

MOTHER'S DAY WITHOUT YOUR BABY



A day dedicated to mothering after the loss of a baby can feel particularly brutal. This brutality is compounded by constant reminders everywhere, from cards in the supermarket to adverts on TV, social media, radio etc; all suggesting ways in which we can tell our mums how wonderful they are...

But for a mum whose baby has died, it is a stark and painful reminder of motherhood lost and a future that is no longer. More elemental for women whose firstborn has died is that they are left wondering if they will ever be a mother.

Does the mother of a stillborn baby still count as a mother?

What about a mother who miscarries?

At how many weeks? Who gets to lay claim to the designation of 'mother'?

For parents whose first baby has died when they do not have living children together, Mother's Day can feel like an identity crisis. Many women will ask themselves; 'Am I a grieving mother?' or 'Am I not a mother if I can't hold my baby?' There are so many feelings experienced, that at times, women often feel like they are in a whirlpool of emotions not knowing where to turn.

For mothers that have living children, there will always be a mixture of joy and sorrow. With time, we hope that joy will begin to outweigh the sorrow. But the absence of the baby that has died is still present and painful for any mother.

During counselling, mums are offered a safe space to share their feelings and concerns, thoughts and sad moments. Recently, one mum said to me; 'I was wondering, will I ever be a mother? Will this ever happen for us?'

Although counselling cannot give answers or predict the future, it can help parents learn to live with what has happened and help them with the pain of such a tragic loss. The following advice may help if you or someone you know has lost a baby...



Be Gentle On Yourself

The words 'Be Kind' are not just for how you should treat others, but how you should treat yourself. You may feel a range of emotions, from sadness, anger and guilt to feeling at peace. This is normal. Give yourself time and space to feel and process whatever you are feeling.

Pre-Plan

If this is the first Mother's Day without your baby, this can be especially difficult simply because you don't know what to expect. You may find it helpful to have a plan but discuss it with your partner or others close to you and leave it flexible. You may just feel like staying at home or you may wish to go somewhere where you would have taken your baby such as the beach or the countryside.

Honour Your Baby


Parents, family members and friends can all become involved by honouring your baby. Doing a good deed and having a tangible positive outcome of such a tragic loss, allows us to honour the memory of our babies for the time they were with us.

Parents I have worked with recently requested donations at their baby's funeral instead of flowers. This money was used to train healthcare professionals and deliver specialist counselling to parents who had also experienced baby loss. For some, donating through sport such as running a marathon can not only help with mental health but raise awareness of baby loss too.

Lighting a candle, planting a special tree or a shrub in your garden dedicated to your baby's memory can also be a comforting and lasting way to remember your baby too.

Lean On Family & Friends

Don't be afraid to speak to others. Spend time with family and friends who understand. Talk about your baby. You may find that hearing your baby's name can be soothing. Although, if you want to be on your own that is ok too. Prepare your family and friends beforehand that you may not know how you are going to feel. Over the years, I have noticed that mothers who have lost babies not only grieve their own losses on Mother's Day, but they are also extra sensitive to other mothers who are grieving.



If you are a friend or family member of someone who has lost a baby, don't be afraid to reach out either.

Often family and friends do not know what to do or say in these circumstances. They do not want to do or say anything that may make grieving parents feel worse and yet by saying or doing nothing, it could be deemed as forgetting or not caring.

Always acknowledge the loss and that this is a difficult time with a hug, a card, a phone call or even a box of chocolates. The most important gesture any mum needs is to know you care.

Mother's Day is a day to remember all mums with both living and non-living children. Mother's Day is also a day to remember and think of those who want to be mothers but for many reasons can't be or aren't at the moment, but wish they were.

If you need some help managing your emotions, do not struggle on alone. I can offer you a free 15 minute, no obligation telephone call to answer any questions you may have about specialist baby loss counselling and to see if I could help you.

In addition, I may be able to offer parents living in Kent some free counselling sessions through baby loss charity, Abigail's Footsteps, who raise funds to provide a specialist counselling service to parents who have experienced stillbirth or neonatal loss. If you are interested in this or know someone who could be, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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