

## Coping with Friends & Family

Friends, relatives, and co-workers may be uncomfortable around you. It can be difficult for someone who has not experienced this type of loss to understand what you are going through. They may not understand the intensity of your grief or may feel helpless to console and comfort you. Often people don't know what to say and in their effort to offer support they may say things that are upsetting to you. You may hear some of the following statements:

- You will have more children.
- You were lucky; it was early in your pregnancy.
- You're still young enough to have more children.
- You're lucky you did not bring the baby home from the hospital.

You shouldn't have to justify to anyone why you feel the way you do. However most people are not trying to be hurtful. Since they have not had your experience, it will be difficult for them to understand the intensity of your grief and sadness. Let your family and friends know how important this baby was to you and ask them to be supportive. Be specific in telling others what you need from them to help you heal.

Most parents who have lost babies feel reluctant at first to ask for help, but are later glad they did. Although family and friends may not understand what you are feeling, they want to help. Be receptive to those who wish to help even though this may not be easy for you. You do not have to deal with your grief alone. Find positive and healthy support.

## Bereavement Resources

There are many reasons why babies die, which means there really are no simple answers to your questions. A baby's death can be one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a parent may face. Although nothing can take away the pain you feel right now, it may be helpful to know that you are not alone - others have experienced and struggled to deal with the intense grief that followed the death of their baby.

When you are ready, please use the resources below for additional information, and for locations and phone numbers of parent support groups, counseling and other help with your grief.

You are not alone.

### For help and information contact:

SHARE  
1-800-821-6819  
[www.nationalshareoffice.com](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com)

M.I.S.S. Foundation  
1-888-455-MISS(6477)  
[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

Hygeia Foundation  
1-800-893-9198  
[www.hygeia.org](http://www.hygeia.org)

Bereavement Services...The RTS People  
1-800-362-9567 x54747  
[www.bereavementservices.org](http://www.bereavementservices.org)



Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade  
701 SW 27th Avenue • Suite 1401  
Miami, FL 33135  
Phone: 305-541-0210 • Fax: 305-541-0213  
[www.hscmd.org](http://www.hscmd.org)

## Stillbirth & Infant Death

A baby's death can be one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a parent may face.

Whether your loss occurred during pregnancy or after birth, you may go through a variety of emotions. There simply are not words to express the depth of sorrow after such a loss. Surviving a loss is hard work; but healing does happen over time.



Healthy Start Coalition  
of Miami-Dade

## The journey may be rocky but you need not walk the path alone.

It is important to understand that each woman reacts in her own way to the loss of her baby. There is no “right” or “wrong” response. Grieving is a normal and necessary process. The grief you feel for your baby who died is painful, and your recovery will take time. Reach out to those closest to you and ask for their comfort and support. No matter what age, your baby was and is a part of you. When your baby dies, so do many of your hopes and dreams for the future.

### Physical Aspects of Grief

Grief often manifests itself in physical ways. You may sleep for only a few hours, if at all, each night. Feeling tired, “walking in a fog”, long- and short-term memory loss, and an inability to concentrate are not uncommon. Sleep deprivation and the extreme stress of the situation often lead to the feeling that you are “losing it,” but this is a normal psychological reaction. If you are uncertain about whether your reaction is normal or you have any history of mental instability, seek help from a professional.

It is especially important to avoid the use of drugs and alcohol in hopes of making the pain go away. Prescription medication should be taken sparingly and only under the supervision of a physician. At this time, a balanced diet, rest, and moderate exercise are especially important. Crying also has been proven to have a healing effect, and should not be stifled because of societal views.

### Symptoms of Grief

When your baby dies, normal symptoms of grief are varied. Parental reactions and intensity of feelings may differ. Typical reactions include the following:

- Crying, loneliness, a feeling of isolation.
- A need to talk about the death and the details of what happened.
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, depression.
- Anger, guilt, blame.
- Loss of appetite, overeating, sleeplessness, irritability.
- Inability to concentrate, comprehend, or remember.
- Loss of goals and aims in life, a sense of despair about the future.

Grief can last far longer than you or others may expect and has many ups and downs. The first year can be especially difficult when parents torment themselves with painful questions and statements:

- Why did this happen to my baby, my child?
- Why did this happen to our family?
- Why didn't I know something was wrong?
- Why didn't I go to the doctor sooner?
- It's all my fault!
- If only . . .

There may be no adequate or satisfying answers to these questions or statements. Anger and guilt are common reactions and often accompany grief. Sharing and expressing these feelings can be a way to release them.

### Coping with Grief

- Allow yourself time to grieve. Don't let anyone dictate how you should be feeling. Grieving is different for everyone.
- Open up to your friends and loved ones. Let them know how they can be helpful. They may not know what to say to you, but in most cases they are willing to listen. Your spouse and relatives may be grieving with you. They are hurting as well.
- Gather keepsakes. Pictures, cards, the funeral bulletin, special gifts from loved ones -- whatever you can hold on to that will help you through this time in your life and also allow you to remember your baby later on.
- Find ways to remember your baby. Light a candle, release a balloon from the grave site, have prayer said for your child, remember your baby at special events. Do what is comfortable for you.
- Take care of yourself. Make it a priority to eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of water. Get adequate rest and engage in physical activities like walking or exercising. Keeping yourself healthy will help with the healing process.