A Father's Guide to Grief

--------- for fathers who have suffered the death of a baby by pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or in the first months of life.

The death of a baby is an overwhelming experience for the entire family. Mothers and fathers who are grieving share many of the same emotions. Feelings of shock, anger, guilt, sadness and despair are common in the grief process. Yet, traditional expectations are different for men and women.

It is acceptable for a woman to cry in public, but men are expected to keep themselves under control. You may have been taught while growing up that showing emotion is a sign of weakness. Even though you are a grieving father, you may feel the need to put your own grief aside in order to meet family responsibilities so that you may continue to take care of your spouse and children.

Your grieving will likely be hindered if you neglect the strong emotions that you feel. Take time out to grieve. Men often prefer to express their grief in private so they do not appear weak to others. Just remember that there is no correct way to grieve. You will find that coming to grips with this loss is a complicated process, and every person's journey is different.

Be aware that anger may play a large part in your grief. Anger may actually be masking deeper emotions such as sadness, heartache, guilt or fear. Your anger may be directed toward God, the doctors and other healthcare providers, or your own loved ones. While anger is a normal part of the grief process, misdirected anger can interfere with your journey through grief and with some of your relationships. Not acknowledging this feeling may result in delaying your process of healing, causing you to become "stuck" in this grief stage.

Remember that while you and your partner have experienced the same loss, you will probably not grieve in the same way. It may be difficult for you to understand your partner’s grief. Women tend to be more open in expressing their emotions, and in return they receive more support from friends and family. As the father, you may not receive such support. Friends and family may think you are unfeeling because they do not see your grief. Even your partner, the baby’s mother, may question your grief, thinking that you don’t care. Grief over a baby’s death can be very challenging for marriages and relationships.

It helps to remember how important your partner is to you, and to continue to nurture your relationship with love and understanding. Many fathers have been helped by joining a Father's Grief support group. Your Hospice and Palliative Care team can help you find a support group and other resources to guide you in your journey through grief.