

Suggested Reading

- Serokee, I. (1996). Empty Arms - coping with miscarriage, Stillbirth and infant death. MN. Wintergreen Press.
- Kohn, I. & Moffett, P. (1993). A Silent Sorrow - Pregnancy Loss. New York, Delta.
- Golden, T. (1996). Swallowed by a Snake - The gift of the masculine side of Healing. Kensington, Maryland: Golden Healing Publishing, L.L.C.
- Limbo, R. & Wheeler, S. (1998). When a Baby Dies - A Handbook for Healing and Helping. Wisconsin: Lutheran Hospital - La Crosse Inc.



'Circle of Friends' is a support group for families who have experienced a pregnancy or infant loss. This support group enables you to meet other families who understand your experience.



"Circle of Friends" Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support Group

Valley Regional Hospital
Ambulatory Care Quiet Room
(main floor)
150 Exhibition St.
Kentville, Nova Scotia

For further information call:

VRH Chaplain

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ANNAPOLIS VALLEY HEALTH

Grandparent's Grief



For Grandparents who have
lost a grandchild

Grandparent's Grief

Losing a grandchild is a unique loss because it is a double loss. You grieve for your grandchild and you grieve for your child. Dreams are shattered when your child loses a baby through ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, stillbirth or newborn death.

FEELINGS

You may find that you are sad and in pain and your sorrow may generate feelings of powerlessness to help your own child. This baby's loss may cause shock, stunned feelings, panic, distress and anger. It seems so unreal. You were to go first so the order of loss is reversed.

Your child is grieving and using their strength for themselves and may not recognize your pain. You too have lost a grandchild. Your pain and confusion are real. Distance may prevent the close contact you need to understand what is going on with your child. You may not want to impose or you may feel that you are letting your child down by not being able to control your grief. Some emotions may seem strange.

Trying to find a reason for the loss may lead to blaming yourself or others. Parents and grandparents may wonder if their genes caused the death. Blaming adds more guilt, stress and pain. Some may be angry that they are alive and their grandchild is not. Emotions are volatile and frightening at a time when resources are often limited. It drains energy and is not easy.

Grief takes the form of disorganization through feelings of hopelessness, emptiness; lack of interest, fatigue and it is hard to concentrate.

Feelings during mourning can only be dealt with by expressing them the best way you can, regardless of what they are. Find someone you trust to talk to. Try painting or writing your feelings down. Releasing them helps you go through the grief process as you cry, talk and grieve with your child. Grief does not leave unless we work at it each in our own way. Reorganization does come with time, as feelings of a "new" normal state emerge, as you talk, journal, ask for help and express your needs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Although it is hard to do, the best role a grandparent can take is a supportive guide. Ask the parents what you can do to help. Sometimes little things like getting a meal ready, grocery shopping, bill paying or laundry can seem overwhelming to grieving parents. Offer to help out with the day-to-day tasks.

The parents may or may not ask your assistance with personal tasks. Arranging the funeral is an important gift the parents give their baby. Putting away the baby's things is an important release for their feelings and can be done anytime the parent feels ready. Parents want to hold something that belonged to their baby. This may bring them comfort and remind them of their baby. Not every parent or grandparent may want to hold and see the baby, but those who have, are

often comforted by it. They find lasting memories in whatever they do to remember their child. Pictures and Memory Boxes may be treasured keepsakes. Offer specific help but don't try to rescue or deny your children their pain. Parents often want to do things themselves at the time they feel is right for them. Spiritual needs may differ but needs can be expressed. Include the baby in conversations to ease the parents and friends. Validate the memories and offer your support for as long as needed.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

If you are expecting another grandchild, worry surrounding the loss may be especially troubling to you. You may want to seek someone to talk to or go to the support group. Celebrate the grandchildren you may have now. Continue to keep room in your heart for the infant who has died.

SELF CARE

Grandparents have an important role. At this time, take good care of yourself as you search for ways to give back and make sense of this experience. Question, express your feelings, use your faith community and seek help when it is needed. Exercise, eat a well balanced diet, rest when needed and encourage humour and lightness in your day. Change is certain as we make memories.

