

# When Your Grandchild Dies

Grandparents, like parents, are excited about the news that a baby is expected. This excitement grows as you wait for the arrival of your grandchild.

## Double Sorrow

As grandparents, when a grandchild dies your pain is doubled. You are not only dealing with the pain and grief your child is suffering, you also must deal with your own loss. Many times, grandparents feel helpless because they cannot take away their child's suffering. Their child is grown, with children of his/her own, but the instinct to protect and make their child feel better cannot be turned off. There is not a lot grandparents can do for their child, except let him/her know that you feel their pain and are hurting also.

## Grief Stages

Grandparent's grief may be more troublesome if it is long distance. Telephone calls and letters can be a poor substitute when a child sounds so sad and they are not close enough to do anything for them.

As the grandparents of the baby who died, you should expect to go through the stages of mourning. Feelings of anger and of being cheated of the joy of a long awaited grandchild are common. Bereaved grandparents will progress through the stages of grief at their own pace. Your loss will never be forgotten, but it will become less painful over time.

## Give Your Child Room

This is a difficult time for families because everyone's emotions are volatile. Each person, including grandparents, needs to think before making comments that could add guilt or pain during this stressful time. These comments may cause a rift just when your child needs the most comfort.

At this time of loss, you as grandparents may feel a need to take charge in your child's life to ease some of their pain. But it is best for you to just be supportive. The parents must make their own decisions and work through their grief in their own way.

## Remembering

Sometimes, grandparents don't know how to offer support. They find it too painful to listen. Ask the parents what you can do to be helpful. Sometimes, taking part in acknowledgements of the baby's life, attending the memorial/funeral, or lighting a candle or planting a tree can help.

You must always keep room in your heart for memories of the grandchild you lost just as you do for your living grandchildren.