

Grieving for Your Baby

A Baby touches our lives for a moment,
but changes our hearts forever.

Bethel Funerals

Compassion . Peace . Hope



Grieving for Your Baby

The death of a baby creates huge emotional responses for a much anticipated life. Hope for the future can seem lost and any life ahead seems empty. It can be described as a deep, helpless, profound, wrenching pain.

Our hope is that we can enable you to move through this time of loss and grief with as much comfort and care as possible.

You may have recognised your baby's birth and death with a formal Funeral Ritual. If you did not have a Funeral you may like to share in a ritual at a later stage in your journey, to honour your baby. It may be important to consider naming your baby as this gives you a way of acknowledging their existence and place in your family.



What is grief?

Grief has no hard and fast rules, time or calendars by which to work.

Grief can feel like a very lonely and isolating time. These are some quotes from people who have experienced the loss of a baby:

“You grieve for a person you never knew, and for a relationship that ended before it really began. You grieve for the loss of your future as a parent of the baby who has died. Sometimes it is difficult to grieve for the baby, as there is no tangible evidence of your baby’s existence. There is usually no baby to see, hold, touch, no funeral and no memories to keep.”¹

“There is often a feeling of a loss of control and a feeling of helplessness as the parents are unable to ‘protect’ their baby as they had imagined. It is often very easy for disappointment to spill over into feelings of guilt. Some mothers of premature babies feel guilty that they didn’t carry their baby to full-term, they didn’t have a normal labour and aren’t able to look after the baby after birth. It is not your fault. Support from medical staff, family and friends is crucial at this time.”²

Common Feelings Experienced

- Deep sense of helplessness and pain
- Your preparations and anticipation seem pointless
- Shock, disbelief, sadness, anger, blame, protest, guilt or fear
- Loss of hope for the anticipated life of your baby
- Unfairness for your situation



“Grief is an important part of the process, with grief comes an acceptance of how things are rather than how things could have been, which can help people find some inner peace with their situation.”³

“The intense pain of experiencing a stillbirth comes from the change from the bubbling feeling of anticipation to an intense blow of disbelief and shock.

A parent-to-be waiting for that moment to become a parent, becomes a parent without a child”.⁴

Medical Definitions

Miscarriage

A loss prior to 20 weeks of pregnancy is medically recognised as a miscarriage. Sometimes this loss can be unrecognised publicly and thus can compound the parent’s loss with lack of recognition. In Australia, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages formally recognises a death from a gestation period of 20 weeks onward.

Stillbirth

Stillbirth is when a baby has matured beyond 20 weeks in the womb, but does not survive the birth process for varying reasons, whether they are full term or earlier.

Neonatal Loss

This is the death of a baby who is born alive and dies shortly after birth. The baby may have lived for a few days, a few hours or only minutes.

Infant Death

Infant death is the death of a child up to the age of twelve months.

For the grandparents

- Acknowledge that grandparents are grieving the loss of their grandchild and grieving the loss for their own child. This is a double loss for them.
- They see the loss of the continuation of the life cycle - that their family will live on after they have gone.
- They don’t have pictures to share with other grandparents.
- They lose the opportunity to enjoy their grandchildren.
- Your family may grieve differently than you.





Caring for yourself

Some suggestions that may be helpful as you grieve:

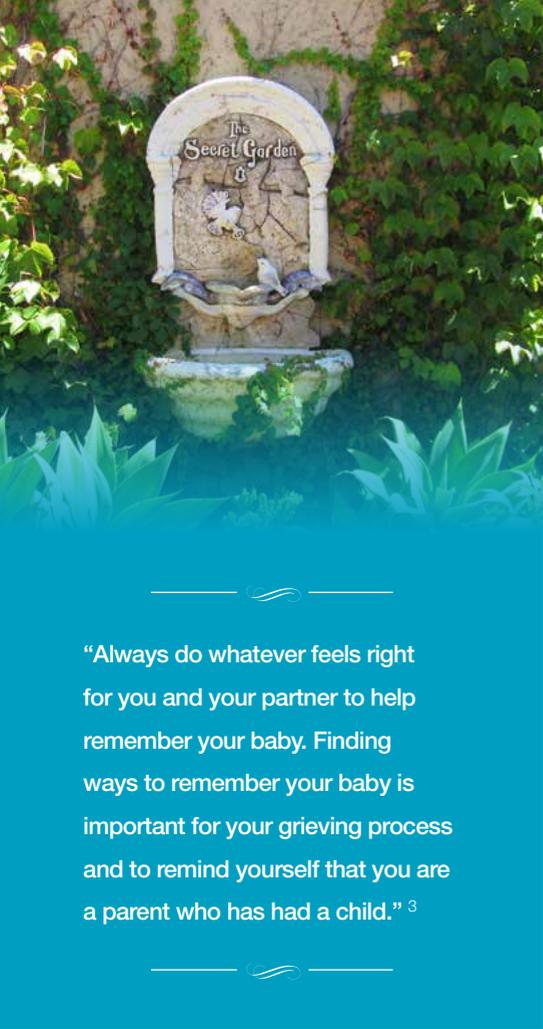
- Find a trusted person who is a good listener to share your feelings with
- Deal with what you can manage, one step at a time
- Find a 'safe' place to cry
- Acknowledge your parenthood
- Remember that a mother and father can, and usually do, grieve in different ways. It is important to share your feelings together and accept how the other is grieving
- Look after your physical health and wellbeing – stay rested and eat well
- You may try to protect each other but this can be misinterpreted
- Make sure you keep communicating
- Disregard thoughtless comments from other people – you do not have to explain yourself or how you feel
- Recognise that the miscarriage or

stillbirth may not be the result of something you did or did not do

- Ask for help from family and friends – meals, cleaning, babysitting etc.

Respect that each of you may have different ideas, so keep talking, even though this can be hard at times.

We cannot always understand or know how to accept situations, but we can move on in our life journey without fully understanding or having all the answers.



Making Memories & Moving Forward

Making Memories

- Talk or write about your baby and your feelings
- Make a special garden, a place of remembering your baby
- Create a memorial at the Cemetery or where your baby's ashes are placed
- Create a memory box or a photo album of your baby
- Write letters to your baby and letters to your other children as they grow
- Create a Family Tree including your baby
- Make a cross stitch, photo frame, ceramic shoe or tile in memory of your baby
- On anniversaries and birthdays – light a candle, buy a gift and give to a charity in memory of your baby, hold a memorial service, donate flowers to a hospital, place flowers on the grave or visit the crematorium with flowers

“Always do whatever feels right for you and your partner to help remember your baby. Finding ways to remember your baby is important for your grieving process and to remind yourself that you are a parent who has had a child.”³

Moving Forward On Your Journey

- Don't rush into any practical decisions, such as what to do with your cot, the baby's clothes etc.
- Should we have another child? Take your time, listen to your doctor, listen to each other, then decide
- It may be helpful to speak with a counsellor, either together or on your own

It's important to share your story and feelings with others so you don't feel alone. Hearing others' stories helps us feel part of the larger world, rather than becoming isolated.

Those who grieve are those who love. Your grief is a tribute to your love for your baby.

Psalm 56:8

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

Matthew 11:28

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

References

- 1 Rachel Stanfield-Porter & The Bonnie Babes Foundation "Small Miracles: Coping with Infertility, Miscarriage, Still Birth and Premature Birth" Hachette, Australia, 2000. P 54
- 2 Stanfield-Porter & The Bonnie Babes Foundation ibid P 94
- 3 Stanfield-Porter & The Bonnie Babes Foundation ibid P 38
- 4 Stanfield-Porter & The Bonnie Babes Foundation ibid P 71
- 5 Stanfield-Porter & The Bonnie Babes Foundation ibid P 199

May you find God's peace and comfort through this time of grieving and adjusting to your loss.



Need more?

If you are in need of further information or help you are invited to take a look at our website: www.bethelfunerals.com.au and go to the 'Grief Care' tab. Here you will find other resources as well as contacts for recommended counselling services.

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MITCHAM Office & Chapel

2d Cochrane Street,
Mitcham VIC 3132
03 9873 8866
info@bethelfunerals.com.au

CARRUM DOWNS Office & Chapel

620 Frankston-Dandenong Road,
Carum Downs VIC 3201
03 8787 7255
info@bethelfunerals.com.au

BRISBANE Office & Chapel

2998 Logan Road,
Springwood QLD 4127
07 3219 9333
infoqld@bethelfunerals.com.au

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