

Helpful & Hurtful Things People Say and Do

Written by Candy McVicar

www.MissingGRACE.org

HURTFUL

- He/She is in a better place. *The parents feel their loving home was a very good place to raise their child and their arms are aching for their baby now.*
- It's God's will. *Many bereaved parents hold the belief it was not God's will to have their baby die and they feel it's a tragedy that happened in world where bad things can happen to good people and feel God did not cause it to happen. To say it is God's will, can also imply this is God's judgment on the parents.*
- God has a plan and it was His perfect plan for this to happen. All things work together for His good. *Right now, the situation is not good and it is hard to see that good things could come of this tragedy. Let them discover on their own the blessings that may come over time.*
- At least you have other children. *The child they lost still had a special place in their life and is gone now and no other child can replace or fill that void.*
- At least it wasn't a "real" baby (in reference to ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage.)
- At least you weren't that far along. *The moment they found out they were pregnant with that baby they began to love them, and they wish they had been able to get farther along.*
- At least you didn't get attached. *Oh, but they were attached.*
- If it's not perfect, you don't want it. *The parent felt their baby was perfect and no matter what health issue they had, they wanted them in their life.*
- It's not meant to be.
- Everything happens for a reason. *Right now it is hard to make sense of this and find a good reason.*
- You can have another one. *Maybe they can but maybe due to issues you are unaware of or they are unaware of they can't have another. Either way that sounds a long way off and it doesn't help now.*
- To ignore what happened and not saying anything at all. To act like things are normal / fine.
- If your baby lived, then maybe they would have been bad or unhealthy so God took him/her.
- Calling the baby "it." Not calling the baby by their name.
- Bringing up the loss of your pet or someone else's death as to say it is a similar type of pain or experience. *Each situation is unique and the grief is personal.*
- Expressing an attitude that parents should be over their loss by a set time. Bereaved parents don't get *over* their babies. They take steps forward in grief and find ways to carry on the memory of their child. They have a need to honor and remember their baby throughout life. Life after loss often requires finding a new normal. Strangers can become friends and friends can become strangers. The length of the grieving process is different for everyone.

HELPFUL

- To say: I don't know what to say, but I'm so sorry. We are thinking of you and praying.
- To acknowledge your own ignorance.
- To send cards or forms of acknowledgement on anniversaries and/or out of the blue.
- To give delayed acknowledgement vs. none at all.
- To say their baby's name and talk about their baby.
- To share that you are going to honor and commemorate their baby in some way.
- To give opportunities for parents to talk about their baby and their feelings.
- To leave the door open for the parents to join you for events such as parties and showers but not pressure them or guilt them when they decline. Support them in their decisions.
- Bring up your own infant loss if you have had one and be open to discuss your pain.
- Offer to help them in daily life through the months after a loss: bring meals, clean house, watch other living children giving parents a chance to be alone, mow the lawn, shovel snow, run errands, send them for a massage or to get pampered.