

Guilt following miscarriage

Guilt is a strong emotion that a lot of people experience during the grieving process and miscarriage is no different. As parents, we are responsible for our children and when our children die we feel responsible no matter what the circumstances.

Parents will often look for a reason as to why they have had a miscarriage and as a result will look at their own behaviour during pregnancy to find a reason and will often blame themselves when there is no evidence that they did anything wrong. They will often think that they should or shouldn't have done something.

85% of miscarriages occur during the first trimester and these are generally caused by chromosomal abnormalities. Miscarriages during the second trimester are much less common than during the first trimester and may happen as a result of an underlying health issue or cervical weakness. Evidence suggests that a lot of the time there is no known cause for miscarriage.

So what can you do about the guilt?

There are a number of reasons why you may be feeling guilty about your miscarriage. It is important to note again that **miscarriages during the first trimester are generally due to chromosomal abnormalities** and nothing you did or didn't do can change this. However, there is a small chance that some aspects of one's lifestyle could lead to a potentially unhealthy pregnancy. It is essential to remember that not everyone will know that they are pregnant or have adequate information on healthy pregnancies.

Steps to overcoming guilt when you may be to blame.

1. Acceptance is key. If you do feel, deep down that you were responsible for your miscarriage then you need to accept that before you can move on.
2. Think about why you did what you did. Were you aware that what you were doing was potentially harmful? Can you change that behaviour? Now might be the perfect time to think about lifestyle changes.
3. You could write a letter to your baby asking for their forgiveness.
4. Talk it over with a trusted family member, friend or a professional.
5. Think about what you have learned? Can you use this knowledge to help others? Maybe by raising awareness.
6. Remember that you are not a bad person, you made a mistake. Forgive yourself!

Steps to overcoming feeling guilty when you aren't to blame

1. Acceptance is key. If you know that you did nothing wrong then you also need to accept that you weren't responsible.
2. Acknowledge that although you may feel guilty, you actually aren't.
3. Don't blame yourself or your health. There is nothing you could have done differently, even if you have an underlying health condition you are NOT to blame for your miscarriage.
4. Talk it over with a trusted family member, friend or a professional.
5. Think about what you have learned? Can you use this knowledge to help others? Maybe by raising awareness.
6. Look after yourself, self-punishment is not productive and will not bring your baby back.
7. Forgive yourself!

Easing guilt will not be a quick process, it will take time. There are some strategies that you can adopt to stop the thoughts and feelings in the short term. Different things will work for different people. When you are aware of the thoughts you can try:

- Finger tapping on the side of your leg or arm
- Using deep breathing techniques
- Meditating
- Counting backwards from 100
- Shout (or think) "STOP IT!"
- Recite "I forgive myself, I am a good person"