

What to Know About Miscarriage Grief and How to Cope:

A type of grief that's often ignored

By Wendy Wisner

Updated on October 02, 2024

Medically reviewed by Sabrina Romanoff, PsyD

Verywell Mind articles are reviewed by board-certified physicians and mental healthcare professionals. Medical Reviewers confirm the content is thorough and accurate, reflecting the latest evidence-based research. Content is reviewed before publication and upon substantial updates.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-to-know-about-miscarriage-grief-and-how-to-cope-5210598>

At a Glance

After a miscarriage, it's common to experience feelings of anger, shock, sadness, and guilt. Hormonal shifts can add to this turmoil, and it's normal for certain things (like baby announcements) to trigger feelings of grief.

If you are dealing with grief following a miscarriage, remember that these feelings are normal. Allow yourself to feel your emotions and consider finding ways to memorialize your loss. Also, don't be afraid to reach out for extra support. Therapy and support groups can be a big source of advice and comfort during this time.

Miscarriage grief is real and profound, but it's not something that's often discussed. After losing a baby, many pregnant people are expected to simply pick up and move on with their lives. "You can always try again," they are told. There often isn't a space where they can grieve; the grieving process is frequently silent and unsupported.

Miscarriages—which are defined as a loss within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy—are common. About 10% to 20% of pregnancies result in a miscarriage.

As common as miscarriages are, many of us don't fully comprehend how devastating they can be to the person who experiences one. Thankfully, times are changing, and many of us are becoming more aware that experiencing intense grief after a miscarriage is normal and that people who experience miscarriage need care and support.

Miscarriage Grief Comes With Complex Emotions

Everyone will have a different emotional reaction to a miscarriage, but it's not unusual to experience intense grief after you lose a pregnancy.

The grief may be particularly intense if you are many weeks in and have already started feeling your baby move, told many people about the pregnancy, and started planning for your baby's arrival.

But even early pregnancy losses can be very difficult.

Many of us get attached to our babies as soon as we find out we are pregnant. An early miscarriage can feel like a profound loss. Early losses can be especially difficult because you may not have even told anyone you were pregnant yet, and so you may feel like you have to grieve silently.

Common Symptoms of Miscarriage Grief

Everyone's experiences are different. Besides sadness and feelings of grief, common emotional impacts of a miscarriage can include:

- Exhaustion and fatigue
- Lack of appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Guilt
- Anger
- Shock
- Anxiety
- Depression

Common Experiences During Miscarriage Grief

Again, each person will grieve their loss in a different way, and there is no "right way" to grieve. There is also no timetable for grief. Some people will find that they can feel better after a few days or weeks of grieving; others find that the grief lasts much longer.

Here are some other common thoughts and experiences you might have while grieving your miscarriage.

You May Blame Yourself

Many people who experience a miscarriage are quick to blame themselves. They think that they lost their baby because of something they did, or because they didn't take as good care of themselves as they should have. But skipping your prenatal vitamin a few times, working overtime, and exercising extensively does not cause a miscarriage.

Most miscarriages happen as a result of genetic abnormalities. You did nothing wrong.

You Will Go Through Stages of Grief

Just like other losses, you will go through stages of grief—from shock to anger to acceptance. Some people will arrive at the acceptance stage earlier than others, and some may feel emotions like anger for longer periods of time. It's also common for you to feel different from day to day as you are grieving. Again, there is no one right way for you to experience grief after a miscarriage.

Your Changing Hormones Are Contributing

Miscarriage is certainly an emotional experience. But it's important to keep in mind that your hormones are shifting as well, which can contribute to the emotional rollercoaster of a miscarriage.

It can take a few weeks for your hormones to stabilize after a miscarriage (you should see your first post-miscarriage menstrual period in about 4 to 6 weeks), and this process can contribute to the strength of your grief.

You May Find Certain Things Triggering

After your miscarriage, you may find it difficult to be around babies, or to hear news about a friend's new pregnancy. As the months go on, and your due date passes, you may also feel emotionally triggered.

These are all completely normal experiences, and it's OK if you need to distance yourself right now from some of the things that are challenging for you to be exposed to.

You and Your Partner Will Grieve Differently

Often, the person who has experienced the miscarriage will experience more outward signs of grief and emotional distress. Your partner may not be experiencing the loss in quite the same way as you—and may also be wrapped up in their role as support person—but they are likely experiencing significant emotional impacts as well.

Communicating how you are feeling, and asking them to share their own feelings, can be very helpful.

How to Cope With Miscarriage Grief

Just as every person's experience of miscarriage will look different, so too will their coping process. Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin to heal from your loss.

Understand That Your Feelings Are Normal

Many people may urge you to move on soon after your miscarriage. They may think you are overreacting if you are grieving hard. It's also quite possible that you miscarried before you officially announced your pregnancy, and so your entire process is private and silent.

Unfortunately, it's been a cultural norm for all too long not to discuss miscarriage grief. As a result, many people don't realize how common it is, and they feel that their feelings are wrong or taboo. This is far from the truth, though.

Feeling grief after a miscarriage is more universal than many of us were taught to believe, and it's OK if you are feeling this way.

Let Yourself "Feel the Feels"

The power of your emotions after a miscarriage might surprise you, and you might feel an impulse to push aside these big feelings. But the best way to cope with your feelings is to move through them.

Trying to deny them, push them away, or run from them will usually only make them worse. Remember, too, that sadness is not the only emotion you may feel. Guilt, anger, shock, and emotional numbness are common as well.

Memorialize Your Loss

Many people find it healing to memorialize their pregnancy in some way. Depending on how far along you were in your pregnancy, having a burial of some kind might be possible.

You may also choose to gather with a few loved ones to have a grieving ceremony. Other people will want to plant a tree in honor of their lost baby, light a candle, make a scrapbook with special items from the pregnancy, or have a piece of engraved jewelry made to memorialize their baby.

When Should You Try Again?

Most doctors will recommend trying again after you've had one normal menstrual cycle after your miscarriage. This usually occurs about 4 to 6 weeks after you've miscarried.

For some people, trying right away feels right, and they feel that getting pregnant as soon as possible will help them recover from the sting of their loss. But others will want to wait longer. Even though your body is technically "ready" for another pregnancy, it can take longer for you to heal emotionally.

It's also normal if you feel especially anxious about experiencing another miscarriage if you try again. Unless your healthcare provider finds another cause of your miscarriage, there is no reason why you'd have a greater risk of miscarriage after a loss. Most people experience healthy pregnancies after miscarriage.

But it's understandable that you would feel worried. You can talk to your healthcare provider if you have ongoing health concerns or lingering anxiety.

When to Seek Extra Support for Miscarriage Grief

Everyone who experiences a miscarriage can use support, even if it just means being able to share your feelings with a close friend or family member. Some people will find that level of support adequate, but others will need more extensive support.

Therapy

If you are finding yourself experiencing signs of depression or anxiety, or if your feelings of grief are making it difficult for you to function, seeking therapy may be a good option for you. You can speak to your healthcare provider for a referral, as it's often very helpful to speak to a therapist who is experienced in helping people move through miscarriage grief.

Support Groups

One of the most effective things you can do as you process your grief is to join a miscarriage support group. Experiencing a miscarriage is a very specific experience, and bonding with others who are going through it too can be comforting. It's important to know that you aren't alone, you aren't overreacting, and that your feelings are valid.

You can find many helpful and thriving miscarriage support groups online. You can ask your healthcare provider for a referral for an in person miscarriage support group.

Takeaways

Grieving after a miscarriage is not a linear process. One day you might feel a little more normal, but another day, your grief might hit you like a ton of bricks. You might find that months or years pass, and then something will remind you of your pregnancy, and you will be transported right back to your early feelings of grief.

You will always mourn your loss in some way, but in time, the sting of your feelings will lessen and become more manageable. That said, some people who experience miscarriage have more lasting effects, and need to work through the trauma of the experience more extensively.

Always reach out to your healthcare provider if you are finding that your miscarriage grief is making it difficult for you to function, or if your loss has caused significant mental health concerns, such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD.