

Below are a few Don'ts:

- ✝ Don't say that they can try again. You don't know this to be true and a new child will never replace the child they lost.
- ✝ Don't suggest that they should be grateful for their other children (grief over the loss of one child does not discount parent's love and appreciation of their living children).
- ✝ If they have other kids, don't say, "At least you already have children" Yes, they do and they love their other children, but that doesn't take away the fact that one of their children has died – children are not interchangeable; they cannot replace each other. Don't conclude their grief is less because they may have one or more living children.
- ✝ Don't say you know how they feel (unless you've lost a child yourself you probably don't know how they feel) and even then, every loss is different
- ✝ Don't send funny or humorous cards. Miscarriage is a death in the family.
- ✝ Don't be afraid to ask how the parents are feeling or what they need from you.
- ✝ Don't let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out to a bereaved parent.
- ✝ Don't expect them to "get on with their life" a week after a miscarriage. Grieving is a very individual process.

✝ Don't change the subject when they mention their dead child or avoid mentioning the child's name out of fear of reminding them of their pain (they haven't forgotten it!)

✝ Don't say the following:

- It was God's will
- You're lucky it was so soon in the pregnancy.
- At least you didn't get attached to the baby.
- Thank goodness you didn't have a chance to get to know her/him.
- Forget it, put it behind you.
- It must have been deformed or abnormal
- Was this something genetic?
- Are you going to try again?



Your help, comfort, and sensitive support can be very influential in how the parents cope with the death of their baby and how they recover. You are important; they need you now more than ever.

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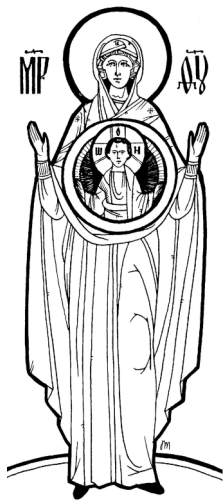


**Comforting Those  
Who Have Lost a Baby  
During Pregnancy or  
Shortly Thereafter**

Blessed are those that mourn; for they shall be comforted (RSV Mt:5:4). All too often couples experiencing pregnancy loss, especially an early loss, are left to mourn the loss of their baby alone and in silence. One in four pregnancies will end in miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or stillbirth. Most people, however, are unaware of how this loss, the death of their baby, affects the parents and those close to them.

Many family members and friends do not even know what to say. They use clichés such as, "You can have other children," or, "Good thing you didn't lose the child after he/she was born," or "Good thing you weren't pregnant for long." What most people don't realize is that the mother and the father begin to bond with the baby from as early as conception. And it is important to know that it is a fundamental Christian belief that life begins at conception. God knows the name and age of each person from their mother's womb, is what we pray during the Liturgy of St. Basil. Pregnancy loss is not about tissue, or fetuses, or any other medical term – a pregnancy loss is the death of a child, a human being.

Below are some guidelines to help you support and comfort "those who mourn".



† The first and likely the most important thing you can do is realize that a baby has died and this death is just as "real" as the death of an older child. The parents' grief and healing process will be painful and take time, *lots* of time. They may not be recovered or done "thinking about their baby" after a month or even a year. Realize that the parents are sad because they miss their baby, and

that he or she can never be replaced by anyone else, including future children or children they may already have.

- † Let the parents know that they and their family *and the baby* are in your prayers. Call or send a sympathy card. You don't have to write a lot inside, a simple "You and your baby are in my thoughts and prayers" is enough.
- † What the parents need most now is a good listener and a shoulder, not a lecture or advice. Listen when they talk about the death of their baby. Don't be afraid, and try not to be uncomfortable when talking about the loss. Talk about the baby by name, if they have named the child. Ask what the baby looked like, if the parents saw the baby. Let them talk about the baby – most parents need and want to talk about their baby, their hopes

and dreams for their lost child.

- † It is okay to admit that you don't know how they feel. A good thing to say is, "I can't imagine how you feel and I just wanted you to know that I am here for you and am very sorry."
- † Give a hug, this is a sign of love and concern. Even if this is all you do, it's a nonverbal way of saying "I'm sorry" or that "I'm praying for you."
- † Offer to baby-sit their other children, often there are follow-up doctor's visits and the parents need a chance to be together as a "couple" as well.
- † Offer to bring over meals; often mothers have no "energy" to do even basic things.
- † Offer to go food shopping, help clean the house, do laundry. Anything that lightens the burden of daily chores that need to be done. This is especially helpful if the mother is still waiting to miscarry the baby. That process may take days and is physically and emotionally draining.
- † Be careful not to forget the father of the baby. Men's feelings are very often overlooked because they seem to cope more easily. The truth is that they are quite often just as devastated as their partner.
- † Try to remember the anniversary of the death and due date with a card, call, or visit. Anniversaries can trigger grief reactions as strong as when the loss first happened. Months down the road a simple "How have you been doing since you lost your baby?" can give much comfort.
- † Give special attention to the baby's brothers and sisters. They too are hurt and confused and

in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give at this time.

- † If the children want to talk about the death, don't be afraid to engage them in conversation. Children have a natural relationship to death; and they are open and direct with adults they are comfortable with. When children are allowed to share their dreams and thoughts openly, they are not usually impacted by death in a negative way.
- † If you are pregnant, it may be hard for the bereaved parents (especially the mother) to see or even talk to you. You will need to be very understanding and extra patient with them. They still love you and are happy for you, but it is just such a huge reminder of what they have lost. Some may not be able to talk to you right now. If this happens, please don't take it personally it is just that to avoid pregnant people at the moment may save your friend's sanity. Your bereaved friends may even feel a little jealous of you (especially after your baby comes), and then feel angry at *themselves* for feeling that way because they don't really begrudge *your* happiness, it's just that they are mourning the loss of theirs.
- † Remember that any subsequent pregnancies can be a roller-coaster ride of joy, fear and bittersweet memories.
- † Remember also that mourning puts a tremendous strain on relationships between family and friends.