

# Single Parent Grief

## Facing the Loss as a Single Parent

Confusion and loneliness can be overwhelming, especially when there is no partner to share your tears or the burden of your grief. Maybe your partner has left your side, is not actively involved with you or possibly is very ill or has died. Whatever the reason, you need to find the strength and resources to face the very difficult challenge of dealing with, and living through, your child's death. It will not be easy, grieving over a loved one never is. It is a long and unpredictable process. But it can be done, with a lot of hard work and with support from those who care about you. As a single parent, you may quite often be alone with your pain.

If you are a fairly self-sufficient woman, people may not actively support you for very long. They assume that you can handle the death of your child on your own. After all, look what you have handled by yourself already. There is the tendency to believe that you can surround yourself with work and other activities, and that now you will have the time to more fully develop your potential.

Feeling alone in your grief is natural. Grief is a lonely process, even when you are surrounded by others. But it can feel even more solitary when you are convinced that it would be easier if you could be sharing this with a partner. One mother expressed it this way, "Being a single parent magnifies the word lonely." In addition, if you go home to an empty house and an empty bed, eat alone or have few friends with whom you can share your intimate and intense feelings, you feel even more lonely.

If you are a single father who has suffered the death of a child, you may also find a reduced level of support for your loss. Many people assume that a father has less of a bond to an infant, especially with miscarriage and stillbirth. They may think that your grief cannot be as deep or painful as that of the mother. There is also danger of you minimizing your own loss; many men have been raised by families and society to be "strong" and to "move on quickly."

Every new loss has the potential to bring up previous losses; reminders of painful times in your life. New grief and new pain serve as reminders of how things have changed. Do not be surprised if you now find yourself reliving other painful events in your life. This is normal and should be talked about and dealt with in your support network.

What does it mean to do grief work? When doing your grief work you will try to understand what has been lost and who is missing in your life. You will admit to yourself your deep sense of loss and the feelings that have resulted. This is the time to express your pain and get your feelings out in healthy ways. You will recognize that doing grief work is a life long process.