

SELF CARE TIPS

Grief, trauma, and stress can affect your sleep, appetite, and desire to take care of yourself. But, this is one of the most important times to practice self-care.

Know that your grief may come and go over the years. It may be especially difficult at specific points across your life, such as in subsequent pregnancies, subsequent losses, fertility problems and menopause.



Healthy Habits

Rest as much as your body and mind need.

- Get as close to 8 hours of sleep as possible.
- Keep the bedroom cool and dark.
- A sound machine can be helpful.
- Limit caffeinated drinks, nicotine, and other stimulants, especially after 2PM.
- Abstain from alcohol too close to bedtime (or at all).

Grief and trauma can affect your appetite.

- Try not to skip meals.
- Drink plenty of water.



Nurture Yourself

Try some of these nurturing activities that can be done in less than 5 minutes:

- Stretch, take a walk
- Doodle
- Journal
- Pray
- Make a cup of tea
- Connect with a loved one

Wanting to numb by scrolling on your phone is normal. However, it will usually make you feel worse. Try- re-watching your favorite movies or tv shows instead.



Nature & Movement

Get some sunlight by sitting outside or by a window for a few minutes each day.

As soon as you are cleared by your medical provider, take walks and move your body.



Seek Support

Ask for what you need from loved ones so they know how to support you. For example, ask a friend or family member to run errands for you, watch a movie with you, or send you a text each day to check in.

Let close friends and family know that you'd like them to check in on you **in the way you prefer** - whether it's a text, call, or visit.

* FREE ONLINE RESOURCES

Unite Support Groups and resources:

unitegriefsupport.org

Light after Loss 8 week support group:

noelleslight.org/emotional-support/

Stillbirth Support and Advocacy:

aubreysadvocate.com

Star Legacy Foundation support groups for grief and loss :

Postpartum Support Groups:

postpartum.net/get-help/psi-online-support-meetings/
(Various groups for loss)

Postpartum Support International Helpline:

1-800-944-4773 (4PPD) #1 En Español or #2 English

Text in English: 800-944-4773

Text en Español: 971-203-7773

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Complex Emotions & Grief

It is common for people to blame themselves for this type of loss. Whatever emotions you are feeling, they are normal. This is NOT your fault.

You may feel:

- Sadness
- Rage
- Isolation

You are grieving a loss. This grief can hurt like physical pain does.

No one can tell you what you're supposed to be feeling or for how long. Have patience and grace for yourself. Let yourself feel whatever comes up, and please, let yourself cry. When we try to bottle up our emotions, it just makes them bigger.

Physical Recovery

In addition to your mental well-being, your body will be recovering from birth and experiencing post-birth changes. **These physical changes may include:**

- Sore breasts
- Breast milk production
- Vaginal bleeding
- Cramping
- Hormonal changes



It is important to give your body time to heal and return to its pre-pregnancy state. Be aware that these symptoms can be physical reminders of your loss.

It is important to see your provider for a follow-up visit about two weeks after the loss to make sure that you are healing well. Contact your medical provider about any concerns.



You Deserve Care, Support, & Love

This is a loss like no other. It can make you feel more alone and isolated than other types of loss.

Common experiences include:

- Friends and family who minimize your loss because they don't know what to say or how to help.
- Blaming yourself for your loss.
- Being scared to share because you are worried about being judged.

You have done nothing wrong. **This is not your fault.**

You deserve to be supported by loved ones, healthcare professionals, and your community. Seek out support from people in your life who can listen and care for you with empathy and without judgment.

When to Seek Professional Support

This type of loss can be unbearable and can cause what is known as traumatic grief.

You may want to seek support from a licensed therapist if you are having flashbacks, nightmares or intrusive thoughts. Therapists can also support you if you are feeling depressed or anxious.

Please seek immediate psychiatric attention if:

- You are using substances or self-injuring behaviors to escape painful reminders.
- You are having suicidal thoughts.



TIPS FOR FINDING SOLACE AND CARE

There will be many hard decisions to make about how to honor your baby. **These are some questions to consider:**

- Do you want to **spend time with your baby holding, washing, or dressing them?** Some reject this idea at first, but, it can be very healing.
- Would you like people to **refer to your baby by their chosen name?**
- Will you have **photos taken**, and who will you share them with?
- Will you ask for an **autopsy?** It is important to discuss this option and think through how the information will impact you.
- Will you have a **funeral or memorial service?** If so, please ask friends, family, and/or hospital staff to support you in making that happen.
- What **rituals** do you want to create to honor your baby in this moment and ongoing?
- Will you need to cancel plans that make you feel worse - like attending baby showers or being around a pregnant person? If you aren't comfortable sharing the reason, it is okay to make up an excuse. It does not make you a bad friend. You are grieving.

Share cultural or religious beliefs with the hospital staff.

There are no right or wrong choices. Be compassionate with yourself.

