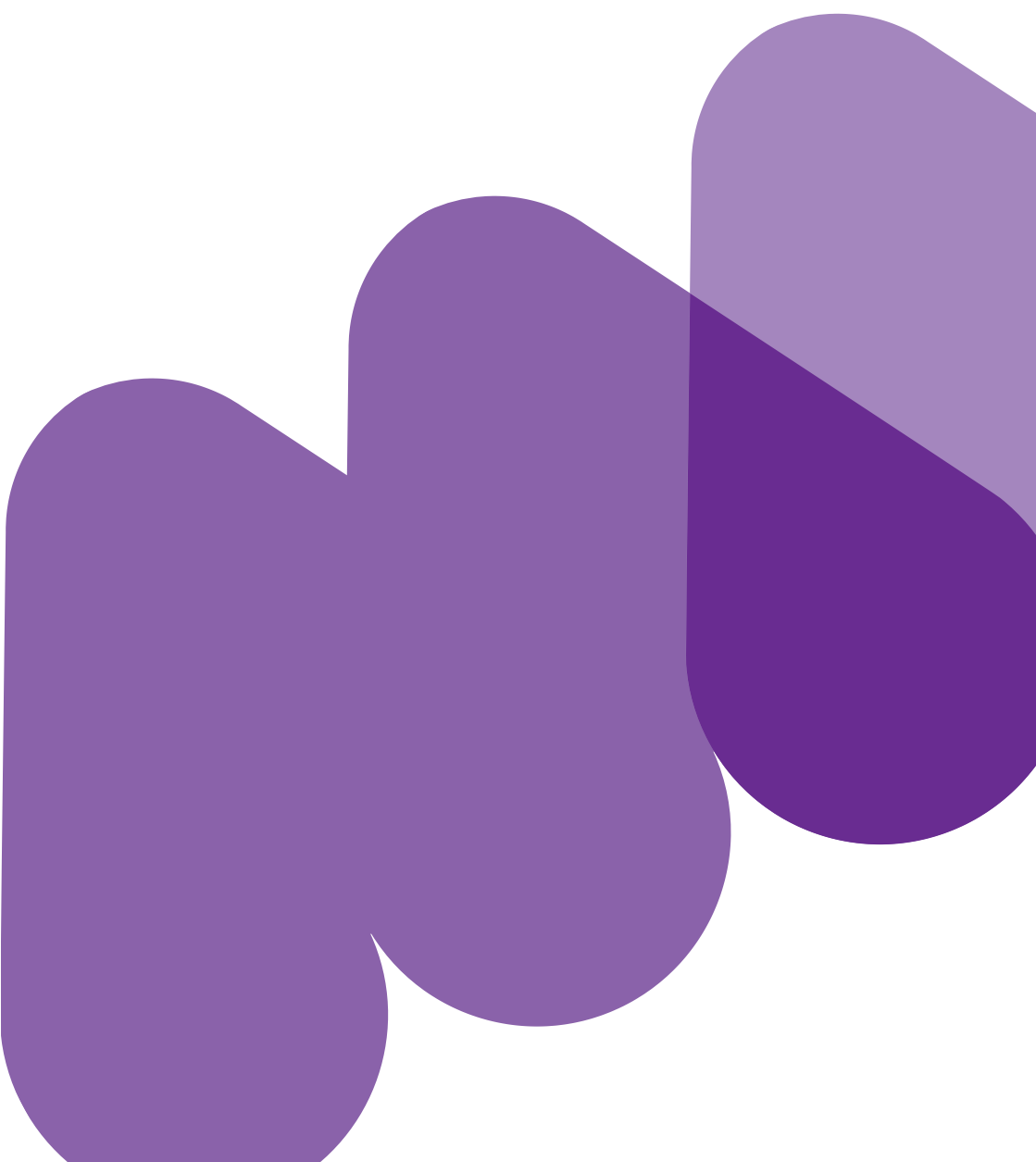




MISCARRIAGE  
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

## Someone you know



**When someone loses a baby through miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, it can be a devastating event. For you as a relative, friend or colleague it can also be difficult as you try your best to provide the support they need.**

**This leaflet aims to help you know what to say and do, so that you can provide support and comfort when you may be needed most.**

## **Feelings after miscarriage**

Everyone's experience of miscarriage<sup>1</sup> is different and individual – there is no right or wrong way to feel. For many people, even a very early miscarriage means the loss of their baby and they feel a great sadness. Others may be less upset.

Some people recover quickly after a miscarriage and are soon ready to try again. Others find that this takes a long time, perhaps many months.

Some people cope well at the time, but find that the pain of their loss hits them later.

Quite often, people are surprised and shocked by how much miscarriage affects them.

**“I've never cried so much in my whole life. I feel so empty and lost.”**

It is perfectly normal to feel any or all of these:

- Sad and tearful
- Shocked and confused
- Numb
- Angry
- Jealous
- Guilty
- Empty and lonely
- Panicky and out of control
- Unable to cope with everyday life

**“Everyone thinks I should be over it by now, that I should just have another baby. But it's *this* baby I want.”**

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<sup>1</sup> In this leaflet, we use the word “miscarriage” to cover all types of pregnancy loss, including ectopic and molar pregnancy.

## Helping your friend, relative or colleague

You may feel totally helpless or in the way, but it's most likely that your support, however small, will be valued in the weeks and months after the miscarriage.

So what can you do? Here are some things that couples have said have helped them through their grief:

### Acknowledging the loss

For many if not most women and their partners<sup>2</sup>, even the earliest pregnancy represents their baby. After a miscarriage, they may want to be recognised as a mother or father who has lost their baby. When you acknowledge that sense of loss and grief, you are showing that you understand how real those feelings are.

Partners are often forgotten. Many men feel they have to be strong for the woman who has miscarried – and this can be true for a female partner too. But they may also be grieving for their loss and may need just as much support from family and friends as their partner.

## Keeping in touch

After the loss of a baby, some women feel very isolated. You might avoid visiting because you are afraid of intruding or upsetting her. You might worry that you'll do or say the wrong thing and make things worse. But this may make her feel even more isolated. One of the most supportive things you can do is offer to be there, even if you feel awkward about what to do or talk about.

If you are pregnant yourself, or have a young baby, you might be worried that your friend or relative will be upset to see you. You might even feel guilty about being happy when she is not.

It's true that after a miscarriage, many women find the sight of pregnant women and babies extremely upsetting and try to avoid them. But that's not the case for everyone, so it might be worth checking.

Perhaps you could send her an e-mail or a text message asking if she would feel OK about meeting. If she doesn't want to meet, you might keep in touch by telephone, e-mail, or text, or by sending a card.

**“ People never ask how I'm doing. It's as if Kate is supposed to have a reaction to the loss but I'm not and it drives me mad. ”**

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<sup>2</sup> For ease of writing and reading, we generally refer to the woman who miscarries. But we use it to include her partner too, if she has one.

## Talking

You may not know what to say to your friend or relative, or you might be worried that you will say something upsetting. But saying nothing is often much worse. Just a simple “I’m sorry”, with a hug if it feels right, may be exactly what is needed.

As time passes, asking “How are things?” or “How are you feeling?” shows that you still care and this can be very comforting.

## Listening

Some people need to talk about their experience and feelings, sometimes over and over again, to someone who is willing to listen. If you can be there to listen – in person, on the phone or even by e-mail – you can help them get through this difficult time.

It might be hard for you to hear what they have to say; you might be upset at seeing them crying and in distress or it may remind you of your own experience of miscarriage.

Try and remember that you haven’t caused the tears, and if you find you have to cry as well, then this shows that you care.

If you’re worried that your friend or relative is particularly depressed it might be helpful to suggest that he or she talks to their GP about counselling.

## Allowing time to grieve

There is no time limit for grieving; people just learn to deal with their loss in time, some more quickly than others.

Some people may relive their grief at particular points following the miscarriage. Examples are the date the baby was due and the anniversary of the miscarriage. They may need your support during these times and may also be comforted to know that you have remembered their loss.

**“Once the IVF had worked, the last thing I expected was to miscarry. I can’t help feeling a failure.”**

## The future

For many people, miscarriage throws up a new set of questions and worries about the future. They may have mixed feelings about trying again, and perhaps move between hope that all will be well and anxiety about another miscarriage.

They may want to try again soon or to put it off, perhaps for some time. And their feelings might be different from their partner's, which can create real tension.

Some people won't have those choices. This might have been their only chance of having a baby, maybe because of age or health or fertility problems. Or they may not have a partner.

If they do try again, they may be very anxious in the next pregnancy. This can be especially true if they have had several miscarriages, or if they had a particularly difficult or frightening experience, such as a late miscarriage or an ectopic pregnancy.

Coping with the fear of miscarrying again can be an added pressure, and your friend or relative may need continued support in another pregnancy.

## What should I say?

Many people find it hard to find the right words to comfort someone following miscarriage. If you're really at a loss for words, here are some things that people have said were helpful:

**“I'm very sorry you have lost your baby”**

**“This must be really difficult for you both”** or even

**“I just don't know what to say”**

Comments that you think might help, but often don't, include:

**“Don't worry, you're young - you can always have another baby”**

**“It was meant to be”** or

**“It was nature's way”**

**“It was probably for the best”**

**“At least you have a child already”**

**“At least it was only an early miscarriage, it would have been worse if it was later....”**

**“Part of me desperately wants to be pregnant again, and the other part of me is just too terrified of going through the same thing again.”**

## How it can affect you

Miscarriage often affects those close to the woman and her partner and even here the range of reactions and feelings can vary.

If you are a close relative or friend you might be deeply affected yourself by the miscarriage, so you may need to give yourself some time to grieve.

That can be especially true for a parent: not only are you sad for your son or daughter, but you may also be grieving for the loss of your grandchild.

If you have a baby you might feel guilty that everything has gone well for you. You might also feel that way if you are pregnant – or you may be afraid that you too might miscarry.

If you have had a miscarriage yourself you might feel particularly sympathetic, though it might also bring back unhappy and upsetting memories.

On the other hand, you might think that your friend or relative didn't have as bad a time as you did, or even that they are over-reacting. If this is the case, try and remember that everyone's reaction is different and we all feel and deal with grief in different ways.

**“ I feel like I'm crying for my loss as much as my daughter's... I was so looking forward to a new baby in the family. ”**

## How the Miscarriage Association can help

The Miscarriage Association can provide support, help and information.

You can call our helpline, email or write to us. We also have a network of support volunteers across the UK who have had personal experience of miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy.

It may be easier for your relative or friend to speak to someone they don't know; and you may find it useful too.

We also provide online help through our internet support forum. And we have a range of helpful leaflets on all aspects of miscarriage. We can send these out to you or you can download them from our website free of charge.

### **The Miscarriage Association**

Tel: 01924 200799;

[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

17 Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield

WF1 3QW

“ Just talking to people that understand what I've been through and how I'm feeling makes me feel like I'm not alone. ”

### **Need to talk to someone who understands?**

Call our support line on 01924 200799. Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm

Or email [info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk)



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