

Helping Children Cope

Losing a baby will not only be difficult on you and your partner, but also for your other children. If you have children at home, you will need to prepare how to help them through their own grieving process. The most important thing is to be honest with your children. It's natural for you to want to protect and shield them from pain, but it's also necessary to give them correct information. If you leave too much up to the imagination by telling half-truths or using unhealthy explanations, your child will feel more confused. Consider the ages and maturity of your children, expanding details for the older children and simplifying them for the younger ones. The National Share office has produced a wonderful brochure called [Children's Grief](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_children.pdf) <http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_children.pdf> that gives some detail as to how children, from toddlers to teens, comprehend death and ways to help.

If you already have created a structure in your family about how to deal with death, this is a great time to put those beliefs into action. Through religion, culture or family tradition, you can discuss what happens at death and how to mourn the loss of a loved one. This may be the first time your children have experienced death closely. Use the experience as a teaching tool; sharing your family values, beliefs and knowledge will be a vital life lesson for your child. Through this process, you and your family will be able to create rituals to honor your baby and unite as a family as you mourn. The grieving process does not have to be divisive; it can allow you opportunities to connect with family members in a unique way. If you have not yet created this kind of structure or not sure how to proceed, you can start now or talk with someone who can help you. Find support through your local clergy, teachers, medical professionals, counselors, family and friends.

Tips to help children:

- Give a stuffed animal or memento (sometimes provided by the hospital) to your child so she can always have something tangible to remember your baby.
- Read these [children's books](http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/resources.html) <<http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/resources.html>> or find other books talking about death and heaven. If you can't find something that fits your situation, write/draw your own.
- Allow your child to express himself in whatever way he feels comfortable. If he isn't comfortable talking about his emotions, encourage him to journal or even draw how he is feeling.
- Let your child see you cry. It will let her know it is okay to be sad and express emotion. It will also open the door for her to talk about her own emotions anytime, anywhere.

- Validate your child's emotions. Just as you need validation through every stage of your grief, your child needs it too. Listen and work hard to understand, even if it seems too difficult because you are mourning too.
- Talk to family members, friends and teachers to explain what your child is going through. They can be extra sensitive to your child's needs and help you determine if he might need more help.
- Include your children in any memorial services, visits to the cemetery, etc. Bring them to the [Walk to Remember](http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/events.html) <<http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/events.html>> and let them release a balloon for your baby.
- Remind your children how much you love them! Help them understand even though you are sad you lost the baby, you are so grateful to have them in your life. Sometimes, children can feel like too much emphasis is put on the deceased sibling and come to resent it. Even though you are mourning, make sure your focus is still centered on the child you have with you. Spend quality time with her and do activities to celebrate what you do have: each other.