

Healing After Loss

Navigating the Challenges of Grief



A photograph of a man and a woman walking away from the camera on a paved path. The man is on the left, wearing a red sweater and grey pants. The woman is on the right, wearing a white coat, blue jeans, and tan boots. The path is covered with fallen yellow leaves. In the background, there are trees with green and yellow foliage, and a body of water is visible. The scene is set in autumn.

Your loss will not be forgotten.

In this time of mourning, may the emptiness in your heart be filled with gentle peace, and may you find comfort in each memory of your baby. Your baby's short life has touched many hearts and will never be forgotten. We hope that the information in these pages eases the days ahead.

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Taking care of yourself: Physical challenges

When you are grieving, it is especially important to remember to take care of yourself. The stress of a major loss can quickly deplete your energy and emotional reserves. Being mindful of your physical needs will help you get through this difficult time.

If you've lost a newborn, your body will need some time to adjust. Here is what you can expect:

Breast engorgement

For most women, breasts become full three to five days after delivery. If milk isn't removed frequently, you can end up with overfull or engorged breasts. This engorgement can be painful. Thankfully, your engorged breasts will return to their normal size and feel within a few days. Until then, you want to discourage any future milk production by:

Wearing a snug-fitting bra

Avoiding any kind of nipple stimulation or milk expression

Using ice packs to ease discomfort

Vaginal bleeding

During the first few days after your baby's delivery, vaginal bleeding will be bright red and heavier than a normal period, and may contain blood clots. You may have a "gush" of blood or more bleeding when you get up. The bleeding will gradually lessen, becoming pinkish-brown in color and continuing to change from brown to white to clear by about four to six weeks after delivery.

If you are too active during the first few weeks, you may have more bright red bleeding. Your body is telling you to slow down. It will be important to lie down and rest if this bleeding returns. Do not use tampons or douches until after your six-week exam with your doctor. Use sanitary pads and change them often.

There is no way to predict when your period will return. It may be heavier than your normal period at first. Your period commonly returns within two to three months.

Episiotomy and perineal care

If you had stitches, they will dissolve and do not need to be taken out. The area may be sore and bruised at first but will heal in about three to four weeks.

Sitting in warm water can help. After going to the bathroom, use the water bottle you got at the hospital to rinse your bottom from the front to the back. You may want to rinse several times a day, for as long as you are bleeding. Topical medications, such as Tucks® and Dibucaine, may relieve soreness and swelling.

Care after cesarean birth

Recovery after a C-section is likely to take longer. It is recommended that you:

Avoid driving for at least two weeks

Limit stairs and activities until you feel up to them

No vigorous exercise for at least six weeks

Your scar may itch, feel numb or have a "prickling" sensation when you touch it; this is normal. You may also have gas pains for a few days after surgery; walking, rocking in a chair or using a heating pad on your abdomen may relieve this pain.



Pain management

If you are recovering from surgery, controlling your pain will help you recover faster; you'll eat, sleep and feel better. Pain medicine works better when taken on a regular schedule; don't wait for pain to get worse before taking your medicine. You may get additional relief from cold packs, heating pads, massage and relaxation exercises. But, if you've taken your pain medication and your pain is still at level "4" or higher an hour later, call your doctor.

Pain scale



Sexual activity

When you are emotionally ready to resume sexual activity, it is important to make sure your body is also ready. The earliest you should have sex is after your flow has changed from a brown-red to a white or clear color, which indicates your uterus has healed. If you have sore stitches or a tear, you may not be ready for sex until after your six-week checkup or possibly longer. If you find sex is still uncomfortable after a few months, talk to your doctor.

Call your doctor if you experience:

- Bright red bleeding that soaks through a pad in one hour or less, especially with clots of whitish tissue
- Blood clots that are golf-ball size or larger
- Bad smelling or greenish-colored vaginal discharge
- Pain that doesn't go away after taking medicine
- Uterus that is tender to touch
- Fever or chills with a temperature of 100.4° F or higher
- Any hard, red, painful area in your breast along with a fever or chills
- Pain or burning when passing urine
- Severe headache not relieved with Tylenol or rest, or double or blurred vision
- Deep pain, redness, warmth with swelling in any area of your leg(s)
- Stitches that become painful, red, separated or have pus-like discharge
- A feeling of sadness or being depressed, day after day, for more than a week

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF: EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Grieving is a long process, but the pain is felt most acutely in the first days following your loss. Here are some coping strategies:

Face your feelings

You can try to suppress your grief, but you can't avoid it forever. In order to heal, you have to acknowledge the pain. Trying to avoid feelings of sadness and loss only prolongs the grieving process. Unresolved grief can also lead to complications such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and health problems.

Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way

Write about your loss in a journal, or write a letter to the baby you lost, expressing all of the things you never got to say. Make a scrapbook or photo album celebrating your baby's life. Consider getting involved in a cause or organization that would help honor your baby's memory.

Look after your physical health

The mind and body are connected. When you feel good physically, you'll also feel better emotionally. Combat stress and fatigue by getting enough sleep, eating right and exercising. Don't use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain or grief or lift your mood artificially.

Don't let anyone tell you how to feel and don't tell yourself how to feel either

Your grief is your own, and no one else can tell you when it's time to "move on" or "get over it." Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment or judgment. It's OK to be angry, to cry or not to cry. It's also OK to laugh, to find moments of joy and to let go when you're ready.

Plan ahead for grief "triggers"

Anniversaries, holidays and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings. Be prepared for an emotional "jolt" and know that it's completely normal. If you're sharing a holiday or life cycle event with other relatives, talk to them ahead of time about their expectations and agree on strategies to honor your baby.

Ways to cope with your loss

Losing someone or something you love is very painful. After a significant loss, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as shock, anger and guilt. Sometimes it may feel like the sadness will never let up. While these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming, they are normal reactions to loss. Accepting them as part of the grieving process and allowing yourself to feel what you feel is necessary for healing.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve—but there are healthful ways to cope with the pain. You can get through it. Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing that eventually can strengthen and enrich life.

Everyone grieves differently

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried—and there is no "normal" timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

Grief is a roller coaster, not a series of stages

It is best not to think of grief as a series of stages. Rather, we might think of the grieving process as a roller coaster, full of ups and downs, highs and lows. Like many roller coasters, the ride tends to be rougher in the beginning; the lows may be deeper and longer. The difficult periods should become less intense and shorter as time goes by, but it takes time to work through a loss. Even years after a loss, especially at special events such as a family wedding or the birth of a child, you may still experience a strong sense of grief.

Common symptoms of grief

While loss affects people in different ways, many people experience the following symptoms when they're grieving. Just remember that almost anything that you experience in the early stages of grief is normal. This includes feeling like you're going crazy, feeling like you're in a bad dream or questioning your religious beliefs.

Shock and disbelief

Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth. If someone you love has died, you may keep expecting them to show up, even though you know they're gone.

Sadness

Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.

Guilt

You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings (e.g., feeling relieved when the person died after a long, difficult illness). After a death, you may even feel guilty for not doing something to prevent the death, even if there was nothing more you could have done.

Anger

Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. You may be angry at yourself, God, the doctors or even the person who died. You may feel the need to blame someone.

Fear

A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality of facing life without that person.

Physical symptoms

We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical problems, including fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, and insomnia.

Get support

The single most important factor in healing from loss is having the support of other people. Even if you aren't comfortable talking about your feelings under normal circumstances, it's important to express them when you're grieving. Sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier to carry. Wherever the support comes from, accept it and do not grieve alone. Connecting to others will help you heal.

Turn to friends and family members

Now is the time to lean on the people who care about you, even if you take pride in being strong and self-sufficient. Draw loved ones close, rather than avoiding them, and accept the assistance that is offered. Often times, people want to help but don't know how, so tell them what you need—whether it's a shoulder to cry on or help with funeral arrangements.

Draw comfort from your faith

If you follow a religious tradition, embrace the comfort that mourning rituals can provide. Spiritual activities that are meaningful to you—such as praying, meditating or going to church—can offer solace. If you're questioning your faith in the wake of the loss, talk to a clergy member or others in your religious community.



Join a support group

Grief can feel very lonely, even when you have loved ones around. Sharing your sorrow with others who have experienced similar losses can help. To find a bereavement support group in your area, contact local hospitals, hospices, funeral homes and counseling centers.

Talk to a therapist or grief counselor

If your grief feels like it's too much to bear, call a mental health professional with experience in grief counseling. An experienced therapist can help you work through intense emotions and overcome obstacles to your grieving.

How to support a grieving person

If someone you care about has suffered a loss, you can help them heal by asking about their feelings, spending time just being with them and listening when they want to talk.

Complicated grief

The sadness of losing someone you love never goes away completely, but it shouldn't remain center stage. If the pain of the loss is so constant and severe that it keeps you from resuming your life, you may be suffering from a condition known as complicated grief. Complicated grief is like being stuck in an intense state of mourning. You may have trouble accepting the death long after it has occurred or be so preoccupied with the person who died that it disrupts your daily routine and undermines your other relationships.

Symptoms of complicated grief

- Intense longing and yearning for the deceased
 - Intrusive thoughts or images of your loved one
 - Denial of the death or sense of disbelief
 - Imagining that your loved one is alive
 - Searching for the person in familiar places
 - Avoiding things that remind you of your loved one
 - Extreme anger or bitterness over the loss
 - Feeling that life is empty or meaningless
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The difference between grief and depression

Distinguishing between grief and clinical depression isn't always easy, since they share many symptoms. However, there are ways to tell the difference. Remember, grief is a roller coaster. It involves a wide variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even when you're in the middle of the grieving process, you will have moments of pleasure or happiness. With depression, on the other hand, the feelings of emptiness and despair are constant.

Other symptoms that suggest depression, not just grief

- Intense, pervasive sense of guilt
 - Thoughts of suicide or preoccupation with dying
 - Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
 - Slow speech and body movements
 - Inability to function at work, home and/or school
 - Seeing or hearing things that aren't there
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Can antidepressants help grief?

As a general rule, normal grief does not warrant the use of antidepressants. While medication may relieve some of the symptoms of grief, it cannot treat the cause, which is the loss itself. Furthermore, by numbing the pain that must be worked through eventually, antidepressants delay the mourning process.

When to seek professional help

If you recognize any of the symptoms of complicated grief or clinical depression, talk to a mental health professional right away. Left untreated, complicated grief and depression can lead to significant emotional damage, life-threatening health problems and even suicide. But treatment can help you get better.

Contact a grief counselor or professional therapist if you:

- Feel like life isn't worth living
 - Wish you had died with your loved one
 - Blame yourself for the loss or failing to prevent it
 - Feel numb and disconnected from others for more than a few weeks
 - Are having difficulty trusting others since your loss
 - Are unable to perform your normal activities
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The truth about grieving

There are many myths about grieving, and you will find well-intended loved ones offering advice and information that may or may not be helpful. Here we address some often misunderstood aspects of the grieving process.

Truth:

The pain will not go away faster if you ignore it

Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

Truth:

You don't have to "be strong" in the face of loss

Feeling sad, frightened or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

Truth:

Crying is not a requirement

Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

Truth:

There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving

How long it takes can differ from person to person. Healing is attained only after the slow necessary progression through the stages of grief and mourning. Some heal quickly and some do not. You don't have to "get over it" on another person's schedule.

Truth:

A new pregnancy will not help you forget

While thoughts of a new pregnancy may provide hope, a lost infant deserves to be mourned just as you would have with anyone you loved. Grieving takes a lot of energy and can be both emotionally and physically draining. This could have an impact upon your health during another pregnancy. While the decision to try again is a very individualized one, being pregnant while still actively grieving is very difficult.

Truth:

Alcohol or pills will only postpone grieving

You must eventually face reality in order to begin healing, so dulling your pain with alcohol or pills will not help you avoid the grieving process. However, if your doctor feels that medication is necessary to help maintain your health, use it intelligently and according to his or her instructions.

Truth:

You will never be the same, and that's OK

Your upside-down world will slowly settle down, leaving you better prepared to handle the hard times that everyone must deal with sooner or later. You have experienced one of the worst things that can happen to a family, and as you heal, you will become aware of how strong you are.

Truth:

Grieving is not morbid or a sign of weakness or mental instability

Grieving is work that must be done. Allow yourself the time. Feel it, flow with it. Try not to fight it too often. It will get easier if you expect that it is variable, that some days are better than others. Be patient with yourself. There are no shortcuts to healing. The active grieving will be over when all of the work is done.



Truth:
Grief is not all-consuming

In the midst of the most agonizing time of your life, there will be laughter. Don't feel guilty. Laugh if you want to. Like sadness, laughter is part of the healing process, and it will make the pain more bearable.

Truth:
You cannot, and should not, bear this alone

While only you can make the choices necessary to return to the mainstream of life as a healed person, others in your life are grieving and feeling helpless. As unfair as it may seem, the burden of remaining in contact with family and friends often falls on you. They may be afraid to "butt in" or they may be fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing. This makes them feel even more helpless. They need to be told honestly what they can do to help. They don't need to be told, "I'm doing fine," when you're really NOT doing fine. By allowing others to share in your pain and assist you with your needs, you will be comforted and they will feel less helpless.

Truth:
God is not punishing you

The loss of a baby has happened to many people before you, and it will happen to many people after you. It is human nature to look for a place to put the blame, especially when there are so few answers to the question, "Why?" Sometimes there are answers. Most times there are not. Believing that you are being punished will only get in the way of your healing.

Truth:
Decisions need to be made

Well-meaning people will try to shelter you from the pain of making decisions involving your baby (seeing and naming the baby, arranging and/or attending a religious ritual, taking care of the nursery items you have acquired). However, many who have suffered similar losses agree that these first decisions are very important. Our brains filter out much of the pain early on as a way to protect us, but these moments make the loss real and allow grieving to begin.

You will find yourself acknowledging the loss by reliving these early events over and over, trying to remember everything. Remembering how you performed loving, caring acts for your baby in those early hours and days after your loss will provide comfort.



Truth:

It will be difficult to hear about or be around new babies

You may find it very difficult to be around mothers with young babies. You may be hurt, angry or jealous. You may wonder why you couldn't have had that joy. You may be resentful or refuse to see friends with new babies.

You may even secretly wish that the same thing would happen to someone else, and feel ashamed that you could wish such things on people you love or care about. You aren't a dreadful person to have these feelings; you are human. Even the most loving people can react this way when they are actively grieving. Forgive yourself. These feelings will eventually go away.

Truth:

Losing a baby is hard on a marriage

You might blame one another, resent one another or dislike being with one another. If you find this happening, get help from a support group or grief counselor. Don't ignore it or tuck it away assuming it will get better.

Truth:

You will never forget

When you lose a child, your whole future, your plans and dreams, have been affected. This is painful, but there is a resolution in the form of healing and learning to cope. You will survive. You will always remember your precious baby because successful grieving carves a place in your heart where he or she will live forever.

Where to find help

Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support, Inc. Local Chapter

nationalshare.org | 630.933.4234

A national group offering support for parents who have experienced a pregnancy loss, including a national directory of support groups. A local chapter meets at Central DuPage Hospital each month. For more information go to cadencehealth.org/learning-and-support.

Northwestern Medicine Behavioral Health Services

630.933.4000

Grief Watch

griefwatch.com | 503.284.7426

2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97212

Resources for pregnancy loss and support for general loss. Site includes a links index, newsletter articles, an online store and much more.

The Compassionate Friends national chapter

compassionatefriends.org | 877.969.0010

PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60523

A national support group for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who have experienced the death of a child at any age.

Centering Corporation

centering.org | 866.218.0101

7230 Maple Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68134

Centering has some of the best resources for anyone experiencing any type of loss.

The Dougy Center (The National Center for Grieving Children and Families)

dougy.org | 866.775.5683

PO Box 86852, Portland, Oregon 97286

An internationally known model for providing peer support groups for grieving children, teens and families.

Kidsaid

kidsaid.com | P.O. Box 3272, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

A safe place for kids to share and help each other deal with grief about any of their losses. At this site they can share feelings, show their artwork and meet with peers online.



Growth House

growthhouse.org | 415.863.3045

2261 Market Street, #199A, San Francisco, California 94114

Information about life-threatening illness and end of life care as well as a comprehensive collection of reviewed resources on the Internet.

Web Healing

webhealing.com

PO Box 83658, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878

An interactive website for those healing from loss. Has many links to other sites.

A Place to Remember

aplacetoremember.com | 800.631.0973

1885 University Avenue West, Suite 110

St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

Features support materials and resources for those who have been touched by a crisis in pregnancy or the death of a baby.

GriefNet

griefnet.org | P.O. Box 3272, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

An Internet community of people dealing with grief, death and major loss. They have numerous email support groups and two websites.

Helping children understand death

Perhaps a child you know is facing the death of a loved one. Adults often fear that children are too fragile to face the reality of death. Actually, most children are emotionally strong and want to know about death. The truth helps them understand what is real and what is imaginary. Just like adults, children need to be able to feel pain, mourn and grow.

How preschool children perceive death

Very young children understand facts best. They think in specific, concrete terms. When death is explained as "sleep" or "a long trip" they may expect the deceased to wake up or return. They see death as reversible, as it is often shown in cartoons. They may ask, "When will Bobby come back?" You may need to explain again and again, "Bobby is dead. That means he won't ever live with us again. But we will always remember him." They may not realize that death will happen to everyone and every living thing. They may need to ask again and again, "Do girls die? Do doggies die?"

Young children need to ask questions about the death again and again. They need to learn the facts about the death and to make certain the facts have not changed.

Young children are likely to believe their thoughts or feelings have power over others. A child who was angry at his mother before her death may believe he is responsible for the death.

How grade school children perceive death

Most children of this age know that death is permanent. They often are very curious about physical details, and need tangible ways to experience and express grief. Rituals such as visitations, funerals and memorial services are very important.

Children accept their parents' religious beliefs. A belief in life after death generally comforts children if that concept has been part of their religious beliefs before the death. Boys tend to have more difficulty talking about death and showing their feelings.



TELLING A CHILD THAT SOMEONE HAS DIED

Someone emotionally close to the child should be the one to “break the news.”

Choose a location where you will not be disturbed.

Stay with the known facts. If you don’t know the facts, find out before telling the child about the death.

Be concrete—avoid misleading terms like “He’s asleep.”

Avoid phrases like “All wounds heal in time” and “Everything will be all right.” The child cannot comprehend such statements. Say, “This must feel frightening (or confusing).”

Simply be with the child. Allow the child to ask questions and answer as clearly and factually as possible. If you don’t know, say so.

Be quiet and wait. Sometimes it takes a while for children to understand what has happened. The child also may need time to react to the news.

Because of young children's misconceptions about death, you may need to stress that:

The person or the doctors could not prevent the death

The person loved the child

The person was not angry at the child

The person will never come back

The child will be loved; someone will take care of the child

Feelings are all right: sadness, anger and crying are OK

There's nothing wrong with playing and having fun

You can gently reassure children with these concepts even if they have not asked questions about them. Children may not be able to verbalize some of their concerns right away or may feel too embarrassed to ask you.

Common signs of mourning in children

When they learn of the death of a loved one, children have many of the same physical and emotional responses as adults, but children mourn their loss in different ways. Adults need to be aware of these signs of mourning in order to accurately meet the children's needs. When children's mourning behaviors are wrongly perceived as misbehavior, the children's hurt and confusion may deepen.

Anxiety

Children may lose their sense of security and fear another death or loss. Young children may become clingy or demanding.

Vivid memories

Real or fantasized images related to the death can intrude on other thoughts. Memories can show up as dreams or nightmares.

Sleep difficulty

This is very common. If "sleep" is used to describe death, the child may fear sleeping. Children who cannot mourn the death during the day may have more dreams and nightmares about it.

Sadness and longing

Some children cry. Some don't. Some are sad for a long time; some aren't. Some children try to hide their sadness to protect their parents. Children may long for the loved one, become preoccupied with memories or may carry an object that reminds them of the deceased. For a while, this can help the child deal with the pain.

Anger and acting out

Children may become very angry at death, God or adults in general. Or they may be angry at themselves and somehow feel responsible for the death.

Guilt

Some children believe they are responsible for the death. Some may feel guilty because of a thought or deed. Feelings like, "It was my fault" or "I must have been bad" may cause lingering guilt. The child needs to talk about these feelings and needs your help to understand that they are not true.

School problems

The child may learn more slowly than usual due to difficulties in concentrating, memories, sadness and grief.

Physical complaints

Common complaints include headaches, stomach aches and may even include symptoms similar to those of the deceased.

SHOULD CHILDREN ATTEND THE MEMORIAL SERVICE?

Children need rituals. Participating in the funeral or memorial service helps make the death seem more real and encourages the healing that comes from mourning. Children may feel angry or left out if they are not allowed to participate. Of course, no child should be forced to participate if he or she does not want to.

HELPING CHILDREN ATTEND SERVICES

Prepare the child for the experience: What the room looks like, where the body will be viewed, what the casket looks like, how the deceased is lying and that the skin looks different than usual and is cold because the body isn't working anymore. Explain how adults at the funeral may behave: crying or even laughing while reminiscing.

Approaching the casket: If the child wishes, help him approach the casket. Viewing the body helps the child understand what death is and that their loved one is, in fact, dead. Few children later regret viewing the body; many regret not doing so. Most focus on the familiar features of their loved one. Plan the child's first viewing to be in private with a supportive adult. The child's age and maturity are critical factors to consider.

Making decisions: School-aged children can help make some of the decisions about the service for a family member. For example, they may want to choose a song or the burial clothes.

Expressing feelings: Suggest specific ways for children to express their feelings. They might choose to place something in the casket, write a letter or draw a picture. Young children may want to touch the deceased or look under the closed part of the casket to know that the legs are actually there. Older children may value time alone to talk to the deceased. Be responsive and supportive of what the child wants to do. Do not force them to engage in any uncomfortable activity.

Support: The support of a trusted adult is important. A parent who has lost a spouse, child or parent may not be able to provide this support. The parent will need to participate in the event and mourn. The child may need another caring adult who can comfort, answer questions and leave the room with the child if necessary.

Emotions: Encourage the child to talk, draw or play to release emotions after the service.

Misunderstandings: Patiently correct any misunderstandings about death or the service.



As you all begin to heal

Photos and mementos are especially important for children who may fear “forgetting” the person or what the person looked like. Children especially appreciate having a photo of the loved one in an unbreakable frame that they can carry wherever they wish. The child may wish to hold onto memories by continuing traditions that involved the loved one and remembering birthdays and other important dates. These things can help the child remember the love and caring the deceased felt for him.

Does my child need professional help?

Any kind of extreme behavior is a red flag signaling a need for professional counseling: suicide threats; serious destructive acts toward property, people or animals; frequent panic attacks; or substance abuse. Other changes include an inability or unwillingness to socialize, continued denial of the death, feeling responsible for the death or a long-lasting decline in school performance.

Children may need special help if they had a difficult relationship with the person before the death, if there was confusion or misinformation surrounding the death or if verification of the death was delayed.

Books are an excellent tool to help children become aware of and talk about their feelings concerning the death of a loved one. As you read to the child, ask questions. “How is the character feeling?” “Is it true the person died because the child was angry?” The responses often will give you clues about how the child thinks and feels, allowing you the opportunity to correct misunderstandings and suggesting what kind of emotional support to give.

Children identify with the characters in books. Learning that the characters have feelings similar to theirs helps the healing process.

BOOKS TO HELP CHILDREN DEAL WITH DEATH

Adult

Healing a Child's Grieving Heart by Alan Wolfelt
Offers 100 practical, kid-friendly ideas for helping children grieve.

How Do We Tell the Children? by Dan Schaefer and Christine Lyons
Designed for adults to help children better understand and cope when someone dies.

The Journey Through Grief and Loss: Helping Yourself and Your Child When Grief Is Shared by Robert Zucker

The author—a psychotherapist—offers parents important insights into managing their own grief while supporting their grieving children.

BOOKS ABOUT DEATH FOR CHILDREN

4-8 Years

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley
Badger's friends are sad when he dies, but they treasure the legacies he left them.

Bear's Last Journey by Udo Weigelt
A charming picture book that articulates the sense of loss and confusion that children feel when a loved one dies.

Help Me Say Goodbye by Janis Silverman
An art therapy book for children coping with the death of someone they love.

Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs by Tomie dePaola
Young Tommie learns what it is like to be young, old, very old and finally to die by visiting his grandmother and great-grandmother.

Saying Goodbye to Daddy by Judith Vigna
Frightened, angry and lonely after her father is killed in a car accident, Clare is helped through the grieving process by her mother and grandmother.

Tell Me, Papa by Joy and Marv Johnson
A gentle explanation for children about death and the funeral.

The Accident by Carol Carrick
After his dog is hit by a truck and killed, Christopher must deal with his feelings of depression and anger.

The Memory Box by Mary Bahr
When Gramps realizes he has Alzheimer's disease, he starts a memory box with his grandson to keep memories of all the times they have shared.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst
A young boy learns to deal with the death of his cat by remembering all the good things about him.

We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But Had an Angel Instead by Pat Schwiebert
Expresses the excitement and anticipation children feel for their new sibling, and the sudden, life-changing nature of an unexpected loss.

8-12 Years

A Taste of Blackberries by Doris B. Smith
Told from a child's perspective, this is a story about a young boy who loses his friend.

My Daddy Died and It's All God's Fault by Sue Holden
Young Chris tells his story—his feelings of sadness, anger, false guilt and confusion—to help other young people know they are not alone.

Sunflower Promise by Kathleen Maresh Memery
A chapter book for pre-teen children who are experiencing the death of someone close to them.

The Remembering Box by Eth Clifford
Nine-year-old Joshua's weekly visits to his beloved grandmother on the Jewish Sabbath give him an understanding of love, family and tradition, which helps him accept her death.

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief by Marge Heegaard
Allows children to draw, write and color their way to understanding grief and developing coping skills.

Teens

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas by Alan Wolfelt
Speaking directly to teens, each page presents a new idea to help readers recognize the different symptoms of loss and how to release grief in healthy, positive ways.

How It Feels When a Parent Dies by Jill Kremetz
Eighteen young people (ages 7 to 16) describe their feelings when a parent died and how they learned to go on in life.

When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens About Grieving and Healing by Marilyn E. Gootman
Provides teens with important information on understanding grief.

Ways to memorialize your baby

Many bereaved parents may find themselves wondering if there is any way they can personally memorialize the baby that was so precious to them. They may also question whether or not this is a “healthful” thing to do, as well-meaning friends or family members tell them to “put it out of your minds.”

There are many healthful and comforting ways to memorialize a special child. Include family members and friends in plans to memorialize your baby.



A few ways to memorialize your baby

Plant a tree, rosebush or symbol of life—a group can have a memory garden with individual parents planting their own flower

Create a memory book/box for the baby

Engrave a wall plaque or symbol with the baby’s name and date of birth, death or both

Wear a charm with special meaning on your bracelet or necklace

Do something special on the anniversary of the miscarriage, birth or death

Have your baby’s birthstone set in a ring

Make a bouquet of small flowers, dry it in a small shadow box

Donate money or give toys to a charity in memory of your baby

Donate books on perinatal loss or a significant topic to a church or public library

Donate flowers to the church on the anniversary date

Donate to research in memory of your child

Donate to support groups for bereaved parents

Assist in making keepsakes for bereaved parents

Plant a memorial garden



Flowers and their meanings

Grief and loss can be overwhelming, tiring and sometimes surprising in how it affects you and your family. Spring is a wonderful time of renewal in nature and can be a time to plan how you would like to connect to your baby in new ways. The splendor of a garden can bring thoughts of your baby each year as the season turns and beauty blooms.

For indoor or outdoor planting, understanding the meanings of types of flowers may help you decide how you would like to start creating a unique potted array of plants or a garden. A color, shape or meaning may remind you of your special baby, giving distinctive meaning to your space.

The tiny beginnings of these flowers, from seed to sleep, is a reminder that your baby, in his or her small beginning, has bloomed in your heart where you nurture and tend to their memory, just as we tend to our gardens.

For a full list of flowers and their meanings, visit nationalshare.org

Birth and death certificates

Should you wish to obtain a copy of the birth and death certificates for your baby, they will be available from the county Health Department. For a stillborn baby, a fetal death certificate will be available, but there is no birth certificate.

TO REQUEST A CERTIFICATE BY MAIL:

DuPage County

Download a request form from dupagehealth.org/birth-certificates and/or dupagehealth.org/death-certificates, or write a note that includes:

- Your full name
- Your address (where you want the certificate mailed)
- Your baby's name
- Baby's date of birth and/or death
- Born at: Central DuPage Hospital, Winfield, Illinois

Mail your letter and check to:

DuPage County Health Department
111 North County Farm Road
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Include:

- Completed Birth Certificate Request Form
- Copy of the front and back of a photo ID that is current and valid, such as a driver's license, passport or immigration card
- Check or money order
- Birth certificate: \$15 for the first copy, \$2 for each additional copy, plus \$2.95 for postage and handling
- Death certificate: \$12 for first copy, \$4 for each additional copy, plus \$2.95 for postage and handling (Pricing as of 11/1/11; please visit dupagehealth.org to confirm current pricing)

Kane County

Download a request form from co.kane.il.us/coc/records/birth/birth.asp, or write a note that includes:

- Your full name
- Your address (where you want the certificate mailed)
- Your baby's name
- Baby's date of birth and/or death
- Born at: Delnor Hospital, Geneva, Illinois

Mail your letter and check to:

Kane County Clerk
Vital Records
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. B
Geneva, IL 60134

Include:

- Completed Birth Certificate Request Form
- Copy of the front and back of a photo ID that is current and valid, such as a driver's license, passport or immigration card
- Check or money order payable to the Kane County Clerk. \$11 for the first copy and \$4 for each additional copy of the same record
- Death certificate: \$15 for the first copy and \$8 for each additional copy of the same record

TO REQUEST A CERTIFICATE IN PERSON, VISIT:

DuPage County

DuPage County Health Department
111 North County Farm Road
Wheaton, Illinois 60187
630.682.7400, Ext. 7378

Kane County

Kane County Clerk
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. B
Geneva, IL 60134
(630) 232-5950



Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital

25 North Winfield Road
Winfield, Illinois 60190
630.933.1600

Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital

300 Randall Road
Geneva, Illinois 60134
630.208.3000

TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833

cadencehealth.org

