

Grieving Your Grandchild

After pregnancy and infant loss, including infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death, and ending a wanted pregnancy

The passing of a grandchild is a unique loss. Not only do you grieve for your grandchild, but you also worry deeply about your child and your child's partner. *Loss affects everyone differently.* It is normal to feel unequipped to adequately support your child and your child's partner while also experiencing your own grief.

We hope this information will help your own grieving process and guide you in supporting your children.

Meeting Your Grandchild (If Given the Opportunity)

- It is natural to be hesitant to meet your grandchild in person.
- It may feel daunting or strange, but most families do not regret seeing and holding their (deceased) baby.
- Take part in memory making activities with your grandchild.
- Ask for a photograph, copy of the footprint, or a lock of hair from your grandchild to keep as a personal connection.

Tending to Your Grief

- Give yourself permission to grieve—you have also suffered a loss.
- Let go of any guilt you may feel.
- Read books or pamphlets about the loss of a grandchild.
- As a parent yourself, acknowledge the “loss of control” feelings you may have as you watch your own child grieve.
- Don't judge yourself, grief is not linear; emotions will change from day-to-day and year-to-year.
- Share feelings with your spouse/partner or a trusted friend.
- Let go of expectations that your child (the bereaved parent) will comfort you.

- Talk to other grieving grandparents about your experience.
- Find ways to manage and express your feelings such as exercising, writing, gardening, making crafts, or other creative activities.
- Get to know your grandchild—write letters to them, wear a symbol of their life, keep a journal, visit the cemetery, or celebrate Grandparent's Day.
- Acknowledge that birthdays/loss anniversaries may be emotional for you and your child.
- Recognize that anger is part of the grieving process, and do not take outbursts personally.
- Seek help from a therapist with experience working with grieving grandparents.

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Suggestions for Supporting the Grieving Parents

- It is common for you to feel a need to hide your own emotions or be strong for your child; at times, it may be helpful for you and for your child if you are able to express your own grief.
- Say your grandchild's name and talk about them.
- Follow your child's cues.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Be a good listener.
- Be non-judgmental and accepting of their feelings and choices—everyone grieves differently.
- Instead of asking, "Is there anything I can do to help?," offer concrete suggestions: provide meals, assist in organizing a funeral, hire a housekeeper, or support your living grandchildren.
- Do not clear away baby items without being asked.
- Commemorate your grandchild—plant a flower, plant a tree, place a marker, establish a memorial fund/scholarship, make a donation on your grandchild's birthday, or remember during holidays of different faiths.
- Display photos (if available) of your grandchild.
- Do not ask your child about having future children; instead, let your child raise any conversation about future plans, if any.
- Research support groups or counseling for grieving parents, who may find it overwhelming to seek out support, so that options are available to the parents when they are ready.
- Recognize that healing is a lifelong process and help your child understand that there is no timeframe for the grief process.
- Do not suggest that your child should or will "get over" or "move on" after a loss.

If Your Child Becomes Pregnant Again after Their Loss

Know that they may be in denial of the pregnancy or have a fear of attaching to the baby; assure them that this is entirely natural, and do not try to talk them out of their fears or worries.



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

