



Navigating the loss of your baby
Bereavement Support



About me – Jessie Wilkins (Held Sacredly Doula)

Im jessie! I'm a mother and a doula based in Adelaide, South Australia.

I have created this resource to support women and families through the loss of a baby. From the bottom of my heart I am so sorry you are reading this. I also want you to know that all loss matters, Infant, pregnancy and baby loss matters, regardless of gestation or timing.

If you need extra support through this time, however that support looks like for you, please have no hesitation in reaching out to me. I am here to hold a sacred space for You and your family, where I can.

I also have listed some helpful organizations in this booklet, that I believe are highly beneficial in seeking support for what you are going through.





Early loss in a pregnancy (miscarriage)

A pregnancy loss (miscarriage) is the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks.

The term miscarriage can mean miscarriage, ectopic, molar and any other loss that happens before 20 weeks gestation.

Most miscarriages occur in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, but a miscarriage can occur before you even know you are pregnant, often being mistaken for a period.

If you are reading this and experiencing a miscarriage, I want you to know your loss matters, your feelings and emotions are valid, I see you and I here for you.

- I also want you to know this is not your fault and there is nothing more you could have done to prevent this. Please know most women who experience this go on to have healthy subsequent pregnancies.





Termination For Medical Reason (TFMR)

Termination for medical reason (TMFR) is when a pregnancy is terminated due to baby having severe abnormalities, genetic conditions, or there is a risk to the mother's life.

If you are experiencing this, you will be feeling many emotions distressed, anger, blame, resentment, regret, with loss these are all normal feelings.

You may also be feeling relief, certainty and empowerment, with a loss like this these are all normal feeling too.

Please give yourself grace, lean on your support system, seek professional help if you need it. Please don't ever feel a burden or scared to ask for help.

Seeking support is crucial in your healing, and with healing, take as long as you need! Everybody grieves differently, everybody heals differently.





Still birth & newborn death



Parents spend 9 months preparing to meet their baby, manifesting a positive birth experience and preparing to meet their newborn.

Some people never get to do that, some birth a baby with no idea baby won't be born breathing and some go through the birth knowing that their baby will be still born, otherwise known as born sleeping.

If this is your heartbreaking experience, you may be feeling lost, confused and alone, maybe even asking why me? You may feel this deeper if you've never known someone that has had a still born.

I want to reassure you, that you are not alone. Here in Australia 1 in 120 births will be stillbirth or a newborn death. It is uncommon but not rare. You are loved, you are seen, you are heard, there is support out there for you!

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. There is no right or wrong things to do. Everything may feel overwhelming. Here are some ways to honour your baby and your time with them.

- Spend time with your baby, hold, bathe, name and dress your baby. Some parents find that making these memories with their baby have helped them heal.
- Create keepsakes – hand and foot prints, lock of hair, hospital band or blanket, things you can hold dear to your heart forever.
- Take pictures – hospital staff will be more than happy to assist in taking pictures of you and your baby. There is also a volunteer organization called Heartfelt, the professional photographers are dedicated to giving you these photographic memories who have experienced stillbirth or have children with serious or life threatening illness.
- Request more time if you need – hospitals can provide a "cool cot" or "cuddle cot" that keeps baby cool, giving you more time to spend with your baby.
- Speak with your hospital social worker as they can explain any legal requirements, and support you in planning your baby's funeral. This can feel hard and painful, your feelings are valid, please allow yourself time to feel these. Parents do say they find peace and comfort in being able to do this, to express their love for their baby.



Nurturing yourself through your loss

You may not feel like you want to do any of this and that is okay, or you may be looking for guidance on how to care for yourself in this time without feeling guilty or judged for it. Please try not to feel this way, self care is important for your overall health and for your healing. You need to allow yourself to recover physically from birth while navigating your emotional grief. Every woman's journey will look different. Here we have listed some things that can help you during this time.

Allow time for healing – physical recovery can take 4-6 weeks, your body needs the time to heal. Take time to rest, while going back to usual activities may help you mentally, make sure those activities aren't strenuous or detrimental to your physical recovery too soon.

Gentle movement – if feeling up to it light walking and stretching can help your mood and will improve blood circulation.

Nutrition – staying hydrated and eating nutritious small meals is highly beneficial as your body needs nutrients, vitamins and minerals for physical recovery and will help lift your mood.

Comfort for engorged breasts – after losing your baby your milk may come in. This can come with heavy emotions reminding you of your loss or can be reassuring to you that you had a baby. Again, everyone will feel different. There are medications that the hospital may tell you about, that can dry up your milk. You can also donate your milk if you wish and even freeze it or have it turned into a piece of jewelry for keepsake.

Mind-body healing – practicing meditation and breathing exercises can be healing for the mind and body, it can help in releasing your emotions and calming your nervous system. Yoga is also beneficial in releasing tension and emotions within.

Follow medical advice – keep up with and requested appointments, after a loss these will usually happen to make sure there are no complications, especially for still birth. You will receive guidance from your doctor when it is safe to try to conceive again.

Resources – websites and support lines for you

The resources I have listed offer different kind of support for you and your families heartbreaking situation. There is life after loss, and these websites and support lines I have listed below can help you and your family navigate this hard time. They are free and confidential support services.

Red Nose – this foundation supports grieving individuals and families with 24/7 phone support.

Website: <https://rednose.org.au/grief-and-loss-support/find-support/support-for-myself/>

Phone line: 1300 308 307

Heartfelt – a volunteer organization of professional photographers dedicated to giving the gift of photographic memories to families who have experienced still birth or have children with serious or life threatening illness.

Website: <https://heartfelt.org.au/>

SANDS – is a dedicated organization that provides bereavement support to individuals and families following loss through miscarriage, still birth or newborn death. They offer a 24/7 support line, email and online live chat.

Website: <https://www.sands.org.uk/>

Phone line: 1300 308 307

Pink elephants – a miscarriage and early pregnancy loss support circle, online community and information.

Website: <https://www.pinkelephants.org.au/>

Bears of hope – provide support for families who have experienced the loss of their baby.

Website: <https://www.bearsofhope.org.au/>

Phone line: 1300 11 HOPE

BeyondBlue – this is a free 24/7 phone line and online counselling service for everyone in Australia.

Website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Phone line: 1300 224 636





Local Resources

Here I have provided some services I recommend that can help you through this challenging time. These are for those families local to Adelaide, SA.

Red tree foundation:

Located in Hindmarsh, red tree offers free grief counselling and peer support for South Australian families who have been impacted by miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death. Counselling can be in person, home visits, and support groups like coffee club, pregnancy after loss and dads support group.

Contact: 8332 1066

Specialised Perinatal Psychologists (Adelaide)

- Adelaide Perinatal Psychology (North Adelaide) - offers specialised care for pregnancy loss, miscarriage and prenatal/postpartum anxiety.
Anna Worth (clinical psychologist).
Contact: 0411 791 013
- Centre for Perinatal Psychology (Multiple locations – Adelaide): Has several psychologists that specialise in pregnancy loss – **Allison Carcary** from (Findon/Telehealth) is experienced in pregnancy loss.
Link to Allison's page -
<https://www.centreforperinatalpsychology.com.au/psychologists/allison-carcary/#contact>

Heartfelt photography – giving the gift of photographic memories in this hard time:

South Australia Representative – Helen Roberts

Request a session: 1800 583 768

sa@heartfelt.org.au



How a doula can be extra support for you

A doula can provide support to you through your loss.

We offer a safe space to grieve, discuss your grief, fears, and worries, in a judgement free environment. Helping you process your feelings and emotions safely. Gifting you a safe presence, listening and holding space for you.

A doula can advocate for you to have your wishes met and respected with your decision making, and choices.

We want you to feel heard, seen, and your feelings acknowledged with compassion and upmost care.

If you need emotional support, debrief, guidance, support with caring for your other children, practical help of support in finding more resources. Please reach out!



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