

## Coping with the loss of a baby

The loss of a child is one of the most difficult things to deal with. It can occur in various situations such as miscarriage, stillbirth, ectopic pregnancy, elective termination, adoption, and neonatal death. Young people are suddenly faced with many questions and decisions none of which you're prepared for.

In our society, we rarely openly discuss death. Many adults are not even prepared for their own death. Decisions regarding living wills, organ donation, assigning a health care surrogate, or simply letting their loved ones know their wishes are often left unfinished. Do yourself a favor; talk about it with your loved ones.

It is difficult when elderly people die, but little babies aren't supposed to die. We simply don't understand why this happens. Sometimes we find answers and other times we do not. The way we cope with loss may be affected by the meaning of the pregnancy and how we have dealt with death in the past, even as small child. What were we taught as children about death? What are you teaching your children about death?

We all grieve differently. Many variables affect the way we grieve such as religion and cultural beliefs. You cannot put a time limit on someone's grief, the child may be thought about for a lifetime. We move through stages as time goes on, as evidenced by some of the literature and research done in this area.

One thing I have experienced is that you can't forget or not deal with the grief, you need to go through the process, because if not, it sneaks up on you and it forces you to deal with it at a later time in your life. Coping with it sooner rather than later will help you move on. You may be driving in the car or hear a song and suddenly you have a thought about your loved one and may suddenly start crying or feel sad. So, you need to work through the process. Crying and writing down your thoughts in a journal, can be therapeutic. Talk about how you feel with someone who is close to you. Some people find support groups helpful. Grieving is a very unique, individualized and complicated process. Going through the process is one of the hardest things you have to do in life.

Knowing that there will be good days and bad ones, hopefully the good days will out-number the bad days and life will start to get better each day in your healing journey.

## Helping yourself when you experience the loss of a baby:

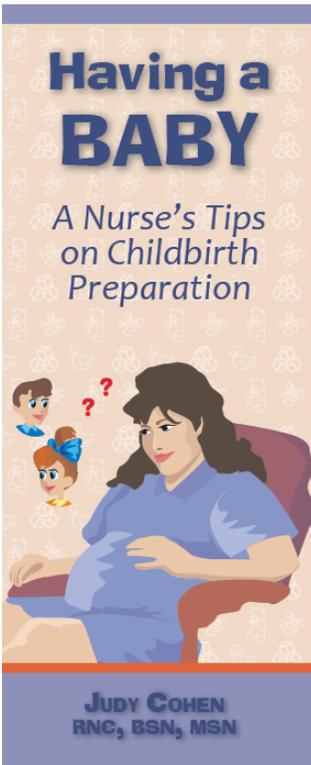
1. Find out as much information as you can from your physician about your situation and what to expect.
2. Allow your family to participate and support you by helping you with what you need. (Cooking, cleaning, childcare, running errands, etc).
3. You and your significant other may find it very helpful to spend, as much time as you can with your baby if that's an option; this is the only time in your life you will have this opportunity. The loss can be very stressful on the relationship so be sure to share your feelings with each other.
4. Take pictures and get mementos of the baby. Today hospitals provide pictures, footprints, grief literature, and other information on dealing with pregnancy loss.
5. Read booklets on pregnancy loss and bereavement to help understand the grieving process. Seek out parent support groups.
6. There are various ways of memorializing your baby with cremation, memorial services, burial, each state has laws.
7. While you and your partner should be the ones to make plans and decide what is right for you, you may also want to consult clergy and other family members.
8. Be aware many people don't know what to say and may say the wrong things they are not intentionally trying to hurt you, they often simply don't know what to say.
9. Do not make any major life changes for one year after any type of major loss.
10. See your physician for a check-up about 6 months to make sure you are ok, be aware of physical and emotional symptoms you may have at this time. This is due to your immune system response to the stress of your loss.
11. Support your partner.
12. Try to rest, eat, drink lots of fluids and let yourself take the time you need to heal.
13. Be aware there will special days that may be challenging like holidays, due dates, so make sure you plan something special to remember your baby if you want.
14. Give yourself, your body and mind time to heal; they all may require different time frames. The only things you need to do are rest and give yourself time to heal.
15. Know you may experience many different emotions, this is normal. Try to relieve yourself of any guilt. Seek professional help if you need to. Talk to your physician.

I'd like to thank the following organizations for education and support on this matter.

- PLIDA (Pregnancy Loss & Death Alliance)
- RTS Bereavement services [www.bereavementservices.org](http://www.bereavementservices.org)
- SHARE/Compassionate friend's [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Helpful websites:

- [www.Griefwatch.com](http://www.Griefwatch.com),
- [www.bornangels.com](http://www.bornangels.com)
- [www.NationalShareoffice.com](http://www.NationalShareoffice.com)
- [www.pregnancyloss.info](http://www.pregnancyloss.info)



*For more information, go to:  
GetReady4Baby.com*

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