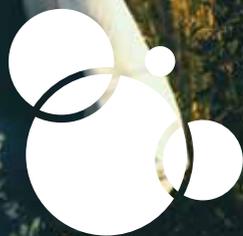


A photograph of two people walking away from the camera on a path through a field. The person on the left is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and orange trousers, with a black backpack. The person on the right is wearing a green hoodie and blue jeans, with a white bag slung over their shoulder. They are walking towards a line of trees in the distance under a clear blue sky. The lighting suggests it's either early morning or late afternoon.

Advice for friends and  
family... when a baby dies



Little Things & Co.  
The baby bereavement charity

## Advice for friends and family... if someone close has had a baby that has died.

**If you have sought out this leaflet or it has been given to you, it is likely that someone close to you has had a baby that has died.**

When a child dies, it goes against the natural order of things.

We appreciate that this can be a very difficult time for you as a family member or friend to understand just what to say and do.

We hope to be able to provide advice that you will find beneficial. It has been researched directly with those who have experienced such a loss.

We aim to guide you in what to say and not to say. What to do and not to do.

The guidance here is just that, guidance. You will know your family or friend better than we do. Approach each circumstance with your own instinct. And remember the mood of the person affected can change from day to day and sometimes even minute to minute. The grief they are experiencing is very confusing and sometimes they may not even know what they want. Treat every encounter with care.



## What to expect

The Unexpected! Grief is confusing, messy and unpredictable. Be prepared for anything. Grieving parents can react in lots of ways. No two are the same. Remember two parents grieving for the same child can also behave very differently. Things have changed completely, and they are not the person they once were. Their outlook on life may be very different to what it was. But also remember they are still the person you care about.

The important thing is to be honest with them. Admit you don't know what to do or say, but reassure them that you will be with them whatever life throws their way. **And mean it.** If you commit to such a statement do not walk away when things get rough and certainly not when things seem like they are levelling out again. Grief can come in waves. It may be that they have had some good times and you feel they are getting 'better'. Do not be surprised if they lapse from time to time and it seems they have gone backwards. Grief is not predictable and there is no definitive pattern.

The parent may have many reactions to the loss of their child. Sadness is assumed, but anger, guilt and disbelief are common. They may feel ill physically, experience extreme fatigue and having conversations may prove difficult.

## What to do

- Message and check before you visit.
- Respect their wishes.
- Families now have many options regarding their baby. Seeing the child, making memories and holding a funeral are now not only seen as standard but are positively encouraged. Allow them to make their own decisions, regardless of your own thoughts.
- Know the grief of both parents is equal. Dads are often led to believe they have to be strong for their partner, but the baby is equally a part of them both. Treat them both the same.
- Remember anniversaries and special dates. The most important thing a family want is acknowledgment. Giving them a keepsake such as a candle can mean the world.
- Acknowledge that your relationship may change. Maybe you were friends who would go out for drinks or maybe you were cousins who went for long walks together. It could be that they no longer feel able to do these things. Find other ways to connect and be together.
- Monitor your social media activity. They may feel very upset to see another baby. If, for example, someone close has a healthy new baby and you plan to share the news and perhaps photos, then alert the bereaved family in advance.
- Be sensitive to their grieving.

**What to say**

*"I don't know what to say."* Be honest that this is not something you have encountered before, and you have no words. Honesty and silence is better than saying the wrong thing.

*"Can I do anything for you?"*  
Practical tasks. Maybe they can't face taking back baby items or doing the food shop. Offer to help.

*"I am here. I cannot change what has happened, but I am here."*

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**What not to do**

- Turn up to the house or hospital without checking first.
- Pretend that the child did not exist.
- Do not ask them when they will be 'trying again'. They need time and they want this baby, not any baby.
- Try to fix the person. They are grieving and need time to heal. They do not need to be fixed but allowed time to process their new reality.
- Assume they do not want to talk about other babies. i.e. if another family member has had a child since their own loss. Be honest and ask, "would you like to hear, or shall we save for another day?". The importance is giving them the control to decide.

Similarly, do not assume that they will want to talk about other babies. Sometimes it is just too much. Do not mistake this as them not being happy for the other person, it could just be that today is not a good day to talk about another baby.

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**What not to say**

*"You are young enough to have another baby."*

*"At least you know you can get pregnant."*

*"At least you have other children."*

*"It was God's way."*

*"They are in a better place now."*

Where is better than in their parent's arms?

*"In my day we didn't have a funeral."*

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All of these things are guidelines and recommendations from parents who have experienced child loss. It is their words to help others. However human instinct is the best possible tool to help you. Baby loss is a distinct, cruel and devastating grief unlike any other. If you have any questions regarding how to approach your family or friend, not contained within this leaflet, please do get in touch.



This booklet has been prepared and sponsored by Little Things & Co. – The baby bereavement charity.

Little Things & Co. is a registered charity (1165463) who provide emotional and practical support to anyone suffering the loss of a baby.

Little Things & Co. believes the bereavement care after losing a child should be seamless, thoughtful and helpful.

If you would like to discuss anything you have read within this booklet please do not hesitate to get in touch.

To find out more about the work they do visit **[www.ltandco.org](http://www.ltandco.org)** or email **[info@ltandco.org](mailto:info@ltandco.org)**

