

Fathers Grieve, Too

After pregnancy or infant loss

Infertility, miscarriage, ending a wanted pregnancy, stillbirth, or infant death impact fathers in different ways. If a pregnancy did not end in the birth of a live infant or if a newborn passed in infancy, fathers need to process their experience and be supported to grieve in their own unique way after this heartbreaking loss.

Fathers Often Experience Delayed Grief . . . Why?

- Focus is usually on the mother
- Male partners tend to assume a supportive role and neglect their own grief
- Societal pressure to act strong
- Stigma, which may prevent men from talking about their own feelings of grief and loss
- Lack of recognition of father's grief
- Limited outlets for expression of father's grief

What Can Be Helpful

- Individual counseling—create space to process your own emotions
- Couples counseling—can improve communication and help you better understand your partner's journey
- Connecting with your partner (mutual massage, 2-minute hug, couples yoga)
- Seeking social support (pre-existing social networks or faith communities)
- Attending a bereavement support group
- Spending time outdoors
- Exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods
- Setting time limits and boundaries for work

Signs of Grief and Trauma in Men

- Flat affect, lack of emotion
- Irritability, anger, lashing out
- Hyperfocus on work as distraction
- Self-blame
- Lack of focus and motivation
- Isolation
- Impulsiveness and taking risks, like reckless driving or extra-marital affairs
- Substance abuse, suicidal thoughts

Paternal Mental Health

- Postpartum depression affects 10-25% of dads, regardless if there is a live baby.
- 24-50% of male partners of women with postpartum depression report depression themselves.
- Up to 18% of male partners report postpartum anxiety.
- Prior history of depression/anxiety puts fathers at a higher risk of developing postpartum depression/anxiety.
- After birth loss or trauma, men have the same risk of developing PTSD as their partners.



For more information, resources, and support, scan or visit [Janesroom.org](https://www.janesroom.org).

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