



*The weeks and
months ahead*



Féileacáin





The weeks and months ahead

After the funeral and the post mortem results, you may feel very sad and empty. Intense grief can go on for a long time and many parents find it hard to believe that they will ever feel alright again.

Parents often feel under pressure from friends, family and colleagues to “get over” the death of their baby in a few weeks or months. Parents may also feel they have to hide their grief and put on a happy face. Again, it can help to talk to other parents who have been in the same situation. They know that this is a journey that may take months and years.

“Your life changes after you lose a baby. People expect you to be back to normal. They don’t understand that the loss of your baby is something that will stay with you forever.” Mother

Parents who have lost one of twins, and parents who have lost one or two of triplets, may find that other people expect them to be happy because they have a living child. But for most parents, having a living child does not reduce their grief for the baby or babies who have died. The emotional roller-coaster that many grieving parents go through in the weeks and months after their baby has died is a natural response to loss. Most parents recover and can function normally with time, but some may need professional help along the way. Some mothers also suffer from postnatal depression; this is different from the sadness that is a normal part of grieving. Some parents have persistent and intrusive flashbacks of the events surrounding their baby’s death and may put these down to grief, when in fact they could be suffering from post-traumatic stress.

If after about six months you are still finding it very hard to manage everyday family life or work, it is a good idea to seek professional help. Make an appointment with your GP and explain how you are feeling. If necessary he or she can refer you for specialist help and support. Féileacáin offers a low cost counseling service with a qualified psychotherapist who is also a bereaved parent; details of this service can be found on www.feileacain.ie.



The longer term

It is very common for parents to experience renewed waves of grief even long after their baby's death. These may come out of the blue, or may be triggered by events and dates, for example, the date your baby was due, anniversaries of his or her death, Mother's Day, Father's Day, family celebrations and festivals.

Many parents also feel waves of sadness when other children who were born around the same time are starting nursery or primary school or beginning to become more independent. For parents of twins or more babies of whom one has died, such milestones are particularly poignant. A living child's progress is inevitably a reminder of what might have been.

"People think I'm back to normal but the pain is still there. I'm just learning to live with it. I have friends whose children were born around the same time as my son and seeing them as he should be now is hard. Sometimes I cry for what I have lost and for what he has lost. It's hard."

Mother

Many parents say that life is never the same after the death of their baby. Instead, they reach what some have called a "new normal". Their baby will always remain an important part of their lives but they can also function normally; the acute pain and grief of the early days have gone.

"My son will always be with me, I can laugh again, have fun again, do all the things that at the start I thought would never be possible. I'm back to a different kind of normal, but I will always carry my son in my heart."

Mother

Remembering your baby

Over time, you may want to create additional ways of remembering your baby. For example, you may want to have your baby's name or handprint or footprint engraved on a piece of jewellery, or to wear your baby's birthstone. You could also inscribe a bench or a piece of sculpture with your baby's name.





If you have a garden you could plant a tree, a rose bush or other shrub (perhaps one that flowers or produces berries in the month in which your baby died). Or you could plant a small tree or shrub in a pot instead, so that you can take it with you if you move house. There may also be special places or gardens locally where you can donate a bench or plant a tree in your baby's memory.

Other ways in which parents have chosen to remember their baby include: drying and pressing flowers from the funeral, planting a tree in a woodland or memorial arboretum, choosing a special candlestick so that you can light a candle for your baby at family occasions or whenever you wish, buying or making a special ornament or picture, having your baby's photo re-created as a painting or a sketch, naming a star, and making a piece of cross-stitch or needlework. Other ideas for remembering your baby can be found under the "Keepsake" section of the Féileacáin website.

Many parents, family members and friends fundraise for Féileacáin in memory of their babies who have died. Some parents have created personal websites for their babies or set up an 'In Memory Fund' dedicated to their baby which can raise money for Féileacáin in their memory. There are also a number of interactive Remembering features on the Féileacáin website.

One day at a time

- Be gentle with yourself and give yourself time to grieve and time to heal. Try not to expect too much of yourself.
- Be patient with your partner, especially when he or she reacts differently to you.
- Accept practical and emotional support from helpful and sensitive family members and friends.
- Try not to waste energy being angry with people who say or do the wrong thing.



- If possible, give yourself at least a year before making any big decisions such as moving, changing your job or changing your lifestyle.
- Be creative and express your feelings. You could do this, for example, by lighting a candle, keeping a diary, writing a letter to your baby, reading or writing poetry, drawing, painting, or sewing something such as a quilt or cross-stitch in memory of your baby. Féileacáin holds a number of workshops throughout the country i.e. jewellery making, cardmaking, knitting, stained glass workshop and other craft workshops that allow you to create crafts in your baby's name in the company of other bereaved families.
- Give yourself time to recover, both physically and emotionally, before starting another pregnancy.
- Accept and welcome the times when you feel less sad and begin to enjoy life again. This doesn't mean that you no longer care, or that you have forgotten your baby.
- When you feel able, take a small step towards normality. You could go out for coffee or a drink with a friend or invite one or two close friends around for tea. When you feel ready, arrange to meet a friend or relative who has a baby or small child.
- Anticipate times, such as the anniversaries of your baby's death, when you may feel new waves of grief. Think about keeping the week around the anniversary reasonably free and taking the actual day off from work or from your usual routine. You could do something special and different that gives you time and space to remember, perhaps with your partner or a friend.
- Although it is a cliché, time does bring healing, and bereaved parents do recover, and most of them keep forever a special place in their hearts for their baby son or daughter.





Support Links

Soft Ireland - A support organization for parents of babies born with Trisomy 13/18

www.softireland.com

Anam Cara - Offering help and comfort for bereaved parents and siblings through their loss.

www.anamcara.ie

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland - To provide help and support to anyone affected by the experience of a miscarriage.

www.miscarriage.ie

Potter's Syndrome - A support forum for anybody affected by the loss of their baby through Potter's Syndrome.

www.potterssyndrome.org

Irish Premature Babies - A charity aimed at providing support and information for parents who have premature babies in Ireland.

www.irishprematurebabies.com

Irish Multiple Births Association - This charity offers a unique insight of parents and families of multiples during pregnancy and birth.

www.imba.ie

Other links are available on our website at <http://www.feileacain.ie/links/>

Other links

Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie

General Registration Office of Ireland

For information on registering your baby.

www.groireland.ie

Citizens Advice Bureau

For information on all aspects of entitlements

www.citizensinformation.ie



About us

Féileacáin, (the stillbirth and neonatal death Association of Ireland), was founded in 2010 by a small group of parents bereaved by stillbirth or neonatal death, who came together to offer support to other parents whose baby has died.

At Féileacáin our mission is to:

- Offer support to anyone affected by the death of a baby.
- Work in conjunction with health professionals to improve the quality of care and services provided to bereaved parents and their families.
- To support research into stillbirth and neonatal death.

We undertake a comprehensive programme of training, workshops and talks for health professionals based on the Féileacáin Guidelines which give practical guidance on how to meet parents' needs and provide good quality care.

In spite of medical advances, the shocking reality is that each year in Ireland over 550 babies are stillborn or die within the first year of life. We are working with national and international organisations in an effort to reduce that figure.

We depend on the extraordinary energies of our supporters to raise the funds we need each year to deliver the wide range of services that we offer.

If you would like any further information or support please contact us or visit our website.

Support: 085-2496464 info@feileacain.ie

Website: www.feileacain.ie

Facebook: Follow us on facebook



Féileacáin

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society of Ireland
(SANDAI)

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Please contact Feileacain on

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