

When your baby dies



How is grief different when your baby dies?

When someone we love dies, we experience overwhelming feelings of loss and sorrow, which we call grief. When a baby dies, it is especially devastating, and parents have often said this is the most painful experience anyone can go through. You may feel isolated and lost, whatever your thoughts and feelings, grief is a deeply personal experience, it has no set time and everyone deals with it in their own way. Accepting that you need to mourn and express your grief following the death of your baby is important. Be kind to yourself, take each moment as it comes, set aside time for grief to flow through you, you may find relief in releasing emotions, moving your body, solving problems or accomplishing meaningful tasks.



Emotions and feelings

Have realistic expectations about grief; try to view grief as a complex process that has no deadlines, but mainly waves and unpredictable ups and downs, which eventually brings a sense of healing that creeps up after many months or several years.

You know that your love for your baby will never go away and is part of who you are as a parent. Parents tell us that ultimately you come to an understanding and belief that you will always be the parent of your baby who has died and find ways to continue to feel a bond with your baby.



What do I do now?

Accept your preoccupation with your baby as a natural expression of your parental bond and a natural part of grief. Processing memories and telling your story can help your grief flow.

Do the things that let you feel close to your baby. For you this might be visiting the cemetery; thinking or writing about your pregnancy and your baby; spending time with your keepsakes such as baby clothes and photographs; memorializing your baby such as installing a plaque, planting a tree or a garden; building a shrine or memory box to hold memories; creating a scrapbook; making a piece of art or donating your time or resources in the name of your baby.



Looking to the future

Have faith that eventually you will feel better. Many parents have survived the death of their baby and so can you, as you grieve you are healing, take one day at a time and trust the process.

Events such as birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas can be particularly painful without your baby. It is possible to find ways to cope with these days. Some parents choose to go away or develop routines and rituals in memory of their baby on those days such as letting a balloon go, lighting a candle, making a memory box. Parents often talk about finding a new meaning to life. This could be through a job, charity work in your child's name or fulfilling dreams you may have had for your baby.



Psychological support

Please do reach out and accept emotional support at any time, the intensity of feelings while we are grieving can be overwhelming and being able to talk confidentially with one of our counsellors may be helpful. A parent said, 'Counselling gave me the space to say how I really feel and having said that, I didn't feel so distressed and alone anymore'.



Meeting other bereaved parents

Remember that your grief is normal and you are not alone. Bereaved parents often find comfort in meeting others in a similar situation. We hold a number of events for bereaved parents each year and contact can reassure you that your experiences are natural and a normal part of grieving when your baby has died. Please see below for further support.

These organisations might be able to offer further information and support:

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents with a helpline resources and groups for parents.

www.tcf.org.uk

0345 123 2304

Compassionate Friends have a newsletter and online group specifically for childless parents that can be accessed via the website.

Sands

Supports anyone affected by the death of a baby helpline, groups, resources.

www.sands.org.uk

0808 164 3332

The Child Death Helpline

Support for those affected by the death of a child, whether family, friends, or professionals. Staffed by bereaved parents and supervised by trained counsellors.

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019

Cruse

Information, help and support for anyone bereaved via a helpline, individual sessions and group support.

www.cruse.org.uk/

0808 808 1677

If you would like further advice or to hear about other organisations that can help you, please call our Family Support Line on 01483 230974 or email: familysupport@shootingstar.org.uk