



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER AFTER LOSING A CHILD

When you lose a child it often becomes the only thing you can focus on. The grief consumes you and it's hard to put other things into focus. The reason so many relationships grow apart is because this is one of the most difficult things a parent can go through. We become so engulfed with our own grief that we create a barrier or a wall that keeps our partner out. On the other side of the spectrum, (it's usually the man that does this), some people may feel like they have to be strong for the other person. This can create feelings of confusion such as, "why isn't my partner as devastated as I am about our loss?"

Let's go over some information to help you support your partner after losing a child.

1) Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

It's imperative that you keep the line of communication open with your partner. Tell them it's okay to be raw, open and honest about how they are feeling. Odds are they are feeling very similar and just expressing their grief in different ways. Some couples find this the hardest but it's a crucial lifeline to your relationship. If you can't openly speak about the loss, it can help to at least write letters to one another explaining how you feel.

2) Listen.

Yes, this is part of communication. (See why communication was number one?) You do want to communicate with one another about your feelings. Sharing your emotions is crucial as mentioned above. But sometimes, your partner just wants you to listen without them seeking a response. Simply listening and holding them is incredibly powerful.

3) Know It's Okay To Not Be Okay

Your emotions are valid and so are your partners. You don't have to feel like you need to have the answers to be a supportive partner. It's okay if you don't know what to say. It's okay if you aren't sure what to do. Just be present with your partner.

4) Accept Their Grieving Style

You are learning your coping strategies and trying to navigate through your loss and so are they. Be kind to YOURSELF as well as THEM. Be patient and understand that everyone grieves differently. When you do this you break the misinterpretations and the tension that comes from them. An example would be of one person who focuses 100% on the loss and seems unwilling to move forward...while the other partner wants to be strong for their partner and "carry on" with life. This is an extremely common circumstance but what ends up happening is the first person's grieving style makes them believe that their partner's makes them uncaring about them and the child. This creates anger, confusion, repression and resentment. But it shouldn't. Everyone grieves differently and the best thing you can do is be patient, kind and accepting.

5) Awareness

This is a tough one for couples after a loss because as mentioned before grief can consume us and our every thought. But it's important to not only be self aware but aware of our partner. If you see your partner sobbing in bed, approach them and ask them if they need anything. Maybe they need to talk or maybe they don't. That's okay. If you see your partner working at home and they seem super focused, bring them some coffee or tea and put a hand on their shoulder to let them know you are there. These little things will not only create awareness for one another but also keep your bond strong. Also, don't assume your partner knows what you need. Tell them.

6) Take Your Time.

Be patient. Not only with yourself but with your partner. Not only does everyone grieve in different ways, they grieve for different times. You will forever be grieving the loss of your child. The goal is to not let that the grief consume you to where you are no longer "functioning". You may be in a different stage of grief than your partner. You may get into acceptance before they do. All of this is okay.

Bottom Line: Keep the line of communication open, be kind and loving. Be patient and understanding. Be present. Not just with them...but with yourself.