

A Father's grief



Little Things & Co.
The baby bereavement charity



When a child dies it can have a devastating effect on a family. Many people focus on a mother's grief; however, two people are parents to the child. A father's grief is as raw and important.

Historically men have been described as the 'stronger sex', but this label is not helpful when it comes to grief in general, let alone the loss of a child. A man typically takes on the role of caregiver and is often forgotten about amongst the concern for the baby's mother.

Here we mention some of the things, as a father you may be feeling, as well as ways in which to look after yourself and remember, as you too grieve for your child.

Things you may feel and things to remember

- That you must 'take care' of everything. i.e. funeral, registration of death and all arrangements

Choices regarding the funeral and all necessary arrangements should be made together (regardless of if you are still a couple or not). When a child dies you can feel as if you have lost any control. By choosing things together you are regaining some of that control. To make the choices together is committing to choices as a

family, albeit not the ones you had hoped to be making.

- That you should be strong and show no emotion

Many men feel this very real fear of having to be strong and not to show their emotions, especially in front of others. Tears are a natural response to grief and by crying you are not being weak. It is an expression of your love and how much you cared. If grief is retained and suppressed it will find its way out. Often when you least expect it and sometimes many years later. By expressing your pain, you are helping to project outward and begin your healing.

- That you need to protect your partner

It is natural to feel that it is your responsibility to take care of your partner and help her and all that she is going through. However, it is vitally important to remember that you too have lost a child. She too will undoubtedly have the same protective feelings toward you. Your partner is an adult and it is a grief to be shared.

- Angry, confused and frustrated

It is very usual to feel many emotions after the loss of a child. You may find yourself getting very angry at the smallest of things. You may not have the tolerance for people as you once did. Simple tasks that you normally did with ease can prove difficult. Know that this is an understandable reaction to your grief.

After the death of a child so much is taken out of your control.

It is not unreasonable to want to regain some of that control. If you find these angry feelings continue over a long period of time it may be time to visit your GP for a referral for professional help. Anger is a natural reaction to grief but if it becomes a prolonged issue it is important you seek help.

- That you should not talk about your grief, instead focusing on practical tasks

Many people use distraction techniques such as keeping busy with household chores or work to combat the isolating feelings connected to grief. However, this is not a long-term solution. Talking about how you feel is important and will allow you to process your thoughts and feelings. Discussing how you feel with other men in the same position can help greatly. There are online support groups and forums specifically designed for grieving fathers.

If you would like to know more about those we recommend, please get in touch.

- Feeling of failure and disappointment

It is common for men to feel that they have failed if their child dies. It is the most natural thing in the world to want and have children and many men report they feel like they have failed if their child dies. You have not failed. Although your child is not here with you as you wished you will always be their father. That fact can never be taken from you. We urge you to celebrate your role as a father and be proud of yourself. Your feelings of disappointment are very real, and we acknowledge those. But allow your feelings of pride to be your overriding feeling.

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If you would like to discuss anything you have read within this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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