

Getting support after loss



Support after early or late miscarriage, or ectopic pregnancy

Written by Janet Sackman, local support contact for the Miscarriage Association

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Registered charity number 1076829. Web site: <http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/>

After your loss

When you've lost your baby, whether through an early or late miscarriage or an ectopic pregnancy, it can be hard to make sense of your feelings as you try to come to terms with what has happened to you and your baby. Some of the feelings we may go through can include the following:

Shock

Feeling numb and disconnected. Feeling aches and pains in different places for no apparent reason. Unable to do anything but cry or not to cry at all even if you want to. Feeling like it's too much to take in, like it's a dream that you'll wake up from.

Denial

Pushing away thoughts of what has happened. Telling yourself that it was no big deal.

Anger

Feeling intense anger towards anyone or anything we feel was to blame for our baby's death – including ourselves. Well-meant comments from family and friends such as: "never mind, you can always have another," can be very hurtful.

Bargaining

Working out what to do differently, to prevent another loss.

Acceptance

Finding ways of accepting what has happened, which allow you to function.

You may feel some or all or none of them and at different times; it's normal to feel as if you're veering about all over the place; try to stay calm and accept that it's all part of the process of coming to terms with what's happened to you.

Getting help

Some people have lots of support from their family and friends; others struggle to find people with whom they can be open and have their feelings accepted and supported. We can feel pressure from our family and friends to be back to how we were before, which can be at odds with how we're actually feeling. You may like to talk to your GP, church minister, the hospital chaplain, a counsellor or someone who has been through similar experiences. The Miscarriage Association is a national charity with a network of support contacts, people like me who have been through losses and are happy to talk with other women going through it. The Miscarriage Association's head office may be contacted on 01924 200799. They have leaflets they can send you for a small charge and you can become a member for an annual subscription fee.

Telephone support

You may wish to talk to someone outside your family in friends, in confidence, about what you have been through and how you are feeling. **If you would like to talk with a local support contact, you are welcome to call me (Janet) on 01763 249243 between 9am and 9pm.** If I'm not in you can leave a message on the answering service and I'll call you back. This service is free and confidential. I can send you extensive support materials free of charge and a quarterly newsletter. You are welcome to keep in touch as long as we both feel it is helpful to do so.

Support group meetings

If you would like to meet and talk in person, then the support group is an ideal place to come and meet other women who have been through the same sort of experience. **The meetings are free and confidential. Details of the dates and venues for the meetings are included in the quarterly newsletter, or you can ring me for details of the next meeting.** The meetings are small and friendly; you can be assured of a supportive environment in which to talk about your experiences and how you have coped, and listen to other people share their experiences too.

We're all nervous to begin with about talking about our experiences – especially when it feels as if the time other people give you seems to be limited to a couple of minutes if you're lucky! Don't worry, everyone feels anxious about how they'll get on in their first meeting and worry that they'll just sit and cry. There's nothing wrong with that if you do, but most people do seem to be able to come and talk and feel a lot better for doing so. Women or couples are welcome, if your

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partner wishes to come along too, that's fine; if you would rather come on your own that's fine too. You can come to as many or as few meetings as you like.

If you would like to meet for private sessions, that can be arranged. A charge is made for these.

Internet support

If you're on the Internet, there's also a private group for the women who come to the support group meetings, as a way of keeping in touch in between the meetings. Even if you don't see yourself as someone who would benefit from going to a meeting, or feel you have to cope on your own, do give it a try. ***What have you got to lose?***

Support resources

Having something to read at your leisure, which you can keep as a resource when you need it, can be enormously helpful. The Miscarriage Association publish a range of leaflets that you can order from them for a small charge (tel 01924 200799). You can join the MA and receive their quarterly newsletter for an annual subscription fee. I have also written some support materials which I can post or email to you free of charge. These are:

"I'm so sorry that your baby died" for ideas you can use to help yourself and those around you through this experience, and a look ahead to the next pregnancy.

"Stories from the Heart" for detailed and frank personal accounts of people's losses;

Poems from the Heart" poems and songs written by people who've suffered loss.

There's also a quarterly newsletter containing details of where and when the meetings are. To keep costs to a minimum, it's easier to email the documents to you rather than print and post them. If you don't have email then I'm happy to print and post them to you, but if you could send a donation to cover those costs then that would be much appreciated.

Donations

Although the group is part of the Miscarriage Association, donations from callers are the only source of funds to pay for printing and posting support materials and the quarterly newsletters. If you'd like to make a donation to support this work that would be gratefully received. Contact me for details of how to do this.

National support organisations

- Miscarriage Association (losses up to 24 weeks): 01924 200799 and web site www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- Ectopic Trust: 020 7733 2653 website www.ectopic.org.uk
- Antenatal Results & Choices (terminations for abnormality): 0207 631 0285 web site <http://www.arc-uk.org/>
- Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society (losses after 24 weeks): 0207 436 5881 web site <http://www.uk-sands.org/>

Internet resources

There are lots of places on the Internet for support, including www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/ or www.babyloss.com or www.ectopic.org. You may be interested in joining my private Yahoo support group. This is a special group that's only available to members, not to the general public, and is a safe and friendly place to go and post messages about how you're getting on. Send an email to Janet on janet.support@ntlworld.com for an invitation.

Remembrance services

There are special services held every year for people affected by losing a baby in pregnancy. Everyone is welcome to attend, whether you normally attend church or not, and regardless of when your loss was or when or how it occurred. Contact Janet for precise dates, but generally the services are held:

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge: Feb | <input type="checkbox"/> Hoddesdon: November |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watford, April | <input type="checkbox"/> Luton & Dunstable: November |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wesley Church, Cambridge: May | <input type="checkbox"/> St Albans: November |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Albans/Hemel Hempstead: October | |

Your next pregnancy

Being pregnant again after loss can be an anxious time; worries about losing the next baby too can be difficult to deal with and hard to explain to other people who don't understand. I can provide support for women who are pregnant after loss, either one to one or in a group, depending on who else is pregnant at the time and subject to demand.

I wish you luck on your journey.