

Fife Sands
PO Box 29210
Dunfermline
Fife
KY12 2BS

0845 528 0322



Registered Charity No 299697
Registered Charity Address 28 Portland Place, London, W1N 4DE



Relationships and Grief



Men and women

You cannot generalise about reactions to grief. Every baby is unique and the experience a parent goes through when their baby dies is unique as well. Men and women do, however, tend to grieve in different ways. Women tend to focus intensely on their feelings and need to express those emotions and have them recognised. They need to cry and be allowed to be sad.

Men on the other hand, while equally distressed, may put their emotions on hold and get through the experience by focusing and planning for the future. Social conditioning, especially in Western societies, means that it can be difficult for men to cry or show emotion in public, or possibly even in private.

Men, if they are the main bread winner, are forced to move ahead quicker than women and put their grief on hold. They may have to get back to work after a week or two. Colleagues and friends at work may not give them the space to express how they feel so they naturally don't talk about their grief.

If the mother has been given maternity leave by her work, then she will be at home, facing the prospect of a future without the child she had planned to care for. The loss of a child is, for her, an intensely physical as well as emotional experience. One moment the baby is part of her - kicking, growing - the next it has disappeared from her life altogether. It will take time not just for her mind to come to terms with the loss but for her body to recover from the shock.

Given the intensity of their individual feelings it's easy to see how misunderstandings occur between couples and how that can spill over into anger and arguments.

A couple's frustration can be exacerbated by the fact that this is exactly when they feel they should be closest.

Grief and sex

Many of these emotions are subconscious and barely articulated by parents, but they can have an effect on all aspects of your relationship including your sex life.

While one partner may feel sex is a way to feel intimate and close, the other may resent the fact that their partner could suggest making love, at such a time. On the other hand, you may both want to make love but one or other of you feels guilty at the prospect of experiencing any pleasure.

Because losing a baby is both physical and emotional for a woman, aside from any bruising and stitches she may have, she may feel too physically vulnerable to make love. The presence of a Caesarean scar may be a stark reminder of her loss. A sense of failure and feelings of low self-esteem will inevitably effect her sex drive. Meanwhile, some men may feel a physical aversion to their partner, who seems to be grieving all the time.

Either partner may fear the whole idea of sex. Making love is about creating life and life has just been destroyed. Such an experience can make the world seem senseless.

Parents often say that losing a baby has changed them as people. There may be, therefore, little solid recognisable ground between a couple and they may find themselves having to look at their relationship in a new light.

Getting help

It's important to stress, that many parents get through the tragedy of losing a baby stronger and closer. If you do, however, feel overwhelmed by your grief and unable to help each other, it can be important to seek outside help.

This information was taken from Sands website at www.uk-sands.org