



A Mother's Grief



Providing *comfort*
during the
greatest of *losses*

a Mother's Grief

We want you to know that we understand the importance of your baby's life and death. We hope to explain some of the feelings and decisions you will face in the days ahead, so that you don't feel so alone as you go through this grieving process.

Making Decisions

Your family and friends can be helpful if you are able to share honest feelings with them. If not, ask for help from a hospital staff member. You may find that you feel a little better as you begin to make some decisions. This is because you are making decisions for your baby as his/her mother.

We encourage you to spend as much time as you can with your baby after his or her death. If you have other children, consider whether they would like to say goodbye, too, along with grandparents or other close family members. This is a small window of time that you will not be able to get back.

A Mother's Nature

Your body may actually ache for your baby. Many mothers physically yearn to hold their baby or to nurse him/her. You may have a very real feeling of the baby kicking, or feel sure you have heard the baby cry. A lot of mothers experience Empty Arms Syndrome, which is a physical weight on your arms where your baby should be. Because you have truly lost a part of yourself, it feels very much like an amputation. Some mothers have desperate, urgent thoughts about their baby, or they believe it would be better to be with their baby. While this is normal, thoughts of suicide that won't go away are cause for concern. This is when you must discuss your feelings with a professional.

Grief will feel like a great weight coming down on you. It may be hard to concentrate or feel interested in the people and things that used to take up your time. You may feel anxious and unsettled, unable to make the simplest decision.

At any time, worrying about "going crazy" can add to your burden. It can be a great relief to learn that the symptoms of grief you are experiencing are natural and normal ways people cope with the death of someone they love. We encourage talking with other bereaved parents, healthcare providers, your doctor, a spiritual advisor, or others.

Asking For Help

It is important to recognize that others will need to mourn your loss, too. They often hurt not only for themselves, but also for you. You may find yourself avoiding contact with others. Talking with family and friends about your baby helps them to be more sensitive to your needs. Some family members and friends don't know what to do or say, and therefore, make your grief more difficult by ignoring it or saying hurtful things. They simply don't understand how you feel and that you're not sure how long it will take to feel better again. Remind them to be patient with you, because nothing can take the place of this child.

As you travel the path of grief, you need time to mourn your loss and remember the dreams and

hopes you had for this baby. Don't be afraid to ask your friends and family for help. Feel free to tell them exactly what they can do to help you. They are looking for any way to comfort you. Ask them to help with grocery shopping, making meals, or just to spend time with you.

A Mother's Milk

Your milk may come, even without your baby. Some mothers have leaked every time they have heard a baby cry. It will eventually stop, and by then you may have become accustomed to it and may feel like you have lost the only physical connection left with your baby. This is perfectly natural. To ease some of the physical discomfort, wearing a tight fitting sports type bra can help, along with applying ice packs. This will also help to shorten the time period that you will lactate.



Understanding Your Feelings

There is no "right" way to grieve. Even if you and your partner are very close, you will discover differences in how you handle your grief. This discovery might be unpleasant. Be careful not to judge your partner, and the quality of their grief. It is common to experience overwhelming feelings of, anger, sadness, bitterness, confusion, hopelessness, and loneliness. Try to talk about what you're feeling, or write down your thoughts.

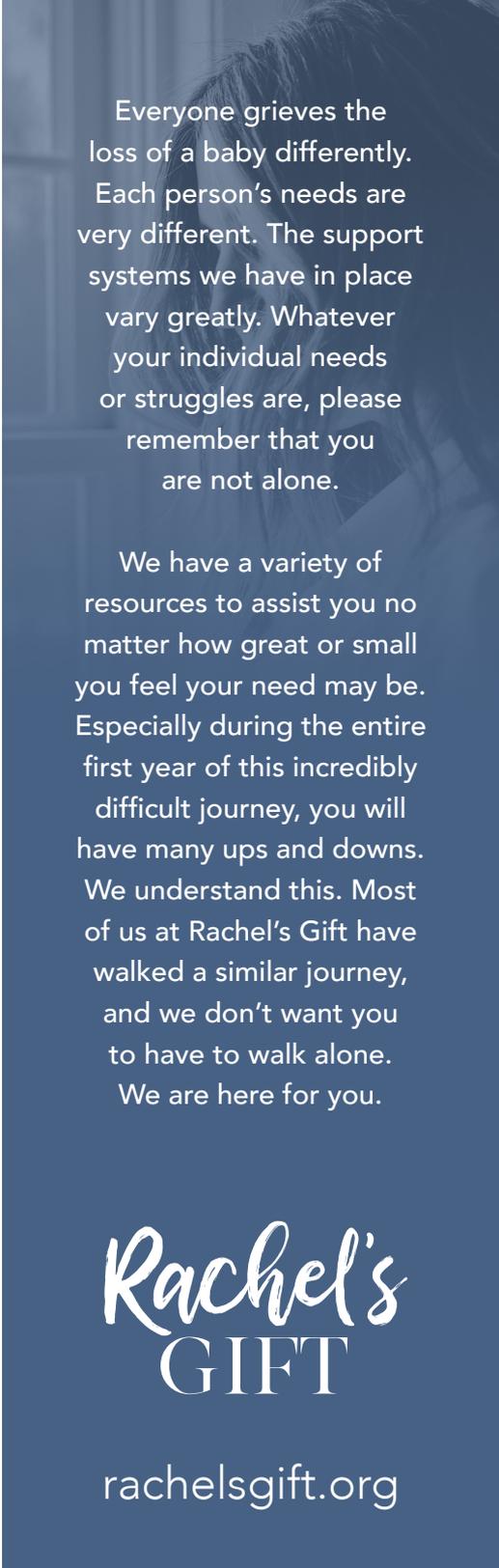
922 Highway 81 East
PMB 153
McDonough, GA 30252

Phone: 470-278-1956

Fax: 888-290-4487

Email: rachelsgift@icloud.com

Rachel's Gift, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All proceeds go directly into the operation of this organization to support the services and resources provided for families in need and education of hospital staff.



Everyone grieves the loss of a baby differently. Each person's needs are very different. The support systems we have in place vary greatly. Whatever your individual needs or struggles are, please remember that you are not alone.

We have a variety of resources to assist you no matter how great or small you feel your need may be. Especially during the entire first year of this incredibly difficult journey, you will have many ups and downs. We understand this. Most of us at Rachel's Gift have walked a similar journey, and we don't want you to have to walk alone. We are here for you.

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