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The Loss of a Child

The death of a child is possibly the most difficult loss of all. The bond between a parent and child often begins as soon as the couple knows they are pregnant. How to deal with it all is a big question. Whether your child was a baby, toddler, or adolescent, you must work through the same emotions and not always at the same time.

Losing a child will affect couples and may alter your feelings toward each other. After the death of a child, parents often expect their reactions to be similar because they are suffering the same loss. Because each person faces the loss differently, you may find it difficult to communicate. It is important to set aside time to be alone together to talk, cry or simply hold each other. Finding a way to support each other, and respect your needs as individuals will help you through this difficult time.



= glossary definition

You will need to go through the grief process. Most likely you are experiencing a mix of emotions including shock or denial, depression, anger and guilt. It is extremely common to be preoccupied with the circumstances of your child's death, or you may have dreams or nightmares about seeing your child. You may feel terribly guilty simply for living when your child has died. Or perhaps you feel guilty because you feel you should have prevented your child's death.

Common Complaints

Some common complaints you may experience include:

- loss of concentration,
- excessive fatigue,
- inability to sleep or sleeping too much,
- loss of appetite or overeating,
- knot or emptiness in pit of stomach,
- headaches,
- stomach aches,
- chest pains or feeling like you cant catch your breath,
- digestive disorders (indigestion, nausea, diarrhea),
- feeling weak or faint or
- slow speech or movement.

Good nutrition, exercise, time and patience can help to alleviate many of these conditions.

Your Other Children

Your other children will experience the loss of their sibling in different ways depending on their age, maturity and ability to understand. Even small children sense the profound grief of parents and other family members. Answering questions, talking about the death and understanding how your child/ren grieve is important to their grief process. The following resources may be a good place to start in understanding the ways in which siblings understand death and experience grief:

- [Experiencing the Death of a Sibling as a Child](#)
- [Experiencing the Death of a Sibling as an Adolescent](#)
- [Experiencing the Death of a Sibling as a College Student](#)
- [Loss of an Adult Sibling](#)

Grandparents

Grandparents find themselves in the unique position of mourning the loss of a beloved grandchild while trying to figure out how best to support their children. One support group dedicated to helping grandparents with the stress and grief after losing a grandchild is [Alliance of Grandparents, a Support in Tragedy \(AGAST\)](#).

The Future

Even when you think that you are learning to live with the loss of your child, dates of special family-oriented events, birthdays, holidays, death dates, Mother's Day, Father's Day, school beginnings and endings may cause you additional pain and grief. It is a normal response to experience the recurrence of grief related feelings with the loss of a child. Such a loss is ongoing and significant. A trigger event might be something that is completely unexpected: hearing a child's laughter. When chronic loss is triggered, getting support is very important.

As you have probably already observed, the death of a child is a very uncomfortable subject for most people. It is unsettling when death is so out-of-order. It is also very frightening to provide empathy. After all, who would want to imagine the death of their own child? Friends and family often don't know what to say. Therefore, looking to those who have had the same experience may be useful and comforting. It is comforting to know that parents can again find meaning and purpose in life after the death of a child.

Finding Support

- Advocacy groups, in which parents have lost a child, are a good source of support (See [Helpful Resources](#)). People there will have experience and can show you how to live with the temporary "insanity" in as sane a way as possible.
- Family, friends and co-workers may want to support you in physical and emotional ways. Drawing support from others is important to the healing process.
- Your doctors and nurses can often direct you to services, support groups and programs that may be beneficial to you and your family.

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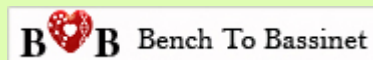
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Last updated: June 2, 2010 10:42 AM