

Navigating the loss of your baby during COVID-19

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has completely turned life as we know it upside down. If you have sadly had your baby pass away during this time we understand how challenging this must be for you and your family.

According to Beyond Blue, whilst grief is a normal reaction to loss, feelings of sadness or anxiety can be extremely intense and long-lasting. Depending on your needs, isolating from others can be extremely harmful, both mentally and emotionally, if you thrive in the company of others. An article written by Robinson (2019) claims that socially isolated people are less able to deal with stressful situations. They are more likely to feel depressed and may have more problems processing information, which can lead to difficulties with decision making, memory storage and recall. For others, the time alone, hidden indoors can be therapeutic and an opportunity to regroup and process your grief without the watchful eyes of “well-meaning” friends and family. Either way, it is still important to stay connected and to care for yourself during these unnerving times.

Here are some suggestions to guide you as you step through and process your grief:

- **Connect with others** via messaging or email. This can give you control over how much or how little you share with others. There is less chance of being overwhelmed by too much chatter and emotion dumped on you by others.
- **Connect to online support groups.** Clinical psychologist David Suman believes that the realisation that others are in the same situation usually brings about a feeling of relief, by gaining the understanding that others have similar concerns and are there to help and encourage you. Groups can be helpful as long as you know when to step away if the connection becomes too consuming. It can be helpful to read about other families and their stories, but always check in with your own emotions regularly, and if you are becoming drained from this connection, limit it to a set amount of time each day or week. As you heal and become emotionally stronger, you will be able to tolerate more. Mater Mothers' bereavement team and pastoral care service facilitate a support group called the “Circle of Hope”—a safe space to be able to share your story, as well as meet with other families in similar situations. To find out more please email mmh.bereavement.support@mater.org.au
- **Visit outdoor places** such as the beach or the park. Walking in nature is one of the most exhilarating and beneficial activities you can do. Fresh air and sunshine can be healing—good for the body and soul. It can give you a purpose, as well as distract your focus onto something other than your sadness for a time. Being in nature can help provide clarity and the ability to think about your loss in a less formal setting. In a peaceful outdoor environment, you could sit, walk or jog at your own pace, whilst embracing the emotion of grief and finding ways to cope with it that works for you. (Bereavement Assistance Ltd, 2019)
- **Make time to connect with a counsellor/psychologist** either face-to-face or online (depending on their current social distancing guidelines), to talk through your emotions and feelings. To engage with an expert in this field can set you on a path of healing earlier, and they can bring guidance to help you navigate your pain and sadness. Meeting with a specialist in this field can help you understand ways to move forward.
- **Journaling and writing** about your loss and how you are coping each day can also be very helpful. Funeralbasics.org claim that a grief journal can give a safe and judgment free place to explore jumbled thoughts and feelings, to find ways to remember loved ones, and to record the ongoing journey through grief. Often, it's comforting to look back and see just how far you've come from day one.

Most importantly, be kind to yourself. Grieving is exhausting work both physically and mentally. The pain will pass and healing will most certainly come, but remember that “Our sorrows and wounds are healed only when we touch them with compassion.”—**Buddha**

If you need support please contact Mater Mothers' bereavement team on 07 3163 1047