Communicating With The Bereaved Parent

**Don’ts**

- Advice
- Cheer-up
- Assume
- Reassure
- Argue
- Minimize

**Do’s**

- Ask Non-judgmental Questions
- Validate /empathy
- Support /silence
- Clarify
- Give information
- Use feeling focused statements

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**Don’t give advice** – You should get out more.
*Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Why don’t you just...*

**Don’t try to happy them up** – Now, now don’t cry. Where’s that optimism you always have?

**Don’t assume** – It’s better now, at least she is at peace. I know how you feel.

**Don’t reassure** – God never gives us more than we can handle. Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.

**Don’t argue** – How can you say that? It’s wrong to blame anyone.

**Don’t minimize** – It could always be worse.
*You’re young; you can always have another baby.*

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**Do ask non-judgmental questions** – *What are your thoughts about...?*

**Do validate** – You have a right to feel however you feel about that. You’ve been through a lot.

**Do support** – I’m here if you want to talk (silence).

**Do clarify** – I’m not sure I understand, tell me more.

**Do give information/explanations** – *Generally that medication is used for... Infant/child CPR is offered at...*

**Use feeling focused statements** – You are still feeling the disappointment. Tell me more about how you are feeling.

(ELNEC, 2003)

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**REMEMBER**

- There are no degrees of difficulty in loss. All loss is important to the person experiencing it.
- Families have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs throughout the continuum of grief.
  - We can help with practical matters, emotional support, and validation of informed choices caregivers made based on their values and needs.

Peaceful Outcomes are grounded in: Meaning, Competency and Support

- Meaning – a lesson to be learned, a purpose, a religious or cultural belief that offers insight into suffering.
- Competency – informed decision making, care for the child with confidence, able to keep the child comfortable, being a partner with other team members in whatever way fits best.
- Support- viable informal and formal supportive systems. I have a sounding board with someone who is objective and non-judgmental. I have help with the day to day practical needs and demands.

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**Take care of yourself and support your colleagues. This is challenging work.**