

## For Friends and Family

WHAT MAY SEEM LIKE EFFORTLESS. EVERYDAY TASKS WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE COUPLE FOR A WHILE. IN MOST CASES. IT'S BETTER JUST TO "DO" RATHER THAN ASK.



Supporting a  
loved one  
experiencing  
the loss of a child

Heaven's Gain Ministries  
6962 Harrison Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45247  
+1 (513) 607-6083  
[heavensgain@heavensgain.org](mailto:heavensgain@heavensgain.org)

We understand your immediate yearning to help your friends of family in need. Here are some very practical ways to help.

**Immediate ways to Help:**

- Use the baby's name
- Ask the parents if they would like help telling others about the baby's death.
- Attend the funeral or memorial service.
- Listen.
- Be patient.
- Acknowledge the loss of the baby as a real death of a child not just a hope or dream.

Please be thoughtful with your words when trying to comfort the couple. Be sure to use the baby's name. Don't just say "the baby."

**To Say:**

- I am so sorry.
- I'm here when you are ready to talk.
- How are you feeling?
- When are your most difficult times?
- I can't imagine how you feel.
- I am hurting for you.
- I am here for you.

**How to offer help:**

- When can I bring a meal?
- What can I pick up at the store for you?
- Would you like me to watch your children so you can have time to yourself?

**Not to Say:**

- Everything happens for a reason.
- I know how you feel.
- Now you have an angel in heaven.
- You can have another baby.
- At least you have other children.
- Time heals all wounds.
- At least you had some time to get to know your baby and get attached.
- Try not to think about it.
- The baby is in a better place.

**Suggestions to pay Respect:**

- Plant a tree in memory of the baby.
- Make a donation to a charity in memory of the baby.
- Give the family a keepsake with the baby's name on it.
- Offer to take them to the cemetery or a memorial; sometimes it's hard to face alone.
- Give a gift certificate to the mother's favorite salon or favorite restaurant.

**Later Ways to Help:**

- With permission, return unused maternity clothes or baby things.
- Bring meals. Pick up groceries. (easy to prepare or already prepared food)
- For the mother, revisiting the doctor's office that she frequented throughout her pregnancy usually occurs at the sixth-week mark. This is a traumatic experience, and she should not go alone.

- Make arrangements to get the other children out of the house. Take them to the movies, bowling, to a park, etc. This will not only help the parents, but it will also be a welcomed distraction for the children.
- Arrange for housekeeping services. This can be expensive, so enlist other friends and family to go in together or take turns doing it yourselves.
- Take over the yard work or simple home maintenance tasks for a period of time, or hire someone else to do it.
- Take a walk with the mother. It will be good for her to get out and get some fresh air and exercise. It will also give her a chance to talk or just listen. If possible, make it a weekly date.
- Take the couple out for coffee or lunch. Pick them up.
- Run errands for the couple, or go with them.
- Invite them to your home for dinner. A change of scenery can be helpful.
- Plan a "girls" or "Guys" night out. This will give them a break and some fresh conversation and fun.
- Send a card. Let them know that you are thinking of them in the recent days of the baby's death and long after.
- Remember the anniversary of the baby's death and the expected due date. Respond by sending cards, email, flowers, etc. Six-month and one-year anniversaries are very painful. Try to mark the one-year anniversary by doing something special for the couple.
- Remember them on the holidays. Regular holidays can be particularly difficult, especially on Mother's Day and Father's Day, even long after the baby's death.
- Gently promote a support group. Heavens Gain Ministries offers an on-line support group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, help can be found through *Family Loss Baby Advisor/ Loss Doulas International*.

After 3-4 months shock completely lifts and this can be a particularly difficult time. Watch for signs of chronic depression: excessive crying, fatigue, and hopelessness. If you feel that they need professional help, don't hesitate to get involved. A good place to start is their physician. There are people who understand how hard this kind of loss is. Encourage the parents to connect with them. It is helpful to talk with other bereaved parents as well as healthcare providers, doctors and counselors.