

# Recognition

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It's not often I'm lost for words. I can quite easily talk for hours, stop for a small refreshment then begin again. Why is it then that when I meet some people they still don't know what to say about my son who died over six years ago? Has it been too long? Should I be 'over it' by now? Should I accept that other people are not living my life and they shouldn't have to acknowledge the past?

I'm not sure that it's just one reason people don't know what to say to grieving parents, or grandparents. It is difficult. How can they say the right thing when realistically is there a right thing to say?

I think after six years I am much more tolerant of people not saying the right thing or acknowledging my son....well....maybe not... I must admit sometimes I want to make some unbelievable Olympic style leap, jump on some inconsiderate twit, land on their chest and simulate a glimpse of grief. Then, other times I am much calmer and able to say ... well....actually....he....

The other day a friend and I visited a home where one of the children, a boy was born in the same year as Henry. So there he was, a lovely boy, good manners, gorgeous smile.... standing there saying hello to me. The mother of the child didn't know that while I was standing there searching for the word hello in my vocabulary I was actually gasping for breath. I thought I coped with it well. I didn't run off crying. I didn't break into a full on panic attack...I just lost the ability to speak for a second. I was quite proud of myself... I knew that it wasn't him. Maybe I shouldn't make the connection, but how can I not let my mind wander?

Later I spoke to my friend who was lovely enough to listen to how I felt. She didn't make me feel like I was being ridiculous. She acknowledged that I was hurting.

My friends have always been pretty good about acknowledging the awkwardness of some situations. People who I may not know so well, but know that they have a child around the same age as their own haven't always responded the way I would have liked. I don't think it's a lack of caring. Far from it.

There must be an incredible awkwardness for parents of children of the same age when I talk to them. It must be even harder for the parents of surviving cherubs. They know all too well that it might have been a different story and that has to hurt. There has to be a sense of not wanting to think of that. I'm not sure. I don't have the surviving cherub.

So what could people say? What could parents or grandparents of surviving cherubs say when we get together? I would hope that there is an acknowledgement. I even think that sometimes there are no words and a hug or a rub on the arm is just as good if not better. I know that there is a huge fear of saying the wrong thing, but in all honesty the silence is far worse. We want the opportunity to talk. We want the opportunity to be listened to.

We want some sort of recognition for our children. We won't get to see them grow up. We

won't have people grab their cheeks and comment at how much taller they have grown. As much as that hurts we need to talk about it.

A little bit of compassion, some understanding and some recognition – even the smallest thing can mean so much. It's not easy for anyone. It would be great to think that the cherubs get-togethers are a place where we can share, appreciate and acknowledge the lives of our children regardless of whether they are with us or not.