

What will grief look like in my child?

Grief will be different for all children.

Children with high self-esteem will generally be less affected by grief. Grief can often be seen in children's behaviour. Toddlers may seem unsettled or fussy.

3-5 year olds may show signs of irritability, they may become easily distressed, startled, clingy or nervous. Night-walking and nightmares may also be seen as well as bedwetting and feeding difficulties. They may be scared to go to sleep in case they too die. They may exaggerate their normal behaviours.

If a child has witnessed the miscarriage, the feelings and memories of the trauma can lead them to have flashbacks. These can be frightening and are difficult to control. The child can be left feeling nervous and the flight or fight response will kick in. Children may not understand what is happening and may find it difficult to describe how they are feeling. The flight or fight response raises adrenaline which may in turn bring on symptoms such as elevated heart rate (palpitations), headaches, abdominal pains and lethargy.

Further Support:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/about-grief/childrens-grief>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Morgan's Wings

<https://www.facebook.com/morganswings>

Or e-mail us on info@morganswings.co.uk

Talking to children about Miscarriage 0-5



Supporting Parents Going Through Miscarriage

How will grief affect my child?

Not all parents will have told their children (or other children in their family) that they are expecting a baby. If you have told your child, then you may now find yourself in the unfortunate position of having to tell your child that the baby has died. If you did not tell your children you were pregnant, you may still wish to tell them of your miscarriage.

Children are capable of grief, although they may not understand death in the same way as adults. They may also react to the distress around them. They see death as separation from a loved one.

It is important that children know that death is permanent.

Children may not understand the term miscarriage. It may be useful to tell them that the baby has died, rather than use terms such as 'born sleeping', 'we lost the baby' or 'passed away'.

Under fives may initially appear unaffected after hearing the news of a miscarriage but are likely to think about it during quieter times, such as bedtimes. They may believe that the miscarriage occurred as a response to something they have said or done, how many times has a child cried as a response to hearing that mummy was having a boy/girl, when they wanted the opposite? Children may ask lots of questions over and over again. They will often fill in gaps about what happened if they do not know the whole truth and this fantasy can be worse than the reality. Children have shorter attention spans than adults and this can make it seem as though their grief is less intense than those around them but in reality their grief is painful but they can easily be distracted from it.

How can I help them?

In the aftermath of miscarriage, it is important to talk to children and encourage them to open up about their feelings, although they may not have the vocabulary to tell you how they are feeling. It may be hard for you to talk to your children about your miscarriage so it may be easier to ask a trusted relative or friend. It is important to be as honest as you can without worrying them more. It is important to stick to routines. Children feel safest when they know what to expect. If a change of routine is needed it is vital that this is discussed with the child ahead of time (where practical) and that they know how long it will last. It is also important to allow the child to see you grieve unless you are using unhelpful coping mechanisms.

It can be useful to include children in creating a memory box, or making cards etc. Involve your child in commemorating your baby, this could be done annually. There are books available that are targeted at children which can be helpful. You can also encourage your child to write a letter or draw a picture for their sibling.