

Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Network

PAIL Network is a provincial program funded by the Ministry of Health as part of the DAN Women and Babies program at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. The mission of PAIL Network is to improve care and support for families in Ontario who experience the loss of a pregnancy or infant through high quality evidence-based information, peer-led support programs, education for health and service professionals, and public education and advocacy.

PAIL Network Peer Support Program: Support for Families

PAIL Network's peer support programs are available at no cost to families and have been tailored to meet the specific needs of people grieving this type of loss. We are sensitive to the experiences of pregnancy and infant loss because all our trained peer support volunteers have lived through it, which reduces a sense of isolation often felt by bereaved people. Our services are delivered in a variety of ways, including mixed-loss in person peer led group support, loss specific online peer led group support, and one-to-one telephone support. We can also provide service navigation for families who may need help completing paperwork, understanding next steps, or seeking information for follow up. Families may self-refer, or be referred by a professional.

IN PERSON CIRCLE OF SUPPORT: Circles of Support are mixed loss groups, and are "open groups" which means there is no start date or end date, no waitlist, and people can join at any time after their request for support. Circle of Support groups welcome all families who have experienced any type of pregnancy or infant loss. Please visit our website for a complete list of locations as we are always expanding the number of groups across Ontario.

ONLINE LOSS SPECIFIC SUPPORT: PAIL Network offers peer-led online support to all families across Ontario who have experienced a pregnancy loss or an infant death. Our team of trained volunteers provide support during scheduled online meetings that you can access from the comfort of home. These online groups connect families who share a similar experience of loss, and these discussions are moderated by a peer support volunteer who also shares that experience.

WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS:

- First Trimester
- Second Trimester
- Third Trimester
- Infant Death
- Support for Grandparents
- Experience of SIDS/SUID
- Termination of Pregnancy
- Grief After Abortion
- Loss of a Multiple
- Partners in Grief
- Parenting Through Loss
- Trying to Conceive
- Pregnancy After Loss

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES: PAIL Network recognizes that the unique grief needs of Indigenous families who experience pregnancy and infant loss may be difficult for non-Indigenous people to understand. This group meets online and is led by Indigenous peer support volunteers with a lived experience of pregnancy and infant loss.

ONE-TO-ONE TELEPHONE SUPPORT: Families are matched with a trained peer support volunteer who has had a similar type of loss. Families can receive up to four one-on-one phone calls.

continued



CANADIAN STATISTICS

- Approximately 8 babies are stillborn every day
- Approximately 5 babies die within the first year after birth every day

THAT'S ONE BABY, ONE FAMILY, EVERY 2 HOURS*

**These numbers do not include miscarriage, which impacts 1 in 4 pregnancies*

What to Say?

WHAT FAMILIES WANT YOU TO KNOW

- Even if I have living children, or if I have another baby in the future, this baby is irreplaceable.
- Using my baby's name acknowledges to me that you know they were here, they mattered.
- Parenting my baby means making decisions, ensuring they are treated with respect and care, and knowing where they are at all times.
- My non-birthing partner may have a very different set of memories, and needs to have attention paid to them, too.
- The experience of pregnancy and infant loss is chaotic, disorienting, and traumatic. I need to understand what this is so I can start to make sense of what I am feeling.

COMMUNICATING WITH A FAMILY EXPERIENCING A PREGNANCY LOSS: Although you can't take away the pain of a loss, you can provide a family with much needed comfort and support, and help them feel less isolated and alone. The most important thing you can do is simply be a supportive and caring presence while they travel their own grief journey. If you have said something hurtful, simply acknowledge it and say you're sorry.

HELPFUL PHRASES

HELPFUL PHRASES	HURTFUL PHRASES
"I'm sorry." or "I'm sorry we are meeting under these circumstances."	Phrases that begin with "At least..."
"I'm sorry this is happening to you."	"Everything happens for a reason."
"Tell me about your baby." or "Will you tell me about your baby?"	"You aren't given more in life than you can handle."
"I'm so sad for your loss."	"You're young. You can have more children."
"It's okay to feel what you're feeling."	"Everything will be okay."
"It's okay to cry."	"Your child is in a better place."
"Take all the time you need."	"Be grateful it happened early on."
"I will answer all of your questions, or find someone who can."	"It's better you miscarried because this fetus was probably abnormal."
"It's not your fault."	"I don't know why this is so hard for you."

HELPFUL ACTIONS

HELPFUL ACTIONS	HURTFUL ACTIONS
Mirror the language the family uses to refer to their loss.	Doing nothing.
Listen with compassion.	Avoiding the person.
Ask questions with sensitivity.	Offering unsolicited advice or platitudes.
Acknowledge and normalize their feelings.	Assuming a person believes in a certain faith.
Answer questions honestly, with kindness and compassion.	Assuming you know how a person is feeling.
Offer small gestures of kindness (blanket, meal, phone call, menstrual pad).	Assuming a person will know what is happening or what to do next.
Offer to contact a loved one or other support person.	Avoiding giving information in a timely manner.
Ask if they have a faith or cultural tradition that is comforting to them.	Missing the chance to connect a person to supports or referrals.
"It's not your fault."	Using medical jargon.
Treat the baby's remains with dignity and respect.	