



## pregnancy loss

**Jan Bond** MCouns. MPACFA; MQCA (clinical)

**Before reading this fact sheet**, it is important to note that, not everyone who loses a baby to miscarriage will be significantly affected by their loss. Also, those who have terminated a pregnancy for medical or social reasons will differ in their reactions, with some people experiencing intense grief or a delayed grief reaction at sometime during their lives. The severity of the loss depends on circumstances, (social, psychological and spiritual) of the individual at that particular moment in time.

**All too often friends**, family and the greater community minimise the grief of parents' whose baby has died. Comments such as, 'you will have another', 'it wasn't meant to be', 'it was God's will', 'there must have been something wrong', are not helpful and can exacerbate feelings of isolation. When your baby died, life as you experienced it during your pregnancy has changed, and the hopes and dreams of becoming parents to this child have been shattered. You will find yourself assaulted by conflicting emotions which will ebb and flow in no specific order. No two people grieve the same and you will be doing yourself an injustice by comparing yourself to your partner or others. Grieving is *natural, normal* and *necessary*. As you work through your grief, you will learn to live healthily with your loss and find a safe place in your life to keep precious memories of your pregnancy and baby. Take time to communicate your feelings and needs to significant others, and give yourself permission to seek professional help if required. Sometimes finding a safe place to talk to someone who is impartial can be helpful.

### Working through your grief

- Avoid making major life changes for the first few months.
- Take a list of questions about this pregnancy or subsequent pregnancies to your General Practitioner or Specialist Obstetrician for discussion.
- Send notes to family and friends informing them of the birth and death of your baby.
- Keep a journal, write poetry or write a letter to your baby.
- Plan ahead for significant dates, e.g., birth date, due date, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Easter. Sometimes just lighting a candle in memory of your baby on these days can bring comfort.
- Try to establish some routine in your day and go to bed around the same time each night.
- Drink lots of water, maintain healthy eating and exercise.
- Discuss your feelings and needs with friends and family. Don't be afraid to ask for help or accept offers. Be specific about what you need and how you want to be supported.
- Consider contacting a pregnancy loss organisation, a support group, or an online forum. If you have spiritual beliefs, you may wish to seek counsel with a religious minister.
- Find some time for self-care, beginning with small steps e.g., short walk on the beach or park, time out with your partner or a friend, massage, pedicure etc.
- Remember it's ok and healthy to have some fun, sing, dance and laugh. This doesn't mean you are dishonouring your baby (feeling guilty about doing these things is also *normal*).

### Creating Memories

- Purchase or make a memory box large enough to keep pregnancy indicator stick, photos, birth records, wrist bands, lock of hair, ultrasound pictures, medical reports etc.
- Create a scrapbook. A number of scrapbooking stores run classes specifically for memory albums.
- Choose a name for your baby, or name a star in memory of your child.
- Plant a tree or shrub in memory of your son or daughter.
- Paint or draw a picture of your baby or have a professional artist paint or sketch from a photo or description of your child.
- Buy a piece of jewellery or keepsake. Some parents choose a tattoo in memory of their baby.

However your pregnancy ended, it is your journey and yours alone. Do not judge yourself harshly. You did the best you could at the time. If you find yourself struggling to cope, contact a counselling telephone line, support group, a counselling health professional or spiritual leader for support.

**Jan Bond** is a Clinical Counsellor in Private Practice on the Gold Coast, Queensland. Specialising in Grief and Loss, Jan offers those who are grieving a warm, safe and non-judgemental environment in which they can share their loves, lives and losses. Phone: 0411 888 628 Email: [jan@janbond.com.au](mailto:jan@janbond.com.au)