

COPING WITH PERINATAL LOSS



Impact of Perinatal Loss

Perinatal loss can affect all members of the client's family and support system.



Partner



Sibling(s)



Grandparents

Bereaved parents are more likely to experience:

Depressive symptoms

Relationship disruptions

Decreased well-being

Health problems

The impact of perinatal loss is not related to the cause of death, the gestational age at which the loss occurred, or amount of time that has passed.

Nurses can provide developmentally appropriate guidance and help connect the entire family to support resources.

Nursing Interventions

Nursing support for grieving families

Understand and accept that a range of emotions and expressions of grief are normal.

Create support systems.

Guide family in coping strategies.

Help create memories and rituals that families will be able to use later to discuss the baby.

Use non-medical language: "your baby" instead of "fetus."

Listen empathetically.

Avoid statements that minimize loss, impose moral or religious values, judge or increase guilt, such as "Everything happens for a reason."

Sit quietly, provide non-verbal support.

Respect that family may not be ready to talk about loss immediately.

Communication strategies

"What can I do for you?"

"I am so sorry this happened to you."

"Would you like me to step out of the room so you can have privacy as a family?"

"What do you need right now?"

"Your baby is beautiful."

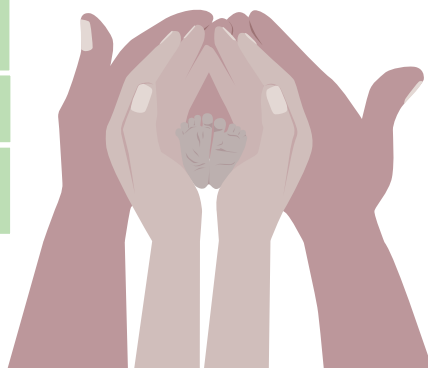
"I am here and I want to listen."

"Take as much time as you need."



Preparing for Birth With Fetal Demise

- Provide anticipatory guidance regarding baby's appearance.
- Respect cultural and religious practices.
- Encourage family visitation.
- Help parents to see/hold their baby within the first 30 minutes, keep the baby warm under warmer.
- Offer choices for client to create memories and rituals. Understand some clients may not want to participate immediately; provide options that client can take home with them.



NOTES

