



Loss of an Infant

The loss of a loved one is always difficult. But the loss of an infant is devastating, the hardest and most gut wrenching to bear. Grief is intensified, more painful, and much longer lasting. And many feelings are enhanced and feel almost unbearable. Common responses to the loss of a child or infant:

Shock and Numbness	Our body's way of shielding us from pain. You move around in a fog.
Denial	You expect to hear baby cry or see son or daughter.
Guilt	You feel responsible and replay endless scenarios of what if... and only if... scenarios of what you could have done differently to save your child.
Yearning	Wanting and praying for just 5 more minutes with child wanting to tell them how much you love them
Confusion	Your mind is hazy. Nothing makes sense. You think you are going crazy
Powerlessness	Total loss of confidence and self-esteem because you were unable to protect your child from harm
Anger and Frustration	Often misdirected
Blame	You may blame yourself, a spouse, a caretaker
Emptiness	All hopes and dreams for your child are gone. You feel a whole in your heart and don't believe you will ever heal
Overwhelmed	You are on overload with emotions, sadness, depression, jealousy, fear, panic

These are the most common feelings, but everyone grieves differently. Be assured whatever emotions you are feeling or see others showing are normal after loss. A person showing no emotion does not mean they are not grieving.

TIPS for Coping

Feel your feelings	As painful as they may be, allow yourself to feel your feelings. Don't try to hide them from others. And take all the time you need. There is no timetable for grief.
Don't hide from your Guilt	You have feelings of guilt – which are common but not always present – confront and admit them. Examine the reality of how your child died and your actual intentions and actions at the time. You may see your actions or reactions in a more positive light. Forgive yourself for being imperfect – you did and continue to do your best.
Write a letter to your child	Write a letter to your child and/or to God. Journal your feelings.
Create a virtual memorial page	There are numerous websites that will help you do this. Some of the links below will have links or google memorial pages.



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Take small Steps

After the death and loss of a child, it is essential to break down the future into small increments, an hour or day, and deal only with one portion at a time. Focus on tasks – feed the cat or do the laundry. These little bits of normalcy and focusing on the moment at hand will make grief more bearable.

Remember the Positive

Focus on the positive events and experiences in your relationship with your child. At some point consider making a journal of all the details you want to remember about your child's life. Review your family photographs and include some in your book. You may not feel ready to do this right away, or you may take great comfort doing this in the early days – each person is individual in their needs.

Let others know your needs

After the death and loss of a child, many people want to be supportive but are at a loss for what to do – they seldom understand this type of loss and don't know what to say. Bereaved parents may have to be the ones to take the first step in reaching out to others. Let friends and family know your needs, and don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're fearful of running into someone who might say something about your child, ask a friend to do some shopping for you. Others could help you deal with daily tasks. Maybe you'd like someone to be available to listen to you or be around to ease your loneliness. Only you know what you need. Share your emotions with those closest to you.

Accept Happiness

After the death and loss of a child, one of the significant hurdles parents experiences in returning to the living world is their inability to accept pleasure – or acknowledge that it even exists. But happiness or enjoyment is one of the most critical survival tools, even if just for a moment in your grief. It's okay to laugh amid tears, to smile at sometimes or something. You might feel that your laughter betrays your child's memory, but you need to know you are not abandoning your grieving by enjoying yourself. The only way to survive bereavement is to step away from it occasionally.

Resources

Rights of Parents when a baby dies

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/da9b2a61/files/uploaded/Rights-of-Parents-When-a-Baby-Dies-.pdf>

Empty Cradle - Pregnancy and Infant Loss, resources, support links, therapists, books, ways to remember your child

<https://www.emptycradle.org>

Bereaved Parents Community Group – a perinatal loss support group

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_v7Lts7G944UKv6XLrIBMvnKE6iL2KpY/view

Forever Footprints - Opportunities for remembrance, resources, virtual support, online therapists, books, videos, webinars, podcasts

<https://www.foreverfootprints.org>



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Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep - Free remembrance photos

<https://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/>

Share - Pregnancy and Infant loss support, resources, online and phone support

<https://www.nationalshare.org>

Sid's Deaths

<https://tipsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ChildrenTeens-Sudden-Infant-Death-Syndrome-SIDS.pdf>

The Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents

The mission of The Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents is based in the Catholic, Franciscan tradition of "All are Welcome. Their mission is to serve the spiritual needs of grieving parents whose children of any age have died by any cause; and help interested parents, as well as Clergy, Religious, Diocesan Staff, and/or Spiritual Directors bring this ministry to their own parishes or regions. For more information, go to:

<https://www.emfgp.org/>

Red Bird Ministries

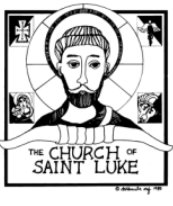
Red Bird was founded on helping parents address the profound healing that needs to happen while also honoring the memory of the child. Our unique value is in the attention given to protect the individual, the marriage, and other relationships from a spectrum of issues that can compound and lead to dysfunction. For more information, go to

<https://www.redbird.love/>

Grief Support Guide

The Grief Support Guide provides nonprofit resources here in San Diego and nationally to help families experiencing the loss of a baby. It was developed as a collaboration between the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency Maternal, Child, and Family Health Services (MCFHS) Branch with the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program Community Action Team – Health Messages Taskforce. Go to:

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/MCFHS/Grief%20and%20Bereavement%20Resource%20List%20Eng-Spn.pdf>



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Books:

A Catholic Guide to Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Loss: Compassionate answers to difficult questions.
by Abigail Jorgensen

At a Loss: Finding Your Way after Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Infant Death by Donna Rothert

My Sibling Still: For those Who Have Lost a Sibling to Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Death
by Megan Lacourrege (Children's book)

When Hello Means Goodbye by Paul Kirk

I'll Hold You in Heaven by Jack Hayford

The Death of a Child – Reflections for Grieving Parents by Elaine E Stillwell

Hiding in the Upper Room by Kelly Breaux

The Grief of Dads by Patrick O'Hearn, Bryan Feger, Ryan Breaux, Red Bird Ministries

For more information, support groups or Catholic Therapists, contact Rich at hello@thechurchofstluke.org