

**The days,
weeks and
months
ahead**

When you find out that your baby has died, it may feel incomprehensible that you will ever feel differently and less in pain or broken than you do at that time. Saying goodbye and leaving hospital without your baby is possibly the hardest thing you'll ever have to do.

Sands is here to support you for as long as you need in the months and years ahead. Finding support from others who have found their way through losing a baby can offer hope and show that you will survive this. There are other parent stories on our website and social media.

The early days

In the first few weeks you may just take one step at a time, or accomplish one small task and that is enough. Many aspects of life will just feel like hurdles to overcome and you may not find any joy or positivity in anything. This is very normal.

Planning your baby's funeral and the build up to the day can be incredibly challenging and the Sands Bereavement Support Services Team are here to support you through this.

Important dates

Important dates, such as the anniversary of the date when your baby was born, died, their due date, or occasions traditionally celebrated with family, such as special holidays, can be especially hard. Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day can be especially difficult and our Helpline extends its hours on these days. Often the build up to the actual day is harder than the day itself and planning something specific can be really helpful.

If you have other children, it can be helpful to talk to them in advance about any dates on the calendar that might be more difficult than others, so they are aware that you may all feel sad again for a while. Do not be surprised if a child also shows signs that important dates, and the lead up to them, trigger feelings of grief for them too.

Holidays and other times when families gather together can be a time when the baby is especially missed. Family birthdays, and those of a surviving twin or multiple birth, can also be bitter-sweet. Some families do something special to remember their baby on these occasions, such as lighting a candle for the baby or choosing a special decoration together, having a picnic, or doing something they've always planned, but not managed to do. It's important that you do what feels right for you.



Many families mark birthdays, anniversaries or other special occasions by lighting a candle, baking a cake for the baby or visiting a special place, such as the baby's grave, the place they scattered their baby's ashes, or another place that has strong associations with the baby. If you celebrate Christmas, hanging a stocking for the baby or putting ornaments on the tree in their memory, might help other children.

Some parents buy a gift for the age their child would have been and donate it to a charity. Many families choose to raise funds for Sands by taking on a fundraising challenge, organising an event such as a sponsored memory walk or making a donation in memory of their baby. There are many ways you can do this and you can find out more at www.sands.org.uk/get-involved.

In memory

Sands has many In Memory opportunities to enable you to mark special days and see your baby's name recorded somewhere significant. Children can be involved in any of these activities and this can provide comfort and ways to acknowledge the grief that is felt by the whole family. You may also want some time on your own whenever grief resurfaces. It might be helpful to explain why this is, rather than risk further upset and confusion at what might already be a time of heightened emotions.

A Sands Always Loved tribute is a wonderful and lasting way to remember your baby. In partnership with the memorial website charity MuchLoved, we are able to provide you with a way of creating a tribute website in memory of your baby, which, if you wish, can also be used to raise funds for Sands. Your free online memorial dedicated to your precious baby can be shared with family and friends or kept completely private if you'd prefer.

An Always Loved tribute is a safe space to help you remember and reflect. You can create a beautiful, unique, personalised website in memory of your baby, where you can easily add and display a whole range of information and memorabilia, including stories, messages of condolence, pictures, music and video clips. You can also write an online journal.

Find out more at www.sands.org.uk/always-loved-tributes.



Over time

Your need for support may change over time as you begin to find a “new normal”. You will never forget your baby and life will grow around your memories and grief will feel less all-consuming. Grief is not a straight line and you may move backwards and forwards through the process with bad days when you least expect them.

There are many ways you can remember your baby and Sands' website has examples of how people have turned their grief into another memory for their baby or another way of honouring them. What is important is that you give yourself the time and space you need to grieve and to move forward, which is different for everyone. You may undertake challenges or volunteer for a period of time and when you feel you need to step back it is not a sign of letting your baby go, or letting them down, but an important recognition of all that you have done and where you are now in your journey.

As with the early days of grief, you may find that you and those around you grieve in different ways and need different types of support or opportunities at different times. If you are worried about yourself and feeling that you are not coping, or have suddenly started to feel worse, please do reach out to the Sands Bereavement Support Services Team, or your GP or trusted health professional. Sudden changes in how you, or those closest to you, feel are signs that you may need more support. It can be harder to reach out at these times and feel that you "should" be coping, particularly if some time has passed, but grief is not a straight line or process and sometimes we need more help.

