



EXPERIENCING MISCARRIAGE AS SOMEONE WHO IDENTIFIES AS LGBTIQ+

Your loss and the complex emotions you are experiencing following a miscarriage are real and valid, no matter your sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, or physical involvement in the pregnancy. While there are an increasing number of fertility and assisted reproductive treatment services available in Australia and improved financial support for these services in recent years, you may find that support and information for LGBTIQ+ identified people are hard to find.

Having a family as an LGBTIQ+ person can bring additional challenges. A lack of support or understanding about your loss from others, including family, friends and healthcare professionals, can complicate that journey.

You may experience a lack of sensitivity towards your miscarriage. You may also feel like you are not being acknowledged. Some have shared that support is especially lacking for those who require a surrogate or are the non-gestational parent, as the physical aspects of loss or the gestational parent can become the focus.

As a LGBTIQ+ person or partner you may face unique decisions and issues that other couples don't have to face, such as finding an LGBTIQ+ inclusive doctor or clinic, a surrogate, or another egg or sperm donor. It can also be difficult if your family or friends do not support your LGBTIQ+ identity or decision to have a family. You may not have let family or friends know about your parenting plans and your recent pregnancy loss for fear of a negative response. You may not have informed your workplace about your parenting aspirations and pregnancy loss for fear of LGBTIQ+ related discrimination.

It is normal and valid to feel distressed, angry, and frustrated when your loss is not recognised or upset that heterosexual people may not have to go through as difficult a journey as you when starting a family.



HOW MIGHT YOU FEEL?

The intensity of complex feelings, especially sadness and grief following a miscarriage, is not related to how far along someone was in their pregnancy or their physical involvement in the pregnancy. Instead, the meaning of this pregnancy to a family or individual, at this point, deserves consideration. People must grieve the loss of their pregnancy and the loss of the future they imagined for themselves and their families.

We encourage you to embrace and be curious about your feelings rather than critical or judgemental. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Not everyone who experiences miscarriage will feel sad; some may feel relieved or confused. Most likely, you will have many different feelings simultaneously, and your emotions are likely to change over time.

Below are some common feelings people may experience after a miscarriage. Your feelings are understandable and have meaning.

GRIEF AND SADNESS

Grief and sadness are shared emotions following a miscarriage. Sadness is a natural and expected feeling to experience. You are not only feeling sad about the loss of your baby, but also the loss of the future you imagined, and possibly feel sad that others are not providing you the support or reaction you expected.

ANGER

Feelings of anger may arise because you do not feel in control of the situation or your body. Anger may arise from not knowing the reasons for the miscarriage or feeling dissatisfied with the medical treatment you received. Or you may be resentful that other people have not responded to you in the way you felt you needed or angry that some people who are cis heteronormative are able to conceive easily. A miscarriage can feel unfair and unjust. Anger can sometimes be a way of keeping feelings of sadness at bay.

LONELINESS

If you didn't tell anyone about your pregnancy, you might feel alone in your pain and sadness. Although it can be challenging to be vulnerable and share these feelings, talking to someone about your loss may help with these feelings.

Partners, family, and friends may understand your feelings, or they may not. Partners often have different experiences and reactions, and open conversations can be worthwhile. If you do not receive the support you would like from friends or family, consider speaking to a support group or perhaps even a psychologist or mental health professional.

CONFUSED

A miscarriage can be a very confusing experience. It can occur suddenly and out of the blue. There may be little explanation for why it happened, and you may experience a whole range of intense, complicated emotions as a result.

JEALOUSY

Many people describe feeling jealous of people who have children or have fallen pregnant. It is painful to see others with a baby, and, understandably, you feel this way. Criticising yourself and feeling ashamed about these feelings doesn't help and certainly doesn't take them away. These feelings are transient and don't make you a terrible person. Speaking with others who have experienced a miscarriage may be helpful. It can also be beneficial to avoid events that might trigger your sadness until you feel ready.

FAILURE OR LACK OF CONTROL

You may feel like you have failed yourself, your partner, or your family by miscarrying. Or perhaps you feel like your body has failed you or have no control over your body, which can arouse anger and anxiety. It is essential to know that it is highly unlikely that you have done anything to cause your miscarriage. Trusting your body again can take time.

SHOCK

You may experience shock as a miscarriage is not the outcome that you imagined when you found out you were pregnant. Shock and disbelief are common feelings, and it often takes time to absorb that you have had a miscarriage.

FEAR/ANXIETY/WORRY

Worry or anxiety is a common emotion following a miscarriage. The intensity and duration of anxiety are likely to change over time.

The experience of the miscarriage itself may be very frightening, depending upon the circumstances. Necessary medical procedures may be painful, and you may not feel like you can control the situation. The absence of control can make you feel anxious.

Uneasy thoughts tend to take the form of "what if..." or "I should...". Many people fear having another miscarriage and worry about what this means about their body and their health. You may also feel nervous about telling others about the miscarriage. If you feel unable to switch off feelings of anxiety or worry, and you or others around you are concerned about you, consider seeking a referral to a psychologist or mental health professional who can assist you.

NUMBNESS/EMPTINESS

You may experience a period after the miscarriage where you feel emotionally and physically empty or numb. Some people feel a sense of disbelief that this has happened to them, and it may feel surreal to feel so distressed when there are limited memories to process. Allow yourself time to absorb what has happened, talk to others, and find ways to remember your baby.

NOTE: If you experience intense and prolonged feelings of disconnection, numbness, or dissociation which interfere with your functioning, you should speak with a mental health professional.

GUILT

Many people feel guilty or blame themselves for a miscarriage, fearing they did something “wrong.” It is rarely the case that you have done something to cause a miscarriage.

In distressing situations, where we have no control over outcomes, we are inclined to look for explanations about why terrible, unforeseen things happen. In the absence of proof, it is understandable why we might want to blame ourselves, even though there may be no evidence that you caused this or were at fault in any way.

When pregnancies progress to term, people have generally had more time (and therefore a more significant opportunity) to work through and somewhat resolve feelings of ambivalence by the time the baby arrives. They probably still feel very anxious about what is ahead, but the dramatic physical changes of pregnancy, especially the latter stages, can support this adjustment. The often-sudden nature of miscarriage can interrupt this process, and people feel uneasiness when left with mixed (unresolved) feelings about the pregnancy.

RELIEF

You may feel relieved after a miscarriage. Perhaps your baby was diagnosed with a medical condition, or you, your partner, or your surrogate was unwell during pregnancy (e.g., Morning sickness or hyperemesis gravidarum). You may also feel relieved if the pregnancy was unplanned or if your circumstances would have made caring for a baby a challenge. There are many valid reasons people may feel relief following a miscarriage and feeling this way doesn't make you a bad person. You can feel relief simultaneously as feeling a range of other complicated emotions about the pregnancy loss.

You may also feel guilty because you feel relieved after losing a pregnancy. This feeling might coincide as you are feeling sad or anxious. It is normal to have a range of complex emotions at any one time. There is probably a good reason why part of you feels relieved, which is OK. Relief doesn't discount feelings of sadness or make you a terrible person. Uncertainty (or ambivalence) about the pregnancy is a normal part of all pregnancies, even the most wanted pregnancy.



The emotions you may experience after a miscarriage can be very overwhelming. Please know that you are not alone and support services are available.

If you are in a crisis situation, please call Lifeline (13 11 14), Beyond Blue (1300 224 636), or 000 immediately.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR WORKPLACE ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE?

Family and friends play an important role in supporting their loved one affected by miscarriage: what they do or don't say can have a lasting impact. Their empathy and acknowledgment of your loss is important to your wellbeing. Equally important is how your workplace supports you at this time, including through leave provision.

YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Your family, friends, and colleagues may also feel grief around your pregnancy loss. If you have told them about your pregnancy, they too have likely felt excitement and joy for you and your partner around your baby's arrival. It is likely they also experience feelings of sadness and disappointment when hearing the news of your loss.

Unfortunately, many people can find it difficult to talk about and support grieving people. To begin with, they can potentially say hurtful things, especially if they are not supportive of your LGBTIQ+ identity.

This response is often associated with their discomfort talking about miscarriage and not knowing what to say or because of cultural or generational differences.

There is nothing you can do to avoid upsetting reactions or people in some cases, and you may choose to find support to help you cope with them. However, there are several things you might choose to do if this occurs:

TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL

Depending on your relationship with the person, if they say or do something hurtful or discriminatory about your loss, you may either choose to try and explain why what they said or did was painful.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Sometimes, you might need to exercise some self-care in these situations, which means you may choose to avoid being around that person until you are ready.

TELL THEM WHAT YOU NEED

It's also okay to let people know what support you would find helpful (if this is appropriate within the context of the relationship). You may find it beneficial to be open with how much your pregnancy meant to you and the impact your loss has had on you. Being honest can show how much support you need and help others understand how and why you feel the way you feel.

WORK-RELATED ISSUES

Some people experience discrimination at work concerning their LGBTIQ+ status. Time off work following a miscarriage may result in further adverse reactions or penalties. If you believe these to be motivated by LGBTIQ+ discrimination, this is illegal, and you can seek advice and support through the Australian Human Rights Commission.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT

Everyone grieves differently and there are many services in Australia to help support you.

Visit our support page by scanning the QR code on the right or visit miscarriageaustralia.com.au/finding-miscarriage-support/



You can also find more information from your GP or specialist.

LGBTIQ+ SPECIFIC SUPPORT

Better Pride



Q-Life



Life Supports Counselling



Headspace



You can also find a list of LGBTIQ+ peer support groups on our website.

SUPPORTING YOUR PARTNER

Understand that your partner may not be grieving or expressing their sadness in the same way as you. Not all partners find it easy to talk about or express their feelings. Their unique emotional experience doesn't mean that they are uncaring. It could mean that they deal with their grief differently from you.

Here are some tips to help you and your partner during this time:



COMMUNICATE OPENLY

Be honest and talk about your feelings with your partner. Knowing and understanding each other's viewpoints and emotions can make it easier to support and understand what your partner might need.

SHOW COMPASSION

You and your partner will not always feel the same way. Share empathy for one another when differences in emotions arise.

TAKING AND GIVING EXTRA CARE

Engaging in support outside of your intimate relationship can be helpful. Speaking with others allows the time and space to process how you feel and make it easier to empathise with your partner. Talk with someone you trust – family, friends, a colleague.

COMMEMORATE TOGETHER

Create memories of your baby together and create a place or memento where you can share in remembrance of your baby. Recognition can help bring you and your partner closer during times of grief.

SAY YES TO HELP

It's ok to need extra support: Recognise when you might need some additional support and seek it out. Friends and family can care for children or pets, run errands, bring food, and finish chores. It is ok to say yes when others offer to help with practical support while you and your partner take time to heal.

TAKE A BREAK

Spend time out of the house. Go for a short-day trip together, spend time with nature, or permit yourself to go on a holiday. Giving yourself distance from reminders and a change of environment can help.

RESTORE JOY TOGETHER

Gently reacquaint yourselves with activities or interests you enjoy as partners. Possibly discover new hobbies or activities you both have wanted to explore.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Visit our website by scanning the QR code below or visit miscarriageaustralia.com.au

You can also find more information from your GP or the website of the hospital or clinic you will be attending



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