

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?** We grieve because we loved. Normal grief can last from 6 months to 2 years. Intensity varies over this timeframe.
- **Intense feelings and reactions:** Panic, sadness, anger, loss of control, and fear are normal. "Yo-yo" pattern or the rise and fall of feelings happens.
- **Is this a punishment?** This is not a punishment for something in your past. Guilt is a normal part of grief. Forgiving is important.
- **Normal reactions & needs:** Crying, retelling the story, isolation for a period, heightened/decreased need for exercise-work-sleep, need for support.
- **Mothers and Fathers grieve differently:** Mother and child bonding begins in early pregnancy. Usually, fathers move on while mothers still need to *actively* seek resolutions. Support each other.
- **Others:** As you can, share with others your feelings and coping ideas. They may not react in the way you wish, but try to keep communication open. You must still do what is right for you.
- **Difficult Reactions to Common Events**-such as pregnancies, babies, reunions, and parties. Protect yourself from further pain. You do not have to be part of these until you have healed. In the future, these events will be happy ones again.
- **Decision making:** If possible, put off all major decisions for at least a year.

Hope for the future




- **Anniversary of birth and death/due date, 4-6 month mark, & holidays:** These cause pain, but we cope. We make our baby's presence meaningful. By making a scrapbook and memory box of mementos and pictures, our baby becomes a special part of who we are.
- **Future Pregnancies:** Though this is what most of us wish for, a future pregnancy should not be "the" healing factor. Give yourself at least 6 months to a year to heal physically and emotionally. The next pregnancy usually is stressful. We have a subsequent pregnancy group for support.
- **Grieving leads to gradual healing:** By taking the responsibility to learn coping ideas & by participating in SA events and groups...**healing happens.**

SHARE Atlanta Grief Support Group

- **Mutual-Support:** You are not alone. You can safely share feelings and learn ways to heal. Feelings are validated by others who "have been there." Many attend steadily for 6 months to a year and revisit as needed. Later, volunteering provides a healing outreach.

*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 (SA) offers:

- **"Survival Kit"** - grief-related brochures-a guide for support during the very first moments of loss.
- **Parent Packet: Support Group info.** with resource materials, group info. & booklist. For parents after returning home. (Online or call)
- **Website with forums for immediate support-** stories, medical, grief, memorial, & CBRS (Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth) info.
- **Online Newsletter and Updates**
- **Memorial & Candlelighting Programs**
- **Angel Garden & Memorial Brick Pathway** in "Babyland" Arlington Memorial Park, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
- **"Outreach for Healing" Programs** (e.g. March of Dimes, 5Bs -Blanket Project, etc.
- **In-service & Advocacy Programs**
- **Spanish "Survival Kit" & Website Pages**

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SHARE Atlanta (SA) is:

- a grief support group for families who have experienced ectopic, miscarriage, stillbirth and newborn loss.
- a non-profit organization since 1984.
- staffed and led by parent volunteers.
- funded completely by tax deductible donations.

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SHARE Atlanta (SA)

Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Grief Support
Since 1984

"No Heartbeat"

*We are sorry your baby has died.
SHARE Atlanta parents grieve with you.
This brochure is from us to you.
It offers choices that we found comforting
both at first and as we healed.
You are not alone.*



Support ~ Information ~ Messages
(770) 928-9603
www.shareatlanta.org
Healing: Groups-Forums-Activities

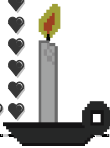
Self-help and mutual-help support group
Non-denominational No fees

*"Thank you for your support. From the very
first moments we didn't feel so alone."
Eve and Tom McIntosh.
1985*

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



"He performed an ultrasound. I'll never forget his words, 'I hate to meet people with bad news, but I have bad news.' My world fell apart. I wanted to leave. I thought that if I could just go home, then none of this would be true." Alicia

Your child is significant— No matter how long you carried your baby or how long your baby lived, you will grieve the death of your baby. The degree of pain and reactions to a loss vary with each individual and family. These responses depend greatly upon the circumstances when the baby dies and the options that are offered.



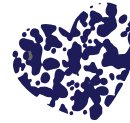
**Consider Your Options...
 Love and Parent Your Baby..**

Though numb, parents are blessed when alternatives are gently offered and accepted. You will carry these bitter-sweet memories forever. Though these choices may seem strange to you, bereaved parents have embraced these options as being healthy and healing as they moved along their grief journey. Many parents wish that they had been given or taken more opportunities to parent their baby.



No "right or wrong" way to travel this path...
 Decisions are made at each turn. While some of the initial decisions can't be altered, others are open for *change at any time during your walk*. SA discusses ongoing issues and options on our website, in our groups and forums.

I never imagined...
 How quickly life can change.
 How suddenly dreams can shatter...
 Elaine Yeager, SHARE Atlanta 1990



Healthy Issues & Options to Consider

Discuss fears or uncertainties with your caregiver.
 Others have asked the questions you are thinking.

Parenting Your Baby in the Hospital

Ectopic Loss or Early Miscarriage

- **Special keepsakes:** A keepsake to hold and cherish helps to ease your pain. Ask for ultrasound pictures, your hospital bracelet, mementos & memory box from the hospital if they have one.
- **Name your baby:** This is comforting when you think or talk about your baby. If the baby's sex was unknown, a unisex name might be appropriate. Naming your baby can happen now or later.

Late Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Newborn Loss

- **See, hold, powder, and/or dress your baby for as long and as often as you wish:** SA parents are glad that they spent time with their precious baby. Parent your baby. You will cherish this time.
- **Name your baby:** It is normal and comforting to remember your baby with a special name. Later, you will find comfort in using this name.
- **Pictures:** This is the only time to gather precious memories with your baby. Later, these pictures are very special. Some hospitals have a photographer who will come to your room. Most take pictures for you. Ask. Take your own. Suggestions: before and/or after your baby has died, alone (wrapped and unwrapped), with family members, friends, a nurse, and a memento. Put these away for safe keeping. Some hospitals will keep them until you ask for them *Please don't throw them away*.
- **Mementos:** These are important: crib card, ultrasound, lock of hair, feet and hand prints, & special gifts. Ask for the blankets and baby clothes you baby used. Ask caregivers not to wash these items.
- **A room after delivery:** Ask what your options are. Some mothers find it intolerable to be on the maternity unit, and others wish to be there.

- **Funeral or memorial service:** A hospital chaplain can assist with this or you can hold a service later. Cremation allows time to make decisions. Waiting several months before planning a goodbye ceremony is not unusual.
- **An autopsy:** It may answer questions regarding this baby and future pregnancies. Discuss details with your doctor.

Initial Family Reactions

- **Fathers:** Dads are confused by conflicting feelings of grief over the loss of their baby and their need to protect the mother from more emotional pain. Taking care of details helps regain control.
- **Other children:** Discussing this loss with your other children can be very difficult, but it is very important to do. See website for support
- **Grandparents:** Their grandchild has died. They also hurt for you, their adult child. Their reactions don't always meet your expectations. They aren't sure what to do either. See website
- **Family and friends:** While helpful at first, they often do not know how to continue to provide support. Some may find it hard to talk about the baby. Often well intended, but inappropriate, remarks may cause further grief. Give them SA brochure "Be Truthful in Grief" for Others.

Coming Home ~ A Difficult Experience

- **Empty arms:** Leaving the hospital with empty arms is extremely difficult. Plan: take mementos, leave baby with caring nurse, know SA parents understand this pain.
- **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*. Mothers find it comforting to plan this important service. Some wait for several months to a year to hold a ceremony.
- **Nursery:** Whether you decide to take it down or leave it as it is, you should discuss this together. SA parents have made both choices.
- **Lactation (secreting milk from the breasts):** This may occur after a few days. It is a painful reminder of your loss. Ask caregiver for suggestions to dry up your milk.