

SUPPORTING SOMEONE

AFTER THEIR MISCARRIAGE

If a loved one has experienced a miscarriage, your empathy and acknowledgement of their pregnancy loss can be of enormous value. 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.

When checking in with how your loved ones feel and whether they need support, your choice of words and the help you offer matters. Take care that you are prepared and ready emotionally and physically before providing support, as you may also experience grief. It is normal and valid to feel sad about the loss.

"...you're not always in the headspace where you can cry out for help, you sort of need people to force themselves on you a little bit, you know, come and have a coffee, you know, don't say, 'Call me if you want me to come', you call and say, 'I'm popping down tomorrow, make sure the kettle's boiled.'"



The emotions someone may experience after a miscarriage can be very overwhelming. You can help your loved ones by sharing the support services available if they need them. They are not alone.

If your loved one is in a crisis situation, please call Lifeline (13 11 14), Beyond Blue (1300 224 636), or 000 immediately.

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



WAYS YOU CAN HELP A LOVED ONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED A MISCARRIAGE



ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR LOSS

Validate their loss to show you recognise how much their baby meant to them and what they are going through. This affirmation can be as simple as saying, “I am sorry about your miscarriage” or “I am sorry for your loss.” Another way to recognise their loss may be to buy them flowers or a memento.



OFFER HELP

Volunteering practical support is often very much appreciated. Ask if they would like you to accompany them to appointments, perform any household chores, run errands on their behalf, supervise other children they have, or care for their pets.



SAVE THE DATE

Make a note of the milestones or significant dates that your loved one chooses to memorialise. The miscarriage or when the baby was due can be an important date and a meaningful opportunity to show your support and empathy. This initiative shows that you understand these milestones might be challenging, acknowledge how they feel, and that you care.



BE PRESENT

Active listening can feel awkward when someone is upset. We are inclined to provide well-intended advice, solutions, or reassurance during our discomfort with difficult topics. Sometimes we make comments like “everything will be ok” when we don’t know what to say and want to be helpful. However, just being present and listening is what your loved one needs the most. Trusting them to find solutions of their own is a powerful way of providing support.

WORDS MATTER

Consider what you will say beforehand. If you are unsure, refer to the do's and don'ts of supporting someone and words matter table below. These are some of the things that people who have experienced miscarriage have told us are helpful to say and things to avoid as they can be unintendedly hurtful.

It's best not to say anything that starts with "At least...". There is no "at least" when it comes to miscarriage loss. While well-intentioned, these sorts of comments dismiss and minimise people's grief and loss and can be really hurtful.

"One of my friends, like I was complaining to one of my friends, and like I hate how people say, 'you should be really grateful you've already got one', and then she said to me, 'but that's not what, one is not what you want. You want two kids, and she said, and like that phrase, 'it's not what you want', it was really helpful to me at the time."

WHAT TO SAY



"I'm sorry for your loss"

"I'm here for you"

"It is ok to feel what you feel"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"How are you feeling?"

"I don't really know what to say"

"I'm thinking of you"

"How can I help?"

"I can't imagine what you're going through"

WHAT NOT TO SAY



"It wasn't meant to be"

"You can always try again"

"It was for the best"

"It wasn't a baby yet"

"At least you're young"

"At least it happened early"

"You're overreacting"

"At least you have other children"

"At least you know you can get pregnant"

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO'S HAD A MISCARRIAGE



DO

- Acknowledge their loss
- Listen and let them grieve
- Encourage them to talk if they want to
- Recognise grief doesn't have a time limit
- Ask how you can help and offer practical support
- Help end the silence around miscarriage by willing to talk about it
- Reassure them that it was not their fault
- Reassure them that they are not alone
- Check-in when you can
- If you make a mistake, or say something that upsets them, apologise and let them know that you really want to help but sometimes you're not sure how
- If you are unsure what to say, ask them what would be most helpful for them right now



DON'T

- Use cliché comments such as... “you can always try again” or “it happened for a reason“
- Blame or offer unsolicited advice
- Rush their grieving process
- Avoid them
- Push them to talk if they are not ready
- Make assumptions
- Minimise their feelings
- Tell them how to do things differently in their next pregnancy
- Take their reactions personally

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

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

You can also find more information from your GP



Miscarriage Australia strives to provide current and evidence-based information to everyone. In developing the website, we engaged an expert advisory committee to review the information to ensure our resources are evidence based and reflect current best-practice. The information provided in this factsheet is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient/user and their existing health care professional(s).

Last edited: 13th December 2022 | Scheduled review date: October 2024