

A Father's Grief

Resolving Differences:

You may have heard that couples always pull together in times of trouble, but that is not always true. Responses to the loss of a baby vary. They may include a resentment of your husband/partner. As the patient, she's getting all of the attention. Medical staff are naturally concerned with her physical and emotional needs; you may feel like a bystander. She may withdraw from you and dwell on the thought of the baby. Be present. Her distance is not because of you, but due to processing differently. You may feel that she needs more from you than you feel you can give right now. Talking with friends, family, or a support group may help. You need to know that it is okay to talk to your wife/partner or to others about your feelings when you are vulnerable. It helps her to make sense if you tell her your needs.



Support for Fathers suffering the loss of a child

To reserve your spot in Heaven's Gain Ministries' on-line support group which meets the 2nd Thursday of each month contact [Kim Kelley @ \(513\)619-0100](tel:5136190100) or email Kim@heavensgain.org

We are sorry that your baby has died. Those of us involved in Heaven's Gain Ministry understand first-hand how devastating the loss of a child can be, and are sorry for all you are going through.

Blessings and healing – Donna and Jim Murphy -HGM Founders

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As a father, this loss may be difficult for you to understand and express – you may feel torn between your own reaction and your need to remain strong for your wife/partner's sake. It is important for you to mourn your baby's death in your own way. Understand that men and women grieve differently, and that's okay.

Your baby has died. As a father, you may be trying to “be strong” or deny your emotions. You may find yourself worrying about how you should react to your grief. Try to let those emotions come, and accept them for what they are, regardless of the expectations of others. Acknowledge the pain, and allow yourself to react to it in a way that feels right to you. What you need now, most of all, is time to heal- physically and emotionally. Allow yourself time.

Grief Responses are Unique:

All losses are individual, and everyone grieves in their own way. Grief can't be measured or compared. Differences in how you and your wife/partner grieve may be hard to understand. She may think you do not care if she doesn't see tears, or if you're not tolerant of hers. You may feel intense guilt when your grief looks differently than your husband/partner's mourning. Recognizing and accepting the fact that you are both grieving in your own way may help. Sharing thoughts and feelings is easier for some couples than others. If you have a difficult time expressing yourself to your wife/partner, then you may consider writing a letter or talking to a close friend.

*Society allows too little time for grieving
and even less time for men.
Allow yourself the freedom and the time for sadness.*

Your attachment to the baby may be entirely different than your wife/partner's. It is not possible for you to have the same physical connection to the child due to hormonal/biological differences. Some fathers feel involved the moment they discover the pregnancy, but some do not feel that attachment until after the birth. No matter the attachment you feel, we recommend that you give your baby a place in the family. Acknowledging that your baby was and still is a part of your family gives the child a place of honor. We suggest you give your baby a name.

What you can do for your wife/partner and baby:

After the loss of a child, the urge to help, to protect, and to fix everything may seem overwhelming; because of this, fathers often feel an intense sense of powerlessness. For your husband/partner the loss has a medical dimension that may cause physical limitations

throughout recovery; during this time, there are many ways you may be able to help. You may offer to make phone calls to keep loved ones informed. You may help care for other children or arrange for other family members or friends to do so. Revisiting the doctor's office your wife/partner frequented throughout her pregnancy usually occurs at the sixth week mark. This is a traumatic experience, and she should not go alone. Ask your wife/partner how you can help. Don't be afraid to make her cry; the tears are from the loss. Allow her tears and sadness. You are not causing the pain and talking and sharing lets her know that you are there.

Goodbye is Never Easy:

It is recommended that you and your wife/partner try to make decisions together at this time, even though you may feel that making the funeral arrangements is a way of protecting your husband/partner. It may be difficult to think of a funeral service for your baby, but it will help with healing and will provide friends and family a way to express their love and support during this time of need. There are several ways to remember your baby. You may choose to hold a formal funeral, or you may take comfort in a private memorial service. Some people find it helpful to write and conduct the service themselves. Involving other children, a pastor, and/or family and friends may be helpful. No matter what, say goodbye in a way that feels right to you. Don't let pressure from family and friends influence your personal decisions. You may regret it later. Do what is meaningful to you.

Ask for Help:

Allow your friends and family to help. Feel free to tell them exactly what they can do to help you. They are looking for any way to comfort you. Ask them to help with childcare, grocery shopping, making meals, or just spending time with you. Reach out to other men who have experienced loss. Seek help through resources for you and your wife/partner. There are people near you who understand how hard this kind of loss is. Try to connect with them. We encourage you to talk with other bereaved parents, healthcare providers, doctors and counselors. Heavens Gain Ministries offers an on-line support group on the 2nd Thursday at 7:00 pm EST of each month. There are several other support groups available, including *Rachel's Gift Star Legacy*, *SHARE or Faces of Loss/ Faces of Hope*. Also, you can check with *Family Loss Baby Advisor/ Loss Doulas International*. Although we do not give medical advice, *Heaven's Gain Ministries'* support services are available before, during and after the birth. Our Baby Loss Family Advisors™/ Baby Loss Doulas® offer non-medical information helping support those suffering pregnancy loss at any stage of pregnancy: miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant loss. We have information to educate you on our website and we welcome calls to answer your questions or to give support.