



## Helping Friends and Family Understand Grieving the Loss of a Baby

It can be difficult to know what to do for someone who grieves the loss of a much-wanted baby. We hope these suggestions will help you provide comfort and support to someone you care about:

### What to Say:

“I am sorry.”

“I love you.”

“I’m sad for you.”

“I’m thinking of you.”

“I’m here for you.”

“Take all the time you need.”

“I don’t know what to say, but I care about you so much.”

The baby’s name, if the baby was named.

### What to Do:

Do listen. Call. Visit. Hug. Cry.

Do acknowledge the parents’ loss. Recognize that something profoundly sad has occurred. Validate the parents’ feelings.

Do attend the funeral, if there is one.

Do send a card.

Do drop off a meal, take care of household chores, run errands, and/or babysit other children in the family for the parents.

Do honor the baby by making a donation in the baby’s name or by planting a tree in memory of the baby.

Do allow the parents to express whatever emotions they are feeling, even if you don’t understand their feelings or are made uncomfortable by them.

Do recognize that the parents may be on an emotional rollercoaster; their sudden swings of emotion may be as surprising to them as they are to you.

Do be sensitive to the parents’ feelings about others’ pregnancies, babies, and children: after losing a baby, it can often be very difficult for parents to hear about or be around those who are pregnant, just as it can be difficult to hear about or be around babies and children.

Do remember that if the parents have living children, the children are grieving, too.

Do educate yourself about pregnancy and infant loss, and about the grieving process.

Do let the parents know that you are thinking of them on the baby’s due date (if the baby died before his or her due date), on holidays, on birthdays, and on the anniversary of the baby’s death.

Do continue to reach out to the parents long after their loss. The parents may be overwhelmed with people visiting and calling during the first few weeks after the death of their baby, but much of that support may fade away soon thereafter. Continue to visit, call, and listen.



#### What Not to Say:

“Everything happens for a reason.”

“You can always have another baby.”

“Be thankful it happened now, before you got to know the baby.”

“There must have been something wrong with the baby.”

“You’ll feel better as soon as you’re pregnant again.”

“Your baby is in a better place now.”

“Now you have an angel in heaven.”

“You need to be strong.”

“I know just how you feel.”

#### What Not to Do:

Don’t avoid the parents because you don’t know what to say or worry that you might say something wrong. The parents need you right now. Simply tell them, “I don’t know what to say, but I care about you and I’m sorry.”

Don’t try to find a reason why the baby died, such as: “This is Mother Nature’s way of taking care of her mistakes” or “God needed him more than we did.” No explanation is going to make the parents hurt any less.

Don’t put time limits or restrictions on the parents’ grief. Active grief often lasts at least eighteen months, but every individual grieves differently. No one can be hurried through the grieving process.

Don’t compare the parents’ loss to someone else’s. Grief is grief, a loss is a loss, sadness is sadness.

Don’t judge or criticize the way the parents are moving through the grief process.

Bereaved parents need to feel that it is okay for them to grieve however they wish.

Don’t take it personally if the parents don’t seem to want to talk. Grieving parents don’t always feel like talking.

Don’t give advice unless you are asked for it.

Don’t think that you can fix the parents’ grief or somehow make it better – there’s nothing you can do that will make their grief go away. You can, however, support them through the grieving process.