

# Grieving Perinatal Loss

**You're not alone.  
We're here to listen.**

There is no timeline for grief. Knowing there are supports and resources available can give hope as you move through your grief.

The death of a baby is profound. Your grief is not only for your baby, but for the hopes and dreams you had for your baby and your family. This loss is often sudden, unexpected, and traumatic.

The “depth of your grief has less to do with the number of weeks that you were pregnant and more to do with the relationship and attachment you developed with your baby” (A. Wolfelt, 2016).

## Communication:

If you and your partner planned for this baby together, you might notice that your shared grief has created difficulty in your communication with one another. It is important to remember that each person will grieve in a way that is most comfortable for them. Some may have a hard time expressing their feelings and needs in the moment, whereas others may not be as comfortable showing their vulnerability.

Communication is key to supporting one another and maintaining healthy relationships:

- Listen to each other; everyone's experiences will be different (even in shared grief).
- Do not correct or discount emotions that are shared.
- Talk about/through any worries or concerns for the future.
- Talk about your needs and listen openly, without judgment.
- Talk about the changes you have experienced and noticed within yourself and your relationship.
- If you find that you are unable to communicate with your spouse/partner, seeking professional support is an option to consider.

How you are feeling may differ from others who were also connected to your baby.

These differences are okay and expected, as the relationship you had with your baby was unique and so your grief will be as well.

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March of Dimes. (2017, October). Dealing with grief after the death of your baby. Help us improve the health of all moms and babies | March of Dimes. <https://marchofdimes.org/>

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# Emotions

Even though emotions may cause distress, feel overwhelming and can be unexpected at times, they serve an essential purpose during grief. Emotions provide information, giving you a better understanding of where you are in your healing, specifically what you need at certain moments. It is important to remember that “there is no set timeframe for this intense period of loss”

(K. Doka 2016).

## What Can Occur

### Shock and Numbness:

Are typical emotional responses experienced during grief. These emotions naturally occur, as the feelings and pain connected to loss would be too overwhelming to process all at once; however, they will subside over time.

### Sadness, Longing, and Yearning:

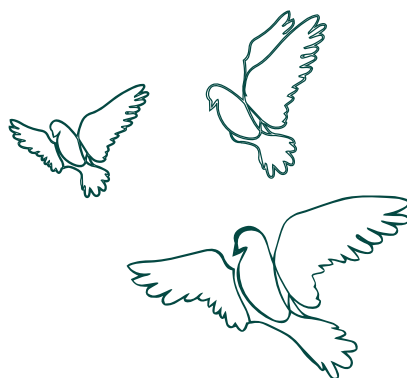
The intensity of these emotions may feel like they will last forever. The first step in dealing with the intensity of these feelings is to give yourself permission to acknowledge that they are occurring, allowing yourself to experience these emotions in “doses” instead of attempting to avoid them. Although painful, these emotions are a natural part of grieving, mourning, and healing.

### Anger:

Plays a vital role at different times in your grief. It is a secondary emotion that provides a sense of control in a world that feels uncontrollable; it is also about protesting what has happened and protesting against injustice. Anger serves a purpose during grief, as it pushes you to complete tasks, reducing and/or providing a break from feeling depressed or helpless. Although a natural response during grief, it is important to release your anger in a way that is safe for yourself and others.

### Powerlessness:

May wave over you during your grief. You may be replaying events in your mind, searching for answers (Why? What if?) in hopes of making sense of this life-altering loss. Or, if it was your partner who was pregnant, you may want to “fix” or take away their pain; however, the loss of a baby cannot be fixed. It is important to remember that pain related to loss is normal and necessary as life has drastically changed.



## Strategies to Support Healthy Grieving and Mourning (A. Wolfelt, 2013)

- **Seek comfort from others.** Spend time together and in places where you feel safe and secure.
- **Connect with others who truly understand your pain.** Reach out and listen to what has helped other parents in grief, and allow yourself to hear their messages of hope.
- **Acknowledge the relationship you had with your baby.** Allow yourself to reflect on the attachment you built, the excitement you felt, and what you did in preparation for your baby.
- **Grieve as a family.** Discuss the differences in your grief, and listen to each other, without judgment.
- **Watch for warning signs that you are avoiding your grief.** Be aware and seek out additional support if you find you are increasingly using substances to treat your pain, isolating yourself from others, if your sleep has been impacted for an extended period of time, or if you are experiencing anxiety most of the time.
- **Prepare yourself for difficult questions.** Being prepared (planning how you want to answer questions) can help you during conversations about your pregnancy, your baby, and your grief.
- **Make use of linking objects.** Objects that are meaningful to you as well as bring comfort and connection to your baby. Place these linking objects in a safe place or create a memory box. You can add items to this memory box: cards, ultrasound photos, items you purchased, or letters you write to your baby.

**We're a part of your story.**