

Pregnancy and *Infant Loss*



**HEARTS
OF HOPE**
finding hope in grief

The journey to parenthood is filled with hopes, dreams, and expectations about what the future will hold. From imagining a child's first steps to picturing family traditions and birthdays, parents begin building a relationship with their child long before they ever hold them in their arms. But sometimes, that journey takes an unexpected turn. Infertility, miscarriage, and the death of a child can bring profound grief into the lives of parents and families, changing not only how they see the future, but how they experience the present.

WHAT IS INFANT LOSS?

Infant and pregnancy loss can take many forms. While some losses occur before a pregnancy begins, others happen during pregnancy or after a child has been born. Each experience carries its own unique challenges, and no two parents will grieve in exactly the same way. For some, the journey begins with infertility. For others, it involves the loss of a pregnancy through miscarriage. And for parents who experience the death of a baby or an older child, grief may come with the heartbreaking absence of someone who was already woven into the fabric of their everyday lives.

Grief following pregnancy and infant loss is complicated. It does not always look the way people expect, and it certainly does not follow a predictable timeline. Parents may experience sadness, anger, guilt, jealousy, loneliness, confusion, or even moments of relief. Sometimes, they may feel several of these emotions at once.

INFERTILITY

For families experiencing infertility, grief can begin long before a pregnancy ever occurs. Month after month, parents may be navigating disappointment, uncertainty, or a feeling of failure. Baby showers, pregnancy announcements, and conversations about growing families can become painful reminders of what feels out of reach. There may also be grief over lost time, financial strain, or the fear that parenthood may not happen.

MISCARRIAGE

Miscarriage can bring a different kind of heartbreak. Even when a pregnancy is brief, the hopes and attachments surrounding it can be immense. Parents may grieve the milestones they will never reach, the name they had considered, or the life they had already begun imagining. Because miscarriage is often an invisible loss to others, parents may feel pressure to keep their pain private or move forward before they are ready.

CHILD LOSS

When a baby or child dies, the loss can touch every part of family life. Ordinary routines, familiar spaces, and special occasions may suddenly carry painful reminders of the child who is missing. Parents may struggle to reconcile the world they knew with the world they now inhabit. They may find themselves longing for the smallest things: a familiar sound, a favorite expression, a hug, or one more ordinary day together.

There is no hierarchy of grief. A loss does not need to be visible to others, understood by everyone, or experienced over a certain length of time to matter. Every parent deserves compassion for the child they hoped for, the pregnancy they lost, or the child whose life ended too soon.

One of the hardest parts of pregnancy and infant loss is that grief can feel isolating. Friends and family may want to help, but struggle to find the right words. Others may avoid talking about the loss because they are afraid of causing more pain.

For parents who have experienced infertility or pregnancy loss, a subsequent pregnancy may bring its own complicated emotions. Hope and fear can exist side by side, making it difficult to fully embrace joyful moments. Parents who have lost a child may find themselves navigating life with both love for the child who died and the demands of everyday responsibilities.

These experiences are not signs of weakness. They are reminders of how deeply love and loss can shape a family.

FINDING WAYS TO NAVIGATE GRIEF

There is no single right way to grieve, and no deadline by which parents should feel better. Still, there are ways to make the experience a little less lonely and to create space for healing.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL WHAT YOU FEEL

Parents do not need to justify their grief or compare it with someone else's experience. Your emotions deserve room to exist. You can feel sadness and gratitude, anger and hope, or exhaustion and love at the same time.

COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

It can be difficult to explain what you need when you are grieving. Some parents may want to talk about their child, share memories, or acknowledge important dates. Others may need quiet, practical help, or time away from difficult situations. Letting trusted people know what feels supportive can help them show up in ways that matter.

FIND PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND

Grief can feel especially lonely when the people around you have not experienced a similar loss. Support groups, bereavement counselors, and peer mentors can offer a space where parents do not have to explain why their loss matters. Partners, fathers, non-birthing parents, and other family members also deserve support as they navigate their own grief.

CREATE MEANINGFUL WAYS TO REMEMBER

Some families find comfort in lighting a candle, planting a tree, keeping photographs or meaningful objects, celebrating a birthday, or sharing their child's story. Others may prefer private rituals or moments of reflection. There is no required way to remember someone you love. What matters is finding a practice that feels right for you and your family.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO CHANGE OVER TIME

Grief can affect how parents see themselves, their relationships, and their futures. You do not have to return to the person you were before the loss or have every question answered to begin finding your footing again. Healing may involve discovering new ways to carry your love while making room for life as it is today.