

Thoughts on Coping

Honor your feelings. No matter how strong, forgiving, smart or moral you thought you were, you may be surprised by the intensity of your emotions. Shock, anger, dwelling on “what if?” and even scary thoughts, like relief at not having the baby or a desire for revenge, may all generate from your bereaved self.

Honor your tears. Just when you think you’ve stopped crying, more memories, thoughts, or new facets of your loss bring fresh tears - sometimes at the most awkward moments. Like anything that’s been taken against your wishes, it takes time to realize all that you’ve lost. And each new discovery brings more pain.

Feeling guilty is common. Feeling you’ve abandoned your baby, failed him or her, or that you are being punished is common. You may have guilt over surviving or even thriving, when your baby is dead.

Expect to repeat and/or contradict yourself. You may find yourself wanting everyone to know what’s happened, or you may find yourself wanting to keep your loss private. If talking helps, then talk. Being involved with people in some way will help your recovery, making you more confident about your ability to go on with your life.

Understand that grief takes much longer to resolve than most people realize. Grief is both physical and emotional. Trust yourself to know for how long, and in what way, you need to recover. Consider every task you complete, even if it’s as simple as getting dressed, a major achievement.

Words from Brief Encounters parents:

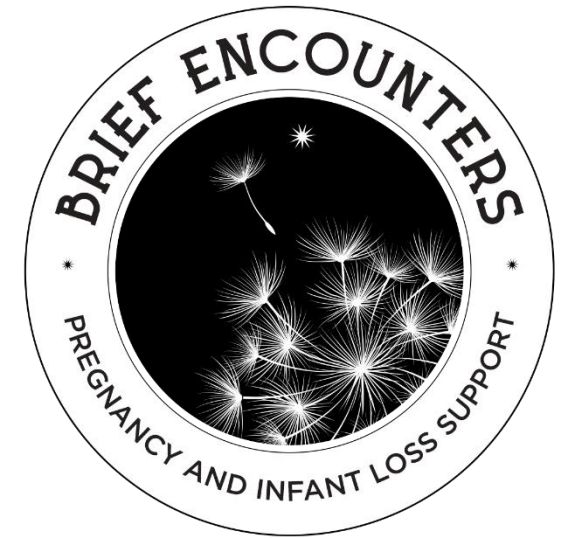
Brief Encounters was a place where my husband and I felt like we belonged after we lost our seven-week old son, Nikolas, to SIDS. When you lose a child, your entire world stops, but the rest of the world still continues and you feel so out of place. Brief Encounters is a safe place to show your pain and vulnerability with other loss parents. --Jinny

Brief Encounters helped me feel less alone. Hearing other parents’ stories helped me understand what I was experiencing and let me know that I wasn’t crazy, I was grieving. --Meagan

At Brief Encounters, people who have lost babies early along in pregnancy are not made to feel their loss is “less than” those whose babies were further along. We don’t compare our grief – we just grieve together and support each other. --Rachel

Brief Encounters helped to normalize the jumble of emotions I felt after losing our twins. As a father, it was one of the few places where it was acceptable to talk about my loss and my grief. --Eric

At Brief Encounters, there was always someone who WANTED to hear about my baby. Even today, years later, I know I have a place where someone will listen to her story, say her name with me, ask to see her picture, and tell me how beautiful she is. --Shannon



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**Breaking the Sense of Isolation
Surrounding Pregnancy and Infant
Loss**

**For more information or if you just
need to talk, please call our message
line at (503) 334-2564
or visit www.briefencounters.org.**

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Each year in the US, nearly one million families experience a miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant death. To grieving families, that number represents more than a statistic. It means a profound sense of loss: dreams that will never be realized and future plans that are abruptly ended.

Grieving is the way you put your heart back together after it has been shattered.

Brief Encounters can help. We're people like you who have experienced the pain of losing a child. We know about the hard work of struggling to pick up the pieces of shattered dreams. We've learned that feelings are not right or wrong, bad or good, weak or brave. We've discovered through talking with each other that all the emotions we feel after the death of our babies - sorrow, anger, emptiness, guilt, frustration, self-pity, and depression - are normal. We've struggled to learn how to be patient and kind to ourselves as the rest of the world tries to rush us through to recovery. And we have learned that doing the work of grieving together is more effective and less lonely.

Grief is like being on an unfamiliar road without a map. You may have never experienced something this intense. Grief can be terrifying. You may think you are going crazy, but your feelings are normal.

Meetings

Brief Encounters meetings provide a supportive environment, a place to learn about the grief process and a safe place to express feelings. Here, parents are able to talk about their loss with others who won't

change the subject or be uncomfortable around tears. As one parent shared, "*The community I found through Brief Encounters let me know I wasn't alone in my grief. For a few hours a month, my experience felt normal.*" Because group members are at different stages of grief, there is an opportunity to learn how others have coped with loss and to begin to have hope for the future.

Brief Encounters meetings are led by trained facilitators who guide the sessions. After words of welcome and introductions, participants discuss aspects of grief that come up in their daily lives. Those not comfortable talking are free to pass.

We offer three types of meetings: one for parents who have experienced a loss at any time during their pregnancy or whose babies died after coming home, another for those who have ended a wanted pregnancy for medical reasons, and a third for parents going through or considering a subsequent pregnancy after loss. Spanish and ASL translators may be available upon request. **For meeting times and information**, visit our website: briefencounters.org/about-our-support-groups.

Monthly Newsletter

Here you will find additional resources, stories from other bereaved parents and updates about events. Sign up to receive our newsletter at briefencounters.org.

Website: briefencounters.org

Our website offers details about our meetings; information about relevant events; access to our monthly newsletter; resources such as counselor referrals, books and links for bereaved families;

lactation resources; information for medical professional; and more.

Phone support

Need to talk? Brief Encounters parents are available to provide peer support between meetings. Call our message line for assistance: 503-334-2564.

Counselor Referrals

Referrals for counselors with expertise in the areas of pregnancy/infant loss and infertility are available on our website. These counselors have all been recommended by Brief Encounters parents.

Library

Our library contains many books we have found useful in our search to understand what has happened in our lives since the death of our babies. These books are available for checkout at meetings.

Facebook Groups

We have two closed FB groups: *Brief Encounters Pregnancy/Infant Loss Support* and *Brief Encounters: Parenting After Loss*. Bereaved parents are welcome to send a request to join. You will be asked to briefly describe your loss before being added to the group.

Donations: *Brief Encounters is supported by donations and run entirely by volunteers. All meetings are free. Love gifts given in memory of our children are acknowledged in our monthly digital newsletter. We are a non-profit, tax-exempt 503(c)(3) organization, federal ID #45-4822283.*