

you should be upset. Please feel free to give us a call on 01 8726996 and we may be able to support you if you need to -trace your baby, locate medical charts or register your baby.

The Future-

Include this Grandchild when you give account of the number of Grandchildren you have. Include Him/Her in conversations and validate the memories and offer support for as long as needed.

Remember to include this Grandchild at Christmas on a card or small gift for tree or flowers for the grave. Remember both parents on Mothers/Fathers Day. Remember to send a card on baby's Birthday/Anniversary. ISANDS have a collection of appropriate cards for all of these.

If another Daughter (in-Law) is pregnant now or in the future-

If you are expecting another Grandchild, you will feel such mixed emotions at this time. Worrying how this is or will affect the parents who have had the loss and supporting them while also trying to support the expectant parents. Talking about this will help everyone. Give the bereaved parents time to get their heads around this without expecting them to be able to cope with a new member in the family so soon and say that to them. The expectant parents need to know also that in time the sadness will get a little easier and that you welcome and celebrate your new grandchild.

You -

Grandparents have an important role in life, it is valued and appreciated. At this time you are searching for ways to make sense of this experience. It is important that you be kind to yourself and give yourself some time to adjust to what has happened. Question, express your feelings, use your faith, community or just a good old fashioned cuppa with a pal will make a difference.



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(Leaflet - Grandparents)

Prepared for ISANDS by Ron Smith-Murphy 2009

*There was a time when ...
I could hold you when you hurt and mend those hurts with a kiss,
I could catch your tears and magically wipe them all away.
I could listen to the tale that made them happen
and find a happy ending.
I could hold your hand to make you feel big and strong.
I could gently feed your aching body and soothe your aching heart.
I could ...I could make it better.
Now your heart is breaking and my kiss will not mend.
I can catch your tears
but I cannot give you what you need to make them stop.
I can listen but I cannot give you a happy ending.
I can see your pain but I cannot make it ease.
I can see my beautiful child broken and I cannot fix a thing.
I can see my beautiful grand child and my hearts breaks for you
and for me.
If I could I would make it better.*

RSM



Grandparents

The death of a grand child is a unique loss, not only has your grandchild died but you are also hurting because your own child is hurting with unbelievable sadness. Their dreams are shattered but so are yours.

Feelings -

It seems so unreal, everything that was planned for this wonderful moment of being a Grandparent has changed. There may be a sense of powerlessness to help. You would do anything to take away the pain for your own child and yet you have pain yourselves. Your Grand Daughter/Son has just died and you have every reason to feel intensely sad.

Distance may also cause anxious waiting and worrying. You may also feel you do not want to impose and unsure of your role. Most parents appreciate that their own parents are around at the time and have the opportunity to share in the baby's brief but precious time with them.

The Spiritual needs of the parents may be different to yours and if at all possible try to support the needs of the parents at this time.

You may experience some of the following feelings of grief- intense sadness/ crying, disorganisation, hopelessness, emptiness, lack of interest, fatigue, sleeplessness, lack of eating, irritableness, intolerance, lack of concentration. Parents and Grandparents often worry that their genes may have caused the baby's death. This can cause unnecessary anxiety especially when the baby's death is unexplained. The Doctor caring for your daughter (in-law) may be able to explain what happened and why.

Sometimes, there can be a sense of guilt or shame if the pregnancy was not welcomed at the start. You may also feel guilty because you have lived a long life and your Grand Child has been cheated of theirs.

Feelings during this time are really hard to cope with and it is important that you recognise them and have someone you can talk to without feeling you are letting anyone down - you're not. ISANDS are available to talk to or even if you are unsure about anything you feel or think you should or should not feel, do please give us a call on 01 8726992 or email info@isands.ie

What You Can Do

The best role that you can provide right now is to be there as a supportive guide or for offering practical help. Ask the parents what you can do to help.

The parents may or may not ask for your assistance with organising the funeral or deciding on a grave. Many parents now take their baby home overnight prior to the funeral/burial, you could offer to help in a practical way like collecting them from the hospital so that they can both be with the baby in the car. Offer to make a meal for them, or grocery shopping.

Their other Children-

If they have other children, you could offer to mind/feed them. Be careful what you say to your other Grandchildren. The parents should have been given our book called A Little Lifetime in the hospital and there is a section on telling children and what to/not to say to children. If you do not get the opportunity to have a look at it please give us a call and we can send one to you. Ask the parents what they would like you to say in those circumstances. Please remember not to use phrases like- "Holy God decided to take the baby" as children will worry that Holy God might decide to take them or their parents. Avoid saying "the baby was very sick" because they will also worry should they become sick or anyone they love. Using the proper words for what has happened is better.

Reminders of the Baby

The parents may have prepared a room for the baby or may have purchased lots of baby clothes and a cot, pram etc. Sometimes the tendency is to put it all away before the parents come home from the hospital; this can cause a great deal of upset later. It is better to wait until/if you are asked. Most parents want to do this in their own time. Having photographs and reminders of the baby brings comfort even though it is heartbreaking. Some parents will want to display them while others choose to keep them in a private place. Both is okay.

Your other Children-

It can also be very difficult to support all of your children at this time and depending on their ages their reaction to what has happened can vary hugely. Try to **encourage** them to seek support or if they are website users they could use the ISANDS Discussion Forum to connect with others coping with a similar experience. Even if you ask them to source information for you, they may also find helpful information or support for themselves. Our website is www.isands.ie

Your own Losses -

Your Grandchild's death may also be reminding you of a loss you have had yourself. Especially if you have had a baby who has died and that happened at a time when parents were treated differently. It may be bringing up emotions and memories you have locked away for years. You did not get the opportunity to acknowledge or recognise what happened all those years ago and now every thing comes flooding back. It is important to remember that it is okay for you to feel emotional, sad and scared. You may feel frightened because all the feelings are back again. When you think about it, you never got the chance to talk about your feelings back then. You were probably told to "get on with it" or "pull yourself together" and you did. Now however it is different and expected and normal that