

Another Baby?

Decision Making after Loss

After your baby died, whether it was a miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death, you need extra care and sensitivity as you think about another pregnancy. You may have times when you either feel the need to have another baby right away to fill your empty arms, or you may be afraid to ever try again. You may experience a roller coaster of emotion and confusion; the accompanying decision-making process is complicated. Also, getting pregnant may not be that simple, nor is it easy living through another pregnancy or having another baby. Maybe you hadn't wanted to consider adoption but it may be the only possibility of having a child. Maybe you will determine it is best for you to remain childless or not to try again.

The desire to quickly become pregnant again may arise from an urgent and intense need within you or from pressure from well-meaning family and friends. So often you and your friends may feel the solution to your grief is to have another baby. You will hear advice from just about everyone telling you to wait, don't wait and don't have a child at all!

You may even hear such well-intended comments as, "You're lucky you can get pregnant. You'll just have to try again." Or, you may hear "You are still young you can always have another one!" (This may not be the case.) Having another baby will not shorten your grief. Trying to replace one loss with another is impossible, since each life is unique.

But how do you decide when or if you are ready? There are no clear-cut guidelines or answers. In the literature on adaptation following perinatal loss, there is little agreement on when it is best psychologically to get pregnant again. There is no simple or perfect answer because of the complexity of loss and a new pregnancy. No one else can know what will be right for you and your partner. You will be the ones who decide, unless nature decides for you. Trust yourselves about the timing and decision.

Some questions you might ask yourselves in considering another pregnancy, adoption or no children are:

- Does the loss still consume my every thought?
- Am I obsessed with becoming pregnant?
- Can I think about the loss without it tearing me apart?
- Am I expecting another baby/child to make me feel better?
- Is my biological clock running out?
- Is adoption or being childless something we now have to decide if infertility is a problem?
- Am I physically ready to go through another pregnancy?
- Psychologically are we ready to face the complexities of another pregnancy?
- How are we communicating as a couple?
- Have we come upon a decision together?

Allowing yourselves time to think and communicate about these and other questions thoroughly is important, particularly since your recent loss may have left you numb or with difficulty making decisions. Again, no one can or should make your decision for you, but giving yourselves a little time will help you in making the decision that is right for you.

The preconceived notion that pregnancy, birth, and motherhood is easy, carefree and completely within your control just isn't so. You have lost your naïveté. There is no longer a blissful attitude during the next pregnancy. Therefore, feelings of concern overshadow the whole pregnancy experience.

While another pregnancy may not be easy, you have it within you to survive and cope in the best way you can. It takes courage to dare to hope and love again - of dreaming new dreams and planning a future with your child.... of taking a great risk.

*“It is a risk to attempt new beginnings
Yet the greater risk is for you to risk nothing.
For there will be no further possibilities
Of learning and changing,
Of traveling upon the journey of life.
You were strong to hold on.
You will be stronger to go forward to new beginnings.”*

Earl Grollman from his book, *Time Remembered*

If you have made the decision and are pregnant again, these tips may assist you in getting through the next nine months:

- Find a way to vent feelings, such as keeping a journal.
- Talk with others who have suffered a loss and then had a healthy baby.
- Talk with others who haven't suffered a loss to remind yourself that most pregnancies do end happily.
- Ask your medical team what precautions you and they will take, and what extra tests are available (e.g. non-stress tests, ultrasound exams, glucose tolerance tests) be careful of the roller coaster that some tests can get you on. Don't just agree or demand them for the sake of doing something.
- Feel free to get a second opinion if you have doubts or concerns.
- Try to find a support group and/or feel free to seek counseling.
- Be honest about your feelings and be aware that you are very normal if you have anxieties at this time.
- You are at higher risk, even if only emotionally. You deserve to be treated with more care by your medical caregiver. Ask for this if you feel you need it.
- If you have doubts or are worried during the pregnancy at any time, call your physician or midwife.
- Ask what subtle signs to watch for this time that might signal a problem.
- You and your partner may handle a subsequent pregnancy differently. Talk about your differences and respect your differences; unmet needs can make matters worse.
- You may feel the need to “do something different this time,” as irrational as it might be. Feel free to make those changes if you feel more comfortable and if they are medically acceptable.
- Work on having positive and hopeful feelings, at least occasionally, even if they may not be coming naturally.
- Realize that it might be difficult to be “joyful and ecstatic” this time because of your fears and experience. That's okay!
- Try to appreciate each day you share with your growing baby, as hard as that might be. Talk with your baby, sing to your baby, and pray if that helps you. Get to know your baby!

- Education and awareness can help one to feel more in control. Read about healthy and problem pregnancies. Understand more about the body and the miracle of birth.
- Follow and trust your instincts. Do what you need to do, so no matter what the outcome, you will feel you have few or no regrets. Take control of those things you can and accept what you can't.
- Have hope and faith that this pregnancy will work out.