

# LOSS OF A CHILD

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*When you have just lost your child your world has shattered and stopped. You have just suffered the most profound loss that an individual can suffer. The loss of a child is not part of the natural order of life. This kind of unique loss changes you. Learn what to watch for while grieving and how to help yourself.*



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1. **Crying is natural:** Cry as much and as often as you want and need. Let the tears flow either when you are alone or in public. Crying is a common outlet for grief. Do not apologize.
2. **Recognize that time does heal:** Your loss will be intense and long-lasting but it won't always knock you to your knees. Do not try to shortcut the grieving process.
3. **Beware of change:** Losing a child can feel like you have lost a physical part of yourself. The loss also puts into question your role as a parent. The loss of your child will change your world. Realize you still can make choices and have control over how you build your life after your loss.
4. **Feeling Guilty:** It is normal to feel guilt after the death of your child. You may feel guilty that you could have prevented his/her death. Also, you may feel guilty because you are unable to care or help your remaining children as much as you would like. If the guilt keeps getting worse, get professional help.
5. **Honor the life your child lived:** Do not try to hide it. Tell other people and family what a wonderful gift you had in your life. Sharing can help heal. Try to find meaning in your child's life.
6. **Watch for special dates:** Losing a child is losing the present and also the future. Special anniversary dates, holidays and birthdays can be doubly hard because not only are you grieving his/her loss, you are grieving the life your child would have had at that special time.
7. **Know gender differences:** Recognize that you and your spouse are most likely going to grieve differently. Try not to blame or criticize your spouse over his/her grieving. Your spouse is also the person who can support you the most. He or she have also lost their child. Lean on each other.
8. **Go to Therapy:** Losing a child is a pain that is indescribable. Do not try to manage this pain on your own. Seek out a grief therapist who can help monitor your mental health, help you make an action plan, and be there to listen when you need it the most.
9. **Watch for Depression:** Being sad and grieving is crippling. Being depressed is a chemical change in your brain. Depression is sometimes missed because it is thought to be "just grieving". If you think you are depressed get a doctor's evaluation. Do not disregard thoughts of suicide. If you are suicidal, call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room as soon as possible.
10. **Remember your remaining children and family:** Grieving affects all members of the family. Other children sometimes are forgotten or ignored by parents who are buried in their own grief. Find the energy to talk to your remaining children about their thoughts and feelings. Get a therapist for yourself and/or your other children if you do not have the strength to parent as well as grieve.
11. **Talk to family and friends:** Friends, family and those at work will not know how to help you or relate to you unless you are specific about your wants and needs. Tell others what you need so they do not fall short of your expectations. Ask for help - it is okay, and at this time in your life - essential.
12. **Lean on your faith:** Remember to touch base with your source of spirituality. It will bring comfort, strength and internal wisdom. If you have no belief system to help you through this rugged time, get in touch with nature. Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to reach out and explore new areas of thought. Or, seek out others who hurt in the same way.