Seeing pregnant women and babies: This is usually extremely painful for the mother. These feelings can last up to a year or more. Fathers express sadness as friends and co-workers discuss their new babies.
Decision making: If possible, put off all major decisions for at least a year.

The Initial Grieving Process

Permission to grieve: As parents, love and grieve for your baby regardless of the baby's gestation. This was your baby-your dream.
Why grieve? Grief comes after the death of someone we love. Depending on the circumstances it can last from 6 months to 2 years.
Intense feelings: Panic, guilt, sadness, anger, loss of control, and fear are normal reactions to a loss. "Yo-yo" pattern—feelings rise and fall.
Is this a punishment? This is not a punishment for something you might have done in the past. Feelings of blame are a normal part of grief.
Normal reactions & needs: crying, retelling the story, isolation for a period, feeling aching arms or hearing a baby cry, heightened need for exercise or sleep (or just the reverse!).
Grief patterns: Men and women grieve differently. See Parent Packet and website
Grieving leads to healing: By taking the responsibility to make choices and to learn new coping ideas as you move through the grieving process, healing can gently and gradually take place. See Parent Packet and website for more information.

Hope for the future

Anniversary of birth and death/due date & holidays: These can evoke painful memories. Our group discusses ways to acknowledge the importance of your child's existence during these times. See website
Future Pregnancies: Give yourself some healing time before deciding to get pregnant again. The next pregnancy usually is a period of anxiety requiring emotional support. We have a *subsequent pregnancy group* for parents during this time. See Subsequent Pregnancy Packet & website

SHARE Atlanta

You are not alone: We know the difficulties that a bereaved parent faces. We have suffered, survived, and wish to support you as you move through this time. We discuss the issues in this brochure, and many more, in our groups.
There is hope: Healing does happen ~ guidance and support aid in this process. We are here when you need us.

Many volunteer to honor the memory of all the precious children whose brief presence touched our hearts forever.

Every loss is the loss of the dream of a living child.

SHARE Atlanta offers:

- ***"Survival Kit"*** *with 'SHARE IS' & grief-related brochures - a guide for support during the very first moments of loss.*
- ***Parent Packet: Support Group info.*** *with resource materials & group info. includes initial booklist. For parents after returning home. (Online or call)*
- *Comprehensive website with forum, stories, e-mail exchange, medical & grief links & information, candlelighting page*
- *"Coping Ideas and Support" booklets*
- *Parent-centered online Newsletter*
- *Memorial & Candlelighting Programs*
- *Angel Garden, Bench, & Memorial Brick Pathway in Arlington Memorial Park, Sandy Springs, GA*
- *"Outreach for Healing" Programs*
- *In-service Programs*
- *Subsequent Pregnancy Support*

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SHARE *Atlanta*

Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Grief Support
Since 1984

"No Heartbeat"

Your baby has died. Grief has begun - some choices for you to consider.

A guide for *healing* after a loss...
ectopic, miscarriage, stillborn
and newborn death.

Support ~ Information ~ Messages
(770) 928-9603
www.shareatlanta.org

A non-profit, volunteer organization
Parent-led
Self-help and mutual- help support group
Non-denominational No fees

"Thank you for your support. From the very first moments we didn't feel so alone."
Eve and Tom McIntosh.

No Heartbeat...
Now we know we aren't alone
Two words have affected so many
We all love our children
Even when our arms are empty.

We cannot find the heartbeat
We cannot find the rhythm
Our child has died and left us
We will hold him again in heaven.
Roger Deane, SHARE Atlanta, 1992

Those first moments are *intense*.. shock, panic, denial - these protect you and are normal responses to loss.

"He performed an ultrasound. I'll never forget his words, "I hate to meet people with bad news, but I'm afraid I have bad news." My world fell apart. I wanted to get out of there. I actually thought that if I could just go home, then none of this would be true."
Alicia—www.shareatlanta.org ~ "The First 24 Hours"

Consider your options...*this is real*...you *must* continue...

Though numb, parents are blessed when alternatives are gently offered. These choices can influence how you remember this tragedy and how you ultimately heal.

Each parent's loss is unique, but there are some universal feelings and reactions that most people move through. It often helps to know that others have walked a similar path and survived.

There is no "right or wrong" way to travel this path. Decisions are made at each turn. While some decisions can't be changed or altered, others are open for *change at any time during your walk!*

I never imagined...
How quickly life can change.
How suddenly dreams can shatter…
Elaine Yeager, SHARE Atlanta

Issues & Options to Consider:

Discuss fears or uncertainties with your caregiver. Others have asked the questions you are thinking. Be gentle with yourselves. *Grieving is* a *normal process.*

While in the Hospital

Ectopic Loss or Miscarriage

Special keepsakes: It is normal and healthy to want something to hold and keep ~ positive pregnancy test, ultrasound pictures, an early baby gift, pregnancy pictures, a memento from the hospital, etc.
Consider naming your baby: It can help you later when you think or talk about your baby. If the baby's sex was unknown, maybe a unisex name would be appropriate**.** Any time you want to give your child a name...you should feel free to do so.

Stillbirth or Newborn Loss

Seeing, holding and dressing your baby for as long and as often as you wish: This may seem strange to you but doing so can dispel frightening fantasies and confirm the reality of your loss. It also allows you to give your baby the love you would want to share with your child.
Naming your baby: It can help you later when you think or talk about your child.
Pictures: Most hospitals offer you photographs and will keep them for you until you want them. Consider making your own, before and/or after your baby has died- alone, with family members or close friends, a favorite nurse, a stuffed animal, etc. If need be, put these away for safe keeping until you wish to see them. *Please don't throw them away.*
Mementos: These are very important to keep: e.g. crib card, ultrasound, lock of hair, feet and hand prints, clothes, special gifts, and record of weight and length.
A room after delivery: Some mothers find it intolerable to be located on the maternity unit while some do want to be with other mothers (perhaps down the hall a ways). This should be your choice.

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An autopsy: If recommended to you, it may answer questions regarding this baby and future pregnancies. Discuss details with your doctor.
Funeral or memorial service: Everything does not need to be decided before leaving the hospital. A hospital chaplain can assist in this or you can wait until later.

Initial Family Reactions

Fathers: Dads feel overwhelmed by conflicting feelings of grief over the loss of the baby and a need to protect the mother from more emotional pain. See our Parent Packet and website
Other children: Discussing this loss with your other children can be very difficult, but it is very important for you to do this. See our Parent Packet and website for support
Grandparents: Their grandchild has died. They also hurt for you, their adult child. Sometimes, though, their reactions don't meet your expectations. They aren't sure what to do either. See website for support
Family and friends: Others may find it hard to talk about the baby. Often well intended, but inappropriate, remarks may cause further grief. SHARE brochure "Be Truthful in Grief" and website

Coming Home ~ a difficult experience.

Empty arms: After months of preparation for a baby, leaving the hospital with empty arms is extremely difficult.
Funeral or memorial service: "It is the one thing I can do for my baby that will have a lasting place in my heart." Often, the mother has a greater need than the father for recognizing this child *with others*. She may wish to plan what she wants to do in memory of your child after she has had some time to heal. See website
Nursery: Whether you decide to take it down or leave it as it is, you should discuss this together.
Lactation (secreting milk from the breasts): This may occur after a few days. It is a painful reminder of your loss. For suggestions ask the doctor or read Mother Care: Physical Care and Beyond After a Baby Dies by Sherokee Ilse, Inez Anderson, and Mary Funk, (Wintergreen Press).