

# Made Known

## DAD PAMPHLET

### A Father's Grief

By: Eileen Knight Hagemeister

It must be very difficult  
To be a man in grief.  
Since "men don't cry" and "men are strong"  
No tears can bring relief.

It must be very difficult  
To stand up to the test.  
And field calls and visitors  
So that she can get some rest.

They always ask if she's all right  
And what she's going through.  
But seldom take his hand and ask,  
"My friend, how are you?"

He hears her cry in the night  
And thinks his heart will break.  
And dries her tears and comforts her  
But "stays strong" for her sake.

It must be very difficult  
To start each day anew.  
And try to be so very brave-  
He lost his baby too.

"To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness." -Erich Fromm

### GRIEF

The loss of a child brings unique complications to grief for a dad. You will likely take on the role of caring for the mother while silently dealing with your own sadness and grief. Since the woman's pain—both physical and emotional—takes the spotlight, it often leaves you wondering if there is room for your grief as well.

The answer is an emphatic and essential yes. Finding an outlet to share your own experience with close male friends, a support group for fathers, or a counselor is imperative. Bring yourself into the conversation by answering the question so many forget to ask. When others ask how the mother is, you can include your own pain by responding with "Physically, she is doing okay. Emotionally, we are both a wreck."

The truth is, you are also grieving. You may feel powerless, angry, overwhelmed, guilty, invisible, anxious, forgetful, or exhausted. Ignoring or shelving these very real feelings can lead to:

- » **Silence** – adopting a "chin up" attitude so as not to appear weak
- » **Secrecy** – covering up your whereabouts as you visit the grave, or hiding or waiting to be alone to show emotion

- » **Action** – becoming deeply involved in funeral arrangements, legal action, or even work or a hobby
- » **Anger** – becoming easily aggravated by your partner, other children, friends or co-workers; throwing things, slamming doors, swearing outbursts
- » **Addiction** – distracting yourself with anything, from alcohol to long distance running, gambling to work projects

## ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR GRIEF

It may be difficult to even know what you are feeling in the days and weeks after your child dies, especially if you were brought up to suppress your emotions. A few important actions now will make a difference in the impact of grief later.

Spend some time with these prompts to help you acknowledge your own grief:

- » When I realized my child’s death was imminent or had already occurred, I felt...
- » In the aftermath, I feel...
- » I wish...
- » I miss...
- » I feel angry when...
- » I feel sad because...
- » I felt powerless when...

Find a safe and supportive friend to talk through these feelings with. Also, sharing these thoughts and emotions with your partner will not only bring her comfort but will help keep lines of communication open in your relationship.

## HEALTHY COPING

Just like there are unhealthy reactions to grief and loss, there are many healthy outlets as well. If you feel yourself withdrawing or experiencing your grief in a negative way, try one of these outlets instead:

- » Journal, blog, or write letters to your baby.
- » Create a keepsake such as a video tribute or handcrafted artwork.
- » Eat a healthy diet.
- » Exercise (but do so responsibly- if you weren’t into running before, don’t try to become a marathon runner overnight).
- » Create personal space in your schedule to slow down, grieve, think and rest.
- » Use meditation/relaxation techniques.

### Books

*Strong And Tender: A Guide For The Father Whose Baby Has Died* by Pat Schwiebert

*A Guide For Fathers: When A Baby Dies* by Tim Nelson

*Three Minus One: Stories of Parents’ Love & Loss* by Sean Hanish & Brooke Warner

*A Silent Sorrow* by Ingrid Kohn and Perry-Lynn Moffitt

*When a Baby Dies* by Rana K. Limbo and Sara Rich Wheeler

*Empty Cradle, Broken Heart* by Deborah L. Davis, Ph.D.

*Don’t Take My Grief Away From Me* by Doug Manning