

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 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 without your consent, 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 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.

Group

by Monica Welty

This poem is by a Brief Encounters parent; we share it with her permission and our gratitude.

I would like to come and sit
next to your pain and you to mine.
Let’s cradle it, here together
on this soft couch in this big house
with this lady with kind eyes.
She knows our grief without telling hers.
Sitting here, in a room full of our stories,
her short sentences telling us
There is somewhere to get to from here.
Let’s whisper it, here to each other
between sobs
choked in the center of the throat,
through the blank stare of shock
So that only we and God can hear.
Give Him a moment’s rest
from our pleading. And us, too.
Sit here with me, together.
Let’s look at each other, stare and marvel
with wide eyes
the million broken shards, some blunt
some sharp, some splintered.
One human to the other:
“What has become of you, Stranger?”
Let’s paste each other back together.
You do some, I do some.
It’s not going to be perfect but
it’s going to be.
Let’s sit here together next to our pain.
Let’s cradle it
in the ache of a mother’s arms.
Let’s whisper it
so only we and God can hear.

**Offering support and
understanding to bereaved
parents of pregnancy and infant
loss.**



BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Interruption Group

**A group for families who have
interrupted their pregnancies for
medical reasons**

**For more information, please call our
message line: (503) 699-8006 or visit
our website: briefencounters.org**

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If you've made the decision to interrupt your pregnancy because of anticipated birth defects, you are not alone. More parents are facing this agonizing decision as advances in medical technology make prenatal diagnostic procedures more common.

But the new technology brings a new set of problems. The grief that accompanies this kind of pregnancy loss is compounded by the social stigma attached to the planned interruption of pregnancy, the guilt one may feel for having taken this step, and a seeming inability of many friends and associates to understand why you are grieving the voluntary loss of an "imperfect" child.

Some parents may feel responsible for having provided defective genes to their child. Friends and family may try to minimize the pain by saying things like, "You are lucky to have found out early about your baby's problem," or "It's for the best."

But we know that the voluntary interruption of a pregnancy can be as devastating to the parents as any other pregnancy loss, and is complicated by the fact that you made the decision for your baby.

Brief Encounters can help. We are people like you who know the pain of the untimely death of our children. We know of the hard work ahead as we struggle to pick up the pieces of shattered dreams. We have learned that feelings are not right or wrong, bad or good, weak or brave. We have discovered through talking with each other that all the emotions we have experienced

after the death of our babies - sorrow, anger, emptiness, guilt, frustration, self-pity, and depression are normal. We have 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 it with others is more efficient and not nearly as lonely.

Meetings

We know how important it is for parents to be able to talk about their loss with others who won't change the subject or be uncomfortable if tears are shed. Each group is led by a trained facilitator who guides the meeting. After words of welcome and introductions, we discuss issues that participants are struggling with in their lives. Those not ready to talk are welcome to pass.

Brief Encounters meetings provide a supportive environment, a place to learn about the grief process and a safe place to express feelings. 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 their grief, there is an opportunity to learn how others have coped with their loss and to begin to have hope for the future.

Brief Encounters offers four types of meetings. One is for parents who have experienced a loss at any time during their pregnancy or whose babies died after coming home. One is for those who have interrupted their pregnancy for medical reasons. A third group is for parents going through a subsequent pregnancy after loss. The fourth groups explores grief issues

related to infertility. For meeting times, visit our website.

Newsletter

A monthly newsletter designed to provide support and information will be mailed to you upon request. Just call and leave your name and complete address and we'll add your name to the mailing list.

Website

Our website offers information about meetings and other events. There you can read digital versions of our current and past newsletters. Under the resources tab, you will find counselor referrals, helpful books and links for bereaved parents and medical professionals, lactation resources, and sources for remembrance jewelry and mementos.

Phone support

Sometimes it seems like a long time between meetings. Bereaved parents are available to provide telephone support to help you through those rough days. Please call our message line for assistance.

Counselor Referrals

Referrals for counselors with expertise in the areas of pregnancy/infant loss and infertility are available on our website and in our monthly newsletter.

Financial Support

Brief Encounters is supported through donations and run by volunteers. Meetings are free. Love Gifts given in memory of our children are acknowledged in our newsletters. **Brief Encounters** is a non-profit organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3), Federal ID #45-4822283.