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**Couples Grief – Miscarriage, Stillborn, Infant Loss**

The loss of a baby is particularly hard on couples. It is crucial to know that everyone grieves differently. One person may feel intense sadness while another person may feel flooded with multiple emotions. Grief is not limited to one way to work through it, and it is something that stays with us. It does get better with time, but that doesn’t mean it goes away.

When a person is grieving, his or her capacity for giving to a relationship may be far less than normal. He or she could be consumed with comprehending the loss experienced, and with coping with the multitude of feelings that accompany grief. In many cases, a person can experience depression alongside the grief, which can feel like another barrier to relating with him or her. When this happens it is important to know how to communicate and work through difficulties.

***Common for Men***

* You are more than likely grieving privately without the desire to show others how you are feeling.
* You may be quicker to anger or feeling more distracted
* When feeling overwhelmed, you may look for a way to stay busy or take out frustrations physically.
* You may want to take away her pain by trying to distract or lighten the mood, but in doing this you may inadvertently deny her the ability to express her emotion. Many men will make statements of “Not wanting to talk because it will make her feel worse”.
* You may be looking for a way to solve or fix things, which in this situation may not be a possibility.
* In trying to fix things, you may be looking for a way to protect yourself from feeling your own emotion. This can come across to your spouse as you not caring and wanting to move on.
* Many men find connection to their spouse with physical intimacy

***Common for Women***

* You are more than likely looking for ways to open up about your emotion and grief where you will feel a need to talk.
* Connection to others can be very important in the process of opening up.
* It may feel important to ask questions and get as much information about the situation as possible.
* You may be looking for him to talk about his feelings and wondering why he doesn’t seem to care. He may be processing the situations completely different than you would expect or want.
* It may be surprising at how fast he wants to be intimate, and this may be the last thing on your mind as you are looking for emotional connection.
* You may feel that he moves on and is done, while you feel you are still stuck

**Tips for Talking about Grief**

**7 Things to Do**

1. Let yourself grief and make time to grieve.
2. Offer support to each other. It helps to do emotional check-ins as often as needed. Do not give advice, try to fix, or minimize your partner’s emotions. Here are some helpful open ended questions:
	1. Tell me more….
	2. What does that mean to you….
	3. How are you feeling….
	4. I’m curious about….
	5. That must be hard….
3. Take breaks form grieving. Too much at one time can re-trigger emotions. Take time to connect in other ways such as going on dates.
4. Seek support from a wide range of people. This takes pressure off of each other and opens up help to others.
5. Be prepared for big days such as anniversaries and holidays to bring up more emotions. These days are more important to talk with one another.
6. Attend to your body. This includes things like sleep, eating, and exercise.
7. Seek professional support if grief feels overwhelming. This is particularly important if depression starts to feel bigger, such as with suicidal thoughts.

**7 Things to Not Do**

1. Don’t try to fix. Fixing implies judgement and is only appropriate when asked for. Use reflective listening as a go to approach.
2. Don’t judge his or her way of grieving. Everyone is different and just because they’re different then you doesn’t mean it’s wrong.
3. Stay away from alcohol. This is a depressant and will amplify negative emotions.
4. Don’t make hurried or big decisions if possible. Emotions can cloud your ability to do this and you may find that you make the wrong decision in the long run.
5. Don’t get rid getting rid of belongings too quickly, such as clothes or baby supplies. Sometimes getting rid of these items can trigger more feelings of loss.
6. Don’t hide your feelings about your baby. If it is hidden it becomes a secret and something bad.
7. Don’t expect too much from your partner. They may be more forgetful, more emotional, or at times disconnected. This is normal and improves with time.

**Communication Tips**

 Communication is very important when working through grief. If done in a helpful way, couples can grow closer through their experiences. Couples generally communicate well when:

* There is a strong focus on body language (80% of communication is non-verbal)
* There is a feeling of safety, which means trust.
* They feel they can talk without negative judgment.
* There is no fear of punishment or of being attacked.
* They are not afraid of being made to feel guilty.
* There is more of an emphasis on talking, rather than being right or wrong.
* They believe they will be understood.
* They know that what they say is not going to be distorted and/or misinterpreted.
* They know that what they say will not be used against them later.
* They are not afraid their partner will withdraw from them.
* They trust that what they are going to say will be kept confidential.
* Conversations aren’t too long. Big emotions can be painful, and talking too much is hard.
* The listener does not respond with solutions, rather they listen and validate.