“How very softly you tiptoed into my world. Almost silently, only a moment you stayed. But what an imprint your footprints have left upon our hearts.”

Author Unknown
Dear Loving Family,

There are no words that could adequately bring you comfort at this time. Instead, Project Sweet Peas would like to help you preserve the memory of your child. Saving things like arm bands, blankets, pictures, pieces of clothing, a wisp of hair and your child's footprints are all ways to preserve the memories.

No parent should ever suffer the loss of a child but we hope that this package will bring you some comfort. We are truly sorry for your loss.

The Project Sweet Peas Family
www.projectsweetpeas.com
Understanding Your Grief

Grief has no timeline. Grief is a healthy expression of the love that we have for our children and the pain we have in losing them. In the upcoming days, weeks, months and even years you will experience a wide range of emotions, feelings and behaviors. These emotions can be powerful and overwhelming at times. Below is a brief overview of some feelings you might be experiencing.

Initially, you might find it difficult to accept what has happened to your family. You may feel some denial towards your baby’s death. You had all of the hopes of having a healthy baby only to have that dream taken away. It is natural to be in shock and to initially disconnect between the reality of the situation and what should have been.

You might feel anger, frustration or guilt. You may have these feelings towards yourself, medical staff, your partner or another loved one. You might find yourself questioning decisions that were made in your care or your baby’s care. Your partner may not be grieving in the same way so you might also feel frustration for that disconnect. Be patient with yourself and with others. Everyone will grieve differently. When you are ready, make sure to communicate your needs and feelings in the most constructive way that you are capable of.

After your baby’s death you might feel jealousy towards others that have healthy children and those that are pregnant. You might have fear that in the future you may not be able to conceive a healthy pregnancy. These emotions are natural and are experienced by many parents that have experienced loss. It is common for parents to take time away from loved ones with healthy children so that they can take the time they need to heal.
Of all things, remember that every person expresses their grief differently. Your partner and other family members may not always be at the same point in their healing as you are. Try to remember during those times that you are all grieving the precious life that you have lost. *You are all here in this moment because of the love that you have for your child.*

"A moment in our arms, a lifetime in our hearts."

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Coping with Insensitive Comments

There will be times when you feel like you are alone in the world. The family and friends that were beside you immediately following the loss of your child may have drifted away. They might not understand why you are still grieving. Worse yet, they may make comments that are just inappropriate for how you are feeling.

The best advice we can offer is to find comfort in knowing that there are others out there that can empathize with what you are going through. Also, know that although some may say things that are unkind, more times than not they have well-meaning intentions.

If Your Baby is Your First Born

The death of a first born child can bring with it a unique set of challenges and sense of loss. You have not only lost your baby, but you also may feel that you have lost your identity as a parent. You may encounter comments from others such as “You will have others” or “You will be a parent when it’s meant to be.” It is important that you remember that you are and will always be a parent to your baby. With time, you will find special ways to parent and honor your baby’s life.
Taking Care of Yourself

After the death of your baby, taking care of yourself physically and emotionally can be a challenge but it is the key to helping you in the healing process.

- **Seeking Support:** Make sure to seek support in some form that suits your needs—loved ones, local support groups or professionals can provide great support and comfort. A strong support system is essential in helping you express your grief.
- **Nourish Your Body:** Make sure to get adequate amounts of sleep, exercise regularly and nourish your body with healthy foods. This will help you to recharge and will help relieve stress.
- **Finding a Medium to Express Yourself:** Many parents find journaling a healthy way of expressing their feelings. Other activities include art, music, cooking, and exercise.
- **Cultivate Your Relationship:** Your baby is the most beautiful expression of the love you have with your partner. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of that love when you both grieve differently. Make sure to take time out of the day to spend with your partner. Whether it is talking about your baby or just doing a daily activity together, keeping that connection is important.
- **Have Patience:** Have patience with yourself and understand that although you may not be where you want to be emotionally today - you will get there with time.
- **Understand that your grief is limitless:** Just as love is limitless, so is grief. You will experience so many emotions in this journey, some positive and some negative. There will be times where you don’t understand those emotions. Trust that with time you will learn to more easily cope.
Helping Siblings Cope

Sometimes, the hardest people to talk to are your other children after loss. It is best to be open with your children by using developmentally appropriate responses. If you have younger children, they may not understand what it means to lose a baby but they may sense your sadness. If your children ask if you are okay, explain to them that you will be and answer any questions they might have.

Regardless of age, all children will probably grieve the loss of your baby in some form. You may choose to explain to your child that you are missing the baby and find a way that they may associate with what you are going through. Consider planning a way to memorialize your baby with your family. Understand each of your children’s individual need to memorialize your baby. Respect every family member’s need to memorialize differently. The important part is to include your children in this process.

Recommended reading for young siblings:

Always My Twin by Valerie Samuels
Am I Still a Sister? By Allie Sims
Someone Came Before You by Pat Schweibert
Something Happened by Cathy Blanford
Where’s Jess? By Ray and Jody Goldstein
Honoring Your Baby

Memorializing your baby is an extraordinary way to help you heal and to help create a lasting legacy for your baby. Have a conversation with your loved ones about ways that you would like to memorialize your baby. Some ways you could honor your baby include:

- Plant a garden or a tree at a park
- Volunteer or donate to a charity in your baby’s name
- Donate items to bereaved families at a local hospital
- Attend local remembrance ceremonies or events
- Have your baby’s clothing made into a quilt
- Collect items that remind you of your baby
- Celebrate your baby’s birthday, due date or other anniversary every year
Trying Again

After a loss, the decision to try again can be difficult. The biggest question once you've decided you want another baby, is how long to wait. There is no perfect answer to this question, as you must make sure you are physically and mentally ready to have another pregnancy, and everyone is different. The first step would be to discuss your decision with your doctor. They will be able to determine if you are physically ready for a subsequent pregnancy, and if you should consider any testing or preparations before you start trying. Once you are told you are physically able, you need to determine if you and your partner are mentally ready. This can be difficult as there is no set amount of time that you should wait. Some couples start to try again as soon as they are physically ready to, while others wait a year or longer to work through their grief of the previous loss. Only you and your spouse can determine when the right time is.

Once you have made the decision to become pregnant, keep in mind that subsequent pregnancies can be emotionally difficult. You are now aware that not every pregnancy ends as we hope, and with this knowledge can come fear, anxiety, and depression. These feelings are normal and for most women, unavoidable. Be honest about your feelings and find someone to talk to, especially if you start to become overwhelmed with your emotions. Talk to your doctor about bereavement counseling or joining a support group. Support groups can be found online or through your hospital and local community. Connecting with someone who knows what you are going through can be very helpful.

Remember: be easy on yourself and your partner. Grief and pregnancy are both emotional experiences, and together they can be a tough combination.
Personal Stories

It’s easy to feel alone but there are more than a million families annually who suffer pregnancy and infant loss. Here are a couple of stories that you may relate too.

“When we lost our first born daughter Nevaeh, we were devastated. I didn’t know how life would go on or ever be normal again. The best analogy I can compare it to is that losing someone is like a scar: at first it is at the surface and raw and painful, but with time it starts to heal, but never goes away completely. I miss my daughter every day - but seven years later - the pain is less and easier to cope with. Now days there are smiles and not just tears as I remember our sweet baby girl.” – Nicole Onesti

“After nearly 6 years and countless infertility treatments, I became pregnant with my daughters, Willow and Hazel. Just shy of 20 weeks, my water broke. After nearly 7 weeks of bed rest, my perfect little girls were born at 26 ½ weeks. I had Willow for an amazing 16 hours before she grew her wings. Hazel joined her sister exactly one week later. I find joy in the precious time I was given with my daughters, packing a lifetime of memories into a few hours and a few days. I know their memory lives on through me every day that I continue.” – Krystal Roark

“I remember dreaming of being a mom when I was young. Imagining what it would be like to hold my sweet baby in my arms. I never imagined what it would feel like to lose a baby. But I did. I lost seven. Seven sweet angels that I will never get to see grow up or hear their first words. Even though they are not here with me, they made me a stronger person. A moment in my arms, a lifetime in my heart.” – Shannon Mason

"Avi, my first born child, came into this world with the odds against him. Despite a traumatic birth process, a genetic disorder, and an abundance of unknowns, he fought alongside us for one precious day. I find solace in the time I was given with him; during my pregnancy and in that hospital room. Whether we are given days, weeks, months, or years with our children, their memory lingers in our hearts for a lifetime." – Sarah King
Memory Box Programs

For those families who face the heartbreaking loss of a child, we offer memory boxes with treasured keepsakes to capture and preserve those precious few memories along with information and resources on coping with grief. To request a care package please visit our website.

www.projectsweetpeas.com

Candle Light Vigil

Every October Project Sweet Peas honors hundreds of babies gone too soon in our annual candle light vigil. As one of the largest vigils of its kind, parents have online access to view the luminaries that were personalized and lit in their baby’s honor.

Forever My Sweet Pea Facebook Page

Our Forever My Sweet Pea Facebook page creates a unique forum for families to speak about their loss, connect with other families and to honor their babies in a special way. Follow us on Facebook for bereavement resources, updates on current events, graphic giveaways and more! www.facebook.com/ForeverMySweetPea
Bereaved Parent Match

The death of a baby is unimaginable to most. Oftentimes, it is difficult for loved ones to comprehend your grief. Consequently, they may be unable to provide the comfort you so desperately need right now. Project Sweet Peas understands that many bereaved family members may benefit from connecting with others who have experienced the loss of a baby.

Project Sweet Peas welcomes you to find support you need through our Bereavement Match Program.

Please visit our website www.projectsweetpeas.com under the resource tab for more information.
Helpful Resources

When we are struggling with grief there are many forms of media that can be used to find comfort.

Musical Media:

Gone Too Soon - Michael Jackson  
Still - Gerrit Hofsink  
Baby of Mine - Allison Krause  
Your Hands - JJ Keller  
Sissy’s Song - Alan Jackson  
Who You’d Be Today - Kenney Chesney  
You are My Sunshine - Carly Simon  
Somewhere Over the Rainbow - Israel Kamakawiwoole  
Life is Eternal - Carly Simon  
Precious Child - Karen Taylor-Good  
I Will Carry You - Selah  
Held - Natalie Grant

Books to Read:

Still  Stephanie Paige Cole  
Knocked Up, Knocked Down  Monica Murphy Lemoine  
I Will Carry You  Angie Smith  
Empty Cradle, Broken Heart  Deborah Davis  
Always Within: Grieving the Loss of your Infant  Melissa Eshleman  
They Were Still Born  Janel Atlas  
Baby Dust  Deanna Roy  
When Hello Means Goodbye  Paul Kirk
Support Websites

Support and Information:

**Compassionate Friends**: Hosts chapters across the United States that provide local support to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. [http://www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Miss Foundation**: Provides immediate and on-going grief support to all family members. [http://www.missfoundation.org/](http://www.missfoundation.org/)

**SHARE Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support, Inc.**: Provides support groups and information to families that have endured loss. They also provide information, education and resources regarding the needs and rights of bereaved parents and their families to caregivers, hospital staff, clergy and other professionals. [http://www.nationalshare.org/](http://www.nationalshare.org/)

**National Alliance for Grieving Children**: Provides a database of local centers that provide support to children that are grieving a loss. [http://childrengrieve.org/find-support](http://childrengrieve.org/find-support)

Other Resources:

**Virtual Memories**: Create an online memorial for your loved one [http://www.virtual-memorials.com/](http://www.virtual-memorials.com/)

**Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep**: Provides free memorial photos to families which have received a poor prenatal diagnosis or poor prognosis at birth [http://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/](http://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/)