

The Difference of Maternal Grief

The difference that has been observed with maternal grief is how others around the grieving person react. Babies who die, (whether during the pregnancy or shortly after birth), have had such a short existence compared to the rest of the world's inhabitants.

This makes any tangible piece of evidence that the baby/ies even existed, worth its weight in gold to the parents. Sometimes all the parents have is a memory, and that makes the situation all the more sad.

Society seems embarrassed about babies who have died. It is alright to speak openly about an older person; there are photographs, letters, amusing stories to share about them. But mention the name of a baby who had died, who has lived such a short life, and a deafening silence invades the room.

Conversation ceases. People look at the floor, the walls, and then within a few moments decide to discuss the weather!

Let's join together in standing up for the rights of these children. They, and their families, are the forgotten ones of our time, and we should be ashamed of ourselves for it! Let's share our stories, our pictures and even our tears with all those around us.

Let's pray that one day, society will mature enough to realise what a silly error it has all been.

The Water-Lily

(verses 1 & 4)

Henry Lawson

A lonely young wife
In her dreaming discerns
A lily-decked pool
With a border of ferns,
And a beautiful child,
With butterfly wings,

Trips down to the edge of the water and sings:

“Come, mamma! Come!

Quick! Follow me -

“Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!”

And the wife in her dreaming
Steps out on the stream,
But the lily leaves sink
And she wakes from her dream.

Ah, the waking is sad,
For the tears that it brings,
And she knows 'tis her dead baby's spirit that
sings:

“Come, mamma! Come!

Quick! Follow me -

“Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!”

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Lynne Schulz, from her book,
“The Diary”, 1998 (1st edn.) & 2014 (2nd edn.),

Dedication

**I don't care if the world thinks it wrong
that I still cherish you;
I don't care if the world thinks it wrong
that I still love you.**

**I am not the world; I am only your mother.
(Lynne Harford, 1998 & 2014)**

NTLS

National Twin Loss Support

Established Oct. 1992



Coping With Twin Loss

www.nationaltwinloss.org.au

Disclaimer: This brochure is a simple, basic, informative guide about coping with twin loss during the early stages of grief. It is not designed to replace professional medical advice.

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Basic Grief Information

Grief means that someone has suffered a loss. Probably the most extreme form of loss is the death of a person very close to us. Surprisingly, other common situations can also lead to a person experiencing the frightening, unpredictable road of bereavement.

Western scientists have proven that physical and emotion pain register the same symptoms within the human brain and body i.e. lethargy, lack of appetite, depression, etc.

It is very important to recognise the symptoms, so that the grieving person can be guided through recovery.

Here are a few facts:

- Grief is a personal, varied experience;
- Grief needs to be worked through, not ignored;
- Grief will undoubtedly change your life;
- Grieving people need friends who will support and listen; not judge and give unwanted advice;
- Grief should not be experienced in isolation;
- Grief can bring people closer together, yet it can also tear them apart.

Multiple birth loss families need a great deal of support as they try to cope with the grieving process, as well as the demands of a newborn child or children. Grieving and parenting by themselves can be emotionally and physically draining. Try doing both together!

Stages of Grief

Whilst some health care professionals may consider the explanation of grief in 'stages' an old fashioned concept, referring to grief in 'stages' can still be beneficial in assisting bereaved persons to understand the emotions they are likely to experience. However, it is important to remember that grief is unpredictable and may not necessarily follow a particular pattern.

There are several models explaining the stages of grief and although they may differ in the number of stages they use, they do share similarities. Grieving is a very personal and individual process, influenced by a person's cultural and religious beliefs. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and as long as the bereaved person has support, they will travel their own journey.

Dr Granger Westberg developed a model of ten stages and this remains a useful method of attempting to explain a process that constantly changes, evolves, and takes on a life of its own. Grief can fool us into thinking it has left us, and then suddenly explode back into our lives in an unwelcome and painful way.

Westberg's Ten Stages of Grief:

1. shock, denial;
2. Emotional release;
3. Isolation and depression;
4. Physical symptoms of distress;
5. Inability to cope with life;
6. Sense of guilt;
7. Anger and resentment;

8. Unable to return to normal activities;
9. Gradual awareness of reality;
10. Return to reality, acceptance and hope.

Joining a bereavement care group or agency may provide an important support base for a grieving person.

Multiple Birth Loss Families & Grief

Health care professionals and other community carers often handle multiple birth loss situations poorly simply because they are ill-informed, or inadequately trained.

Twin loss families have stated that some medical staff, friends and family may ignore the child or children who have died because they feel this increases the pain for the bereaved family. Ignoring the deceased multiple birth child/ren can actually increase the pain and make it difficult for the surviving multiple birth child/ren to feel comfortable with their position in life.

Multiple birth loss families do not appreciate hearing their deceased children referred in terms which also may be used to describe food items. One South Australian woman was told her unborn twin who had died would look like a 'piece of meat' and was therefore too frightened to look at the baby after the birth. Another woman was told her child would look 'flat like a pancake'.

When unsure of what to say, just ask the bereaved parent. The experience is new and frightening to everybody. Using unhelpful descriptions and old clichés will only make the situation much worse and create further tensions. Listen first, talk later.