



# Parent Support OF PUGET SOUND

SUPPORT FOR MISCARRIAGE, STILLBIRTH AND INFANT LOSS

Dear Parent,

We are so deeply sorry for the loss of your baby but are glad that you have found us in hopes that we can help support you. Parent Support of Puget Sound (P.S.) is a parent support group for those who have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss. P.S. is a peer group, comprised of parents, relatives, and friends who share the common experience of the loss of a baby. Our wish is to provide a safe place for you to find some comfort, share the story of your losses, and feel supported. We believe that sharing your feelings and experiences with others who can truly understand and empathize can be such a powerful part of the grieving and healing process.

The death of a baby is a life-changing experience. Most parents are not able to satisfactorily grieve the loss of a newborn, or a baby who died during pregnancy. Instead, they are expected to put their lives back together and continue with life as if the loss did not occur. This is what society expects us to do. Parents need to grieve their loss. Although this may seem difficult, it is a necessary and natural process. Often the pain we have isn't known or understood by the people we love or by others who are trying to help.

## *P.S. Can Help*

We host monthly peer support groups at various locations in the Puget Sound area as well as virtually. This is the main service that we provide—a place where you can meet others, share your individual experiences, and receive support from others who have lived through similar experiences. The meetings are led by trained volunteers—other parents who have experienced the loss of a baby, but who are further along in the healing process. We also hold an annual remembrance walk, along with other healing events within the community, and publish quarterly online newsletters throughout the year.

## *Many Resources Available*

It is also our goal to provide resources, in the way of pointers to books, articles, websites, and local therapists and professional services, to try to help you sift through the abundance of information that can be so overwhelming at this time in your life.

Inside this folder, you will find a list of the peer support group contacts and schedules, info about our “Forget Me Not” column to honor and remember your child in our newsletters, articles about coping with grief, a sample P.S. newsletter, and where to find the resource lists.

We hope you find this information helpful. Please feel free to also contact us through any of the methods listed below.

May you know that you are not alone.

Doug Lacy-Roberts, P.S. President

Robin Hills, P.S. Vice President

\*Please note the P.S. phone number is a voicemail-only number that is not staffed. We do our best to return messages within two business days.

P.O. Box 1912 | Bothell, WA 98041 | 425-686-9451\* | [info@psopugetsound.org](mailto:info@psopugetsound.org)

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## Support Group Participation Guidelines

**Thoughts, feelings, and experiences shared in this group stay in this group.** We respect each other's right to confidentiality. We do not share names or stories outside of the group.

**Each person's grief is unique and valid.** While we may share some commonalities in our experiences, none of us is exactly alike. Consequently, we respect and accept both what we have in common and what is different. This frees us from needing to compare.

**Grief is not a disease, and no "quick fix" exists for what we are feeling.** There is no specific timetable or speed for how long it takes us to heal.

**We feel free to talk or to not talk about our grief.** We try to create for each other, an atmosphere of willing, invited sharing. However, if one of us needs to participate by listening rather than talking, we sincerely respect and support that need.

**It's okay to cry. It's okay to sit in silence at times.** Tears and moments of silence are sometimes a necessary part of sharing our heartache. We try to be sensitive to make gentle spaces for each other when this happens.

**There is a difference between actively listening to what another person is sharing, and expressing our own grief.** We make every effort to not interrupt when someone else is speaking. When the speaker is finished, we try to affirm his or her experiences and feelings.

**We allow each person equal time to share.** This helps us have enough time for every person to share during our time together. It's not necessary for every member to give a response to each story. Sometimes someone's story genuinely needs to take a little more time, and we as a group adjust ourselves to accommodate this.

**We avoid giving advice unless it is specifically requested by a group member.** Since our group is for support rather than therapy, we focus on affirming one another's experiences and feelings of grief. If we do post questions to each other or specifically ask for advice, we try to respond with ideas that helped us in similar situations rather than telling another participant what we think they should do.

**We recognize that our thoughts and feelings are neither right nor wrong.** We enter into each other's thoughts and feelings without trying to change them.

**We try to be courteous to each other.** In respect for each other and to honor the grief we each carry with us and express during our sharing, we turn off our cell phones.

**If you need support during times a group does not meet,** please consider joining our private 24x7 Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/psofpugetsoundgroup/>.



## Taking Care of Yourself

In caring for ourselves, we need to identify those activities which are healing to us as well as those areas that may hinder our healing and cope with each appropriately.

- Give yourself permission, time, and space to grieve.
- Don't pretend that death doesn't hurt.
- Feel free to protest the "why" of the death.
- Don't judge your level of grief and healing by how others are grieving and healing, but buy your own internal awareness.
- Understand and accept your limitations.
- Respect your spouse's timetable and method of grieving.
- Don't escape into loneliness.
- Get rid of the imagined guilt and the "if only's".
- Laughter doesn't mean you are being disrespectful to your child's memory.
- Confront the fears of your death and the death of other loved ones.
- Crying cleanses; do it as often as you need to.
- Honestly express your feelings about this death to people who will understand and not be judgmental and who will not be hurt by your honest expression of feelings.
- Recognize that seeking professional counseling doesn't mean you are weak, inadequate or crazy.
- Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, tennis, walks at nature centers, reading, volunteer work to gain relief and understanding.
- Talk about your experience to friends who were involved and to friends who were not involved with the death.
- Accept your friends with all their imperfections and occasional bad advice, not all people will understand or realize the extent of your loss.
- Tell others what you want and need from them: help, emotional support, time sharing.
- Continue to participate in activities that are fun for you and with people who are special to you, and don't underestimate the effects of small pleasures.
- Treat yourself kindly.
- Recognize you may not always want to talk about your baby, sometimes there is great relief being where no one knows you've lost a child.
- Eat nutritiously; consider using a vitamin supplement.
- Not crying doesn't mean you don't remember.
- It is fine to either enjoy being around other people's babies, or to be uncomfortable.
- Exercise to improve sleep.
- Set small goals.
- Accept others' verbal, non-verbal and physical expressions of caring for you.
- Postpone major decisions such as selling your home or changing jobs.
- The decision to have or not have another child is yours alone.
- The question "how many children do you have?" is a difficult one and you may find yourself answering it in the manner which best fits the situation and/or your own needs at the time.
- Take a break from intensity and exposure to pain.
- Consider participation in support groups: grief shared can be grief diminished
- Avoid masking the pain with drugs or alcohol.
- Give yourself permission to backslide.
- Realize that you cannot prevent, cure or skip the grief process, the only way out is through.

The above is a compilation of excerpts of articles by the following and are reprinted with their permission.

"Caring for the Caregiver", Barbara Swenson, RN, MS, PNP, Seattle

"Ten Guidelines for Dealing with Grief", TCF, Austin, TX;

"Parent Contact Workshop", Washington State Chapter, NSIDSF



## Coping as a Couple

Rebecca Smith Waddell

The keys to coping as a couple are communication and the realization that **each person grieves in a different way** and at an individual pace. We're all a sum of our life experiences and that dictates how we react to everything.

Grieving a loss can be one of the most difficult experiences a couple has to overcome.

Realizing there will be differences in the way you deal with your loss is the first step to understanding each other. Sometimes one partner will be more outwardly upset than the other in the beginning, and the roles can switch back and forth a bit as you take turns trying to care for each other. At times there may be the temptation to get angry or frustrated with your partner because his or her emotions are reflected differently than yours and perhaps are not easy for you to comprehend.

It is not uncommon, for example, for a woman to feel as if she is showing more grief for her lost child than her husband when he assumes the caretaker role. He may appear to be handling the situation better simply because he feels he has to be strong for his wife—and part of that strength is shielding her from his pain. It doesn't mean he is hurting any less. This is where communication will help you understand each other better.

**To keep dialogue open**, it helps to remember to listen as much as you want to be heard.

Be tolerant and try to be non-judgmental, control anger, and be careful not to assign blame so that you don't put your partner on the defensive. Explain your feelings in terms of your emotions, rather than how you feel your spouse may have aggravated the problem. Example:

"I'm feeling confused because I'm not sure I understand how you're feeling," will probably get a better response than, "You never tell me how you feel." "You mustn't be upset," or "I don't understand why you don't seem to care about our loss."

There are many things that couples need to discuss after a loss, including what the future holds, when to start trying again, how to cope with medical problems, just to name a few.

If you have trouble communicating, it is a good idea to **seek counseling** early on to help work things out and prevent the conflicts from escalating. Request the advice of someone impartial and who understands the loss of a baby—support groups are available in many areas and couples counseling is another good option. Friends, family and clergy may also offer guidance.

It also helps to **reaffirm your love for one another**. Grieving is often accompanied by emotions of anger, sadness and confusion as well as a feeling of loneliness. Being together or doing little things to acknowledge the positives can assist both partners in their recovery.



## How to Create Memories

- 🌱 Plant a tree.
- 🌱 Donating a bench with baby's name in a neighborhood park.
- 🌱 Setting flowers or a message in a bottle afloat on the sea.
- 🌱 Writing a letter or a poem to your baby.
- 🌱 Wearing a special piece of jewelry in your baby's memory; i.e. locket with baby's picture/lock of hair/ashes.
- 🌱 Creating a "memory box" for cards, flowers and any other mementos. Create a scrapbook.
- 🌱 Keep a journal. Write about anything, how you felt when you were pregnant, what the loss meant to you, how you get through each new day.
- 🌱 Have a star named after your baby.
- 🌱 If you have footprints, have them framed with baby's birth/death certificate.
- 🌱 Create a special garden. Each year or on special days, add a new plant or tree—a living memorial.
- 🌱 Make a cross-stitch with baby's name, weight and date of birth/death.
- 🌱 Donate a bereavement book to Parent Support and dedicate it to the memory of your baby.
- 🌱 Donate a rocking chair in your baby's memory to the hospital.
- 🌱 Create a pencil etching or picture from photos.

### *Holiday/Anniversaries*

- 🌱 Make quilts or baby blankets for the hospital's NICU and take them there on baby's anniversary.
- 🌱 Send baby's doctor or nurse a white rose on baby's anniversary.
- 🌱 Release helium balloons up with a special message attached.
- 🌱 Donate "Toys for Tots" at holiday time.
- 🌱 Send flowers to your church on baby's anniversary.
- 🌱 Buy a special holiday ornament each year, or paint your own.
- 🌱 Buy a special candle to be lit on special days and holidays.
- 🌱 Prepare a form letter to friends and relatives on anniversary dates—include stationery for responses, donations to children's causes.
- 🌱 Donate age appropriate items to charity in honor of your baby.
- 🌱 Visit the cemetery if nearby or another favorite spot where you can be alone with your thoughts of your child.



## Suggested Websites for P.S. Parents, Families, and Friends

[psopugetsound.org](http://psopugetsound.org)—This is the main website for our organization, P.S. of Puget Sound. Here you will find our mission statement, contact information, stories, newsletters, calendar of events, and resource lists.

[nowilaymedowntosleep.org](http://nowilaymedowntosleep.org)—This non-profit organization helps you locate local trained professional quality photographers to provide beautiful heirloom portraits to families facing the untimely death of an infant. They also provide free retouching services for families who were unable to get professional portraits taken to ensure every family has a peaceful image of their baby.

[crisisclinic.org](http://crisisclinic.org)—This non-profit organization offers an array of support services available to everyone in King County, Washington. Telephone services provide immediate, confidential assistance for people in emotional distress and in need of help.

[stillstandingmag.com](http://stillstandingmag.com)—A blog on infertility and loss.

[unspokengrief.com](http://unspokengrief.com)—A place to share your story if that helps and/or read others to feel less alone.

[facesofloss.com](http://facesofloss.com)—Putting a face on miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant loss.

[bereavement-poems-articles.com](http://bereavement-poems-articles.com)—Poems and articles for those suffering from grief and loss. This website covers a variety of topics to provide inspiration and comfort for the bereaved plus an online memorial tribute.

[healingheart.net](http://healingheart.net)—Healing Hearts for Bereaved Parents is dedicated to providing grief support and services to parents via newsletters, a pen pal program, blog, specific resources for siblings and grandparents, and other programs.

[compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org)—Compassionate Friends is an international organization with hundreds of local chapters whose mission is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

[everymothercounts.org](http://everymothercounts.org)—An advocacy and mobilization campaign to increase education and support for maternal and child health.

[faithslodge.org](http://faithslodge.org)—A place where hope grows.

[inciid.org](http://inciid.org)—A website devoted to specific infertility issues. It includes pregnancy loss and pregnancy after loss discussion boards.

[missfoundation.org](http://missfoundation.org)—A support website for grieving parents dealing with a miscarriage, stillbirth or death of a child at any age. This website has a list of memorial service and inspirational songs.

[nationalshare.org](http://nationalshare.org)—Serves those troubled by the death of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death. They will mail a list of support groups in your area and a free newsletter.

[thehouseikeep.com](http://thehouseikeep.com)—A website about a short film written by Jhene Erwin in which we experience the life of Nicole, who grapples through her day, struggling to come to terms with the loss of a miscarriage during the eleventh week of her pregnancy.

[october15th.com](http://october15th.com)—The official web site of the Pregnancy and Infant Loss organization's Remembrance Day on October 15th every year.

[beautifultribute.com](http://beautifultribute.com)—A free online memorial platform which provides an everlasting and respectful place where families can return to share memories and pay tribute to a loved one.

[findingsupport.wordpress.com](http://findingsupport.wordpress.com)—You are not alone (inactive blog with useful information).

[rtzhope.org](http://rtzhope.org)—engaging a global community of bereaved parents and their health providers to improve mental health outcomes, while also advancing pregnancy and infant loss awareness, education, and support.

[perinatalsupport.org](http://perinatalsupport.org)—Whether you have or might have a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder, you deserve support.



## Suggested Books for Grieving P.S. Parents, Families, and Friends

### For Parents:

- Empty Cradle, Broken Heart by Deborah Davis
- Losing Malcolm by Carol Henderson
- Waiting with Gabriel by Amy Kuebelbeck
- Life Touches life: A Mothers Story of Stillbirth and Healing by Lorraine Ash and Christiane Northrup MD
- Our Stories of Miscarriage by Rachel Faldet and Karen Fitton
- Finding Hope When a Child Dies by Sukie Miller and Doris Ober
- A Silent Sorrow: Pregnancy Loss by Ingrid Kohn and Perry-Lynn Moffitt
- Empty Arms by Sherokee Ilse
- When Your Baby Dies by Louis A. Gamino
- When Bad Things Happen to Good People by Harold S. Kushner
- Parenthood Lost by Michael R. Berman MD
- When the Bough Breaks by Judith R. Bernstein
- Help, Comfort, and Hope After Losing Your Baby by Hannah Lothrop
- An Empty Cradle, A Full Heart by Christine O'Keeffe Lafser
- Grieving the Child I Never Knew by Kathe Wunnenberg
- A Guide for Fathers: When a Baby Dies by Tim Nelson
- A Piece of My Heart: Living Through the Grief of Miscarriage, Stillborn, or Infant Death by Molly Fumia and Ann Dunnewold
- Miscarriage: A Shattered Dream by Sherokee Ilse and Linda Hammer Burns
- The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide by Helen Fitzgerald
- Our Babies Have Died by Sands Vic
- Pregnancy After a Loss by Carol Cirulli Lanham
- Three Minus One: Stories of Parents' Love and Loss by Sean Hanish and Brooke Warner
- Mommy, Please Don't Cry by Linda Deymaz and Sabrina Smith
- We Were Gonna Have a Baby, but We Had an Angel Instead by Pat Schwiebert and Taylor Bills
- Ethan's Butterflies by Christine Jonas-Simpson
- Stacy Had a Little Sister by Wendie C. Old
- No New Baby by Marilyn Gryte and Kristi McClendon
- Something Happened by Cathy Blanford and Phyllis Childers
- What Happened to our Baby? by Susan Heizer
- Help Me Say Goodbye by Janis Silverman
- After a Death: An Activity Book for Children by Amy Barrett Lindholm

### For Friends/Family:

- What Can I Say and Do? by Kelly Osmont
- I Don't Know How to Help Them by Linda K. Maurer
- When a Baby Dies: A Handbook for Healing and Helping by Sara Rich Wheeler and Rana K. Lim

### For Children:

- Tear Soup by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen
- For the Grieving Child: An Activities Manual by Suzan Jaffe



## Therapist Resource List

We partner with Perinatal Support as they provide a vetted list of counselors that is intended to assist you in selecting a therapist in the Seattle area. It is not an endorsement of the providers listed and is for informational purposes only, and no guarantee is made of accuracy. You can find this list at

<http://perinatalsupport.org/for-parents/other-providers/>

You may also email or call the Perinatal Support Warm Line for a full offline list of resources who have not paid to be listed online but were vetted through their provider application process.

## Forget Me Not

If you would like to receive our quarterly P.S. newsletter and any other communications, please fill out the form online at

<http://psopugetsound.org/newsletter/>

Additionally, you can choose to have your child(ren) included in the newsletter Forget Me Not column during their birth edition. Note that only baby's name(s) and birth date(s) and/or death date(s) as well as parent's name(s) will be shared, and any additional information provided is for office use only. Please email if any information changes or you wish to discontinue participation in the Forget Me Not column.