

Father's Grief

Most of the time, dads are neglected grievers. While we know a lot about the grief process, people still aren't sure how to respond to a man's feelings. It's safer to ask how the mother is doing than to ask how you feel.

Among other things, you may feel: angry, depressed, lonely, hopeless, disappointed, hurt, sad, afraid, out of control, confused, empty, guilty, helpless, like a failure and/or frustrated. These are all normal emotions. This can be one of the toughest times in your life, and it's important to take care of yourself and the hurt you are feeling.

You may find that you are taking care of everyone else, making all of the arrangements and doing all the work. After the funeral/memorial, though, people are likely to expect you to act as if nothing happened. Grief, with its many ups and downs, lasts far longer than society in general recognizes. Be patient with yourself.

You never "get over" your grief... you make it part of your life journey, along with the memories of your child. As you begin to get back to your normal activities, you may find your feelings popping up when you least expect them. You may feel like you are just going through the motions of living. You may feel distant from people. And you may find yourself unusually angry.

Anger... Men and women grieve differently. Women have more permission to cry and talk. Men have more permission to be angry. It's okay to be angry when your child dies, whether through miscarriage, stillbirth or after birth. It's unfair, unjust and an angry situation. The biggest problem with anger is where to direct it. A lot of times the anger is directed towards your family. You may want to take a look at how you're sharing your anger. Talking to another dad whose child has died, visiting your pastor, nurse, social worker or just a friend who can see things more clearly may be helpful.

Talking... One of the things that can help is talking about your child. You have strong, cherished memories. Whether the memories are of the pregnancy and your plans for your child, or the actual experience of the death, talking may lighten your pain, clear your anger and affirm your feelings.

Your Relationship... A lot of people think a child's death makes couples closer. Actually, the opposite can be just as likely. Parents are so wiped out with their own grief that they can't lean on each other. Each person's grief is individual. You and your partner will experience it and cope with it differently. Respect each other's way of grieving.

Crying... Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built-up tension for mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. Cry freely as you feel the need.