



DEALING WITH BEREAVEMENT

TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Written by Sharon Darke, Senior Officer responsible for Twins Trust's bereavement support and bereaved mum to Charlie and Joshua.



BE INFORMED

It's so important that parents can access information easily when facing the death of one or more of their babies.



LANGUAGE

It's essential to consider how to deliver information to parents. Use clear, concise and caring language at all times, whether it's at the time of delivering bad or unexpected news, during the birth, while making memories with the family or afterwards at follow-up appointments. Your words can make such a difference. Consider how you refer to the twin who's died if they're still pregnant with a surviving twin or triplets. Families usually want the twin or triplet who has died acknowledged.



MEMORY MAKING

Parents will often need you to take the lead in making memories with their baby/babies. Offer as much as you can, such as photos, holding the baby, bathing and dressing the baby, hand and footprints, locks of hair, other family members meeting the baby etc.





SIGNPOSTING

Families are often not aware of bereavement support groups. You can find some international support specifically around multiple birth loss here:

Centre for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB) - www.climb-support.org

Twinless Twins Support Group International - www.twinlesstwins.org

Womb Twin (for sole survivors of a multiple birth pregnancy) - www.wombtwin.com

Twins Trust Bereavement Support - www.twinstrust.org/bereavement



FOLLOW UP CARE

At the time of losing a baby, it's difficult to take everything in and so sometimes even if families are told about support, they won't remember or be in a place to follow it up. A check-in at some point later can be so valuable and a chance to remind families of the support available.








COUNSELLING

Families often experience long waits for counselling, or it simply isn't offered. Many people who receive counselling find it helpful. It's encouraged to keep in touch with the family during the first year, possibly through the bereavement midwife or hospital counsellors.

THINGS **NOT** TO SAY TO A BEREAVED FAMILY

Sadly, many bereaved parents have had these things or similar said to them after the death of one or more of their babies:

-  "Do you think you'll have a second child?" (*from a midwife at the six-month check-up with one surviving twin*)
-  "You're lucky it was twins. So many people come in here and leave with no baby." (*from a NICU nurse*)
-  "Imagine if you had to carry two of those!" (*from a doctor to a bereaved parent, about bringing car seats into an appointment*)
-  "So here you are with your singleton pregnancy." (*from a doctor to a mum who had lost the other twin to TTTS*)
-  "Take care with this baby." (*from a midwife to a woman who had lost a twin to TTTS*)

