

Knowing the Wishes of a Bereaved Parent

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Once a baby is discovered to be developing inside a mother's womb, dreams and hopes begin for a future with that baby. In a lot of instances, dreams and hopes for a baby begin long before conception. An emotional and physiological relationship begins and continues as the unborn baby's presence becomes more apparent. Parents read about their baby's development, talk and think about their growing baby leading up to their due date. Their dream is becoming real.

Many emotions develop as they imagine becoming a mum or a dad for the very first time or again. They may sing lullabies, rub their bellies, carry pictures around from ultrasounds and start thinking of names. Their excitement grows as they shop for baby clothes and wonder if it will be a boy or girl. They fantasise about what their life is going to be like when their very own baby comes home. With an impending birth, parents begin to define themselves by their parental role.

Your friend's baby is a beautiful little life and a much loved gift created from the love of two parents and is very precious to them.

Then all of a sudden, their baby dies. A tiny life, but still a life and your friend's heartbreak is immeasurable. They will never see their hopes and dreams realised for this little one. Part of their future has now died when their baby left this earth and it can be extremely difficult for parents to come to terms with this. This journey of grief is compulsory for them and they now need to find a way to get through each hour and day without their baby.

They need your help but you may be uncomfortable and unsure of what you should do. Perhaps one of the first steps you can take is to acknowledge their wishes. Written below are some of these wishes in the words of one bereaved parent.

I wish you would not be afraid to mention my baby.

Just because you never saw him doesn't mean he doesn't deserve your recognition.

I wish that if we did talk about my baby and I cried you didn't think it was because you have hurt me by mentioning him. I need to cry and talk about my baby with you, it helps me heal.

I wish you could tell me you are sorry my baby has died and that you are thinking of me, it tells me you care.

I wish you wouldn't think what has happened is one big bad memory for me. The memory of my baby, the love I feel for my baby and the dreams I had for him are all loving memories. Yes there are bad memories too, but please understand that it's not all like that.

I wish you wouldn't judge me because I'm not acting the way you think I should be. Grief is a very personal thing and we're all different people who deal with things differently.

I wish you wouldn't think if I do have a good day I'm ok or if I have a bad day I'm being unreasonable. There is no "normal" way for me to act.

I wish you wouldn't expect me to "feel better" in a few weeks, months, or years for that matter. It may get easier with time but I will never be "over" this.

I wish you could tell me you are thinking of me on my baby's birthday, Mothers Day, other celebration times and the day my baby died. These are all important and sad days for me.

I wish you understood that losing my baby has changed me. I'm not the same person I was before and I'll never be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to get back to "normal" you'll stay frustrated. I am a new person with new thoughts, dreams, beliefs, and values.

Please try to get to know the 'new' me, you might even still like me.

www.bearsofhope.org.au

Further stories & help sheets available online.

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