

What Can You Tell Them?

Communicating with friends, relatives and co-workers about your loss and how they can offer comfort can be difficult. Sometimes, a close friend at work may be able to communicate the situation of your loss to those you work with, to prevent an uncomfortable scene when you return to work. If you do not wish to leave this sensitive communiqué to someone else, you may consider writing a letter/email to those you work with to let them know what to expect when you return. Often, a similar letter to friends and relatives is a good idea, especially if it is still difficult to express yourself verbally.

Here is a list of suggestions for friends, family members and especially co-workers that will help you in your grief. These suggestions also come printed on Care Cards and are available at no cost to you, by contacting Christine Scott at the WNY PBN, Inc. 836-6460 ext 117.

1. One of the most comforting things to say is “I’m sorry.” This lets us know that you are thinking of us and recognize our pain.
2. Remember to ask about both parents. We both lost our baby, and though we may express our grief differently, we are both hurting.
3. Refer to our baby by name. It lets us know you remember, that our baby touched your life and is not forgotten.
4. It is okay to ask how we are doing. Our baby is always with us; you are not “bringing up” anything that’s not already there. We will let you know if we can’t talk about it, and it may just be that time or day (so don’t think you can never bring it up again).
5. Respect that everyone grieves differently and in their own time. Don’t try to put a time line on our grief or expect us to “get over it.” Grieving the death of one’s child is a lifelong process.
6. If you have any questions about the baby, please ask us. One day we may welcome this, another it may be too hard. But, it feels good when people ask about our baby. It gives us a chance to share our beloved child.
7. Anniversaries (birth/death day, due date), holidays, etc., may be particularly difficult for us. Let us know if you’re thinking of us on these days. It will remind us that others remember and recognize how difficult our baby’s absence is. Keep doing this: the difficult days will likely last a lifetime and your continued support will be greatly appreciated.
8. Expect us to be different. Our child’s death has forever changed us and added new dimensions to who we are. We may no longer laugh at the same jokes, may take life more seriously (or the opposite), may need more companionship or more solitude than before, but we are essentially the same—our core values tend to stay put.

What not to do:

Please do not use platitudes to make us feel better. Saying, “It was meant to be,” or “At least he didn’t suffer,” may intend to take away the pain, but most often they do just the opposite.

Feel free to use this letter, submitted by Debbie Dickinson, or use it as a guide to composing your own letter with your own needs and feelings.

My Dear (friend, family members):

I have experienced a loss that is devastating to me. It will take time, perhaps years, for me to work through the grief I am experiencing because of this loss.

I may cry more than usual sometimes. My tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of hope or faith. They are symbols of the depth of my loss and the sign that I am recovering.

I may become angry when there seems to be no reason. My emotions are all heightened by the stress of grief. Please be forgiving if I seem upset at times.

I need your understanding and your presence more than anything else. If you do not know what to say, just touch my hand or give a hug to let me know that you care. Please do not wait for me to call you. I am often too tired to even think of reaching out for the help and support that I need.

Do not let me withdraw from you. I need you more than ever right now. Instead, keep me in your thoughts each day. A card, a note or a phone call to let me know that you are thinking of me may provide strength on a "bad day".

If you, by chance, have had an experience of loss that is anything like mine, please share it with me. It will not make me feel worse: sharing with others can often reduce the burden of individual pain.

This loss is very painful for me. But, I will get through it and I will live again. I will not always feel as I do now. I will laugh again.

Thank you for caring about me. Your concern is a gift I will always treasure.

Sincerely,