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HOW TO HELP THOSE GRIEVING PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS.

WHAT TO SAY

- * "I'm thinking of you."
- * "I'm so sorry."
- * "This totally sucks."
- * "I can't imagine how you are feeling."
- * "I don't know what to say, but I'm here to listen."
- * "There is no timeline for grief, take all the time you need."
- * "You should absolutely feel how you feel."
- * "I can come over and sit with you, even if that's in silence."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- * "You're still young, you can have other children."
- * "Time heals all wounds."
- * "Everything happens for a reason."
- * "It's part of God's plan."
- * "At least you know you can get pregnant."
- * "At least you have your other child."
- * Don't try to fix it
- * Never start a comment with "at least"
- * Don't offer solutions unless they are specifically asked for.
- * Don't compare your experiences with theirs unless they ask you to.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Sit with them in their grief. Don't be afraid of the dark place. Resist the urge to offer encouraging words and try to fix things. If they say "I'm feeling xyz" you say "That makes sense" or "Totally" or "Wow, that's completely horrible." The key is to VALIDATE how they are feeling. *It is okay to just BE with them.* Silence is okay! Be comfortable with silence. Your presence can be the thing that they need. They don't always need your words.

They are forever changed after this experience. You can choose to change with them. You can choose to be uncomfortable and be there for them. You can choose to accept their new reality is harsh and ever changing. They don't want you to disappear, even if they aren't answering texts and calls. They definitely don't want you to disappear.

WHAT TO DO

* Love them.

- * Keep communicating after the initial shock. Most people are very supportive for the first month after a loss, and then they go back to their lives and the grieving person is still sitting there in a horror movie with no way out.
- * Drop off meals on their porch and leave before they answer the door.
- * Continue to text and call even when they don't reply. Send messages saying "I want to let you know that I'm going to continue to text you every day. You do not need to reply."
- * Take in their garbage cans, mow their lawn. (Example text: "I'm going to mow your lawn on Saturday at 10:00am. You don't need to come outside at all. Text me back only if this is NOT okay.)
- * Ask if their kids need rides anywhere.
- * Order groceries, pick them up and drop them off.
- * Offer to walk their dog (Example text: "I'd really like to walk Rufus tomorrow. How's 4:00pm? I'll just grab him, walk him and leave.")
- * Write down important dates and send cards or messages of support. Never stop acknowledging their child. For example: The child's birthday. The date of the death. If the baby wasn't full term acknowledge the due date. Mother's/Father's Day, the parents' birthdays, anniversaries of important milestones.
- * Plant a tree in an arboretum in their baby's name.
- * If you are religious have a church service dedicated to the baby.
- * Name a star after the baby.
- * Find a personalized memory gift - candles, ornaments, trinkets, remembrance items, quotes, art, stuffed animals, jewelry, etc.
- * Keep inviting them to events and outings even if they don't come.
- * You can always 'come back' to them - if you lost touch because you were uncomfortable it's okay to reach out years later and be honest and apologize.
- * For coworkers: Find out what they want at work. Do they want people to talk about their baby? or not? Make sure they have a safe space they can go if they need to 'get away'. (More info about going back to work is on the blog of my website.)

WHAT NOT TO DO

- * Say "Let me know if you need anything." THIS IS NOT HELPFUL
- * Get offended if you don't know the whole story, or if you weren't contacted first - It's not about you.
- * Expect them to perform for you and be "happy" to make you comfortable.
- * Disappear because you are uncomfortable.
- * Guilt them into attending events.

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