



Creating lasting memories of a baby who died during pregnancy or soon after birth is painful and difficult. You can facilitate the grief process by expressing your feelings, talking about your baby, and creating as many memories as possible. Ask for tangible remembrances, such as a lock of hair, footprints and handprints, photographs, clothing, blanket, plaster molds of a hand or foot.

We encourage parents to make decisions concerning your baby's burial or cremation together. If you have a funeral or memorial service, you can write a love letter to your baby or choose poems to be read. You may also want to select an outfit for him/her to wear. Ask other family members to give a special toy or me-

mento to be placed in the casket with the baby. Delaying the ceremony so that the mother can attend is very important. In addition, some families find comfort in planting a tree or a rose bush as a living memorial to their child.

These memories may be bittersweet, but they will help you create and maintain a tangible connection to your baby, and ultimately may console you as you mourn.



Houston's Aid in Neonatal Death

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**H.A.N.D line (832) 752-1919
www.hand.net**



H.A.N.D.

Houston's Aid
in Neonatal Death

*Providing support to
parents in the wake of
miscarriage, ectopic
pregnancy, stillbirth
and infant death*

Resolving our Grief Together

H.A.N.D. (Houston's Aid in Neonatal Death) is a peer-led support group for parents whose babies have died any time from conception through late infancy. The grieving process is intensely personal and often prolonged. *H.A.N.D.* meetings are a safe haven throughout the difficult adjustment to loss.

H.A.N.D. helps parents cope with feelings of grief and isolation that accompany infant death. We are parents helping other parents by seeking to:

- Provide understanding and support to grieving parents by sharing experiences at monthly meetings
- Providing partners the opportunity to hear from others and gain understanding of the different ways men and women grieve
- Offering a parent-to-parent telephone help line
- Providing a lending library of books on diverse aspects of peri-natal grief
- Hold an annual memorial service
- Increase the community's awareness of and sensitivity to pregnancy loss and infant death by publicizing its meetings in the local media and on the internet
- Offering in-services to health care professionals
- Providing *H.A.N.D.* brochures, grief-related literature, and lists of resources to caregivers at hospitals, doctors' offices, and community agencies
- Providing literature that can be shared with families and support networks on ways to help grieving parents

Grief Reactions

During your grief you may experience disturbing feelings, reactions, and conditions such as:

Anger, guilt and depression that may express themselves as:

- tightness in your throat or chest
- lack of strength
- loss of appetite
- insomnia
- heaviness in arms and legs

Persistent thoughts of the child such as:

- vivid dreams of your baby
- imagining that you hear him/her crying
- inability to cope with normal day-to-day life
- irritability, emptiness, and loneliness
- a desire to die in order to be with your baby

Marital misunderstandings, regardless of the quality of your marriage. Fathers and mothers grieve differently because they bond differently to their baby.

All of these reactions are normal.

You may also encounter a variety of reactions from others who mean well, but who are not sure how to respond. Some may attempt to protect you and make decisions for you. You might encounter the "hush syndrome"; those



around you do not mention the baby because they think that talking about your child will aggravate or prolong your grief. The best thing to do is to grieve openly and keep the channels of communication flowing. *H.A.N.D.* can help you do this.

Monthly Support Meetings

H.A.N.D. conducts peer-led support group meetings each month. There is a standing meeting from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month at Chapelwood United Methodist Church located at 11140 Greenbay St. in Houston. You are welcome to attend. **For additional information, please call (832) 752-1919 or visit our website at www.hand.net**

Remembrance Ceremony

Each year in October we hold a remembrance ceremony to honor all of our babies who have died. Information on this ceremony will be mailed or emailed to all who have registered with *H.A.N.D.* and can also be found on the web site,

www.hand.net