

## Helping someone who is grieving

### **Be a good listener**

Grieving people need to talk about their loss, acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief but you can be there, hear their story, and share their journey.

### **Be a shoulder to cry on**

Allow them to cry with you, crying helps the release of emotions and this helps with healing.

### **Be in touch with them**

Drop in, call on the telephone and say "I was thinking of you today" write a letter, send an email, remember special days like Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries.

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

### **Be a friend**

Often being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)

## Contact Us

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### **Telephone Grief Support Line**

**Call 02 9489 6644\*** (\*Call costs will apply)

### **NALAG Centres & Branches (NSW)**

**NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief DUBBO**  
(Same as Head Office)

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# Termination of Pregnancy

Grief reactions associated with  
termination of pregnancy for  
**medical reasons**

## Grief reactions associated with termination of pregnancy for medical reasons

No-one who conceives a pregnancy expects to have to terminate it for medical reasons and for what would normally be a happy event to become one of sadness.

Although there are now a number of tests that are done routinely to check the baby in the uterus, it comes as a shock to learn there is something wrong. It may be there is a problem with the baby and the prospective parents are faced with the difficult decision of terminating the pregnancy. Or it may be there is a problem with the mother's health and the doctors advise against continuing with the pregnancy.

For many couples this news comes out of the blue. All the babies born into the family up to now may have been normal healthy infants. Couples may question why this should happen to them in particular. It may be difficult to believe this is really happening. Both may feel guilt; that they have passed something on to the child, that there is something wrong with them, or with their side of the family. They may feel they have let their partner down and are not good enough for them. They may worry about future pregnancies and avoid having sex with their partner for fear of a another termination.

For other couples this news may not be so unexpected. There may have been an inherited condition in their family which has appeared in

their baby. It may seem unfair they have been singled out. Or the mother may have had some knowledge of her health problems.

Often there is the anxious process of further tests on the baby in the uterus to help confirm the baby's condition. The mother may worry about the procedure of the termination, and whether it may cause difficulties for future pregnancies.

The decision to terminate a pregnancy may cause feelings of guilt, both at the time and later on.

### Decision making

The decision to terminate a pregnancy or not can be a very difficult time for the couple. It is important women and their partners faced with this situation receive as much information as possible about the baby's condition and what their options are. Information and support from doctors and nurses can be vital at this time. They can best advise about the possible outcome. There may be written information about the condition that is available to read. There may be an association or a support group involved in the condition where parents can go for information.

It is important not to be rushed into making a decision about whether to keep the baby or not. Counsellors and social workers are skilled in helping people cope with crises and decision making.

The whole family apart from the parents can be affected by this decision, and may need to be involved, particularly in order to provide support.

After the termination an examination of the baby can confirm the medical condition.

Later, on-going support from others such as the GP, counsellors and family is important to come to terms with the decision to terminate and the loss of the baby.

### Coming home

Coming home from the hospital can feel very empty and support from family and friends at this time can make a lot of difference.

It is important to make follow up appointments with the doctors so they can give advice about future pregnancies and provide further support and information. Future pregnancies with healthy babies are usually possible.

It is important to remember that women and their partners have the right to make a decision about their pregnancy, and that they should not be pressured into doing something they may not wish to do. Grief and sadness are normal after a termination, but with good support and counselling, they do get through it.

Adapted from Grief Link resources website:  
[www.grieflink.asn.au](http://www.grieflink.asn.au)