

How you can help parents bereaved by miscarriage

Written by parents for parents

We've spoken with some parents who experienced the loss of a child through miscarriage, in those early weeks of pregnancy.

We listened as they told us about some of the particularly unique characteristics of this type of loss, what does and doesn't help. Here's what they would love you to know.

The grief following baby loss can be very challenging. The mother has been experiencing the physical changes of pregnancy while often the father hasn't yet been able to feel a baby move or even see them on a scan, yet both have lost a child. For some, the loss has been late enough for them to go through birth, to hold their baby and maybe even make some keepsakes. However, all too often, the loss is early and there are no physical mementos of the child who has died. While some parents may, in the future, go on to have another baby or choose to adopt, they are painfully aware that he or she can never be a replacement for the person that died, as every child is unique. Others may be unable, or choose not to, follow this path.

✓ DO

- ✓ **Do** talk to us – even if you don't know what to say.

- ✓ **Do** listen.

- ✓ **Do** just be there and sit alongside me in the pain.

- ✓ **Do** ask if I want to talk about my baby.

- ✓ **Do** help in practical ways – food, shopping, cleaning. Be specific.

- ✓ **Do** care for my partner too – they have also lost a baby.

- ✓ **Do** allow me to talk about what has happened, as often as I want to.

✗ DON'T

- ✗ **Don't** try and put it right. You can't, and I just need you to be there with me in it.

- ✗ **Don't** ignore my loss and pretend it hasn't happened.

- ✗ **Don't** assume I'm OK if I appear to be coping.

- ✗ **Don't** avoid me.

- ✗ **Don't** start a reply with 'at least ...'

- ✗ **Don't** suggest these things happen for a reason – it really isn't helpful.

- ✗ **Don't** ask how we are – unless you want a truthful answer.

✓ DO

- ✓ **Do** acknowledge key dates – due date and anniversary.

- ✓ **Do** understand if I struggle when I see pregnant mums.

- ✓ **Do** allow us to cry, and maybe cry with us.

- ✓ **Do** treat us as normally as possible.

- ✓ **Do** talk about everyday things too.

- ✓ **Do** ask if we gave our baby a name.

- ✓ **Do** get in touch.

✗ DON'T

- ✗ **Don't** say how strong we are – it puts a pressure on us not to show how we're really feeling.

- ✗ **Don't** tell me it was very early – this diminishes my loss.

- ✗ **Don't** be super-spiritual.

- ✗ **Don't** leave us out of the usual events. We may not feel able to go, or may only stay a while, but we do want to be invited.

- ✗ **Don't** suggest having another baby will solve it. Another child is not a replacement for the one I've lost.

- ✗ **Don't** suggest putting away baby things quickly will make it better.

- ✗ **Don't** say you know how I feel – every loss is different.

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