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**When Your Baby Dies**

# When Your Baby Dies

You are now faced with the difficult, but important, need to mourn. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings regarding the death of your baby. It is an essential part of healing.

## Allow Yourself to Mourn

Whatever the circumstances of your baby's death, you will need to share your grief outside of yourself. Whether you were pregnant for a brief time, many months, delivered a stillborn baby, or your baby lived for a longer time, you have every right to grieve.

- The death of your baby may have come suddenly, without any warning. You have been given little, if any, preparation for this experience.
- You will grieve in your own special way.
- Try not to adopt assumptions on how long grief should last.
- Allow yourself to grieve at your own pace.
- Consider taking a *"moment-to-moment"* or *"one-day-at-a-time"* approach.

## Expect to Feel a Multitude of Emotions

Experiencing the death of your baby affects your head, heart, and spirit. Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself; it means you are using your survival skills. You may feel emotions such as:

- Confusion
- Depression
- Disbelief
- Disorganization
- Fear
- Guilt
- Loss
- Numbness
- Relief
- Sadness

## **Talk About Your Grief**

Express your grief openly. By sharing grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better. It is a natural part of the grief journey.

Find caring friends and relatives who will listen without judgment. Avoid persons who are critical or who try and tell you, "*You're wrong,*" or, "*You can have another baby.*" While these comments may be well-intentioned, you do not have to accept them. You have every right to express your grief. No one has the right to take it away.

## **Develop a Support System**

Reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate thing you can do at this time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Find those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings – whatever they might be.

## **Allow a Search for Meaning**

You may find yourself asking, "*Why did this baby die?*" "*Why this way?*" "*Why now?*" This search for meaning is another normal part of the healing process. Some questions have answers. Some do not. Actually, the healing occurs in the opportunity to pose the questions, not necessarily in answering them. Find a supportive friend who will listen responsively as you search for meaning.

## **Move Towards Your Grief and Heal**

Remember, your grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. It's not that you won't be happy again; it's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the baby died.

The experience of grief is powerful. So, too, is your ability to help yourself heal.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Wolfelt, Dr. A. (1995). helping yourself heal when a Baby dies. Fort Collins, Colorado, USA: Batesville Management Services.



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