

# TO BEREAVED GRANDPARENTS

## Grandparent as Parent

Some grandparents have had deeper than usual relationship with their grandchild who has died. They are not the biological parent of the child but, for whatever reason, they took care of the child as a parent would. They may not feel that the role of bereaved parent fits them, but on the other hand neither does the role of bereaved grandparent. They are not quite the parent, but they aren't typically the grandparent either.

These grandparents may be confused as to where they stand in TCF. It is my opinion that they should consider themselves as bereaved parents and model their grief work after parents rather than grandparents.

Too often we "should" on ourselves. We "should" do this. We "should" be that. We "should" think this. We "should" feel that. And it goes on and on. It is likely that these special grandparents are "Shoulding" on themselves. They are telling themselves that they shouldn't be reacting to the child's death the way they are because they aren't the child's parent.

The situation of these grandparents is much like that of adoptive parents. Like these parents, grandparents aren't the biological parents, but in every other way they fulfill the role. If we do not question the grief reactions of adoptive parents, why then, do we question the grief reactions of bereaved grandparents who take on the role of parent to their grandchild. These grandparents need to recognize that their grief is as legitimate as the grief of a biological parent. They must allow themselves to grieve as fully as they need to and make no apologies for doing so.