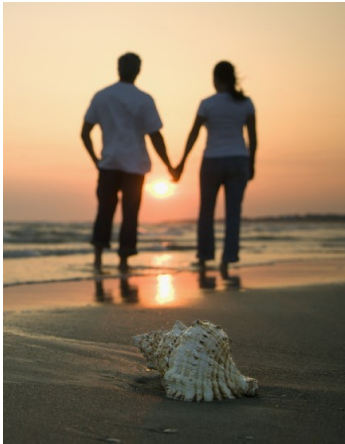


Grieving in Silence: Life After a Miscarriage

by Aneece Alicea, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Miscarriage is often referred to as the “silent grief.” Even though an estimated 15% of pregnancies end in a miscarriage, it is often overlooked and not openly discussed. Like cancer or divorce, just because an event is common does not make it any less painful. For many women and their partners, miscarriage is heartbreaking, confusing and discouraging. It is not uncommon for women and their partners to experience grief and a

variety of painful emotions. Women may experience symptoms of depression or anxiety. Depending on the circumstances of the miscarriage, they might even experience trauma-like symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Factors such as multiple miscarriages, fertility issues, medical complications and having a more progressed pregnancy can make miscarriages even more difficult.



It is very important that after experiencing a miscarriage, the expectant mother and father shouldn't rush through their grief. If you have had the unfortunate experience of suffering a miscarriage, you should allow yourself to feel any sadness, anger, frustration and loss. These feelings might come and go and could be triggered by factors such as seeing a pregnant woman, hearing a baby cry or approaching significant dates such as the due date. The more the feelings are suppressed or denied, the longer the healing process can take.

Allow your support system to help and care for you. Rely on those who are understanding and loving to you and your partner. It may be helpful not to discuss the miscarriage or loss with those who are not as understanding or might minimize your loss. Some feel it is helpful to talk about their experience as much as possible to get their feelings out, while others only want to talk about their loss minimally or at the right time. Trust your gut to tell you who you can talk to, and when you need to talk.

In the days and weeks after a miscarriage, it is important to care for yourself. Do nice things for yourself, and maybe take a break from any obligations such as volunteering or other optional activities for a time to process your feelings. Often there is a sense of guilt or responsibility for the miscarriage when in reality there is nothing that could have prevented it. Some women may even feel guilty if they are not dealing with intense grief, especially if the pregnancy came at a challenging moment in life. The most important thing is that you understand that whatever emotions you are feeling are 'OK.' It is not for anyone else to tell you what you 'should' be feeling.

It is important for a woman to receive care and support from her partner, however if the father grieves

(Over)



For more information, call

**708-895-7310 or
219-226-1810**



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differently it can cause both of them to feel misunderstood and isolated. While this may be challenging, it's important to express your feelings to your partner so that your partner can be more supportive and can better understand what you are experiencing. Partners can easily feel shut out if there is little or no communication. Remember that fathers can also experience grief, guilt, sadness, fear and confusion. If you open up about your feelings, your partner may feel more safe to open up about his feelings as well. Grieving together can create a deeper bond and commitment than there was before. Knowing that you are in it together can strengthen your relationship even after normal life sets in.

Over time, you can find the ability to make peace with your miscarriage. It may be helpful to think of the loss as adding a baby in Heaven, redefining the anniversary of the miscarriage as something that feels comforting, or finding another way to memorialize the unborn baby. Some couples find comfort and closure in giving the unborn baby a name so they can focus more on the joyful time of the pregnancy instead of the heart-breaking miscarriage. Some women may convert the intended nursery to a room for their hobby or may donate unused baby items to a ministry or a friend.

Ways to Support Someone Who Has Had a Miscarriage

- **Listen if they want to talk about it.**
- **Do not force them to talk if they don't want to.**
- **Don't offer an explanation of the miscarriage such as the pregnancy not being in "God's timing."**
- **Offer kind and consoling words or gestures such as "I'm thinking of you," send a card, drop off a hot meal, or mow their lawn.**
- **Don't blame the mother for causing the miscarriage.**
- **Give the person time to heal.**
- **Be understanding, even if you do not understand.**
- **Remember that the mother and father are grieving and may possibly experiencing symptoms of trauma.**