

Supporting Families Through a Perinatal Loss

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Disclosure

- *None of the planners for this educational activity have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.*



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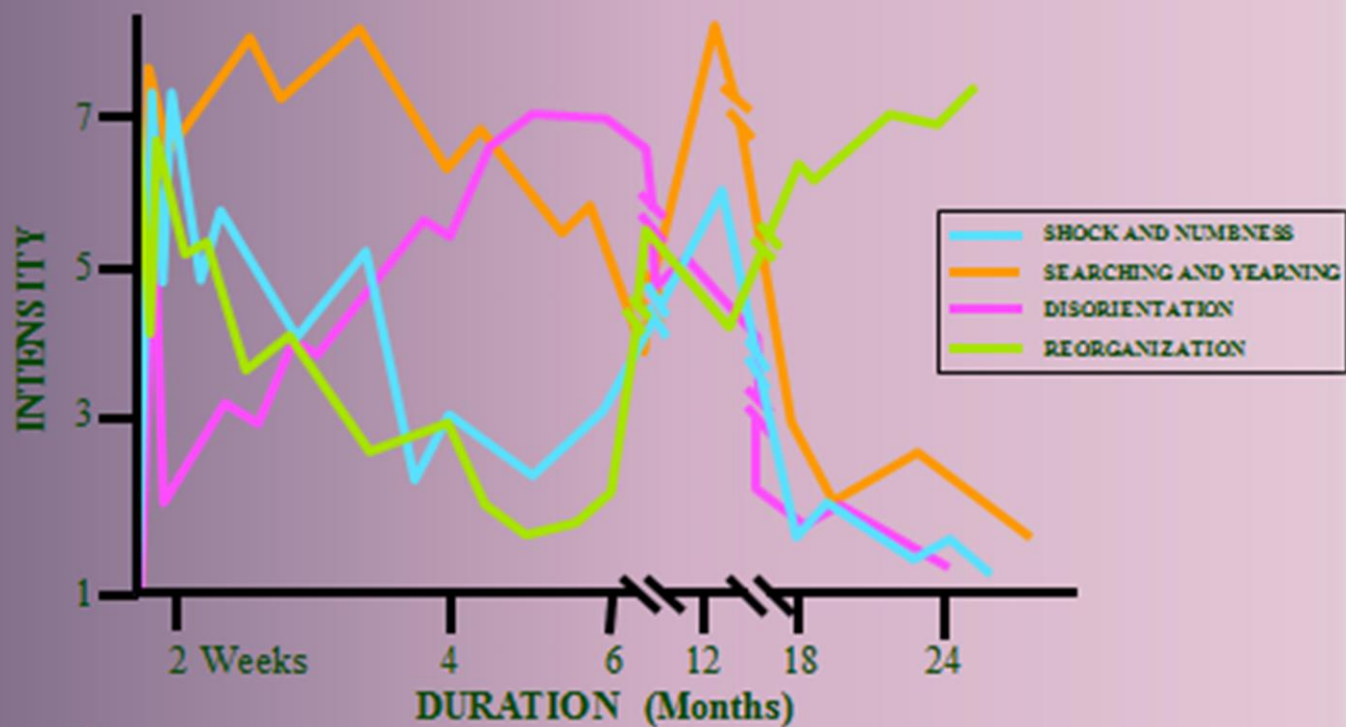
Grief

The need to grieve is directly related to the importance of what is lost.

Research shows that **people who get support** are better able to cope with major stresses in life, such as early fetal loss.



PHASES OF BEREAVEMENT



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Every Family is Unique

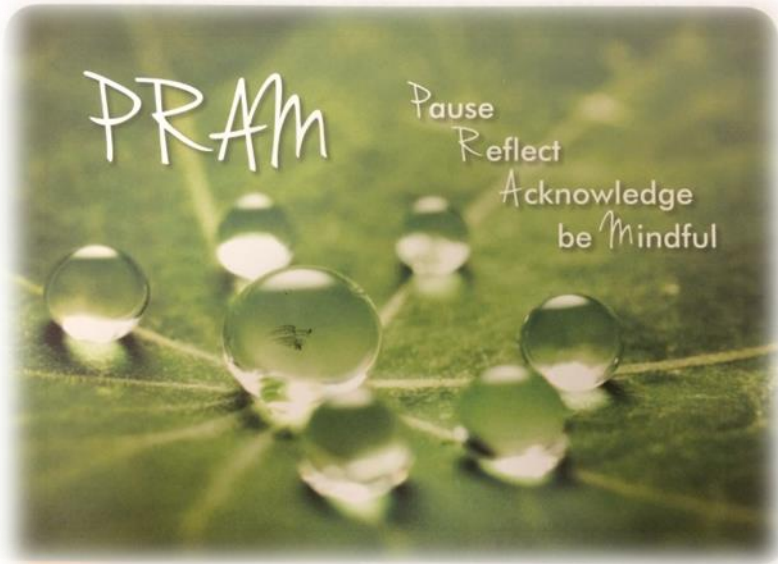
- ❖ Prior losses and trauma
- ❖ Current circumstances
- ❖ How long they have known
- ❖ Planned or unexpected pregnancy
- ❖ Infertility
- ❖ Family history and support network
- ❖ Health status
- ❖ Language, culture and religion
- ❖ Decision to terminate or continue pregnancy
- ❖ Multiples
- ❖ Other children
- ❖ Teens
- ❖ Pregnancy after a loss
- ❖ Intense anger- *fear often comes before anger*



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Before You Open the Door



Listen (*There you are vs. Here I am*)

- Ask about and say baby's name
- Offer a hug, hand on their shoulder
- Let them know what the next steps are
- Walk out together
- Consistent caregivers
- Ask what is important to them, support their preferences
- If they are struggling to make choices, offer ideas from other families
- Give them permission to change their minds
- Remember they can feel protective



What Can you Say?

Sit at their level

- ❖ “What is important to you?”
- ❖ “I’m sorry, this wasn’t what you were planning.”
- ❖ “Can you tell me what this pregnancy meant to you?”
- ❖ “Other families have told me....”
- ❖ “What is your understanding of....”
- ❖ “How can I best help you...”
- ❖ “Could you tell me more..”
- ❖ “What would you like to happen?”
- ❖ “I wish this pregnancy had turned out the way you had hoped.”
- ❖ Silence is OK too.



What Comes Next?

- Adjusting to the **loss** comes first, then adjusting to their **new normal**
- Going back to work- designate a “safe” person to share the news, have an exit strategy, distractions may help
- Practice telling your story-short, medium, long version
 - “How many children do you have?”
 - Three, but two are with us...
 - Two in my arms, one in heaven...
- Ask parents if they want baby items moved or left alone-let it be on their terms

“1 arm hug”



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Who is Here to Help



- Counselors, Lactation Specialists, Support Groups
- SHARE is a monthly support group for families experiencing miscarriage, stillbirth, perinatal loss and early infant death. First Tuesday of each month from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm. Online.
- **Christina Babin 208-367-7488 or christina.babin@saintalphonsus.org**



When You Meet Someone Deep in Grief

Patricia McKernon Runkle

Slip off your needs
and set them by the door.

Enter barefoot
this darkened chapel

hollowed by loss
hallowed by sorrow

its gray stone walls
and floor.

You, congregation
of one

are here to listen
not to sing.

Kneel in the back pew.
Make no sound,

let the candles
speak.

