

Grandparents

Becoming a grandparent is one of the most amazing things to happen after being a parent. The joy of having a baby around again is such an exciting feeling. There is also the added fact that you are able to enjoy all the fun times without having to deal with all the day to day tasks. Grandparents are able to spoil their grandchildren and look forward to being able to do this.

As soon as you are told by your child that you are to become a grandparent you begin to prepare yourself for this new life, you get excited for your child as they prepare to take on the biggest and most important role of their lives. It is also good to know that the family line is continuing and a new generation is beginning.

As the months pass you support your child through all the changes they are going through both physical and emotional and you start to imagine what this new baby will look like and what will become of their lives.

Death of a Grandchild

When this new life is taken away either before the birth, at birth or during the childhood years whether it is expected or not the pain is unimaginable.

As a parent you never imagine that you will outlive your children and especially not your grandchildren so when this does happen it feels like life is very mixed up and wrong.

You want to protect your child, taking away their pain like you were able to when they were growing up and fell over.

However, the death of their child is a pain you are unable to take away, you cannot make it better and this leaves you feeling helpless. It is also a pain that you are now sharing with them but you don't want to burden them with your feelings of grief. You feel like you have to be strong and keep your emotions in check so you are able to support your child.

Grandparents often get a feeling of 'survivor guilt' and would rather that they were the ones that had died and wish that they could change places with the deceased child. The feeling that you have had an opportunity to live your life whilst your grandchild has had this chance taken away from them makes you feel that it would have been better if you had died. They also experience a feeling of guilt that they were unable to protect their child from this pain.

It is said that there are 5 stages of guilt:-

1. Denial: – Difficulty accepting what has happened and a feeling of numbness and disbelief. Denial is a way of allowing the pain of grief to come in small doses.

2. Anger: - Feeling angry at the loss and the pain you and your child is feeling. Feelings of resentment towards other parents.

3. Bargaining: - Once the anger eases people going through grief often enter a stage of bargaining with God. They often ask “Please let me have just a little while longer with my grandchild”, “Now that I’m not angry let me have some more time “.

4. Depression: - Deep feelings of sadness, loneliness, emptiness, despair and physical ailments. People often experience headaches, aches, pains, nausea, weight loss/gain and sleep disturbance.

5. Acceptance: - People going through grief never truly get over it; they learn how to adapt to their new ‘normal’ life. Life will never be like it was before the loss but they find that they can continue to live again.

The stages of grief can happen in any order and there is no time limit on grief, some people will also never experience any of these stages, whilst some will experience just a few. There is no typical reaction to grief and whatever you are feeling and experiencing is normal.

Grandparents are often overlooked during the grieving time as the attention is focussed on the parents of the child who has died. However, they are often going through double the pain as they are not only grieving for their grandchild but also feel inadequate as a parent as they are unable to take away their Childs pain.

It is important that grandparents allow themselves time to grieve to enable to them to get through the loss.

Don't be afraid to talk about your grandchild with your child, it may cause a few tears but just remember you're not going to remind them of the child they lost, they will never forget them. They may also be feeling that they have to keep their feelings and words inside so as not to upset anyone when all they want to do is talk about their child. It is important for everyone to remember that the child did exist and to acknowledge the pain each of you is feeling.

“If you don't let yourself grieve you will be no help to anyone else. You must allow yourself the chance to grieve”