

Comforting Parents After the Loss of Their Baby or Child



By Jennifer White of [VeryWellFamily.com](https://www.verywellfamily.com) and medically reviewed by Rahel Gurevich, RN

It is always difficult to find the words to comfort someone who is grieving, perhaps even more so when it involves the loss of a pregnancy, infant, or child. No one wants to think about it, but sadly, sometimes pregnancies miscarry and babies and children die. When this happens, the bereaved parents are at heightened risk of a variety of mental and physical health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and sleep problems.

Parents who lose a child need the support of their friends and loved ones. This support can come in many forms including offering a listening ear, connecting them with resources, providing a distraction, bringing meals, doing chores and errands, and just being there if and when they need you. Providing this extra support is not always an easy thing to do, but bereaved parents need family and good friends to lean on.

There Is No "Perfect" Thing to Say

Free yourself from the pressure of saying just the right thing. Instead, simply start by saying you love them, want to support them in whatever way they need, and will stand by their side as they grieve. Ultimately, supporting grieving parents is not about having all the right words, but being a listening ear, acknowledging their loss and pain, and finding ways to serve their needs during the months and years that follow the loss. You definitely should have an understanding of their beliefs before you offer what might be "typical" phrases intended to bring comfort. For some, these phrases may come off as being trite or painful. So, use caution when using these phrases:

- "At least you have/can have other children."
- "I know exactly how you feel."
- "It was God's will," "It was meant to be," or "It's for the best."
- "You'll feel better in time."
- "Your baby is in heaven/in a better place now."

Talking About Their Grief

While you certainly want to follow their lead on whether and when to talk about their loss, you don't want to avoid conversation about it, either. It's understandable to be reluctant to mention the pregnancy or baby or child's name for fear of "reminding" them of their pain. However, the truth is that their grief is always there.

Consider this quote from a speech given by Elizabeth Edwards a prominent political mother who lost her 16-year-old son Wade in a tragic car accident.

"If you know someone who has lost a child or lost anybody who's important to them, and you're afraid to mention them because you think you might make them sad by reminding them that they died, they didn't forget they died. You're not reminding them. What you're reminding them of is that you remember that they lived, and that's a great, great gift."

As you interact with the parents over time, you might get a sense from them what sort of boundaries they need when talking about their lost child. However, don't begin by avoiding the conversation. Consider the fact that as you acknowledge their loss you may not be relieving their pain, but it is possible that you will be supporting them in their own grief work. Also, if you're unsure, you can always ask them if and when they want to discuss their loss.

Suggestions for Offering Support to Suddenly Bereaved Parents



Your best bet is often simply just speaking from the heart and listening to your instincts. That said, here are some ideas of ways you can offer support verbally and through your actions.

Offer Your Time

Ask if there are any daily responsibilities or tasks that need to be done that might currently be overwhelming. Consider making a meal for the family or coordinating a list of friends and families who can do the same. Offer to help meet the needs of other children in the family or family pets. Offer to make phone calls on behalf of the family.

Check-In

Give them permission to be silent. You can even say something like, "I'll call tomorrow to check in on you. If you don't feel like talking, just let it go to voicemail." If you are truly willing, assure them that they can call at any time of day or night if they need anything.

In the months following the loss, be aware that certain milestones, anniversaries, and holidays may be difficult. Holidays like Mother's Day and Father's Day might be particularly difficult. Let them know that you're thinking about them on these days.

Help With the Funeral

Let them know how you might be able to assist the family as they make funeral arrangements. You can offer to help organize any part of the event that they feel comfortable delegating to you.

Be Available to Talk

Listen to their grief and assure them that you are happy to listen or talk about whatever they need to share.

Remember Their Child

Perhaps one of the most supportive things you can do is to help keep the child's memory alive well after the immediate loss. In the months and years that follow the loss of a child, many parents feel alone in their grief as the rest of the world moves on.

Consider small ways of showing the parents that you remember their child. If the parents experienced miscarriage or stillbirth and named the baby, don't hesitate to say the baby's name when you talk about them as a way to show that you remember and celebrate them even though you were never able to meet them.

On the anniversary of the child's birthday and the date of their death, consider doing something to acknowledge and celebrate them. If you're unsure, ask the parents how they wish to celebrate their child.

A Word From Verywell and FirstLight

The death of a child is a tragic time for a family. Offering your support and compassion is the best thing you can do to ease their burden. Having friends or loved ones to count on can make a big difference in how well someone copes through their journey with grief.