



## Supporting Others Through Pregnancy Loss

*Haelle Litvak, B.S. & Whitney Robenolt, Psy.D.*

*Updated by Jill Adaman, Ph.D.*

It's hard to know what to say to family or friends who have experienced pregnancy loss. This experience is not rare: [The Mayo Clinic](#) reports that about 10% to 20% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage (the sudden loss of a pregnancy before the 20<sup>th</sup> week). The actual number of miscarriages is actually higher, because many of them happen before people realize they are pregnant.

Because miscarriages involve the loss of a fetus, they can be devastating for everyone involved. Dr. Janet Jaffe, author of [Healing From the Trauma of Pregnancy Loss](#), describes miscarriage as “a traumatic loss that impacts every aspect of our lives.” Unfortunately, many of us are unprepared to provide comfort and support to loved ones experiencing this pain.

The following may provide you with some helpful tips for friends, family, and loved ones who may have experienced their own loss.

### **Do:**

- Understand that pregnancy loss results in real grief, just as one would feel in losing anyone else they loved.
- Reassure the grieving parents that you will be there for them to help them navigate their grief and feel less alone. For example, “I am so sorry for your loss. I want you to know I am here for you, whatever you need. Now, a week from now, or a month, or a year, I'm a phone call away”.
- Ask how you can help and offer your support. Some examples of practical forms of support include dropping off a meal, offering to take care of pets, offering to run errands. Even a simple act of kindness, such as sitting with them in silence or asking them if they'd like a distraction, can be meaningful.
- Respect the person's privacy about the medical details surrounding the loss. They will bring it up with you if they want to discuss it.
- If and when the person does become pregnant again, understand that this may be a very scary time for them. Celebrate with them only when they are ready.

**Don't:**

- Don't say things like "You can always try again," "I guess it wasn't meant to be," or "You have plenty of time; there's no rush." Even if you mean well, those comments actually minimize and dismiss the pain they are experiencing right now.
- Do not assume one's religion or spiritual background. "It will happen in God's time" is not comforting for everyone.
- Do not attempt to lighten the situation by making jokes such as "You can have one of my kids."
- Don't complain about your own pregnancy inconveniences or talk about another friend's baby shower in the presence of people who have recently experienced pregnancy loss.
- Do not rush people to "get over" their loss and move on. Everyone has their own timelines.

*Talk to someone who can help! To find a licensed psychologist near you, use PPA's Psychologist Locator at <https://www.papsy.org/locator>. For information on other mental health topics, go to <https://www.papsy.org>, then "Resources" and then "Public Resources". PPA offers these articles for informational purposes only; they are not a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.*