

* How do you deal with insensitive comments and people who say all the wrong things?

o EVERYONE who comes to group has at least one cliché example to share. “It’s for the best.” “At least it happened before he was born and you got more attached.” “It’s all a part of God’s plan.” “You’re young, you can always have more.” “It just wasn’t meant to be.” “There was probably something wrong with your child, and you’re all better off this way.” “It’s time to move on.” “Be thankful for what you do have and don’t focus so much on this.” “It’s just a bump in the road – you’ll get over it.” I could go on and on and on....

o How to deal with these comments? That’s very much a personal decision based on who is saying it, how you know them, or whether or not you want to engage in a more in depth conversation with them about their comment. Remember that there is never a right or wrong answer – take care of yourself and say what you feel comfortable with in the moment.

o Unfortunately, it’s not so easy to just brush off the implications of these comments, which are: “Your loss was not THAT bad” or “You’re child can be replaced when you have another”.

~ Other questions or discussion topics include:

o What do I do if I am grieving differently than my spouse?

- Although men and women do grieve differently, the most important thing is that spouses try to respect, understand, and support one another in their healing without judgment. Open communication is key.

o How do I handle pressure from my family to “get better”

- It’s important for others to understand that grief is a process and completely different for each person

- Unfortunately, grief is not linear, logical, or predictable...

- It’s unreasonable for family and friends to expect the “old” version of ourselves to return. The loss of a child is a life-changing experience that can alter our beliefs, our perspectives, our relationships, and our priorities in life.

o How/when should I go back to work?

- This also depends on each person, their job position, the flexibility of their schedule, amount of time off they have, and level of understanding and support from their office

- But, there are universal issues that arise in returning to work after a loss:

- Answering questions about what happened

- Dealing with expectations that you are going to be the same person – with the same energy, motivation, work ethic, and focus as when you left

- And, handling other people's discomfort with the topic of death altogether

o What do I do with the complex emotions of seeing other babies/pregnant women who were all due the same time as my baby? Or who have children the same age as mine should have been?

- This is difficult – as there are some people/babies that you just can't escape.

- It's always hard to see people with the families that you should... and it's even harder to watch these babies grow up and reach all of the milestones that you should be experiencing with your own baby

- Hopefully, these parents will show some sensitivity - and be both sympathetic and sensitive to our losses....

- If not, though, it's a personal decision how to proceed. We always give our group families "permission" to take care of their emotional needs first.

o How do I talk to living/subsequent children about death

- This might be the most personal question of this list – because it not only takes your philosophy of death into consideration, but also the role you want your child that died to have in your family.

- Some people have picture(s) displayed in their homes
- Some find comfort in visiting the cemetery or other special location (beach, garden, nature) together as a family
- Some light a special candle or have a symbolic memento
- Some celebrate birthdays and milestones
- Some find comfort in remembrance jewelry

o Along those lines, another question that arises within group is: “How do you answer the question, ‘How many children do you have?’”

- This might depend on the situation – who is asking, how well do you know them, and are you ever going to see them again. Is it a new co-worker? Is it a lady in front of you at the grocery store? The mailman?

- Again, there is no right or wrong answer. Many bereaved parents want to avoid long conversations about their grief with strangers; yet, they feel guilty if they deny mentioning the child that they lost. Give yourself time to figure out what answer feels right to you in different scenarios.

o Many people want to know how to celebrate birthdays/anniversaries/other milestones?

- Some bereaved parents choose to do random acts of kindness, donations, or other volunteer work in their child's memory
- Some have a gathering with a special balloon release
- Some see it as a personal remembrance time to spend with family
- Some send out tribute or memorial cards
- Almost everyone who comes to group wants to do SOMETHING for their children, though – even if it's just themselves

No matter what, this journey is yours. Be gentle with yourselves as you travel this unfathomable road. And, know that you are not alone.