

Words Matter

red
nose



The death of a baby is one of life's most distressing experiences. People often feel anxious or unsure about what they should do or say. The most important thing for you to know is that parents need to have their loss acknowledged and their pain understood.

Allowing parents to speak honestly and openly about how they are feeling and about their experiences, both good and bad, is the best thing you can do.

What to avoid	What to do instead
Saying nothing If you stay away it may seem as if you don't care, which reinforces parent's feelings of isolation	Being a bereaved parent is not contagious. Make contact with the family as soon as you hear their news. Keep reaching out even weeks, months and years later. Say: <i>"I'm so sorry to hear your baby died"</i> <i>"I'm thinking of you"</i> <i>"I miss him/her too"</i> <i>"I remember when you found out you were pregnant - I know you loved her from the first moment."</i>
Offering unsolicited advice	Offer patience and respect. Follow their lead. Don't be afraid to ask parents what they are comfortable with and be sensitive to their reactions. Say: <i>"Would you like to talk about him/her?"</i> <i>"what do you need from me right now?"</i> <i>"I know there's nothing I can do to make this better but I am here for you".</i>
Focusing only on the mother	Remember the whole family. Mums and dads may need support in different ways. Other children will be grieving too. Say: <i>"How is your partner coping?"</i> <i>"Would Lily like to come for a play on Friday?"</i>
Looking for the silver lining "At least you can have another baby" or "it probably wouldn't have lasted" or "you'll fall pregnant again soon"	Acknowledge their pain and offer simple, sincere thoughts. Say: <i>"I can't imagine what you're going through"</i> <i>"I'm here for you"</i> <i>"you're still a mother/father"</i> <i>"I'll never forget your baby".</i>
Judging or dismissing their feelings - "Don't feel like that", "you don't really mean that"	Allow parents to express themselves freely - even dark feelings like envy, anger, blame and guilt - these are normal feelings. Say: <i>"you can swear at me if you need, I can handle it!"</i> <i>"feeling that way doesn't make you a bad person"</i> <i>"It's okay to express how you're feeling and it's normal to be feeling a whole range of things".</i>
Not mentioning their baby for fear it will further upset the family	Parents love talking about their baby and hearing their name. Remembering significant dates/anniversaries through a card or phone call will show parents their baby lives on in the hearts of others. Say: <i>"I know today is your baby's birthday. Would you like to do something special to remember him?"</i> <i>"I saw this today and thought of Oliver".</i>
Saying "let me know if I can do anything to help"	Offer practical support. Take initiative and be direct. Say: <i>"I am going to drop dinner around on Tuesday night, OK?"</i> <i>"What do you need today?"</i> <i>"Is there any support you need that you are not getting?"</i>

Red Nose Bereavement Support Services We support anyone affected by the loss of a pregnancy, stillbirth or the death of a baby or child.

24/7 Support Line 1300 308 307

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Support Library rednosegriefandloss.org.au



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