

Understanding Your Loss

Pregnancy is often a hopeful and exciting time. Whether you were excited or worried, when a baby dies during pregnancy, it changes everything. It is okay to feel angry and depressed. It's understandable. For different reasons, you may even feel relieved—and in a weird way, guilty for feeling that relief. While everyone feels things differently, there is still a process for healing.

Understanding Grief—A Little

Grief is a hard and painful road to travel. It's also a very personal journey, and it changes us forever. It is best, when the pain is very raw, to find the things that calm and soothe you and not to worry about how others will judge you. Getting through each day is hard at first, but it is okay to give yourself time.

The typical stages of grief are:

- denial
- anger
- bargaining
- depression
- acceptance

Sometimes we can't believe it happened or we wonder if the doctor made a mistake. We are angry at ourselves, others, even God. We may bargain with others and God, reasoning that if we do something different, the pain will go away, or even though it doesn't make sense—that our baby will still be alive. Depression is so real it can seem there is no way out. Eventually, over time, we accept the loss and begin to go on with our lives. We will never forget the baby we lost, but we can accept that what happened has forever changed us.

Moving Forward

- Take the time you need to honor your child and grieve their loss. Their life, no matter how short, IS meaningful and valuable!
- Continue to work through your grief so that your next pregnancy is simply your next child, and not a replacement.
- Know that your pain is real and justified, and don't let anyone tell you it's not. Losing a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or anytime after birth is always a tragedy.
- Saying good-bye to your child is healing and so important. This good-bye can happen through a memorial service or something special you do to honor your child. If you know that your child will be delivered stillborn, take the time to hold them, love them, and say good-bye.
- Children lost in miscarriage are generally not given a death certificate, but that should not invalidate your loss. Make your own certificate commemorating their conception and their death. Give your child a name to put on that certificate. It's never too late to do this, no matter how long it's been since they passed.

- Put together keepsakes to preserve your baby's memory. Include ultrasound pictures, cards, a baby outfit, hospital items, and any other items that will help you remember your child.
- Journal your experience and feelings. Some moms find this very comforting and a way to preserve their experience and honor their child.

Those Who Mean Well

Most people don't know how to comfort someone who is grieving. Learn to forgive those hurtful attempts of sympathy from well-meaning friends and family. You will experience people who mean well but are still insensitive. It is frustrating, not knowing when something someone says may trigger you. Keep your deepest emotions for your closest friends. Know that your pain is real and justified, and don't let anyone convince you it's not. Walk away from those who judge your grief.

God's Comfort

You might wonder why a loving God would allow your innocent baby to die. I know I did. The Bible tells us that God cherishes life—both yours and your baby's. Psalm 139:16 says:

“Your eyes saw my body even before it was formed. You planned how many days I would live. You wrote down the number of them in your book before I had lived through even one of them.”

This means that even before your baby was conceived, God knew them and already had a plan for them. He already knew how long your baby would live! God is there to comfort you. He understands pain and suffering because He experienced it in the death of His Son, Jesus. He loves us so much that He feels our pain and weeps with us. He loves you SO much, and He wants to comfort you!

Resources:

1. http://www.pregnancyloss.org/uploads/4/3/7/9/43794419/plsp_booklet_2015_-_pdf_version.pdf
2. <http://americanpregnancy.org/pregnancy-complications/miscarriage/>
3. <http://www.arhp.org/Publications-and-Resources/Patient-Resources/Fact-Sheets/Miscarriage>
4. <https://www.today.com/parents/miscarriage-affects-1-4-women-see-some-their-stories-t104234>
5. Footprints on Our Hearts, DVD, Copyright 2011 and 1997 by Paraclete Press, Inc.