



The Compassionate
Friends Australia



Understanding grief –
stillbirth, miscarriage,
infant and young
child death

Normal grief reactions...

We are unprepared for the reality of grief. Not knowing what is 'normal' can cause further anxiety. Below are some typical reactions.



Remember that whatever you are feeling is normal for you and that's OK.

Helpful hints for supporting grieving people

- ✓ **Offer practical support...**such as meals, shopping, gardening, errands, looking after siblings etc. Don't wait to be asked and be mindful that bereaved families may still need this support in the early years.
- ✓ **Don't judge...**there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Don't say 'you should...' or 'you shouldn't...' Simply listening is far more helpful.
- ✓ **Accept a wide variety of emotions...**such as sadness, anger, confusion, fear, guilt or relief. You cannot make someone feel worse or 'remind' them of their grief. They are living with it every day.
- ✓ **Say the name of their loved one...**listen and allow the grieving person to talk.
- ✓ **Avoid clichés...**such as 'At least you have other children', 'It was meant to be' or 'They're in a better place'. Well meaning statements like these are unhelpful and often hurtful.
- ✓ **Don't assume...**people who are grieving aren't necessarily showing it. Ask how they are feeling/coping/managing with genuine concern.
- ✓ **You can't fix it...**no one can take away the pain and sadness but knowing that people care, is comforting and healing.



For people who have experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth, many people may not understand the depth of your grief, incorrectly believing your grief is less as you didn't 'know' your baby.

For someone whose baby or young child has died, some people may suggest having another child will help. Whilst well-meaning, these types of comments are unhelpful and can be extremely hurtful.

No matter the age, your child was and is a part of you and when your baby or child died so did many of your hopes and dreams for the future.

Grieving the death of your baby or child may last longer than you and others expect. The emotions you experience may be intense and overwhelming.

Give yourself permission to grieve

You will always be a parent to your child and have the right to grieve as long and as intensely as necessary.



"When my 3 year old daughter died, everyone kept saying 'at least I was young enough to have another child' I didn't want another one, I wanted her!

I felt like I was going crazy because I wasn't 'over it'.

TCF was a lifeline, helping me to see I was normal."



Surviving siblings

When a baby or young child dies, you may have other children you are anxious about.

Encourage your child to talk freely and respond honestly. Provide opportunities for your child to express their feelings such as painting, planting a tree or writing a letter.

By helping them to understand death and how to express their feelings, the impact of grief can be lessened over time. You and your family may discover ways to remember your child in a meaningful way.

About us

Every member of The Compassionate Friends has experienced the devastating death of a child in their family.

We provide a haven to share memories of your child, brother, sister or grandchild, both sad and happy, as often as you need, without rejection or a lack of understanding.

Contact can be made in a variety of ways, such as:

- Drop-in centres to talk over a cuppa
- 24-hour grief support number
- Support groups
- Email
- Online

Whatever contact option works best, you will always be talking to someone who has lived through the death of a child in the family.

Be aware that a subsequent pregnancy can be difficult emotionally. Seek specialised support to help you navigate the overwhelming emotions.

Communication with others can become challenging, with each of us grieving in different ways. This can be especially pronounced with a spouse or partner. It is helpful to recognise these differences and understand that while someone is not grieving in the same way as you, it does not mean they are not also hurting.

Let your family and friends know your grief is a natural expression of how much you loved your child and ask them to support you by listening.

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