CAN I GIVE THEM SOMETHING?

Flowers and cards are always nice. Not just immediately following the death but year round. Pay special note to birthdays, holidays, due dates, anniversaries, Mother’s and Father’s Day. All of these days remind us that we feel incomplete as a family.

Jewelry. Something involving the baby’s birthstone would be a nice gesture, especially if they never knew the gender of the baby. www.myforeverchild.com has unique acknowledgment and memorial keepsakes, remembrance jewelry and gifts to comfort those touched by the loss of a child.

Donate. Donating to a cause such as A Small Victory in memory of the baby. A Small Victory adds the baby’s name to our Memorials Page.

Memorials. Check with local hospitals, zoos or parks about memorial bricks, trees or benches. Or you can purchase bricks at the Angel of Hope (caseproof.com/rpe/angels.php) nearest to you. Also, have the baby’s name entered in The Book of Life (www.innocents.com/bookoflife.html). They’ll send you a certificate that you can print out yourself.

Planting a tree or flowering bush in the child's memory.

Personalized Gifts. At glassetchingfever.com you can have the child's footprints etched in a glass picture frame or ornament.

Awareness - pregnancylossribbons.com & www.october15th.com have a wide variety of pregnancy and infant loss awareness items and gifts.

To learn more about A Small Victory and how you can become involved please, visit www.asmallvictory.org
A family member, friend or acquaintance has lost a child and you might not know what to say. It is a hard time for everyone and you may find yourself scared of saying or doing the wrong thing. Try not to let your fear drive you into silence and keep you from saying or doing nothing at all.

This list was compiled by other parents that have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death. It is written from their perspective to their family and friends.

When trying to help a woman who has lost a baby, the best rule of thumb is a matter of manners: don't offer your personal opinion of her life, her choices, her prospects for children. Everyone is different and they all have their own opinions on why it happened or how one should cope.

- **Do** say my child's name. It is like music to my ears. My baby is on my mind every second of everyday - it is okay to talk about them.
- **Do** recognize that I have suffered a death in my family - not a medical condition.
- **Do** say, "I am so sorry." That's enough. You don't need to be eloquent. Say it and mean it and it will matter.
- **Do** send flowers or a kind note - it helps me to know others are thinking of my baby. Don't resent it if I don't respond. And don't expect a thank you note.
- **Do** say, "You're wonderful parents and that baby was lucky to have you." We both need to hear that.
- **Do** understand if I might not attend baby showers/christening/birthday parties etc. And don't ask why I can't come.
- **Don't** say, "It's God's Will." Even if we are members of the same congregation, unless you are a cleric and I am seeking your spiritual counseling, please don't presume to tell me what God wants for me. Besides, many terrible things are God's Will, that doesn't make them less terrible.
- **Don't** say, "It was for the best - there was probably something wrong with your baby." I love my baby, even if something was wrong with it. I'd rather they be here with me than dead. Please don't try to comfort me by pointing that out.
- **Don't** say, "You can always have another one." This baby was never disposable. If given the choice between losing this child or stabbing my eye out with a fork, I would have said, "Where's the fork?" I would have died for this baby, just as you would die for your children.
- **Don't** say, "Be grateful for the children you have." If your mother died in a terrible wreck and you grieved, would that make you less grateful to have your father?
- **Don't** say, "Thank God you lost the baby now instead of later." I loved my child. Whether I lost the baby after two weeks of pregnancy or just after birth, I loved them.
- **Don't** say, "Isn't it time you got over this and moved on?" It's not something I enjoy, being grief-stricken. I wish it had never happened. But it did and it's a part of me forever. I will never "get over" this.
- **Don't** say, "I understand how you feel." Unless you've lost a child, you really don't understand how I feel.
- **Don't** tell me horror stories of your neighbor or cousin or mother who had it worse. This was bad enough, I don't need to hear how "lucky" I am.
- **Don't** pretend it didn't happen and don't change the subject when I bring it up. If I say, "Before the baby died..." or "when I was pregnant..." don't get scared. If I'm talking about it, it means I want to. Let me. Pretending it didn't happen will only make me feel utterly alone.
- **Don't** say, "Well, you weren't too sure about this baby, anyway." I already feel so guilty about ever having complained about morning sickness, or a child I wasn't prepared for, or another mouth to feed that we couldn't afford. I already fear that this baby died because I didn't take the vitamins, or drank too much coffee, or had alcohol in the first few weeks when I didn't know I was pregnant. I hate myself for any minute that I had reservations about this baby. Being unsure of my pregnancy isn't the same as wanting my child to die - I never would have chosen for this to happen.
- **Don't** call more than once and don't be angry if the machine is on and I don't return your call. If we're close friends and I am not responding to your attempts to help me, please don't resent that, either. Help me by not needing anything from me for a while.
- **Don't** talk about other peoples children and don't expect me to want to interact with other babies. If your niece is pregnant, or your daughter just had a baby, please don't share that with me right now. It's not that I can't be happy for anyone else, it's that every smiling, cooing baby and every glowing new mother makes me ache so deep in my heart I can barely stand it. I may look okay to you, but there's a good chance that I'm still crying every day. It may be weeks before I can go a whole hour without thinking about it. You'll know when I'm ready - I'll be the one to say, "Did your daughter have her baby?" or, "How is that precious little boy of yours?" Above all, please remember that this is the worst thing that ever happened to me. The word "miscarriage" is small and easy. But my baby's death is the worst thing in the world. It's going to take me a while to figure out how to live with it. Bear with me.