

## **Don't Give Up Hope!**

This brochure has been designed to provide a sense of hope to multiple birth loss families who are raising surviving multiple birth children.

Often multiple birth loss families give up on the hope for a bright future, particularly during the early years of the grieving process. However, the challenge that such families face, that makes multiple pregnancy loss so unique to singleton pregnancy loss, is the fact that families often have to cope with death and life together.

Multiple birth loss families have to cope with the grieving process, as well as cope with raising a living child, or children. This can be extremely difficult as parents often don't know how to react towards the survivor or survivors.

A common misconception is to try and ignore the situation ever occurred. Many families may refuse to speak of the child who has died, and try and raise their surviving twin for example, as a singleton child.

However, because a surviving twin is part of a fractured set of multiples, no one knows exactly how they feel, growing up without the sibling with whom they shared a womb for many months.

By acknowledging your surviving multiple birth child's status, i.e. twin, triplet, etc, you help them to grow up feeling comfortable in sharing their emotions, and all family members learn how to celebrate their special status in life in a positive way.

## **What does National Twin Loss Support do?**

Our organisation provides the following resources for multiple birth loss families, health care professionals, as well as other bereavement care organisations and community groups:

- **Free educational brochures & newsletters** covering different aspects of multiple birth loss issues;
- **Books for purchase** that explain in detail the emotions felt by multiple birth loss parents, as well as information for the survivors as they progress through childhood and adolescence;
- **Access to other organisations and health care professions** who provide online support;
- **A Public Facebook Page** that allows for wider community members to access newsletters and to communicate with each other if interested.

Note—NTLS does not have the funding to provide counselling services. However, a directory of professional organisations can be accessed via the website.

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**Do yourself a favour and learn all you can;  
then remember what you learn  
and you will prosper.**

Proverbs 19 v.8

# **NTLS**

## **National Twin Loss Support**

Established Oct. 1992



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[www.nationaltwinloss.org.au](http://www.nationaltwinloss.org.au)

**Disclaimer:** This brochure is a simple, basic, informative guide about some of the issues that effect surviving twins and other higher order multiple birth children, from parental observation. It is not designed to replace professional medical advice.

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## **The importance of a positive approach.**

The support from friends and family received by any grieving family is paramount to a successful and eventual, positive recovery. Therefore, if those around us can recognise and acknowledge multiple birth loss in a positive way, and not dismiss it as 'a strange idea from a mother who can't accept what life has thrown at her', then the surviving multiple birth child will grow up in a more positive psychological frame of mind.

We must be aware that surviving multiple birth children suffer guilt of being just that; a survivor. They experience emotions similar to those experienced by war veterans, accident victims, and people who have endured major natural disasters. Psychological studies done over the years support this.

So much has been written about the negative impact upon surviving multiple birth children, especially those who experience their loss early in life. However, by being open and honest about your survivor's situation, their ability to cope, and accept is strongly enhanced.

As one 18 year old surviving male twin shared when asked about his feelings towards the loss of his sister at birth:

"I'm living for the both of us – it makes me feel good!"

Let's continue to make these survivors "Feel Good!"

## **The Benefits of 'Memory Creation'**

This is the creation of tangible and real reminders of the person who has died so that their memory can be shared with those around us. It is considered to be an extremely therapeutic and psychologically healthy method of progressing through the grieving process.

Unfortunately for many multiple birth loss families, they are not offered the same opportunities as singleton loss families to create tangible reminders, especially during the early years of their loss. For example, when the mother is still in hospital, health care professionals will focus upon the living child, or children, as they attempt to lessen the emotional pain for the mother. However, by doing this, they rob the mother of any opportunity to create memories through the taking of photos, ultrasound scans, and other such creative avenues.

The following is a brief list of suggested ways for memory creation:

- Keep a journal or diary;
- Write poetry;
- Take photos (if possible);
- Have a sketch drawn of all babies together;
- Make a scrapbooking album with various mementos, letters, reports;
- Plant a special tree or rose bush.

## **How to cope with birthdays and anniversaries.**

These major events often fall under the heading of 'memory triggers' because they remind bereaved families of what they have lost. To acknowledge the deceased child's anniversary of when they died, or their birthday, particularly during the early years of the grieving process, can be very difficult indeed.

As years pass, the challenge for the multiple birth loss family becomes, "how do we celebrate our surviving multiple birth child's birthday without making them feel embarrassed or uncomfortable?" After all, it can be very difficult to be happy when celebrating a day that also brings with it unhappy reminders.

Here are a few suggested ideas of how to 'celebrate' for all the multiple birth children in your family; survivors and non-survivors included, so that people can understand, and even share in how your family feels:

- Have a special cake for the survivor as well as the deceased child/ren;
- Release helium filled balloons up into the sky;
- Give everyone sparklers to wave about;
- Have a tree-planting ceremony;
- Light special candles;
- Make paper boats with tea candles and float them down the river.