Center for Reproductive Medicine

Coping with Pregnancy Loss

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Experiencing Loss
Losing a pregnancy is a highly emotional experience for women and their partners. While both may experience a wide range of emotions, the experience can be especially acute and personal for women because they literally experience a physical loss. A pregnancy loss triggers a roller coaster of emotions: sadness, anger, shock, denial, numbness, guilt, and depression. These feelings produce common symptoms of emotional stress: difficulties concentrating, sleeplessness, withdrawal and impatience.

It’s not unusual for women to wonder, “why me?” Sometimes women internalize their feelings and blame themselves or suspect they somehow caused the miscarriage because it is hard to imagine that something so significant is really out of your control. At other times, this loss of control may cause people to feel anger, sadness or anxiety.

You and Your Partner
Even though both partners may experience the same range of loss, anger, bewilderment and sadness, their experiences may also differ. A partner may feel helpless and anxious watching their partner miscarry. For some men, bonding may begin with the physical signs of pregnancy, hearing a heartbeat, or seeing an ultrasound image. For many women, bonding with a baby can begin as soon as she finds out she’s pregnant. She physically experiences the pregnancy and is more attuned than her partner to the many subtle physical and psychological changes that accompany it. As a result, some women report feeling isolated with their loss.

It is important to remember that you and your partner may experience the loss differently. Even if you feel the same emotions, you may not be in sync: You may still be struggling with your loss while it might seem that your partner is doing better. Sometimes, these differences can cause a strain in your relationship. It’s important to respect each other’s coping styles, give each other time to grieve and heal. These feelings can ebb and flow.

People experience profound losses at their own pace. Be patient and supportive of your partner. Accept and acknowledge each other’s differences in grieving. Remember you’re going through this together.

Taking Care of Yourself
It is important to take care of yourself. Protect yourself from situations you know will be painful and difficult – reminders of your loss, such as baby showers, visits from friends and family who have recently become pregnant or have new babies, and holiday gatherings. You may feel out of place at these joyous occasions and they may trigger a renewed sense of loss or isolation.

Take it one day at a time and one step at a time. People who have not gone through a pregnancy loss may not understand the intensity of this loss. They may expect you to “get on with your life,” not appreciating your need to grieve. Friends, family and coworkers may feel uncomfortable with loss and say insensitive things.
Know your limits and needs. Seek out people who understand your feelings and who give you support. To heal you have to grieve. Some people find it healing to memorialize the loss, particularly if it is a late pregnancy loss, by lighting a remembrance candle, planting a flowering tree or shrub in the spring, or planning a religious service. Give yourself permission to grieve. Remember, there isn’t a right way to grieve. Nor is there a time limit.

**Seeking Counseling**
In addition to the support of your spouse, friends and family, consider an appointment with a counselor with experience in dealing with pregnancy loss. The Brigham’s Center for Reproductive Medicine has a team of clinicians who specialize in this area of care. Laura Lubetsky, LICSW (617-732-5500 ext. 32214) and Anne Geoghegan, LICSW (617-732-5500 ext. 31565) are available to meet with you.

**Other resources**

**Internet Resources:**
- [www.miscarriagesupport.org](http://www.miscarriagesupport.org)
- [www.babyloss.com](http://www.babyloss.com)
- [www.nationalshareoffice.com](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com)

**Books:**
- *Unspeakable Losses* by Kim Kluger-Bell
- *Miscarriage: Women Sharing From The Heart* by Shelly Marks and Marie Allen
- *Surviving Pregnancy Loss: A Complete Sourcebook for Women and Their Families* by Rochelle Friedman and Bonnie Gradstein