

Thoughts on Coping

Honor your feelings. No matter how strong, forgiving, smart or moral you thought you were, you may be surprised by the intensity of your emotions. Shock, anger, dwelling on “what if?” and even scary thoughts, like relief at not having the baby or a desire for revenge, may all generate from your bereaved self.

Honor your tears. Just when you think you’ve stopped crying, more memories, thoughts, or new facets of your loss bring fresh tears - sometimes at the most awkward moments. It may take time to realize all that you’ve lost. And each new discovery brings more pain.

Feeling guilty is common. Feeling you’ve abandoned your baby, failed him or her, or that you are being punished is common. You may have guilt over surviving or even thriving, when your baby is dead.

Expect to repeat and/or contradict yourself. You may find yourself wanting everyone to know what’s happened, or you may find yourself wanting to keep your loss private. If talking helps, then talk. Being involved with people in some way will help your recovery, making you more confident about your ability to go on with your life.

Understand that grief takes much longer to resolve than most people realize. Grief is both physical and emotional. Trust yourself to know for how long, and in what way, you need to recover. Consider every task you complete, even if it’s as simple as getting dressed, a major achievement.

Words from Brief Encounters parents:

Brief Encounters was a godsend following an immensely challenging decision. Finally I was able to meet face-to-face with others who had experienced the same type of loss. This helped normalize my thoughts and feelings. –Megan

Losing our daughter was devastating. I could feel all of my identity cracking, shattering. Brief Encounters helped me pick up the pieces slowly and figure out where they all go. I’ve gotten to move with the grief on my own time, but not alone. There are no answers, but it is good to know we are not alone and especially gratifying that our daughter’s memory has a place and a community in Brief Encounters --John.

Sitting together in the same room with other families who had been through the same devastation was so important and healing for me. Brief Encounters gave me a safe space to talk about our daughter and our decision to end her life. It was the hardest, loneliest experience of my life, but every time I walk through the doors here I feel loved and understood. --Hanna

Making the decision to terminate a much wanted pregnancy was one of the most difficult decisions we had to make. With an enormous amount of love and great sadness we said goodbye. Brief Encounters gave us a safe place to share our story and the range of emotions we felt. It was amazing to be with other families going through similar situations. –Heather and Adrian



2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

Breaking the Sense of Isolation Surrounding Pregnancy and Infant Loss

***A guide for parents who have
ended a wanted pregnancy for
medical reasons.***

**For more information or if you just
need to talk, please call our message
line at (503) 334-2564
or visit www.briefencounters.org.**

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If you have received a serious prenatal or maternal medical diagnosis and have decided to end your wanted pregnancy, you are not alone. Many parents have walked this path and more are facing this agonizing decision every day as advances in medical technology make prenatal diagnostic procedures more common.

The grief that accompanies this kind of pregnancy loss is especially complicated, agonizing, and lonely. It is compounded by the social stigma attached to the ending of pregnancy, the guilt one may feel for having taken this step, and possibly the inability of others to understand why you are grieving a "voluntary" loss.

Some parents feel responsible for the medical challenges that led to ending the pregnancy. Friends and family may try to minimize the pain by saying things like, "You're lucky you found out early about your baby's problem," or "It was your choice, I don't see why you're so sad."

But we know that the voluntary ending of a pregnancy is as devastating as any other pregnancy loss. It is further complicated by the fact that you made the decision for your baby.

Brief Encounters can help. We're people like you who have experienced the pain of losing a child. We know about the hard work of picking up the pieces of shattered dreams. We've learned that feelings are not right or wrong, bad or good. We've discovered through talking with each other that all the emotions we feel after the death of our babies - sorrow, anger, guilt, frustration, self-pity, and depression - are normal.

We've struggled to be patient and kind to ourselves as the rest of the world tries to rush us through to recovery. And we have found that doing the work of grieving together is more effective and less lonely.

Meetings

Brief Encounters offers a monthly group specifically for parents who have ended wanted pregnancies for medical reasons, led by trained facilitators who have made the same heartbreaking choice. This group provides a safe, supporting & non-judgmental environment for parents to share their stories and express their grief. Here you can talk freely about your experience receiving a poor prenatal or maternal health diagnosis, your decision-making process, and your loss with others who understand. ***This group meets on the 4th Thursday of each month, from 7:00-9:00 PM, at 2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR.***

Additional meetings: We also offer general meetings for parents who have experienced a loss at any time during their pregnancy or after birth and one for parents going through or considering a subsequent pregnancy after loss. Those who've ended their pregnancies for medical reasons are welcome at these groups. Spanish and ASL translators may be available on request. **For all meeting times and more detailed information,** visit www.briefencounters.org.

Monthly Newsletter

Here you will find additional resources, stories from other bereaved parents, and updates about events. Sign up to receive our newsletter at briefencounters.org.

Website: briefencounters.org

Our website offers details about our meetings; updates about relevant events; access to our monthly newsletter; resources such as **counselor referrals**, books and links for bereaved families; lactation resources; information for medical professional; and more.

Phone support

Need to talk? Brief Encounters parents are available to provide peer support between meetings. Call our message line for assistance: (503) 334-2564.

Facebook Groups

We have two private FB groups: *Brief Encounters Pregnancy/Infant Loss Support* and *Brief Encounters: Parenting after Loss*. Bereaved parents are welcome to send a request to join. You will be asked to briefly describe your loss before being added to the group.

Donations: *Brief Encounters* is supported by donations and run entirely by volunteers. All meetings are free. Love gifts given in memory of our children are acknowledged in our monthly newsletter. We are a non-profit, tax-exempt 503(c)(3) organization, federal ID #45-4822283.