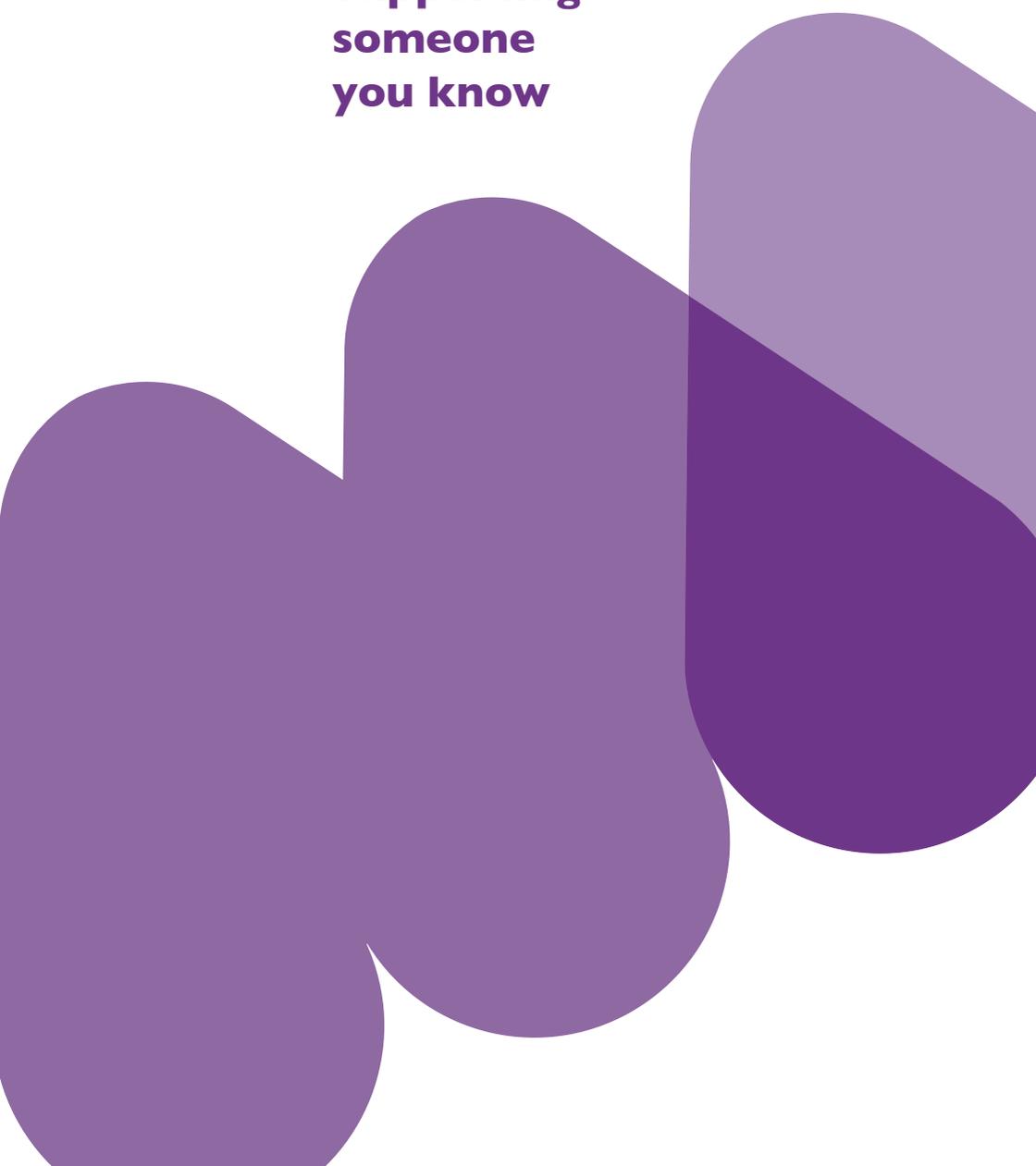




MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

Supporting someone you know



Supporting someone you know

If you are reading this it's likely you know someone who has had a miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy.

You may know the woman who has experienced the physical loss, or you may be closer to her partner.

The support you can offer may depend on your relationship with the people involved. Family members, friends and colleagues may all offer different levels of support. Even if you don't know someone very well, acknowledging their loss and saying how sorry you are can make a big difference.

Sometimes it can be hard for partners to support each other too – especially if their feelings about the loss are different.

This leaflet has been written to help you find the right way to help the person you know, whoever you are and whatever your relationship with them.

Please note: miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and molar pregnancy are different kinds of pregnancy loss. We sometimes talk about them separately in this leaflet but for ease, we tend to use the word 'miscarriage' to mean all three.

Feelings

This section explains a bit more about the feelings and experiences someone might have after miscarriage.

Not everyone feels the same way, but for many people, miscarriage is the loss of a baby, however early in the pregnancy it happens. The list below is just a guide.

How are they feeling?

It's very common to feel any or all of these at different times.

- sad and tearful;
- shocked, especially if there were no signs that anything was wrong;
- angry – it feels so unfair;
- jealous, especially of pregnant women and people with babies;
- guilty, perhaps wondering if they might have caused the miscarriage (that's very unlikely);
- empty – a physical sense of loss;
- lonely, especially if others don't understand;
- panicky and out of control;
- negative about themselves;
- acceptance – feeling as if this is not a major event for them;
- relief – feeling relieved that they are no longer pregnant.

Some people experience panic attacks, flashbacks, nightmares and problems with sleep after their loss.

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

What else might be happening?

- They may be feeling exhausted and in pain.
- They may have hospital or doctor's appointments they need to attend.
- They may not be getting any other support. That can be true for partners too.
- They may be worried about talking to their work or their manager about what they need right now.
- They may feel that they have to put on a brave face and that they should be 'over it' by now.
- They may find it difficult to be around people who are pregnant or who have children.
- They may be trying to be strong for their partner.
- They may be worried about the future –and more anxious in any future pregnancies

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

How can I help?

It can be hard to find the words to comfort someone who has experienced a miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy. These are all things that people told us helped – or didn't help – them.

What it might help to say

The most important thing you can do is to acknowledge what has happened. It doesn't have to be anything complicated or profound.

“I'm sorry for your loss.”

“I'm not sure what to do or say but I am here and I am so sorry.”

“This must be really hard, I'm so sorry.”

“Please let me know if there is anything you need.”

“I've been thinking about you a lot – sending you my love.”

“I'm here if you ever need to talk.”

You can find more suggestions by visiting www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/simplysay.

What it usually doesn't help to say

These are some things you might think would help – but usually don't. They are usually things that try to look on the bright side or start with 'at least'. Most people feel this diminishes the importance of this loss and this baby.

“You can always try again.”

“At least it was early on.”

“At least you can get pregnant.”

“It was probably for the best.”

“Everything happens for a reason.”

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

What it might help to do

Depending on your relationship with the woman and her partner, some of these suggestions might be helpful.

Find out more about pregnancy loss. We have lots of information on our website that can help you understand what has happened. You could share this information and support with them too.

Get in touch regularly to see how they are doing. Let them know you're thinking of them.

Be sensitive about what you share. Even quite a long time after a miscarriage, people may find it difficult to read or hear pregnancy announcements (for example, on social media or in work emails). It isn't always possible to avoid but it's something to bear in mind. It might help to send a message or talk to them privately first so they can prepare themselves.

Send them a card, flowers or something else to show that you are thinking of them. You might like to buy a specialist pregnancy loss card like the one we have on the Miscarriage Association's online shop: <https://bit.ly/3fKm4eY> and also available at Card Factory stores.

Help them seek additional help, if they want it – perhaps from their GP or a counselling service.

Share all or part of your own story, if you have experienced something similar and feel comfortable doing so.

Be aware that they may be upset around the original due date or on the anniversary of the loss. Be there for them if you can.

Partners need support too. Our leaflet *Partners Too* has more information about how to help, and how partners can support each other.

Young people may be even more isolated. They may not have told their parents or carers about the pregnancy yet, let alone the loss. They may need someone to talk to and help them find the support they need.

“My mother was relieved, said it was for the best. I know why she felt that way but it still hurt.”

When helping is difficult

You may feel as if the person you're trying to support is not dealing with things in the way that you would, or that your experience was a lot worse. Try to be kind and accept that we all have different experiences that affect us in different ways. They are dealing with a difficult situation in the best way they can.

People often take difficult feelings out on the people they are close to and may behave in ways you find upsetting or hurtful. Try not to get angry - remind yourself that it's these emotions speaking right now, not them.

Specific situations

Pregnancy loss and the workplace

Many people who experience pregnancy loss return to work reasonably quickly. This may be because they haven't told people at work, or because they were only signed off for a short time. They may want to return to work to get back to 'normality' or they may be pressured into it because of staffing levels.

If you work with someone who has experienced pregnancy loss, there are some things you can do to help make things a little bit easier.

- Acknowledge their loss (see page 3).
- Send a card from you or from your team or put one on their desk.
- Make sure they are OK to be in work. For some people, it's only when they return to work that they realise they need more time.
- Partners may need compassionate leave too.
- Managers may find it helpful to look at our leaflet *Miscarriage and the workplace*. Find it in the leaflets section of our website.

“When I went back to work I still remember people who said ‘I’m sorry, it must be awful, are you okay?’ That is all people need to say. It is a bereavement.”

Pregnancy and birth in family and friendship groups

People who experience pregnancy loss have to cope with family, friends and colleagues announcing pregnancies and having babies. Each time might be an upsetting reminder of their loss –or make them feel worse about their own situation.

This can be a difficult situation for everyone involved. If you are pregnant or have a new baby, you will understandably feel excited and want to share your news. But you may also feel guilty for upsetting them or feel hurt if they are avoiding you.

Remind yourself it's nothing personal. They don't want to have to avoid you. They are trying to cope with a lot of complicated emotions and probably feel guilty and sad they can't be happy for you. Things often get easier in time.

“I withdrew from my best friend who got pregnant 4 months later. I still feel guilty about avoiding her during pregnancy.”

Recurrent loss

People who experience more than one loss often tell us that they tend to get less support from friends and colleagues each time. This is often the very time they need it most. It can feel as if people don't know what to say any more.

You might find it useful to look at our information on recurrent miscarriage to help you understand. You'll find it on our website at www.bit.ly/2YfLlIX.

“With each miscarriage, people were finding it more difficult to know what to say. They found it easier not to say anything...”

Ectopic or molar pregnancy

Ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy developing outside the uterus) can be life-threatening. The diagnosis and treatment can be very frightening for the woman and her partner, and they may also worry about future pregnancies as well as grieving for their loss. You can read more about ectopic pregnancy on our website.

Molar pregnancy is uncommon and may be diagnosed weeks after what is thought to be a miscarriage. The beginning pregnancy doesn't develop, but a particular group of cells does and

this needs specialist follow-up to make sure it doesn't continue to grow. Until this is certain, the woman is advised not to conceive and this can add to her and her partner's feelings of loss. You can read more about molar pregnancy on our website.

Pregnancy loss and mental health

Some people find that pregnancy loss can cause, or worsen, mental health problems.

It may help to read (and share) our information on looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/your-feelings/your-mental-health/.

Looking after yourself

Your own wellbeing is important too. Supporting someone else may be more difficult if you are affected by the loss yourself, if you are pregnant or if you have had a loss in the past.

- Talk to someone you trust – the Miscarriage Association can help you too.
- Make sure you take some time for yourself too – especially if you are providing a lot of support.
- Be kind to yourself – especially if their experience brings back upsetting memories for you, or makes you feel guilty about your own pregnancy or baby.
- Give yourself time to grieve if the loss has affected you too.

You can make a difference

Being there for someone who has experienced pregnancy loss isn't easy. You might feel as if nothing you can do or say will help. But kind words and thoughtful support can make a real difference to how people cope in the days, weeks and years after their loss.

How the Miscarriage Association can help

It may be easier for your relative or friend to speak to someone they don't know. You may find it helpful too.

We can provide support, help and information. You can call our helpline, email us or chat with us online. We also have a range of Facebook support groups, an online forum and lots of information on our website.

Useful reading

Leaflets from the Miscarriage Association:

Your miscarriage

Miscarriage: the facts and your feelings
(our leaflet for young people)

Pregnancy after loss

Partners too

Miscarriage and the workplace

Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss

Recurrent miscarriage



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The knowledge to help

The Miscarriage Association
17 Wentworth Terrace
Wakefield WF1 3QW
Telephone: 01924 200799
e-mail: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

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