

Here are our top tips for healing as a family after a stillbirth.



Use clear and concrete language, such as “dead” and “died.” Avoid phrases such as “passed away” or “she is gone.”



Share age-appropriate details with your children, so they understand what they hear.



Respect each person's way of grieving. This allows for honest expression and healing.



Gather for a **ceremony in memory of your baby**. This gives an opportunity for friends and family to heal by mourning together.



Model healthy grieving by sharing how you feel with your child and allowing your child to share their feelings with you.



Support from family and friends can positively impact you and your child's grief experience.

Take CARE as you heal

Care for your body with healthy food, water and movement like stretching or walks outdoors.

Accept support in the ways you find most helpful.

Rest often and keep normal routines as much as possible.

Express your emotions with others as they arise.



Jessica's House offers free peer support groups for children, teens, young adults and their adult caregivers grieving a death. Each group combines therapeutic talk, play and creative expression to promote healing and hope for the future.

For additional support and resources:

jessicashouse.org

info@jessicashouse.org

or we welcome your call at **(209) 250-5395**

Authors



Erin Nelson, ACTP
Executive Director



Colleen Montague, LMFT
Director of Outreach and Education

Office Hours

Monday – Friday
8 am to 4 pm

1225 W. Christoffersen Pkwy
Turlock, CA 95382

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Healing as a Family after a stillbirth



Grief Support for Children, Teens,
Young Adults and Their Families

When your baby dies, you face the loss of your hopes and dreams for your future.

You may wonder how the world keeps spinning when yours has stopped. You may be experiencing disbelief and confusion. You may feel more alone than ever because your family and friends don't know how to support you. This guide offers practical ideas as you move toward your healing.

Talking to your children about the death

Using easy-to-understand language about death and how someone died helps prevent your child from filling in the blanks with their imagination. Be available to answer questions they may have about how their sibling died. Explain what death means by saying, *"When someone dies, their body stops working."*

Memorial services

Gathering for a ceremony in memory of your baby gives an opportunity for friends and family to heal by mourning together. Memorial services allow you to honor your baby with others who support you and your family in your healing.

Mourning your loss

There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. After the death of your baby, you may experience various emotions like sadness, anger or guilt. You may resent parents with babies or feel a deep sense of emptiness. Emotions need motion, so acknowledging your feelings and expressing them to others as they arise is the healthiest way to heal.



Everyone grieves differently

Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprint, and each person in your family will have their own way of grieving. Siblings will grieve differently, too. One person may want to talk about the death while another is naturally quieter. One person may be having a strong grief reaction while another isn't. Recognizing and respecting each other's way of grieving allows for honest expression and healing.

Physical, emotional and mental health

The death of your baby takes a toll on your physical, emotional and mental health. You may notice that your thoughts feel muddled and find it difficult to make decisions. Your energy level and capacity for family and friends may be low.

Honor the wisdom of your body. When you feel tired, rest. Eating healthy meals, drinking water and walking outdoors can help you to your next moment. Breathe. Don't expect to have the strength to do the daily activities you once did. You are experiencing a profound time of loss, and you are surviving.

Supporting your surviving children

A death in the family has a profound impact on children. Predictability helps them feel secure by knowing what to expect next. Consistency with mealtimes, before and after school routines, bedtimes and chores helps foster stability.



Research shows that children benefit when their parents take loving care of their own physical and mental health. Model healthy grieving by expressing how you feel with your child and invite your child to share their feelings with you.

Loss as a spiritual wound

If faith is a part of your life, losing a child may feel like a wound to your soul. Your physical bonds with your child have been severed, and you may question your belief structure. Anger at God or "why" questions are expected in the grief process. You may wonder where God was when your baby died or why your prayers for their safety weren't answered. Or you may find your faith stronger than ever and lean into your beliefs in deeper and more meaningful ways. Even if you believe you will see your child again someday, it is still vital for your healing to honor and express your grief.

Finding support

Extended family and friends may bring comfort and support during this time. Accepting support and surrounding yourself with those who are good listeners and help in practical ways can bring relief. Finding a peer support group with others experiencing a similar loss can help. Jessica's House offers HeartStrings, an ongoing support group for families affected by a stillbirth.