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Helping Hands

Fall 2015

Planning a memorial

No right or wrong way to honor baby

Experiencing the death of a child can be one of the most heart-breaking experiences that will occur in one's lifetime. When your baby dies, all of the hopes and dreams you had for your baby die as well, no matter how far into the pregnancy you were. As a parent, you may have spent weeks or months preparing for the arrival of a new baby into your lives, hearts and home. Instead, you are now planning a memorial or funeral service and just the thought of it is likely overwhelming. You are probably shocked, confused and unsure of where to turn and what to do to memorialize and honor your beloved baby. If your baby died early in the pregnancy, you may not have known that having a service is an option.

Holding a funeral or other memorial service may also help family and friends understand that your baby was a beloved member of your family who will be greatly missed.

While many funeral homes offer special services for babies – even for the tiniest babies who died early in the pregnancy – there are still limited resources for those who want to plan a meaningful ceremony to commemorate their baby. For many parents, a memorial service is an important step in the grieving process because it is a way for you to not only honor your baby's life, but it can also be healing—the beginning of putting your lives back together again. Holding a funeral or other memorial service may also help family and friends understand that your baby was a beloved member of your family who will be greatly missed.

As you begin thinking about your baby's service, you may be at a loss for ideas and unsure as to what is appropriate to do. Or, you may know in your heart things you would like to do, but you may be afraid to ask if it is okay. Reading about what others have done can be very helpful. While we give suggestions from parents who have walked the same path you are now on, use them only as suggestions. Let your own unique circumstances, religious beliefs, cultural practices and creativity guide you in creating the perfect, meaningful service for your baby. The possibilities are endless.

Often, just beginning to plan a service is the most difficult part. It probably feels very unnatural, and perhaps you have never planned a funeral service before. If you have a priest, minister or other clergy member to seek help from, he or she may have ideas for you. In some religions, it may not be acceptable to deviate from certain songs and/or scriptures, but in others, it may be more acceptable to be creative and choose popular songs and poems. If you would like to incorporate more than one cultural or religious faith, that can be an added

challenge. Following are some tips you may want to keep in mind:

- Follow religious traditions that are important to you, but it is also okay to create new traditions.
- Do not be afraid to let other people help you.
- Ask to see and hold your baby one last time if you want to.
- Ask for what you want. No matter what it is, if it is something important to you, tell the funeral director and/or pastor of your wishes.
- Know that not all parents are comforted by the same things. It is okay to not find comfort in scriptures and other religious practices, even if at other times, these same things did bring you peace.
- Be aware that there is no right or wrong way to plan a farewell service. Whatever you as parents choose to do will be the “right” thing. Personalize the service as much as you can to make it meaningful and special.
- If you choose not to involve a funeral home and have a funeral, or if you do not have a gravesite or urn, you may decide instead to hold a prayer service or remembrance gathering to honor your baby. This can be held at a location such as a church, home, park, garden or other meaningful place. This allows for choosing exactly when you want it to take place – soon after your baby’s death, on a holiday, on an anniversary or even your baby’s due date.
- It is okay to wait to have a service. While some religious doctrines do require a funeral and burial within a certain time frame after a death, most do not. It is acceptable to postpone it if necessary. Do not let anyone pressure you or rush you into making decisions.
- Many funeral homes and cemeteries offer burial services for babies free of charge, so do not hesitate to call around to find one in your area that offers this. If it is too difficult for you, consider asking a trusted friend or family member to make those calls for you.
- It is possible to have a small graveside service or a private memorial service if you are not up to a full funeral.
- You may wish to be involved in your baby’s funeral by reading a poem, saying a prayer, or even singing a song.
- You may want to have a balloon release as part of the service. Provide balloons with cards attached so those in attendance can write a message to your baby.
- If you have other children, they may find great comfort in participating in the service in some way. Children often like to write and read poems, sing a song, or even create artwork that can be used in the program.
- Consider having family members or close friends participate in some way as it can add a special touch that you will always remember. Someone who enjoys writing poetry may want to

Helping After Neonatal Death

Chapters:

HAND of the Peninsula

HAND of Santa Cruz

HAND of San Francisco

**P.O. Box 3693
Redwood City, CA 94064
(650) 579-0350 crisis line
(650) 367-6993 office
www.HANDsupport.org**

**Helping After Neonatal Death
Santa Clara and Alameda Counties,
and part of the Central Valley
P.O. Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(888) 908-HAND (4263)
www.handonline.org**

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Helping Hands

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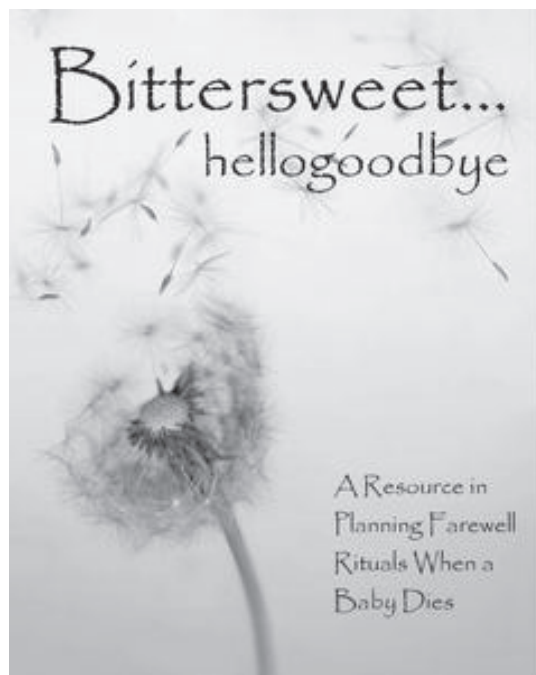
**Submission deadline:
NOV. 1, 2015**

write a special poem, or perhaps, you have someone close to you who enjoys singing or playing a musical instrument. Any of these things can add a personal touch that you will fondly remember in years to come.

- It may seem foreign to you, but you might want to consider videotaping or photographing parts of the service. This may not be acceptable in some cultures or religions, but if it is, you will have a treasured keepsake.
- While some faiths and cultures require funerals and memorial services to only be held in a church, it is not uncommon for parents to host their baby's farewell ritual at a park, lake, or other meaningful place that is special to them.
- Music and readings are typically an important part of a funeral or memorial service. Often, songs are chosen that were favorites of the person who died or are celebratory in nature. When a baby dies, those types of songs do not seem appropriate, and parents may agonize over what songs to include. While some churches and cultures allow only certain religious songs, others are more open, and you may want to choose more "popular" songs. There are now many artists who write and sing songs specifically about the death of a baby, but you may also want to consider songs that are meaningful to you or that remind you of your pregnancy and baby.
- Those who are grieving often find great solace in poems as well as songs, and including poems in your baby's service can be the perfect way for bereaved parents to put their deep feelings of grief and strong emotions into words that may otherwise be difficult to express. Following are some ways you may want to consider including special songs and poetry into your baby's service:
 - Where your service is held may dictate what types of songs you can play. Some churches may not allow secular music, but you may be able to play a special song at the gravesite. If your service is held somewhere other than a church, you will likely be able to choose whatever songs you wish.
 - You may want to use the words of a song as a reading or poem.
 - A more informal service can include a video montage of pictures with a favorite song or two playing in the background.
 - You may want to play a lullaby or other song that is meaningful to you.
 - If you have a family member or friend who plays an instrument, it can be a beautiful and soothing part of the ceremony to have them play.
 - Children often enjoy writing poetry, and poems written and possibly even read by the baby's siblings or cousins will become treasured keepsakes. Children typically enjoy being included in some way, and this is a meaningful way to include them.
 - The words from a children's book can be a reading at the funeral.
 - Favorite quotes can also be added to slideshows, programs and prayer cards

While planning a baby's funeral is likely not something you have done before or even considered doing, a personalized goodbye ritual can be very meaningful and healing. **Share** has many resources if you need more guidance or consider purchasing "*Bittersweet hellogoodbye: A Resource in Planning Farewell Rituals When a Baby Dies*" which offers extensive readings, poems, songs and other ideas to memorialize your baby in the coming months and years.

<http://nationalshare.org/heal/>



Support Meetings

Support meetings are informal gatherings where parents can receive and give support by sharing common experiences as we work through and resolve our loss. We cordially invite you to attend.

Meetings may start out with a topic of discussion, but everyone is free to bring up any questions or aspects of their loss which may concern them.

Attending your first meeting does take courage, but parents who attend find a comforting network of support, encouragement, friendship and understanding.

Nothing is required of you. There are no dues or fees. You need not speak one word. Even if you no longer need the meetings for yourself, come and share your experiences with someone who has recently suffered a loss.

HAND of the Peninsula

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

Contact: (650) 367-6993

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 2 and 16
Oct. 7 and 21
Nov. 4 and 18
Dec. 2 and 16

Location: Follow signs to Palm Room at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., San Mateo

HAND of Santa Cruz

Support meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month.

Contact: Kristie Shulman
(831) 438-4513

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Date: Sept. 16
Oct. 21
Nov. 18
Dec. 16

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel

HAND of San Francisco

Meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

Contact: (415) 282-7330

Time: 6:30-8:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 2 and 16
Oct. 7 and 21
Nov. 4 and 28
Dec. 2 and 16

Location: Davies Campus of CPMC, Castro at Duboce 6 blocks north of Market St. Enter the North Tower lobby, follow the HAND signs from the Info Desk to our meeting room.

Pregnancy Support Meetings

Parents who are pregnant again after a loss have special emotional and psychological needs. Pregnancy Support Group meetings address the concerns of bereaved parents who have started or are thinking about starting another pregnancy. Fathers are especially encouraged to attend.

HAND of the Peninsula

Subsequent pregnancy support meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., in San Mateo. *Please RSVP if you plan to attend.*

Contact: (650) 367-6993.

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 9
Oct. 14
Nov. 11
Dec. 9

HAND of Santa Cruz

Subsequent pregnancy meetings are held at 7:30 P.M. on the first Wednesday of each month at the Congregational Church of Soquel. **RSVP** is appreciated. **Contact:** Kristie Shulman
(831) 438-4513

Births

Gus Van Ryn -- February 2015, to Anna Severn and Turner Van Ryn.

Donations

Our warmest thanks to those who have sent donations to HAND of the Peninsula. It is through your support that HAND is able to grow and help others.

Sara Braden, in memory of Gregory Hartnett

Michele and Mark Hollar, in memory of William Adam Hollar

Jodi Perelman and Brad Shapiro

Anna and Rob Strong

Susanna Barlow

Paula and Joe Osorio, in memory of Alexis Marlene Osorio

Kelly and Judd Luckey in memory of Lauren Elizabeth

Marie and John Violet, in memory of John Robert Pitino

Chris Lehr, in special thanks to Paige, Eric and Nikki, Beth and Mark, Lyndsie, Sara and Ari for their support in coming back to HAND meetings when we needed them.

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<http://tnv.im/20T>





HAND of the Peninsula's

Annual Service of Remembrance

Sunday Oct. 11, 2015

Social time 10 a.m. and Service 11 a.m. — 1 p.m.

Miwok Shelter Huddart County Park in Woodside

Parents, families and friends are welcome to join us in honoring and remembering babies we have lost.

Please send any photos, poems, drawings, stories and your baby's/babies' name or nickname, which will be read during the program. To be included you must send baby names by Sept. 28 to

sor@HANDsupport.org

We welcome your participation in this annual event. If you are interested in volunteering to help, call and leave a message at (650) 367-6993 or email

volunteers@HANDsupport.org

Breakfast beverages and snacks will be served and wildflower seeds to scatter will be provided.

Huddart Park parking is \$6 and pets are not allowed.

From highways 280 or 101, exit onto Woodside Road (Highway 84) going west. Continue westbound, through the town of Woodside, about 1.5 miles from I280. Turn right on Kings Mountain Road and drive up the curvy road another 2.3 miles. Turn right at Huddart Park entrance and continue to the gatehouse. Follow signs up the hill to the Miwok Shelter.

1100 Kings Mountain Road, Woodside, CA 94062