

Tips for Family and Friends

It can be terribly difficult to see someone you love go through a pregnancy loss. What are ways you can help?

- Allow the parents to grieve. Everyone handles pregnancy loss differently. Even if the mother was only a few weeks along and miscarried, she still deserves the chance to mourn the loss of her pregnancy.
- Allow yourself to grieve as well. You undoubtedly looked forward to this addition in your life and you will not only mourn for the parents, but also for the unborn child. The tips for [grieving parents](http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/resources.html) <<http://www.shareparentsofutah.org/resources.html>> might prove helpful for your own mourning process or if you're a grandparent, there's a wonderful brochure from National Share called [Grandparent's Grief](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_grandparents.pdf) <http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_grandparents.pdf>.
- Avoid philosophizing and clichés. Things not to say include: "You'll have more children," "your child is in a better place," "you already have children," "you weren't that far along." It's so easy to want to "fix" things with a cheery comment, but even though they may be well-intentioned, they seldom help.
- Offer a simple, "I'm sorry," "I love you" or even, "I don't know what to say" when words are at a loss.
- Don't forget Dad. The father might seem to be doing well, but remember he is not only grieving the loss of his baby, but trying to keep it together and in control for his wife/family. Take him to lunch once he's back at work or make a call, just to him, to see how he's doing. Read the National Share brochure called [Father's Grief](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_father.pdf) <http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/docs/trifold_father.pdf> for more insight in what he's going through.
- Try to make life easier on the grieving family. Even the most simple tasks are difficult to people in mourning. Step in to do housework, lawn care or grocery shopping. Offer to baby sit older children. Even a gift of paper plates and a pizza place gift card can be very helpful, so the couple doesn't need to worry about dishes or dinner for a little while.
- Make specific offers of help. "Can I help with anything?" is very overwhelming to someone in grief. Help ease the burden of decision-making by doing it for them (i.e. "I want to bring over bagels for breakfast tomorrow morning at 9 AM"). If that feels too bold, give two choices (i.e. "I can bring dinner over tonight or take your kids to the park afternoon tomorrow. Which would you prefer?") If they initially turn you down, don't give up; offer again in a couple of weeks.

- Avoid comparing tragedies. Sharing stories can be comforting, but not when it feels like you're trying to "one-up" the loss. Don't say, "Oh, you only lost your baby at 12-weeks, my cousin lost a baby full-term." or "I know someone who has had 5 miscarriages, one isn't so bad." Again, each loss is extremely personal and deserves to be treated with sensitivity.
- Acknowledge the pregnancy and the loss; never ignore what happened. Some people feel it might be too painful if they bring it up, so they avoid talking about the experience altogether. However, this can be even more painful for the bereaved parents; feeling like no one is validating the existence of their baby or recognizing the loss.
- Do exactly what you'd do for anyone else who experienced a death in the family. Send a card, flowers or gift offering condolences.
- Recognize the child as a part of your family unit. For example, stillbirths can be included on genealogy/family trees with a name and the word stillbirth marked next to it. Some extended families hang an ornament on the Christmas tree in honor of the baby.
- Remember anniversaries or birthdays by making a simple phone call to the bereaved parents. If you're wary of bringing it up in conversation or to afraid you'll upset the parent, send a card.
- Keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.
- Be patient; true healing may take a long time.