



A Father's Grief



Providing *comfort*
during the
greatest of *losses*

a Father's Grief

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 partner's sake. It is important for you to mourn your baby's death in your own way, to understand that men and women grieve differently, and that it'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 and space to grieve. Allow yourself that time.

Goodbye is Never Easy

It is recommended that you and your partner try to make decisions together at this time, even though you may feel like making the funeral arrangements alone is a way of protecting your partner. It may be difficult to think of a funeral service for your baby, but it may help with healing, and will provide friends and family a way to express their love and support in 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. You can wait until your partner is out of the hospital, or you can hold a service in the hospital room or chapel. Some people find writing and conducting the service themselves, involving other children, their pastor, or friends to 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 something that is meaningful to you and your baby's mother.

Suggestions to Help You Say Goodbye

- ♥ Ask for a private place to spend a few minutes alone with your baby
- ♥ Do a reading at the memorial service
- ♥ Plant a tree in memory of your baby in a special place
- ♥ Have a balloon release
- ♥ Help put away things from the baby's room
- ♥ Write a letter to your child

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



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 partner grieve may be hard to understand. She may think you don't care if she doesn't see your tears, or if you're not tolerant of hers.

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 partner, then you may consider writing a letter or talking to a close friend.

Your attachment to your baby may be entirely different than your partner's. Some fathers feel involved the moment they discover the pregnancy, but some do not feel that attachment until after the birth.

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 partner because she's getting all of the attention. As the “patient,” medical staff are naturally concerned about her physical and emotional needs. You may feel like a bystander. She may withdraw from you and dwell on the thought of the baby, or she may need more from you than you feel you can give right now. Talking with friends, family, or a professional may help. You need to know that it is okay to talk to your partner or to others about your feelings when you are vulnerable.

“For me, when Eli died, I had all these feelings that were hard to identify and incorporate - generalized feelings of anxiety and anger and none of the books talked about that. I was a wreck. Finally I realized it all boiled down to powerlessness and fear - that my life was being torn apart and there wasn't a thing I could do about it. After that realization, it seems like I settled down and coped a lot better.”

- John, a father from *Empty Cradle, Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby* by Deborah L. Davis

Ask for Help

Ask your friends and family for 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 to spend time with you. Please visit our website for additional support and resources.

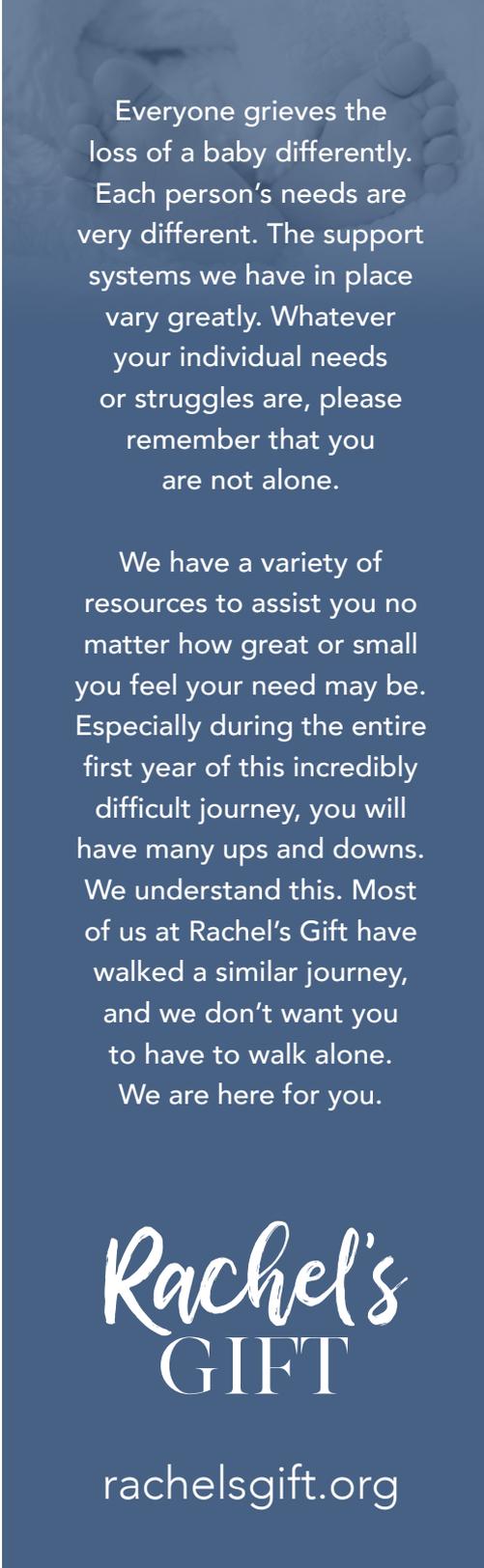
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Rachel's Gift, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All proceeds go directly into the operation of this organization to support the services and resources provided for families in need and education of hospital staff.



Everyone grieves the loss of a baby differently. Each person's needs are very different. The support systems we have in place vary greatly. Whatever your individual needs or struggles are, please remember that you are not alone.

We have a variety of resources to assist you no matter how great or small you feel your need may be. Especially during the entire first year of this incredibly difficult journey, you will have many ups and downs. We understand this. Most of us at Rachel's Gift have walked a similar journey, and we don't want you to have to walk alone. We are here for you.

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