

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 feel a sense of emptiness for weeks or months after their loss.
- 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 for months 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 PENINSULA Helping After Neonatal Death

HAND relies solely on donations and volunteers to support its programs. For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, contact:

HAND OF THE PENINSULA
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Redwood City, CA 94064
www.HANDsupport.org
info@HANDsupport.org
facebook.com/HANDsupport

PENINSULA CHAPTER
650.367.6993

SANTA CRUZ CHAPTER
831.438.4513

SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER
415.282.7330

24 HOUR STARVISTA CRISIS HOTLINE
650.579.0350 or 888.220.7575

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

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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 after miscarriage, stillbirth, interruption of a wanted pregnancy due to prenatal diagnosis, and death in the first year of life.

HAND chapters in San Mateo, San Francisco and Santa Cruz counties have been offering support 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 peer support and information about pregnancy loss and infant death. All **HAND** services are free.

Many parents who have lost a baby find it helpful to share the common feelings of the experience.

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 referrals for bereaved parents and professionals.
- Hospital visits and labor support to parents experiencing a neonatal loss.
- Bedside support for mothers giving birth after a prior loss.
- Presentations for healthcare and mental health providers.
- Helping Hands newsletter.
- Limited financial assistance is available to help with funeral expense.

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.
- Parents who are anxious about a subsequent pregnancy may need extra emotional support.