



Friends & Family

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



Providing *comfort*
during the
greatest of *losses*

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.

What may seem like effortless, everyday tasks will be difficult for the parents for a while. In most cases, it's better just to "do," rather than ask.

Later Ways to Help

- ♥ With permission, return unused and unwanted maternity clothes or baby items.
- ♥ Bring meals.
- ♥ Pick up groceries. (easy-to-prepare or already-prepared food)
- ♥ Offer to take the Angel Mom to postpartum doctor visits. This usually occurs at the six-week mark. For an Angel Mom, revisiting the doctor's office that she frequented throughout her pregnancy 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 welcome distraction for the kids.
- ♥ 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 yard work or simple home maintenance tasks for a period of time or hire someone else to do it.
- ♥ Go take a walk with the Angel Mom. 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.
- ♥ Send a card. Let them know that you are thinking of them in the recent days of their Angel's death and long after.
- ♥ Remember the anniversary of the baby's death. Respond by sending cards, email, flowers, etc.
- ♥ 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.
- ♥ Give a gift certificate to the mother's favorite salon or father's favorite golf course.

To Say or Not to Say

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

To Say:

- ♥ I am so sorry.
- ♥ What do you need?
- ♥ 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.

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 with your baby.
- ♥ It was probably for the best.
- ♥ At least you didn't have 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 their baby in a special place.
- ♥ Make a donation to a charity in memory of their baby.
- ♥ Give a gift of a keepsake with their baby's name for Mom or Dad.
- ♥ Offer to take them to the cemetery or where the ashes were scattered; sometimes it's hard to face alone.

"If you are afraid to mention their baby because you think you might make them sad by reminding them that they died, they didn't forget. You're not reminding them. What you're reminding them of is that you remember that they lived, and that's a great gift."

- Elizabeth Edwards

The 3-4 month frame is when shock completely lifts, and this can be a particularly difficult time. Watch for signs of chronic depression, fatigue, and hopelessness. If you feel that the parents need professional help, don't hesitate to get involved. A good place to start is their physician(s). Six months and one-year anniversary dates are very painful. Try to mark the one-year anniversary by doing something special for the parents.

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Rachel's Gift, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All proceeds go directly into the operation of this organization to support the services and resources provided for families in need and education of hospital staff.

Everyone grieves the loss of a baby differently.

Each person's needs are very different. The support systems we have in place vary greatly. The entire first year is full of many ups and downs and painful "firsts" such as Mother's and Father's Day, various holidays, anniversaries of the baby's due date, and birth/death date. This will be a very challenging year.

If you need additional guidance on how to help your family member or friend in general, or with a particular struggle, we are here for you.

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