

Help and advice for  
children – *after the loss of  
a baby within the family*



Little Things & Co.

The baby bereavement charity



## If you are reading this leaflet it is likely you or someone you love has had a baby that has died.

When this tragic event happens, it can be all consuming and grief can take over. It can be hard to focus on anything other than your own feelings, but if there are other children, they too will have their own grief.

Within this leaflet we aim to provide help and advice to help you with children and their grief.

### Things to do with any child affected by the death of a baby

- Be honest. Tell them the basic facts and allow them to process the information before you go into details, (if details are applicable at all).
- Avoid using words such as 'fell asleep', 'gone to Heaven' or 'slipped away'. Use words such as

'died' to avoid any confusion.

It is better to be factual from the beginning rather than cause problems later. If the child thinks that going to sleep can mean a person will not wake up it can have implications for their own bedtime as well as upset about other loved ones going to sleep. Similarly, if they think they are 'somewhere else' it can confuse them, and they may ask if they can visit.

Depending on your own religious beliefs will depend on how you approach this subject, but facts are the key to avoid any confusion.

The important thing for them to process is that death is final from the respect of seeing the person again on earth, regardless of your

religious beliefs beyond that.

- Encourage them to write down their feelings. Ensure it is not a letter **to** the baby as that will undermine what you have already stated. But a letter on how they feel, the hopes they had and what they wish to do next, will allow them to express themselves.
- Encourage art and craft as a creative expression. Maybe make an item they can keep, in remembrance of the child.
- Sport can also be a good means to get them to channel their energy and let off steam. Encourage them to participate in activities that will expend energy in a positive way.
- Encourage them to ask questions about the baby. Do not hide that a baby existed. Children are very aware of their surroundings and take in more than most of us give them credit

for. They will be aware of a change in atmosphere amongst adults, so include them in conversations about the baby (that are applicable).

- Inform their nursery or school about the death. It will allow them to know what is going on at home.
- Be prepared for a change in their attitude, behaviour and mood. We know as adults that the death of a loved baby makes no sense. To a child this event makes even less sense. You may find they are quiet, loud, happy and sad. Be prepared for a roller-coaster of emotions. It is their way of expressing themselves at a confusing time. Their age will also affect how they respond. Tantrums can be common in younger children, as they do not know how to vocalise what they are feeling. Whereas slamming doors, mood swings and back-chat can be outlets for older children.

- It is personal preference on whether a child should attend a funeral. There is no right or wrong way. Only you know the child and their maturity. However, explaining the ritual of a funeral and why, we recommended. Sometimes our imagination is worse than the reality and to give the children some controlled information is better than what they may be told by a third party or internet searches.
- Depending on the child's relationship to the baby will depend on the grief. Grief is connected to our attachment of a person, so a sibling is likely to have a greater impact than, for example, a cousin or friend. However, each child is individual and should be cared for as such. Similarly, two siblings may react to the death of a baby in different ways. Ensure you acknowledge any way is ok and that there is no right or wrong.
- Expect the unexpected. Some children process the grief in very

simple ways and some children need to know lots of details. Asking about coffins, graves and if it 'hurt the baby to die' are not unusual. They are a young person trying to fathom what has happened in their previously simple world.

- Admit to the child that there are some questions they may have that you cannot answer, or that you cannot answer right now. Tell them if there are things you can answer later, but make it clear when there are no answers for you to provide.

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**As adults we know that the death of a baby is a complex, confusing and sometimes unexplained tragedy. We can struggle to process what has happened. As a child this grief and confusing feelings can be compounded. If you need any further information and advice regarding the grief of a child after the loss of a baby, that we have not covered in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to get in contact.**

**For more information:**

**E:** [info@ltandco.org](mailto:info@ltandco.org)

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