

When your baby dies, everything you do for and with your baby becomes a very special memory. Because there are so few moments to share during this difficult time, for many parents and families it is important to create tangible mementos of their child. Sometimes they create traditions to honor their baby, or they might make a special gift or craft as a gentle reminder. For so many bereaved families, finding meaningful ways to cherish the short life of their baby is significant to healthy healing.

The following information has been gathered by bereaved parents, grandparents, friends, and professionals. This pamphlet has been provided as a source for answers to some of your questions, and also to help find ways for you to honor and cherish your baby's short life.

## ***How can I begin creating memories?***

The moment you found out you were pregnant you created a lasting memory. There are many tangible items you can collect starting from the time you found out you were having a baby. Begin by gathering anything that reminds you of your pregnancy or baby.

### ***Mementos before delivery or with an early pregnancy loss can include...***

- Pregnancy test results
- Appointment cards from your doctor's office
- Sonogram picture – if you had an ultrasound, but do not have a picture, call your doctor or lab and ask for a copy
- Cards or flowers of congratulations or recognition of your pregnancy
- Pictures of yourself pregnant, even if you didn't look or know you were pregnant

### ***Mementos you can create or collect in the hospital can consist of...***

- Pictures of you, your family, or friends
- Pictures of your baby
- Crib card, comb, or measuring tape
- Lock of hair

- Hospital birth certificate or honorary certificate
- Baby clothes and/or blanket
- Footprints and handprints ~ place them on paper or in a memory book
- Permanent footprints and handprints ~ if your facility does not provide permanent prints, you can use soft clay or Model Magic®
- Cards, flowers, or gifts you receive after your loss
- Stuffed animals
- Recognition of Life Certificate from Share
- Naming Ceremony/Baptism Booklet from Share
- Memory Book from Share

## ***How can I create a special ceremony or funeral?***

The following are suggestions that could be included when arranging a special ceremony for your baby. Not all of the suggestions are right for everyone, but are offered to help you create a way to honor your baby and help you walk through your grief.

- Talk to funeral homes in your area
- If you do not have a gravesite or urn, or choose not to use the help of a funeral home, you can choose to have a Prayer Service or Remembrance Gathering to honor your baby. This can be held at a location such as a church, home, park, garden, etc. This also allows for choosing exactly when you want it to take place; soon after their death, on a holiday or on an anniversary.
- Follow religious traditions
- Create new traditions
- Pick out or create a poem or verse that is special to you or your situation
- Choose a song with special meaning
- Find a person you trust, and that is willing to follow your belief system, to conduct your service
- Have each family member or friend place a flower at the grave
- Light candles

- Have a balloon release
- Purchase a headstone or marker

*Mementos to create or collect during your gathering can include...*

- Flowers
- Notes or cards
- Booklets provided by the funeral home
- Service itinerary
- Pictures of the ceremony or family

## ***What do I do with all these things I have saved?***

When a baby dies, you lose the memories that you would have created in your future together. For some parents, finding ways to create mementos is important to their grief process. The following ideas may help you decide how you might want to honor and cherish the memories that you can create for you and your baby. These ideas, perhaps, could help you find tangible connections to your special child.

### ***Make birth and/or death announcements.***

This baby will impact your life as you never expected, and will find ways to touch others' lives as well. Making announcements validates your baby's short life and can include precious memories for those you share it with. You can include footprints, handprints, dates, times, weight or length, and/or a picture. Parents sometimes feel that including a brief message about their baby's short life and the need for continued support during this tragic time is a way of being open and reaching out to family and friends.

### ***Make copies of your ultrasound pictures.***

Put them in a safe place or laminate the copies. Be sure not to use a heat laminator to seal your original ultrasound pictures, as the heat will damage them. Copy them onto acid free paper to help preserve them longer.

***Create an album.*** You can make a simple picture album or scrap book your pictures and paper memories.

**Create a memory box.** You can buy or decorate a memory box that can be any size or shape. Including your mementos in the box is a good way to have your baby's belongings close to you without displaying them.

**Create a shadow box.** A shadow box is a unique way of displaying all of those little items that sometimes get put away. Show your pictures, hand and foot prints, tape measure, clothes/socks, crib card, lock of hair, or any other item that you have collected or created.

**Create tangible memories from blankets or clothing.** Many times clothes and blankets are put away in boxes, trunks, or closets for safekeeping. Stuffed animals, angels, or quilts are just a few of the items you can create using the fabrics you have saved.

**Dry your flowers.** You can create many special things using your dried flowers. For example, you could create a potpourri that could be displayed in a special bowl or vase. You could also make decorations with store bought plastic and/or glass ornaments that can be filled with your flowers and ribbons, and decorated with fabric flowers, extra ribbon, or tiny, plastic baby decorations. Making candles decorated with the flowers in the wax or placed neatly around it could be another creative way to display your special flowers. You might also arrange or glue them in a shadow box around a special poem or picture.

**Find or make a shelf that can be used to display items of your choice.**

## ***What kind of new traditions can I create?***

There may be a time when you are ready to include or share the short life of your baby in new ways. Some families choose to create unique ways to honor the special people in their lives who have died. These suggestions may be helpful for you to find your own unique traditions that will continue your healing.

- There may be a particular figure/collectible like an angel, butterfly, teddy bear, or flower that you want to start collecting. Local gift stores or religious bookstores carry many items that may be appropriate for your loss.

- If you released balloons at the funeral, you can do the same for each birthday or significant date that passes. Release them by themselves, or attach written messages from you or your family.
- If you have a burial place, bring special flowers or gifts for holidays or birthdays. You may want to share angel food cake, special shaped cookies or another significant item with your family on birthdays, or open a family-oriented gift on holidays.
- Include your baby during holidays. Add his or her name on holiday cards, stockings or any decoration that includes names. Some parents have a prayer or time of remembrance before meals. Or, you can donate flowers or money to your church, hospital, or other organization in memory of your baby.
- Create living memorials. You can create a garden, or plant specific flowers, shrubs, or trees in honor of your baby. This can be a daily reminder of your precious baby and how their love still grows in your heart.
- Join or start a "Share Walk for Remembrance & Hope" in your area. Contact a local grief support group, like Share, to find out more information.
- If available, you may like to attend the "Angel of Hope Ceremony" each December 6 at 7:00 P.M. at the Angel of Hope Statue in your area.
- You might like attending the annual "Light of Hope Ceremony" hosted by your local Share.

Grief is a journey.

Along the way you feel many emotions, remember your baby, and talk and cry about the precious life you lost. Creating and recalling priceless memories can be important in making connections with your baby, as well as facilitating positive healing.

# **Creating Memories**



***A brief reference for creating memories in honor of a baby who has died due to early pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or in the first few months of life.***