

# Miscarriage: Your Personal Journey

A miscarriage is a very personal experience that touches individuals in unique ways. Some deeply mourn the loss of a child, while others grieve just a little. Sometimes emotions fall somewhere in between or even back and forth between a wide range of emotions. All of these reactions are very normal and although grief is a common emotion, it is not as strong for everyone.

Some people are surprised at the depth of their sadness, not understanding this type of loss until experiencing it personally. Others may even experience fear or anxiety at the thought of conceiving again. Others may not experience a strong sense of sadness and view the miscarriage as part of a pregnancy journey, even a learning experience.

It is as normal not to grieve as it is to be devastated by the miscarriage.

***It is important to recognize that there are no right or wrong feelings and that you will require time to heal both physically and emotionally in ways that are unique to you.***

Some people develop a relationship with a baby early on in the pregnancy while others do not until the birth seems more of a reality. Even within a family, some members may develop a relationship early on, while others may not – this will differ even between mothers and fathers. Early on, a woman may feel closer to a baby since it is growing within her. Because the father does not experience this physical attachment he may feel less emotionally involved in the early stages of pregnancy. These relationships may affect the grief response after a miscarriage. Just as each relationship is unique, so is the response.

Miscarriages are more common than most people think. They occur in about 15 to 20 percent of all diagnosed pregnancies, usually between the 7th and 14th weeks. About 75 percent of early losses occur before 12 weeks. While miscarriage is common, your loss still is unique to you and you should not expect to feel comforted by these facts.

## **Your Physical Journey**

A miscarriage can occur slowly or over a long period of time. It may also be discovered early through ultrasound diagnosis or blood tests. You may spot bleed or cramp a little or a lot. The amount of bleeding may alarm you. You may take a medication or have a surgery to complete the miscarriage.

Following a pregnancy loss, the body takes weeks to return to normal. Your breasts may be tender, and your milk may even come in. Uterine cramping may continue for several days. Bleeding or spotting may continue for a week or more. If you have heavy bleeding, a foul discharge or a fever, contact your doctor immediately.

Heart palpitations, fatigue or sleeplessness, loss of appetite, inability to concentrate, nightmares, headaches and withdrawal from social activities are normal grief reactions that may also occur.

## **Your Emotional Journey**

You may go through a wide range of emotions including fear, sadness, anger and guilt and you may feel the need to search for answers. Some women also experience a loss of self-esteem following a miscarriage.

Depression after a miscarriage is not uncommon. If it seems like you are not getting your enthusiasm and interest in life back, talk to your health care provider. Understanding more about your miscarriage will help you cope.

Many women experience a profound sense of emptiness following a miscarriage. They look at their flat stomach, which should be protruding, and are overwhelmed with a sense of emptiness and loss.

After a miscarriage, you may find yourself avoiding friends who have children or who are pregnant because you feel it is too painful to be around them. Pregnant women may also feel uncomfortable around you because they are not sure what to do or say. If you can, try to talk with your friends about each other's needs and concerns.

## **The Father's Journey**

Men may feel many emotions when their partners miscarry, but they may have more difficulty expressing them due to fear of appearing weak or the desire to appear strong to protect their wives or partners. Some men experience feelings of helplessness as well as disbelief, anger, frustration and guilt. They may also feel insecure about asking medical questions or worry about their wives or partners.

It is helpful if a father can tell his partner how he is feeling. It may reassure the mother that she is not alone in her grief or help her understand his personal experience.

Both men and women often experience a sense of relief that follows the stress of the miscarriage. It is a peaceful, happy time when they realize that they have lived through the experience and that life will go on. However, episodes of grief may occur again.

## **Time for Healing**

Following a miscarriage you may be told by your doctor or nurse to "wait and watch" in future pregnancies. Though this may sound insensitive or frustrating, it is your provider's way of telling you that there is not necessarily a way to treat or prevent most causes of miscarriage.

However, the success of pregnancy following one or even two miscarriages is better than previously thought. Your chances of having a healthy baby after one or two miscarriages are about the same as if you had not ever had a miscarriage. If necessary, you may receive careful medical attention during future pregnancies.

A miscarriage is a personal experience that will require time to heal both physically and emotionally. The time you require will be unique to you as well. Make sure you give yourself that time.