

Differences in Grieving

Your feelings come from who you are, what kind of relationship you have together and how you've been taught to grieve. Understanding these differences may help you as you grieve and heal together. Recognizing your baby as a real person is important. Take time to create memories and acknowledge your baby's existence in the world. The grieving process takes much longer than we, as a society, anticipate. One of the major causes of stress in bereaved couples may develop because partners experience grief at different times, express it in different ways, and cope differently. It can be very challenging and can test the strength of the relationship. After a loss, the relationship may need more love, strength, and patience than ever. Your relationship will need to be at the top of your priority list.

Women	Men
Sadness, Depression -normal and usually longer than men's sadness	Tends to Work More -may find comfort in staying busy
Tears and Crying -more likely to express and have more permission to show sadness	Hold Feelings In -frequently cries alone or resists crying
Sleep Disruption -insomnia, dreams, even sleeping due to depression	Worries about Partner and Needs to have her Feel Better -may try to cheer her up, hoping to get her through grief as quickly as possible
Angry, Irritable -little things may bring tension or rage	Anger and Depression -men have more permission to express grief through anger, cover depression with outbursts
Thinks of Her Baby Constantly -for weeks, months, or even years	Will Tend to Focus on Others -may deny feelings to take care of partner or others
Talks Frequently of Baby -helps make the loss real, recognizes the importance of the baby and helps heal by telling her story	Reluctant to Talk About Baby -may be afraid of "breaking down," or appearing "weak" or upsetting partner
Change in Social Behavior -may be withdrawn or can't stand being alone, may feel detached from everyday life	Physical Problems -may overeat or lose appetite, have difficulty sleeping, upset stomach
Needs to Hear Partner Express Their Grief -They may seem cold and uncaring when actually they are just grieving differently	May Feel Left Out When Others Show Concern for Partner -it may feel as if you don't matter as much as she does
Need for Comfort/Intimacy -women often feel abandoned, tend to feel more comforted by hugging and holding. Sexual intimacy is usually the farthest thing from her mind.	Need for Comfort/Intimacy -more likely to feel that sexual intimacy will bring emotional closeness. Men may feel awkward just holding and hugging.

Let Grief Strengthen Your Relationship

Stay Healthy

It may be hard to exercise at first but it is a great way to relieve stress and grief. It will also help you sleep better and help you control your appetite better. First, check with your doctor to see if it is okay for you to exercise, then try the following together:

- Walking
- Biking
- Running
- Hiking
- Stretching

Talk to Other People

Try a parent support group meeting if you can. You don't have to talk, you can just listen, but being around people who have experienced or are experiencing what you are going through, might make you feel better.

Talk to/About Your Baby

Talking about your baby and your loss can help you find your true feelings more easily and you may find a sense of relief just getting it off your chest. Some people also find peace in talking to their baby. Find a quiet place where you and your partner can go to talk to your baby.

Nurture Your Relationship

Sometimes when a couple is having trouble in a relationship, they have stopped going out on dates or even stopped just spending time alone. Even while you are sad, do special things with your partner. Once a week is a good place to start, even if it is just going to a neighborhood pizza place. Talk about how you met, fell in love, what you like about each other etc.

Slow Down

Avoid major decisions such as moving or changing jobs for a few months. It is tempting to think a big change will ease your grief but it often makes it worse by adding stress to your life.

Hold Each Other

Sometimes all you want to do is cry while being held. That is okay! And that is normal! Make this time of gentle caring and holding a time to recognize that your love continues even in grief. Your first intimacy can be somewhat difficult. Recognize it as both a precious and a vulnerable time.

Do Not Blame Each Other

Now is not the time to bring up old disagreements or past hurts. Nor is it the time to accuse your partner of loving your baby less than you do. This is no one's fault.

Have fun

The first time you laugh after your baby dies, you may feel guilty. Remember, your baby wouldn't want you to be sad. It is okay to enjoy little things in life, like a good laugh.

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