



Talking to Your Children about Miscarriage or Still Birth

There are many factors to consider when your family suffers a loss as a result of miscarriage or still birth. You may be managing your physical recovery while grieving and also helping your children make sense of this loss. Though your family did not get enough time with the baby you were preparing for, there is much to grieve. A Haven is with you.

Early Term Miscarriage

Sharing the news of a miscarriage with your children, especially young children, can be difficult because they may struggle to understand a loss that they cannot see. ***Know that it is normal for young children to ask about and need to be told about a death or loss multiple times.*** This is their way of making sense of the permanence of the loss. ***For older children or teens, you can share with them that miscarriages can be sad and scary, but they are also not an uncommon experience for many families.*** It is okay for them to see you feel sad and to share your feelings of grief and disappointment that this baby will not be joining your family.

It is also possible that you had not yet shared the news of your pregnancy with your children, but will still be grieving in a way that is visible to them. If you had not yet shared the news of your pregnancy, consider how it will feel for you to have to answer your child's questions about the loss frequently. ***If you decide not to tell your child(ren) about the pregnancy, that is okay.*** There is no right or wrong. You can simply decide to share that Mommy is feeling sick and/or sad right now, but will feel better in time. Either way, reaffirm for your child that they are safe even though you may feel sad right now. Ask other trusted caregivers to spend special, extra time with your child if possible.

Late Term Loss and Stillbirth

Returning home from the hospital without your baby will be incredibly painful for you and your children who are waiting for you at home. Prepare your children before you leave the hospital that you are coming home without the baby, that you will feel sad, and that it is okay for them to feel however they are feeling. ***Consider who you want to be home with you at the time of your arrival,*** arranging for people you and your children trust and are comfortable with if possible.





Talking about Miscarriage or Stillbirth (continued)

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Remind your children that though your baby did not come home from the hospital, ***you are still dealing with the physical recovery from childbirth and will be limited in what you can do.*** This will help them feel less unsettled if they see that you are not able to move around or lift and hold them as you usually do.

Know that you can grieve deeply for things that have not yet happened. Following the death of your baby, you will grieve the entire life and future that you had envisioned for that child and their role in your family. Your children will do the same. Ask what they were excited about and what they are sad that they will not get to experience with this baby. As you are able, share with them the things you had been hoping for and are now grieving.

There is no rush to make decisions at this time. ***If you had set up a nursery for your baby, you can decide in time what you would like to do with that room and the items in it.*** If you feel a need to put away baby items that are too painful to have out in your home, offer for your children to choose some items that had been intended for the baby that they would like to keep as mementos. Trusted friends or family members may be able to help you clear the baby's room or take away items you no longer want to have at home.

Memorializing Your Baby Together

Your baby is a part of your family's story. How you choose to honor your little one and their role in your family is a personal choice that each family will make for themselves. Young children may benefit from a transitional object that can physically represent the baby that they can cuddle and be close to when they need. Children and teens of all ages may be comforted by using the baby's name and talking openly about milestones that the child would have reached as it grew older - remember that grief lasts for a lifetime, and children will re-experience grief as they grow and gain developmental understanding of the loss. ***If it is painful to hear your baby's name or think about their loss, consider who can be a support to you as you support your children.*** As you move forward in the long term, think about how you would like to answer social questions like "How many children do you have?" ***You may find that having different answers for different audiences feels right for you.***

Many families may choose to include their baby into family holiday traditions or to honor their birthday each year - ***when the time feels right, include your children in conversations about how to memorialize this baby or include them in family traditions.*** There is no right or wrong way to do this - some families will want a lot of traditions while some others may prefer a simple ritual or two.



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