

Helping Friends and Family Understand Grief

When your baby has died, the people around you may want to help but may not know what to say or do.

You may not know what you need either and that's okay.

Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is tell the people around you what feels helpful and what doesn't.

You don't have to make everyone feel better

Your friends and family may feel uncomfortable seeing you in pain. They may want to find the right words or make things better. But grief isn't something that needs to be fixed. Sometimes you simply need someone to sit with you, listen and acknowledge that your baby matters.

You don't need to reassure other people that you're okay.

Tell people what you need

It can help to be specific.

Instead of saying:

"I'm struggling."

You could say:

"I'd really like someone to sit with me today."

"I don't need advice, I just need you to listen."

"I'd like to talk about my baby."

"Please don't ask me how I am unless you're able to listen to the answer."

"I'd rather you check in with me by text."

"I'd really appreciate some practical help at the moment."

"I might not reply straight away, but please don't think that means I don't want you to contact me."

Practical help can make a difference

When you're grieving, everyday tasks can feel overwhelming.

You could ask someone to:

- Cook a meal
- Do some shopping
- Walk the dog
- Help with household jobs
- Give you a lift to an appointment
- Sit with you
- Make you a cup of tea
- Help with paperwork or practical arrangements
- Accompany you somewhere you find difficult

You don't have to do everything yourself.

What can friend and family do?

You may want to share the following comments and suggestions with the people around you.

Please remember my baby: My baby was and will always be, important to me. Please don't be afraid to mention my baby's name if I have chosen one. I may want to talk about my baby, look at photographs or share memories.

Please keep checking in: Grief doesn't end after the funeral, hospital discharge or first few weeks. Sometimes the hardest part comes when

everyone else has returned to normal. A simple message such as: "I'm thinking of you and your baby today" can mean a great deal to me.

Please don't compare my grief: Everyone experiences loss differently. Please don't tell me how I should be feeling or suggest that I should be "moving on".

Please don't try and find a positive: You don't need to explain why this happened or tell me that everything happens for a reason. You can simply say: "I'm so sorry. I'm here with you."

Setting Boundaries

Remember it's okay also to set boundaries.

You can say:

"I know you're trying to help, but I'd rather not talk about that."

"Please don't tell me I need to stay positive."

"I'm not ready to talk about another pregnancy."

"I need some space today, but I'll let you know when I'm ready."

"Please don't avoid talking about my baby."

Setting a boundary isn't being unkind. It is a way of looking after yourself.

You can change your mind

What feels helpful one day might feel overwhelming the next.

You might want company today but need to be alone tomorrow.

You might want to talk about your baby one day and not be able to say their name the next.

That's okay.

Let the people around you know that your needs may change.

An example message to send to someone

"I know you want to support me and I really appreciate that. I'm not always going to know what I need, and what helps me may change from day to day. Sometimes I need someone to listen, sometimes I need practical help and

sometimes I just need some space. Please don't feel that you need to fix things or find the right words. Just being there, remembering my baby and checking in with me means a lot."

Remember

You don't have to carry your grief alone.

Letting someone know how they can support you isn't asking too much.

Sometimes people simply need a little guidance to know how to stand beside you.

Your baby matters, your grief matters and **you matter too.**