Partners' Grief

A unique experience

Infertility, miscarriage, ending a wanted pregnancy, stillbirth, or infant death impact partners in different ways. When losses are experienced on the journey to parenthood, the attention and support is often directed towards the birthing parent. As a non-birthing parent, it is common for your experience and grief to be overlooked. And yet, you are a parent who has experienced the loss of a pregnancy or baby and needs attention and support.

Partners Often Experience Delayed Grief . . . Why?

- Focus is usually on the birthing parent
- Partners tend to assume a supportive role and neglect their own grief
- Lack of recognition of partner's grief

Common Responses to Infant Loss

- 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
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal thoughts

The Birthing Parent's Health and Wellbeing

- Know that your partner is going through a physical and emotional experience.
- The physical aspects of pregnancy and birth, combined with the trauma of pregnancy or infant loss, can lead to Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADS).
- Be prepared to support your partner during this time.

Self-Care Considerations

- Don't neglect yourself. You may feel as if you want to focus on your partner, but remember to also help yourself.
- You have experienced the heartbreaking loss of your pregnancy or baby. You deserve to receive the support you need.
- You and your partner often have separate experiences. They are both valid and real.
- You may benefit from a support group, therapy, and/or medication.

What Can Be Helpful When You've Experienced a Loss

- 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

For more information, resources, and support, scan or visit Janesroom.org.

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