

# Stillborn, Miscarriage And Infant Death

## Parents Of Infants – On Losing A Baby

By: Deby Amos

Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few, and for some parents even non-existent. Those of us who have had a baby die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child.

Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For most parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be.

For many parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss.

It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter the age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have had a child die.

Those of us who have not had an older child have nothing else to compare the death of our baby with, just as those who have had an older child die cannot completely understand our feeling upon the death of a baby.

The death of an infant is often times considered 'unfortunate' but so many feel that it can be *remedied* with the birth of another child.

Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope, and the future that has been lost with the death of a 'much looked forward to' baby.

In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, "You're young, you can have other babies..." or "It's better you were never able to hold her and love her..."

And things like, "It's over with, forget it, put it all behind you..."

The truth of the matter for me, at least, was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica.

She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone.

Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, neither have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I never got to hold her?

I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss.

If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life.

Learn to love her? I already loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her. I knew she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her I cannot ever forget her.

I never want to.

*Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few*

**SPECIAL  
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I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like.

Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life.

I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder...

I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know. We have no memories to cherish.

I am not trying to make a comparison with the death of a child who lived to be older.

I cannot compare things of which I do not know about. I just know that a parent who has a baby die feels grief, and loss, and pain and hurt.

To grieve is to grieve, to feel pain and loss is to feel pain and loss, to miss a child is to miss a child.

Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feeling and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt at no matter what age a child dies.



# The Scent Of My Baby

By: Debby Root  
Fox Valley

When we think of babies, we think of that certain scent.  
The scent that newborns seem to have, for me – that came and went

The scent of my baby is a different one, it's not shampoo or baby powders.  
It's not that "newborn scent" but that of fresh cut flowers.

For God chose my son to be with him and leave me down below.  
So the flowers I place upon his grave are the only scent I know.

So when I smell a flower my son always comes to mind  
and the delicate scent of a flower seems to suit my son just fine.

For my son touched and brightened my life just like a flower may.  
And the true beauty of a flower was my son in every way.



## Footprints

Some people come into our  
lives and quickly go ...  
Some stay for a while and  
leave footprints in our  
hearts, and we are never,  
ever the same ...

## A Little Mixed UP

Just a line to say I'm living  
That I'm not among the dead  
Though I'm getting more forgetful  
And more mixed up in the head.  
For sometimes, I can't remember  
When I stand at the foot of the stair  
If I must go up for something  
Or I've just come down from there.  
And before the 'fridge, so often  
My poor mind is filled with doubt  
Have I just put food away, or  
Have I come to take some out?  
And there're times when it is dark out  
With my nightcap on my head,  
I don't know if I'm retiring  
Or just getting out of bed.  
So if it is my turn to write you,  
There's no need in getting sore  
I may think I have written  
And don't want to be a bore.  
So remember I do love you  
And I wish that you were here  
But now it is mail time  
So I must say, "Goodbye Dear."  
There I stood beside the mailbox  
With a face so very red.  
Instead of mailing you my letter,  
I had opened it instead.

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# Infant Death: Collecting And Creating Memories

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This workshop was presented by Linda Moffatt at the 1993 National Conference. This summary of her workshop was written by Sara Tamburrino, Rolla, MO and lovingly lifted from their newsletter. Linda Moffatt, former facilitator of the St. Louis Infant/Toddler group, led this workshop.*

One of the main topics she addressed was the collection and creation of memories when a baby dies either before or shortly after birth. Linda's infant son Nick died seven years ago. She assured the group that you never forget, and that parents should not try to.

She stated that her memories have given her much comfort as the years have passed. Although there is still pain, it has softened and she sees her memories of Nick as something very special in her life. She had several good ideas for collecting and creating memories.

Items can be kept in a special memory box or book. This may be as simple as just a storage box, or can be something created and decorated just for this purpose. Linda has used a trunk, which she has decorated beautifully.

Photograph albums can be used to keep pictures, certificates, cards, poems, or journals.

Don't be afraid to include anything that can connect with your pregnancy, your baby, and even things that happened after his or her death – include anything that is special to YOU. Pictures of the mother while pregnant, or an ultrasound of the baby can be part of your memory collection.

Pictures, footprints, ultrasound pictures and others can be transferred to a shirt or other clothing using transfer medium and a copy of the object. (A craft store could help with these items.)

Special jewelry can be purchased or created using the child's birthstone, either from the date of birth, death, or the due date. Charms can be engraved with names and dates. Locketts can be worn with pictures.

Personalized license plates can be ordered with names and/or special dates. Linda's license plates read NICK85. She is very proud of these plates and they have given her comfort as time passed.

Linda ended by advising parents not to be limited by what other people think is appropriate. Follow your own heart in collecting things that are important to you. This may be different for every parent.

# The Same – But Different

By: Linda Moffatt

Have you ever seen that commercial with the little girl and the Ritz Bits crackers? The announcer is trying to get her to say whether Ritz Bits are the same as regular Ritz crackers or different.

The little girl tries various explanations. First, she tells him how they're alike. "So they're the same?" he asks. "No, Silly," she answers, "one's little and one's big." "So they're different," he says.

She rolls her eyes.

Finally, in frustration, she says, "Don't you get it?"

What is obvious to her – but difficult to explain – is that they're the same, but different.

The shock/disbelief/horror/anger is the same. The pain in the chest is the same. The void is the same. The ache and the longing and the despair hurt just as much, for just as long.

The *difference* is nobody believes any of that.

When Nicholas was diagnosed (shortly after birth) with a heart defect, he was given only a short time to live.

We wanted to bring him home from the hospital, and we were met with some resistance from the family and friends.

Many thought that bringing Nicholas home was a *terrible* idea. "Oh, my, you'll get attached to him, and it will be much harder on you when he dies," was the common thread of their thoughts on the matter.

I don't know how they thought we had avoided attachment to this point – he was our *child*, he looked just like our other children, he was our *son*? (Can you envision a world where people have to be talked into taking their new baby home? "Don't worry, Dear, you'll like him once you get him home and get attached to him.")

People honestly seem to think you can carry a child through pregnancy (to whatever stage the pregnancy ends), give birth to your child, hold him or her, and have no feelings toward or about your child or yourselves as parents unless the child is alive and healthy.

When a baby is expected, we are told by

everyone, including the media, that the birth of a baby is the most blessed of all life's events, that this new person, who is different from all persons ever born, will change our lives forever.

And yet when this most blessed and unique person *dies*, everybody acts like it's *nothing*. "Oh well, better luck next time." "It's better he died before you got to know him." "You'll have more babies."

These are some of the things that make grieving for an infant child complicated – *different*.

There is no permission given to even *feel bad*, because you can't have feelings for someone you didn't know."

So parents who lose a baby will generally try to hide their feelings of grief from others for fear of ridicule, disapproval or stern lectures about how lucky they are – to have other children or the *ability* to have new (an obviously improved) babies.

On a tragedy scale, losing a baby ranks pretty low.

For people who will still say that it is "harder" to lose an older child, I say that these are people who are not currently pregnant or have an infant, and that they have forgotten.

They've forgotten the excitement, anxiety, fear and – ultimately – the miracle of birth.

They've forgotten the purity of love, the wonder and amazement at the first glimpse of this brand-new person, and the vow that every parent makes at that moment: "I'll never let anyone or anything hurt you – ever!"

Let them hold their own newborn in their arms once again, and they would remember.

Do I wish Nicholas had died at birth instead of living six weeks? Of course not, It simply defies logic to think that any parent would want less time with their child instead of more.

People will say that grief over the death of an infant is nothing more than the loss of hopes and dreams for the future.

That is certainly a part of it, as it is for any bereaved parent. (The fact that my brother lived 49 years doesn't stop my mother from wishing to see him with his grandchildren).

But we also miss that unique individual who was our first-born or second child, or only daughter or whatever.

Even if I'd had another baby, Nicholas would still be my only child starting Kindergarten this year.

He was his own person with his own place in our family.

When we speak of the death of a child, age has no place in the discussion of grief.

Don't you get it? It's the *same*.

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## Alike But Unlike

By: Dennis Klass  
St. Louis, MO

"We are alike, at the same time we are very unlike."

"Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling grief are different; but we are alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt, we experience many of the grief symptoms alike, and we are alike in our need for help."

"While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away each other's pain, we can help each other by simply being there and listening to each other."



# Just Ten Weeks

## A Poem On Miscarriage

By: Susan Erling,  
St. Paul, MN

From: Share Newsletter, Mar-Apr 1984

For just 10 weeks  
I had you to myself.  
And 10 weeks seems too short a time for  
you to have changed me so profoundly.

In just 10 weeks  
I came to know you ... and to love you.  
You came to trust me with your life.  
Oh, what a life I had planned for you!

Just 10 weeks  
Then I lost you.  
I lost a lifetime of hopes, plans, dreams, and  
aspirations.  
A slice of my future simply vanished  
overnight.

Just 10 weeks  
It wasn't enough time to convince others

how special and important you were.  
How odd, a truly unique person has died  
recently, and no one is mourning the  
passing.

Just 10 weeks.  
And no "normal" person would cry all night  
over a tiny 10-week fetus, or get depressed  
and withdrawn day after endless day.  
No one would, so why am I?

You were just 10 weeks, my little one. You  
darted in and out of my life too quickly.  
But it seems you only needed 10 weeks to  
make my life so much richer and give me a  
small glimpse of eternity



# After I've Lost My Baby, Please ...

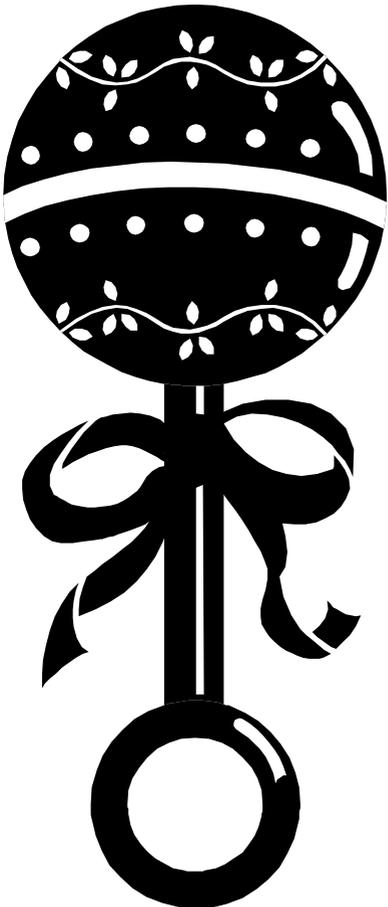
By: Elsie Sieben  
Worcester, MA

- Don't ignore me because you're uncomfortable with the subject of death.
- Acknowledge my pain, even if you think I shouldn't be feeling it because I've lost "only a baby." And don't expect me to be "over this" in a month.
- If you invite me for lunch, expect to talk about my loss.
- Don't change the subject if I should start crying. Tears and talking are the healthiest way for me to release this intense emotion.
- Don't remind me that I'm lucky to have the other kids – I am and I know it, but my pain is for this baby, and the others don't take that away.
- Don't devalue my baby – to me he was a very special, unique person and there is no way he can ever be replaced.
- When you ask my husband how I am doing, don't forget to ask him how he is doing, too.
- Hug me; tell me you care, and that you're sorry this has happened.
- Be available to me often if you can and let me talk and cry without judging me.



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# Where Did You Go?



By: Darcie D. Sims  
Abilene TX

Oh, Baby, my laughing treasure, where did you go?  
Are you hiding around some corner?  
Are you playing peek-a-boo with the sky?  
O, Baby, my loving joy, where are you now?  
Are you at last free of our meddling fingers,  
free of our toil and trials?  
Are you riding the rainbow's curve, dancing  
on star dusted paths?  
Oh, Baby, are you sleeping now, or has your  
life only just begun?  
Is that your smile I see sparkling in the sun?  
Is that your sigh I hear whispering in the  
leaves?  
Are those your tears I feel raining on my  
cheek?  
Oh, Baby, were did you go?  
Why are my arms so empty?  
Why is my heart so full?  
Oh, Baby, so tiny, yet so strong, where are  
you now?  
Here, here in my heart, in my very being.  
Here in my life ...  
never to be cast away, never to be forgotten.  
Oh, Baby ... I love you