

The Miscarriage Association



acknowledging pregnancy loss

When the trying stops

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Introduction

For some women and their partners, there will sadly come a time when they make the decision to stop their efforts to have a baby. While some may be trying to complete their family, for others this means stopping their attempts to have their first child.

There may be many reasons for making this choice: repeated losses; fertility problems; advancing maternal age along with its associated health problems; social, financial or relationship issues.

There appears to be a widely accepted belief that when we wish to have a child it will happen without too much difficulty. There is often a biological urge to have a family. When this does not happen, then the feelings associated with remaining childless, or in not being able to complete a family, can often be overwhelming.

If you are thinking of stopping trying, especially if it means remaining childless, this leaflet is written for you.

* * *

We had noticed after the fifth miscarriage, that we had started to forget to take our supplements, and had missed our homeopath appointment and I had begun to think that this might not happen. I remember panicking, thinking, how can I live my life without my own children?

Thinking of stopping

The thought of stopping trying for a pregnancy can at first seem to be a very scary and daunting prospect. This may be especially true if this decision will result in the woman or couple remaining childless.

There can be many reasons for considering this option. You may feel that you have come to the end of the line medically, or simply feel that you can take no more – physically, emotionally or even financially.

The hopes that you had at the outset of this particular journey may be dwindling and the resources you once had to cope with any further loss/es slowly diminishing. The continuing roller-coaster of anticipation and disappointment can make the thought of trying again more of a dread than something to look forward to.

You may not even know where the thought of stopping first came from, but once there, it is difficult to ignore. Even so, you may find it difficult to allow yourself to start thinking about how life would be if you stopped trying. It may take time – and courage – to face these feelings and to achieve some kind of acceptance which will allow you to move on.

Hope has gone and that leaves a simple fact: it is not going to work. There is something straightforward and clean in that. I have had enough of this. I realise hope is what has made this so painful but now it is gone, somehow it is easier. It is funny in these dire times what relief can be found in such unexpected places.

Many people feel that this is in some way a betrayal of the baby/ies they have lost. It can be difficult to accept that stopping does not mean letting go of the memory of the babies you conceived.

Making the decision

For some people, there comes a clear moment at which they make the decision to stop trying. Others find that they make and re-make the decision several times, revisiting it as their feelings shift back and forth. Don't be surprised – or too dismayed – if this happens to you. It is a normal and understandable part of the process.

A different kind of loss

Stopping can lead to a sense of isolation and loss for women AND men, which is quite different from the feelings experienced after pregnancy loss/es. When the trying stops, then so does the medical care. Even though this may have been a very difficult and distressing time, visiting the hospital or GP at least provided a continuing focus to concentrate upon. Doing something at least meant that there was still hope.

Trying to conceive and hold on to a pregnancy will almost certainly have taken a great deal of time and energy, sometimes stretching over many months or years. For some people, this has been their focus for so long that it is hard to imagine any other kind of future.

Stopping trying opens up a new space, one that used to be filled with our hopes and plans for a future with our children. Amongst the turmoil, however, can be the sometimes quite unexpected feeling of relief. No more decisions to be made; no more fingers crossed when finding out you are pregnant; no more anxious days and weeks waiting for a scan; no more medical intervention when everything does not turn out as we

wished. This time can be a difficult one of conflicting emotions and one that may take some time to accept and come to terms with.

What shall I do with my life? I have no idea. I can hardly move. I can hear a neighbour in the garden say to a guest 'We love foreign travel'. What do I love to do? Its all been so overshadowed, I have no idea.

We've become more relaxed and trying to make babies isn't our priority any more. It is so nice not to keep looking at the calendar any more.

A different future

Thinking of facing a life without children or without completing your family can raise many new questions and can be quite a confusing and emotional time, especially within a relationship which has been based upon a mutual wish for children. These questions can range from what to do with your weekends, to what to do with your life. Sometimes these issues cannot be resolved without professional counselling but usually most men and women DO come out of the other side and learn to adapt and create a happy and fulfilling life, even if it is not necessarily how they would have originally wished

Getting away on holiday felt like a reprieve and coming back I felt a sense of openness and expanse. I have no plans for this year or my life going forward. That doesn't trouble me. It feels right.

Lives continue with a sorrow that changes over time from the raw overwhelming emotions experienced at the time of pregnancy loss, to a continuing sadness that, whilst always present, is less intrusive within everyday existence. People learn to carry with them their experiences and the memory of each of the tiny lives that were with them for such a very short time. They learn to close the door on their 'trying'; to accept that this part of their lives is in the past and to move on, feeling that it is actually OK to do so. This is not to say that it is not a hard decision to make and lives and relationships may change as a result, in ways that they didn't imagine.

I feel my family is complete now. Just my husband and me and our memories of the tiny lives we had with us for a short while.

I loved each one of those lives so deeply and profoundly, they remain with me for ever. I shall celebrate their presence in my life whilst also mourning the fact it was so short.

Moving on

There is a real richness in the variety of ways which people find to move on with their lives after making the decision to stop trying for a further pregnancy.

There are other ways of becoming a parent, and some people decide that they are going to look to fostering or adopting a child or children. Some people will consider caring for older children, or those with special needs.

I don't think you ever give up hope of having your own child until nature prevents it, but we've learned to come to terms with it and actually the thought of looking after children that have had a disadvantaged start to their little lives, makes life seem even more worthwhile.

(This couple went on to foster)

I was physically and emotionally unable to contemplate going through any more miscarriages. Even knowing that this was the right decision, I still had an overwhelming urge to be a Mum. I started a new role and started to move on, yet I was still not completely settled or satisfied. For my husband and me, the need to be parents continued and we found ourselves starting to discuss other options, the possibility of adoption.

Others may decide to move on without directly parenting and become more involved with their nephews and nieces or the children of friends. Although this might be painful at times, being part of a child's life can also bring much happiness. In the same way, working with a children's charity can bring great satisfaction and fulfilment.

You may choose to build a different life, without a focus on children. Not having children means that there is often greater flexibility in the way people live their lives and can free up time and energy for other things. While there may be times when you wish that this wasn't the case, for some people making changes in their daily life is an important step in the process of moving on. Closing the door on trying can mean opening another door to a different future and some may decide to pursue other interests and opportunities, or develop a career they put on hold whilst they were trying for a pregnancy.

Just as when you were still trying, there may be times when it's difficult to be around other people with children, especially if the conversation seems to centre on the subject. You might find it helps to spend more time with others who don't have children or whose children have grown up.

Some people feel that moving to a new house is a good way to make a new start. This may be particularly so if the house was bought specifically to fill with children, as it may contain too many memories of associated sadness.

Talking to others who have faced the same issues can be hugely helpful, as can involvement from professionals – see [Resources](#) below.

Moving on does not happen overnight. It is a journey of finding and building a new life and of learning to adapt and accept that new life and identity. Finding the coping strategies to get through that journey is not always easy and sometimes there can be a difference in the pace of acceptance between some couples, which can lead to problems. Sadly, some relationships may not survive this complete change in direction and listed below are some of the organisations you may find useful at this time.

Summary

The decision to stop trying for a baby is rarely an easy one. The life you are facing is a very different one from the one you had hoped and wished for and the process of adapting to that new life is likely to take some time. Choices may be made and then unmade several times before the ultimate decisions are finally in place. This is a very common process and entirely understandable.

It is important to know that you are not alone and there are many resources available to help you and/or your partner come to the right decision for you. Hopefully they can help you move towards a positive future.

Resources

You may find some of the following resources helpful:

Something to read:

Beyond Childlessness: for every woman who ever wanted to have a child and didn't

Black, Rachel and Scull, Louise. Rodale International Ltd, London 2005.
ISBN: 1-4050-7761-1

Someone to talk to:

The Miscarriage Association

c/o Clayton Hospital, Northgate, Wakefield WF1 3JS

Tel: 01924 200799; e-mail: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Offers a staffed helpline, leaflets and a UK network of telephone support volunteers. These include people who stopped trying after pregnancy loss (some remaining childless and others who adopted).

More to Life

Charter House, 43 St Leonard's Road, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex TN40 1JA

Tel: 08701 188088; e-mail: admin@moretolife.co.uk

www.moretolife.co.uk

A national network offering a support service to people who will, involuntarily, remain childless.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leics LE17 4HB

Tel: 0870 443 5252; e-mail: information@bacp.co.uk

www.bacp.co.uk

May be able to help you find a registered and qualified counsellor in your area.

Relate

Peremier House, Carolina Court, Lakeside, Doncaster DN34 5RA

Tel: 0845 456 1310; e-mail: relatedirect@relate.org.uk

www.relate.org.uk

Offer a counselling and support service for couples or individual partners who are experiencing problems in their relationship.

The Samaritans

Tel: 08457 909090; e-mail: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

24 hour helpline when you need someone to talk to

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded to our questionnaire in the Autumn 2006 newsletter and who, by sharing their experiences so openly, helped us write this leaflet.

“As time passes the sadness has moved from being a heavy burden that weighed me down to a gentler, kinder sorrow that is familiar and an important part of me. It is a precious bit of me that I am glad is there - it’s the special bit that connects me to my babies.”

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