

Supporting Your Child After Infant Death

Normal Feelings:

- Children under age six usually do not understand that death is permanent.
- They may ask when or if the baby can come back.
- They may feel like they did something to cause the death. They need your reassurance that they did nothing wrong.
- They may be afraid to talk about their feelings because it could make others sad.
- They may fear that they or others will die.
- When stressed, children may regress. For example, they may start wetting the bed or using baby talk, or thumb sucking
- They can have physical reactions, like stomach aches.
- Children often show their feelings through playing. This is how they make sense out of what happened.

Ways to Support the Child:

- Be aware that children often copy your feelings and reactions. “Funeral” and “heaven” are difficult for younger children to understand.
- Avoid confusing statements like “he went to sleep.”
- Use simple explanations such as “his body stopped working” or “the doctor couldn’t fix him.”
- Give the child the choice to be involved in ways to remember the baby, such as a memorial service. Ask them if they want to do anything special for the baby.
- Avoid major changes in the child’s routine, if possible. They need stability and predictability to feel safe.
- Let your child know that you feel sad and it is ok for you or them to cry.
- Allow the sibling to talk openly about the death. This will build trust between you and your child.
- Let your child know that he/she can always talk to you, or another trusted adult, about their feelings.

If additional assistance is needed, seek help from a grief counselor.

To request counseling services, please ask parents or guardians to contact the Stepping Stones for Kids Program (727) 523-3458

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