



Five Rights of the Bereaved Parent

1) **You have the right to your feelings.** No one knows exactly what it is like for you to lose your child. No one has walked the exact same path as you. No one has lost THIS child who was unique in his or her own special way. You have a right to feel how you feel about your loss. Some days will be better than others. Today might be a good day, moments of laughter might even occur, but that doesn't mean two years from now a deep sadness might not wash over you and you will be tearing up when back to school time rolls around and you're one child short when dropping the kids off to school that day. You get to have all of these emotions and experience them and don't let anyone else tell you otherwise.

2) **You have the right to grieve however you choose.**

Remember the saying, "There is no right or wrong way to grieve." We are all unique, therefore the ways we grieve the loss of our child will be unique. If you decide to keep their room the same and untouched for a year after their death, that's fine. If you still have cake and a celebration on their birthday every year, great! If you get a tattoo in remembrance and it's out of the ordinary for you, super! None of these are more appropriate or better than the other. As long as you are not hurting yourself physically or emotionally, there really is no "right" or "wrong" way to do this. Only your way.

3) **You have the right to grieve for however long you need.** Similar in nature to #2. There is also another great saying, "There is no time limit on grief." I'm sorry to say you will carry the weight from the loss of your child with you throughout the rest of your life. You will remember them until you can no longer breathe. Don't let people tell you otherwise. Yes, the grief will shift and morph and move. Some days it will be as if it's not there at all while others it will be a heavy burden to bear, but it will never fully or completely go away. And this is okay. You have the right to grieve for as long or as little as you need, even if it's a lifetime because this grief is great because the love was great.

4) **You have the right to find peace when ready.** At first grief hurts. There are really no words to describe the pain that comes from losing a child. It is disorientating, out of life's order of events, and feels so soul-crushing. When it first happens, and in the months and years after, it may seem as if any sense of peace will never find you again. However, over time, it will come. It won't ever be the same sense of peace you felt before loss; you know the one that has innocence tag along with it by its side. It will be a sense of settling into the vulnerability of your soul. It's a place of knowing the pain and being accepting of it. Not necessarily okay with it, but a realization that peace and pain can exist on the same plane, in the same space and at the same time. You have a right to find this place and embrace it when you are ready. Don't let anyone else force you there; it's a place you must find on your own time and at your own speed.

5) **You have the right to remember and speak their name.** You know when people ask you that silly now confusing question of, "How many children do you have?" Guess what? You have the right to give the *real* answer. You should say their name as much and as often as you like. Include their name in holiday cards say their name in nightly prayers. As they say, "My child did exist," and you have a right in remembering and speaking of their life and the love they brought to it and in many ways still do. I mean if we don't remember who will? It's our right as bereaved parents to carry their memory with us for as long as our heart beats and speak their name as much as we desire as it is music to our soul.

