

# RELATIONSHIPS

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**We get questions on a weekly basis as to how to handle relationships with friends and family after an only child dies. As bereaved parents, we are so desolate and yet after a few days or weeks it seems those we had 'counted on' go about their daily lives and forget us. We are so highly sensitive and distraught that what normally would not have bothered us now plagues us and we feel we are slighted, hurt, ignored and abused.**

**We are sharing the following story, with names and locations changed to protect the individual who shared it with us.**

My problem involves five male friends whom I've known for over ten years. We used to get together with our families every year at Christmas until my wife and I moved out of state a few years ago. The five of them came for a visit a few years ago, a year or so after our son died and it was very healing for me at that time.

We got together the next year at another one of the guys home and it was a little difficult for me then, listening to them share about their children and families. The following year, one of them moved closer to us so we planned a golf outing for the weekend.

While it was wonderful to see them all, it was VERY HARD for me this time. We talked about my son somewhat and how things were going, but I had a lot of trouble listening to each one of them talk about each of their children over the course of the weekend.

Another side issue regarding these friends is that since our son's death, my faith has deepened and I have become much more conservative in my political views than I was when we first became friends ten years ago. They are fairly liberal and a bit younger than I am, and that made for a few uncomfortable moments for me during a political discussion. I'm not comfortable confronting them on their ideas, so I just bite my tongue and keep my views to myself. I tend to feel outdated and outnumbered a lot of the time, and that feeling has always been there over the years, just not as obvious as it was this time.

I am now wondering how I am going to survive another visit with them, as they wanted to start planning a repeat visit next year. I am thinking of not joining them this year and wondering if I'm making much ado about nothing? I don't know if this is a temporary thing, though the liberal/conservative differences have become more prevalent over the years!

Have you had any similar experiences (referring to the discussions about their children) with friends since your child's death? I've talked to a few other friends (who all have children, of course) and they think I should wait and see how I feel when it comes time for the visit later this year. But, because this involves airline bookings and because one of the friends books vacations and outings a year in advance, I feel like I should tell them NOW rather than wait.

**What experiences have you had that may be similar to this and how have you handled it? We would like to encourage you to respond. You may change dates, names and specific events to protect yourself but be specific enough that it will help others.**