

It is with sadness that we at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin extend our sympathy to you.

We know nothing worse can happen to a parent than to have one's child die. We also know there are no words that can take away your pain. Be gentle and patient with yourself.

Grief is different for each person, but necessary for one to heal. There is no way around grief, only through it.

We hope the information in this pamphlet will help you. Because grieving can be lonely and frightening, it is important for you to know you are not alone. There are resources through Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and in the community to help you.

Please feel free to call us.

*Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Family Services Department
(414) 266-2800*

Ask to speak to a bereavement counselor.



Children's Hospital
of Wisconsin®

A member of Children's Hospital and Health System.



Grief: the death of a child



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Grief: What you may experience

It is hard to know how you will react to and deal with your loss. Below are some things other grieving parents have told us.

- ❖ Grief takes longer than most people think.
- ❖ Grief takes more energy than you ever would have imagined.
- ❖ Everyone grieves differently.
- ❖ You will mourn for your child and for all your hopes and dreams that will go unmet.
- ❖ You may feel confused and experience reactions that are quite different for you.
- ❖ Many people experience a wide range of emotions, including anger, guilt and overwhelming sadness.
- ❖ Don't be surprised if you have waves of grief that occur suddenly and without warning.
- ❖ It is common to have trouble thinking, making decisions and focusing on routine tasks.
- ❖ Your grief may make you feel like you are going crazy.
- ❖ You may find yourself questioning your beliefs.
- ❖ You may have physical reactions which you need to discuss with your doctor.
- ❖ You may find certain activities and days more difficult.
- ❖ You may react differently to people and they to you.
- ❖ Support sometimes comes from unexpected sources.

Thoughts for the future

We each grieve in our own way. Below are some things other people found to be of help. Use what you find helpful, but feel free to ignore whatever is not.

Be good to yourself

- ❖ Take one day at a time.
- ❖ Don't try to do more than your energy allows.
- ❖ Give yourself time to cry – alone, or with others.
- ❖ Keep a journal.
- ❖ Enjoy your good days. Don't be disappointed if they don't last. You will have more.

Be sensitive to others

- ❖ Remember, your way of grieving might not work for others.
- ❖ Talk about how you are feeling and let other people talk to you about their feelings.
- ❖ Don't expect people who have not had a child die to always understand. Forgive them for being unable to know what it is like.
- ❖ Sometimes people say things that are not appropriate. Remind yourself that they mean well.

Take care of your body

- ❖ Eat balanced meals.
- ❖ Get plenty of rest – even if you don't sleep.
- ❖ Exercise.
- ❖ Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Find ways to remember your child throughout the year

- ❖ Do something for others in your child's memory.
- ❖ Write your child's story.
- ❖ Do something special on birthdays and holidays to celebrate your child's life.
- ❖ Start a new family tradition in your child's memory.

Resources

Clergy

If you want to talk to your clergy person, call his or her office. Do not wait for him or her to call you.

Family/Friends

Many people want to help, but don't know how. Be specific about what you need; don't be afraid to ask for:

- ❖ Someone to answer the telephone.
- ❖ Someone to call friends.
- ❖ Someone to be with your other children while you have time alone.
- ❖ Someone to cook a meal or do some laundry.
- ❖ Someone just to be with you.

Support Groups

These are groups of people who come together to share their experiences, concerns, feelings and support. These groups can be led by a professional or by parents themselves. They usually are available at no cost.

- ❖ Children's Hospital provides grief support groups. For information, call (414) 266-2800.
- ❖ Compassionate Friends, a national parent support group, may have a local chapter near you. Check your telephone directory or call a hospital close to your home.
- ❖ Hospice groups, hospitals, and/or funeral homes in your community frequently provide support, or can help you find someone who does.