

## Creating Memories

Some hospitals have a Keepsake Program. They may take photos of your baby clothed and unclothed and being held by someone.



This program may also provide little mementos such as a special outfit, a Keepsake Album, a certificate with your baby's feet and handprints, records of the baby's weight and height, the hospital wrist band, or a snippet of hair.

You may have a special blanket or toy that you have bought for your baby and want to keep as a memento. If your baby has a sibling, he or she may want to write a note or make a drawing for the baby to be kept among the mementos. Grandparents, too, might want to write a note to the baby. All of these testify to your baby being part of your family story.

You may have regrets that there were things that you did not do at the time. Do not be hard on yourself. In your emotional distress and grief, you did what you could.

## Naming Your Baby

By giving your baby a name, you can officially acknowledge the birth, and his or her place in the family. You might find this decision more difficult if you had a miscarriage or premature baby, but it can be appropriate because it says to you and to the world that this was your baby. Some parents decide not to name their baby. This is really your choice, but if you do, you can do this when the time is right for you. You need not rush into that decision if you are unsure.

excerpt from "Empty Arms"  
by Sherokee Ilse  
(used with permission)

***"The name of your child is a  
magic word to heal your heart."***

Sascha Wagner



## A Time of Healing

Although nothing can take away the pain you feel right now, it may be helpful to know what others have experienced as they've struggled to deal with the intense grief that follows the death of a child. Sharing with other bereaved parents, in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, can ease the loneliness and isolation of grief. Those who have "been there" can fully understand and accept your grief. These parents can help you to understand that the most painful aspects of bereavement will soften over time and that you are not alone. The following list includes some helpful suggestions on how to cope with your loss.

- **Books** on perinatal loss can offer you knowledge, guidance and support. They give you a greater understanding of your grief, explain how the death of a baby affects your life and suggest ways to cope.
- **Counselling** can help you if you become stuck in the grief process or can find little joy in life.
- **Anticipation of difficult times:** Anniversaries of your baby's birth and death dates, holidays and due dates can be difficult times. Letting others know what you are feeling, and finding a meaningful way to commemorate your baby, will help you to heal.

**For support in your area contact:**



# Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death



## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF CANADA

An international peer support organization for bereaved parents and their surviving children

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF CANADA



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## Grieving for Our Baby

As soon as we know that we are expecting a baby, our baby is real, a part of us. Long before we see them, they are the focus of our hopes and dreams. We wonder what they will look like and how their personality will develop. We choose names and imagine their place in our family.



When our baby dies, a part of us dies too. Although we knew so little of them and our time with them was so short, the loss is overwhelming. At whatever age our baby dies, we experience the same shock. The life we looked forward to sharing with our baby will now not happen, and we shall never know the person he or she would have become in adulthood.

## How Our Baby Died

When our baby dies as a result of **miscarriage** or a **stillbirth**, then we have had no relationship outside of the womb. Sometimes we will have had warnings that something was wrong. We may have known that our baby would be born dead or we may have had to face this during labour or in the minutes after giving birth.

It is hard to mourn someone you have known only as a part of yourself. There is a dimension missing because they have not yet had a separate existence, but they are more than just a part of us, they are also themselves.

When we suffer a **neonatal death**, our baby is born alive but is too frail to survive. Each day and each hour becomes a roller-coaster of hope and despair as we watch their struggle, but are powerless to affect the outcome. Maybe your baby died shortly after birth and you did not have the opportunity to hold her or him. This is especially hard as you did not get the chance to say your “*hellos*” and it is already time for the “*goodbyes*”.

## Feeling the Loss

Grief is the emotional response to loss. Mourning is the way we deal with these emotions. After the loss of an infant or a fetus, grief reactions may differ, even between the parents. There is a danger that a father’s grief may not be acknowledged as he tries to be strong for his wife or partner. He, too, has lost his child, and has had his dreams shattered. Everyone deals with grief in different ways; typical reactions include the following:

- shock and numbness—feelings of disbelief and a sense that this can’t have happened
- incessant crying or feelings of loneliness
- compulsion to talk about the details of the death
- a sense of hopelessness
- feelings of anger, guilt, or blame
- loss of interest in food, or excessive eating
- sleeplessness
- memory lapses or irritability
- loss of any desire for the future
- experiencing aching arms, or phantom crying

Grieving is hard work that takes time and drains energy. Be aware that your reactions are normal and may present with many ups and downs. Grieving takes far longer than society recognizes. Grant yourself the freedom to allow this complex process to occur.



*My Little one,  
you have left us too soon.  
Though my body can no longer  
hold you,  
I hold you forever in my heart.*

## Coping with Family and Friends

Friends, relatives, and co-workers may avoid you, or seem embarrassed around you. They may offer words of condolence that sound empty or wrong to you, such as the following:

- *It was good this happened so early in your pregnancy.*
- *You’re young and healthy and can have another baby.*
- *Maybe it was Nature’s way of ridding the body of something that wasn’t perfect.*
- *It was probably for the best.*
- *You should be thankful that you already have (an)other child(ren).*

These kinds of statements may hurt and indicate a lack of understanding of the depth of your grief. Let others know that it is *this* baby you are grieving, a baby that cannot be replaced no matter how many subsequent pregnancies occur.

## Subsequent Pregnancy

It is up to the bereaved parents as to when they will try to conceive again. There is no set time frame for this to occur and every family will decide when the time is right for them.

When you are pregnant again, you may find:

- You have to get past the point of your last loss before you feel hopeful and calm.
- The pregnancy seems to last forever.
- You need a good support system during this subsequent pregnancy.
- Asking your doctor for extra tests and reassurance will help ease your fears.
- Directing your energy to the tiny living baby within builds special memories of this pregnancy.

***“Precious moments lost forever  
but not forgotten.”***

Sascha Wagner