

Special Days and Events

The first year after your baby's death is very hard and your baby's first birthday and the anniversary of his or her death may also be very difficult. Even if you seem better, the sadness and pain may return. It will be hard to be around other children, especially babies. These are normal feelings. It is ok to celebrate and enjoy these times. It is ok to laugh and cry at the same time. You can go from laughing to crying very quickly. Other children in your family will need help during the holidays to celebrate as they have in the past or to understand why things are different.

Some parents...

- Choose to celebrate and participate in these occasions as they always have in the past, but find it is a struggle. Sometimes they even avoid talking about the baby who died.
- Choose to do completely different things during the holidays and special events. They may not participate in any of the usual activities or traditions.
- Try to balance their participation in holiday activities and cope with the pain and sadness of missing their baby.
- These are different and personal choices.

Remember...

- What you and your family decide to do for anniversaries, during the holidays, or for special events is your choice.
- Your participation in these events may be very different during the first year or so. After awhile you may go back to normal activities or permanently change how you remember some holidays and special occasions.
- Celebrating holidays and special events will reflect your cultural background and traditions. It is important for you to value these traditions because they are part of your life during happy and sad times.

Tips For Coping With Special Days

- Lower your expectations of yourself
- Forget about what other people think you should do and feel. Give yourself permission to feel and do whatever you think is right
- It's okay to stay away from children for awhile
- Find comfort or inspiration in a holiday event or a new tradition
- Offer kindness and support to others who are having a hard time
- Look to your religious beliefs for strength and support
- Plan a special event for just your baby's parents
- Share with your family and friends what helps and what hurts
- Special days / events can be emotionally and physically draining. Try to get enough rest
- Remember these special days are only temporary
- Pick and choose the family events for awhile
- Set some goals
- Do something special for yourself
- Plan ways to help you handle uncomfortable situations
- If you have other children, try to make it fun for them.

Adapted from After Sudden Infant Death by US Dept of Health & Human Services, HRSA MCH



How To Heal

- Crying is ok and is healthy for mothers and fathers.
- Anger is ok but find a safe way to “let it out” and it will go away.
- Don’t make too many decisions too soon.
- Mothers and fathers grieve differently. Let people know what they need to do to help you.
- You’re not alone. Join a support group.
- Holidays and anniversaries of your baby’s birth and death may be very hard to handle. It is ok to do things a little differently.
- If you are thinking of trying to get pregnant again, give yourself time to heal physically and emotionally.
- Keep a journal. Putting your thoughts and feelings on paper is a good way to get them out and see how you’re doing.
- Beware of alcohol, drugs, eating too much food and getting overly involved in other activities.

What is a Bereavement Support Group?

Attending a bereavement support group is another way to do the “grief work” needed for your healing to occur after the loss of your child. Parents, grandparents, children and other family members and friends may attend. Everyone meets to talk about his or her grief and to seek help and comfort in a confidential and caring environment. Through sharing, group members come to know that “they are not alone”. Groups are voluntary and free of charge. Often a professional or another bereaved parent facilitates them. There are support groups that focus on SIDS, infant loss and the sudden and unexpected death of a child throughout the country. If you are interested in finding out more about attending a support group, please contact us for more information about meeting times and days.

Ways to Remember

- Create a memory book or photo album
- Write a poem, story or song
- Go to the cemetery and visit
- Add their name to holiday cards
- Do something special on the anniversary or birthday
- Volunteer for your local SIDS organization
- Give a gift to a hospital for children and say it is in memory of your child
- Attend a memorial service
- Sponsor a fund raiser
- Make a donation for special days, such as holidays, birthdays and anniversaries
- Plant a tree

