



922 Highway 81 East
PMB 153
McDonough, GA 30252

www.RachelsGift.org

24 Hour Hotline: 470.278.1956

Fax: 888.290.4487

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.

A Grandparent's Grief



Rachel's Gift

Providing comfort during the greatest of losses

As a grandparent, your grief is two-fold. You have just been through the devastating experience of losing a grandchild. This loss is not in the natural order. You are in shock and feeling profound sadness at the loss of your grandchild. At the same time, you are watching your child experience one of the most unimaginable situations in life, the death of one's own child. The helpless feeling of not being able to dry the tears and kiss away the hurt can consume you. The pain your child feels today cannot just be hugged away.

“You want to take away the hurt and take it on yourself, which is impossible.” —a grandfather

Although you may feel the need to take charge of your child's life at the time of a loss, most agree that the best role a grandparent can take is a supportive one. For example, making decisions for the parents, such as funeral arrangements or putting away the child's things, is often an important step in the healing process for the parents, and it is helpful for them to have a part in it. It is suggested that a grandparent guide decision making instead of taking charge.

As a grandparent, you have an important role at this time. You will always have some influence over your children, no matter how old they become. But you still need to recognize your child's need to make it through this experience in his or her own way.

***“We hurt twice.
We hurt for our
children because
they are our children.
Plus, we hurt for the
grandchild we lost.”***

—a grandmother

Your child may need some guidance about seeing and holding the baby. Some parents do so eagerly and may ask for this as their right as parents. Others may feel they cannot hold the baby, or feel unsure if they would like to. If they see the grandparents cradling the baby, it may give them the “permission” they need to do so. Although many are comforted by those tender moments together, not every parent or grandparent desires to hold or see the baby. If you wish to hold and see the baby, please ask.

Phases of Grief

1. Shock:

The parents will be stunned one minute, and the next feel intense panic, distress, or anger. They may feel that the situation is unreal or not happening to them.

2. Searching and Yearning:

The parents will yearn for their angel baby and search for the cause of their loss. The placement of blame is present at this stage, whether it's on others or themselves. The parents may be angry at just about everyone: God, doctors, nurses, friends, and you. They maybe comforted by caressing objects that would have been the size of the baby.

3. Confusion and Disinterest:

The parents often talk about having a feeling of emptiness, lifelessness, and hopelessness. They have little to no interest in activities they once enjoyed. They may neglect their personal appearance and daily tasks.

4. Periods of Feeling Normal Again:

The parents may begin to branch out again to friends and activities. They may have discovered true peace and renewed energy for life.

Things grandparents should not say:

Please think before making these kinds of comments. They add additional guilt and pain to the parents, as well as cause a rift in your relationship. Your child needs your comfort the most.

- “We thought you got pregnant too soon.”
- “Maybe you shouldn't have been working so hard.”
- “I knew all that running while you were pregnant wasn't good for the baby.”
- “I told you that you weren't eating right or taking care of yourself.”

Things grandparents should say:

- Refer to the angel baby as your grandchild and consider including the angel baby in conversations and your count of grandchildren. This will ease the parents' fear of the child being forgotten or somehow being erased from the memories of the family.
- Use your grandchild's name.

You will always have memories, although brief, of your angel grandchild. Try to keep room in your heart for the infant who has died, even as new ones are born.