

## About Grief

- Grief over the loss of a baby, before or after birth, can be as intense as grief over the death of any other family member.
- Grieving parents may experience a range of emotions, including shock, sadness, anger, fear and guilt, as well as physical symptoms.
- All parents must feel free to express their love for the baby they have lost and to grieve in their own way.
- Seeing pregnant women and babies can be painful after the loss of a baby.
- Family and friends often find it hard to talk about the baby, and inappropriate comments may cause further grief.
- Anniversaries of the baby's birth and death can bring back parents' feelings of grief and loss.
- Grandparents often grieve for their grandchild, and may find it difficult to cope with their own child's pain.

### How Friends and Family Can Help

- Allow parents to share their pain.
- Listen. Don't try to fix or change parents' feelings.
- Express your own sorrow.
- Say the baby's name.
- Be patient—grief may last for years.
- Stay in touch often.

## Contact Us

### HAND OF THE BAY AREA Helping After Neonatal Death

#### CHAPTERS

- NORTH BAY (San Rafael)
- SAN FRANCISCO
- SAN MATEO
- SANTA CRUZ

#### CONTACT US

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info@HANDsupport.org

HANDsupport.org

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P.O. Box 3693, Redwood City, CA 94064

#### 24-HOUR STARVISTA CRISIS HOTLINE

650.579.0350

Your call will be referred to HAND by StarVista, and a HAND volunteer will return your call within 24 hours.

**HAND** relies solely on donations and volunteers to support its programs. For more information please visit our website at [HANDsupport.org](http://HANDsupport.org).

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*This brochure is also available in Spanish. Please contact us to request brochures or download from our website at [HANDsupport.org](http://HANDsupport.org).*



We are a volunteer group of parents who have experienced the loss of a baby before, during or after birth.

We offer support to parents and their adult family and friends during the normal grieving process following:

- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Loss of a pregnancy that was wanted, but interrupted, after prenatal diagnosis or for maternal health
- Premature birth
- SIDS
- Infant death in the first year of life

HAND has been offering support to Bay Area families since 1981. HAND is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## How HAND Can Help

We are sorry you have suffered the loss of your baby. To help you with this heartbreaking loss, **HAND** provides empathetic peer support and information about pregnancy loss and infant death. Many parents who've lost a baby feel overwhelmed, and it can help to talk with others who understand and share a similar experience.

All **HAND** services are free.

**HAND** offers:

- Grief support meetings where parents can share their experiences.
- Subsequent pregnancy meetings for parents expecting another baby, to support their special emotional needs.
- One-on-one peer support from a **HAND** volunteer via phone and/or email.
- Information and resources for bereaved parents and professionals.
- Presentations and bereavement care training for healthcare providers.
- Annual Service of Remembrance, creative workshops and other events to help parents process grief.
- Helping Hands quarterly newsletter.
- Limited financial assistance is available to help with funeral expenses.
- For more information about our services and support groups, visit our website at [HANDsupport.org](http://HANDsupport.org).

**HAND** volunteers are not professional therapists, but may offer referrals to licensed psychotherapists.

## After Your Loss

### First Days: What to Expect

- Seeing and holding your baby helps to affirm your child's life and gives you lasting memories.
- Naming your baby is a way to honor your baby's uniqueness, and it can help later when you think and talk about your child. It's never too late to name your baby.
- Photographs of your baby, a lock of hair, footprints, a birth and/or death certificate, and other items can be treasured mementos.
- Baptizing or blessing your baby may be comforting.
- After delivery you may want to stay on the maternity unit, or if you find it difficult, you may ask to be moved to another area of the hospital.
- Engorgement and milk in the breasts can be a painful physical reminder that you don't have a baby to nurse. Your healthcare providers can help you with this.
- You may be asked to sign a birth and/or death certificate, and to make decisions about the handling of your baby's body.
- An autopsy may be helpful to understand the cause of your baby's death.
- You may choose to plan a memorial service or you may decide not to.
- Your healthcare providers can be a source of information about your loss.

## Helpful Suggestions

- Be kind to yourself. Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel. There is no correct or incorrect way to grieve.
- Give yourself a break. If possible, put responsibilities and expectations on hold until you have more energy.
- Take as much time as you need to decide what to do with your baby's things.
- A memorial service, a religious ceremony, or planting a tree or a rose garden can be helpful at any time.
- Stay in touch with those friends and family who understand your loss.
- It's okay to avoid people and events, like baby showers and children's birthday parties, until you feel up to it.
- Take good care of yourself with nutrition, rest, time in nature, physical activity, and anything that comforts you, moment to moment.
- Get all the support you need through support groups, online communities, spiritual care and/or grief counseling.
- Tell your story and express your feelings. Allow yourself to cry.
- Try to avoid major decisions and big changes. Grief can be overwhelming and your judgment may be clouded for a while. If you must make decisions right away, seek input from a trusted family member or friend.
- Parents who are anxious about a subsequent pregnancy may need extra emotional support.