



# I'VE COME TO HELP YOU CRY

By Joannetta Hendel

**G**rief touches us all sooner or later; death is part of life. For those caught up in the pain, there can be no escape. For those standing by, there may be no more helpless feeling than trying to comfort a friend or loved one through an unbearable loss. Fear of saying or doing the wrong thing can result in saying or doing nothing, leaving the bereaved feeling alone and out of step, unable to express their needs or feelings. They may perceive their grief reactions as inappropriate in the eyes of others.

The world of grief is often a secret place, and therefore misunderstood by those who have not personally experienced the pain of overwhelming loss. In our society, death and sorrow are often tucked away behind closed doors. There is a lack of information about the nature of grief, and the complexion that mourning can and must take for a healthy resolution of the loss. For grieving is healing, and in order to fully live again, sorrow must not be denied.

I look back with regret to the times in my life when I failed to reach out to those in need simply because I didn't

know what to do or say. If I could do it over...

...I would go immediately to the home of the newly bereaved family.

...I would hug and I would listen with my heart.

...I would offer no answers.

...I would be quiet support, offering help in any way that might lessen the confusion, no matter how simple.

...I would not forget the bereaved as the days and weeks passed.

...I would call.

...I would stop by from time to time with something good to eat or a small gift, just to say, "I care."

...I would offer to help out in small ways to simplify a life filled with confusion.

...I would offer help and support with bereaved children, whose grief is often forgotten.

...I would speak of the deceased openly, remembering the joy, the life.

...I would welcome tears, for tears are healing.

...I would listen without judging to voiced guilts, to the anger, to the despair.

...I would remember that when a bereaved person needs help the most is when he may be least able to ask for it.

...I would not assume that all was well simply because I had not heard otherwise.

...I would accept and encourage the expression of grief in its own way, in its own time.

...I would open myself to the pain.

...I would share the sorrow.

The greatest gift of all is the gift of self . . . loving arms and simple words, "I've come to help you cry."

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Joannetta's son Alex died in 1984 when he was two and one-half. She is the mother of four remaining children and lives in the Indianapolis area. She is currently working on her first book which should be ready for publication early in 1988.