



Losing a child is one of the hardest things you will ever face. You may grieve for what you lost as well as what your baby never got a chance to see and do and feel. This experience will be very difficult. There is no way to avoid, skip, or cure grief...the only way to move forward is to move through grief.

## About Grief

Grief is the normal response to a loss. It can include many different emotions: sadness, anger, shock, confusion, relief, helplessness, guilt, and more. You may feel some or all of these emotions. You may feel several emotions at the same time. What you feel may change by the day, hour, or minute. All of this is normal. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is different for each person. Your partner, family, or close friends may have different emotions...or may express them differently. That's okay. Do your best to be understanding with each other. Everyone grieves in their own way.

## Taking Care of Yourself Emotionally

The most important thing you can do is give yourself permission to grieve in your own way. Some of these ideas may help.



Join a support group, either in person or online



Keep a journal of your feelings



Ask for help if you need it. Other people often don't know how to help someone who is grieving. If you need food, laundry, help with caring for other children, or something else, ask. Your friends and family are likely to be happy to help.



Watch for signs of depression, which is a medical condition. For example, if you have trouble getting out of bed or completing basic tasks for more than 2 weeks, you may be depressed. Talk to your health care provider right away (or ask someone else to make an appointment for you)

## Taking Care of Yourself Physically: For Mothers

Mothers may need some additional help as their bodies recover from pregnancy. Talk to a health care provider if you have bleeding or if your breasts have milk. Some women find it helpful to donate their breast milk in honor of their baby. Talk to your provider or NICU staff about your options.

# Understanding Grief and Loss

## Taking Care of Yourself Physically: For Everyone

As hard as it may be, it is important to take good care of yourself as you grieve. Staying physically healthy may help you emotionally. Try to:



Get enough sleep



Make healthy food choices



Do something active every day



Avoid using alcohol, drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, or street), or tobacco to cope with your emotions

## About the “New Normal”

People often want to know when they are going to feel better after a loss. There is no answer to that question. Some people find comfort in getting back to their daily routine. Others need time and space for themselves. These differences can cause stress between partners, family members, or close friends. Try to be patient as others move through grief, and ask them to be patient with you.

Over time, most people find that they settle into a “new normal”. Life does go on, but you are forever changed by losing a baby. You may cope well for periods of time but then be hit by a sudden wave of grief. That happens to everyone. Accept it, experience the emotions, and then try to return to your “new normal”. Your baby will always be a part of you.



**Remember that grieving is a process. You must go through it your own way and at your own pace. If you need help, don't hesitate to reach out to family, friends, or your health care provider.**

## NOTES:

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