

## Parents of Infants – On Losing A Baby

Unlike parents who have had an older child to die, our memories are few, and for some people, even non-existent. Those of us who have had a baby to die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child. Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For *most* parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be. For *many* parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss. It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter what the age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have lost a child. Those of us who have not lost an older child have nothing else to compare the loss of our baby with, just as those who have lost an older child cannot completely understand our feelings upon losing a baby.

The death of an infant is often times considered “unfortunate” but so many feel that it can be remedied with the birth of another child. Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope and the future that has been lost with the death of a “much looked forward to” baby.

In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, “You’re young, you can have other babies . . .” or “It’s so much better that you were never able to hold her and love her.” And things like, “It’s over with, forget it, put it all behind you . . .” The truth of the matter for me, at least, was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica. She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt, were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone. Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, nor have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I never got to hold her? I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss. If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life.

Learn to love her? I already loved her. Any mother who carries a child knows love for that child even though it is still unborn. I loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her, I knew she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her.

I can never forget about her. I never want to. I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like. Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life. I wonder what it would have been like around here with three children, close in age, playing together. I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder . . . . I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know. We have no memories to cherish.

I am not trying to make a comparison with the loss of a child who lived to be older. I cannot compare things of which I do not know about. I just know that a parent who loses a baby feels grief, and loss, and pain and hurt. To grieve is to grieve, to feel the pain and loss is to feel the pain and loss, to miss a child is to miss a child. Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feeling and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt at no matter what age a child is lost.

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