

What NOT to Say to Grieving Parents

Here is a list, compiled by grieving parents, of the most unhelpful statements people made to them, and what people could have said instead:

10. “At least he/she wasn’t older – it would have been so much harder”

Really? How is that you would think that would be the case. I lost my hopes, dreams, and future for this child. This was my child. A living, breathing human being. Infants are not supposed to die. I was supposed to have a lifetime to make memories. I was robbed and cheated out of everything I was supposed to have with my child. This is HARD, this is a hard that people cannot even comprehend. It doesn’t matter how old he was.

Try saying this instead: “I am so sorry, no parent should ever lose their child.”

9. “You’re having a funeral/memorial/lantern release to say goodbye? Why?”

Why wouldn’t I have a funeral? Did your mother/father/husband/brother/other loved adult have one? Why doesn’t my child deserve a funeral? Because they were under a year old I should just donate them to science or something? What if I don’t want to and I want to have a nice funeral for them, because heaven knows I am not going to be planning any birthdays or any other the other million things I should have been able to do with my child. Just let me do this and say goodbye the way I need to say goodbye.

Try saying this instead: “What time is the memorial? Anything I can do to help?”

8. “This is why I co-sleep/don’t co-sleep/have an angel care monitor/nurse/don’t nurse/vaccinate/don’t vaccinate so forth and so on”

This is not the time for parenting advice. Yes, we all know you are the World’s Best Parent doing everything correctly. Why don’t you go back to trolling forums now and brag a bit there. Have fun. I am going to go sit in the corner with my guilt and replay every moment of my child’s life and try to figure out what I did wrong, which by the way is something I do anyway every waking moment of my day.

Try saying this instead: “I am so sorry. I don’t know what to say.”

7. “I heard that (reason for baby’s death) is caused by (giant piece of misinformation here)...”

You want to find an expert on the various causes of death in infants or miscarriages or stillbirth or anything that causes young childhood death. Find a parent that is living through it, because that is what we do – we search and search and dig for answers all day, every day about what caused us to lose our child. We become the experts. We read research papers, stay on top of legislation, read article after article, check and double check facts, we will even reach out to top doctors in that particular field to find answers. It really upsets us when we hear misinformation being spread. Bonus points if you decided to argue the point with us after we correct you on the facts.

Try saying this instead: I am so sorry for your loss. I've heard of (reason baby died) would you be able to tell me more about it?

6. "I know how you feel, my cat passed away."

Go away and stop talking. This was actually said to me and I know quite a lot of parents who have had their babies deaths compared to the loss of a pet. Sorry, no. Just no. I can't say that enough and cannot believe it even needs to be said. I love animals. I have pets. I have had a cats and dogs for my entire 36 years on this planet. I adore animals and would adopt every adoptable animal if I could. I have lost pets. And I buried my child. It's not the same. It is not even comparable. I don't care how much you love your pet, it is nothing, NOTHING even close to losing a child. Quite honestly and bluntly, losing a child isn't comparable to any other sort of loss, and I have had some major losses in my life, including my beloved father. Planning a funeral for my 26 day old son was a sort of pain that a human should have to go through and hearing someone compare that to the loss of a cat, is just insulting.

Try saying this instead: "I am so sorry, I have no idea what you are going through right now."

5. "Maybe something was wrong with him, like genetically, sometimes nature knows what it's doing"

Maybe something is wrong with you. Thanks for insulting my child in my time of grief and shock. Much appreciated. And I wouldn't have cared if anything was "wrong" with them, anything is better than dead.

Try saying this instead "I am so sorry. You must miss him."

4. "This is so much easier for fathers."

Oh REALLY?! That is awesome to know. I'm going to tell my husband that – I am sure he would love to know that bit of info. Especially since waking up that morning at 6 am to find our newborn non responsive and then desperately attempting CPR (which we actually took a class for) and failing then getting to see the horrors of the trauma room at the ER has caused nightmares to the point that he almost didn't sleep for a month and now most likely has PTSD from the trauma of the whole horrible event. Then, he has to deal with me, a postpartum mom without a baby. I'm an emotional wreck and could barely brush my teeth due to being in a state of shock for a month. Top that off with the whole everyone expecting him to be the "strong" one because he's the guy, well, yea, he is in just as much pain as I am. Remember, he lost his baby too.

Try saying this instead: "You and your husband must be in so much pain. I am so sorry for your loss."

3. "I can't believe you are managing to go on...if *I* had to bury *MY* baby I wouldn't be able to get out of bed!"

Have you? Have you actually buried one of your babies? No? Then don't tell me what you would do, you haven't been through this and have no idea how you would react. I have living children, I don't have a choice. I have to get up and go on. Laying in bed and being miserable is

just not an option. And I am already judging myself for getting up and continuing to live, I don't need the additional guilt.

Try saying this instead: "How are you doing?"

2. "You can always have another!"

Well, no, I can't. Thanks for reminding me. It's that way for a lot of other woman as well. We don't have an option to have "another baby". There will be no rainbows for us. Even if we could and even the woman that have the option to have "another baby" we don't want ANOTHER baby, we want OUR baby. The baby that isn't here and is gone forever. Even woman who do go on to have other children, it isn't a replacement baby, it doesn't make the hurt and pain go away. NOTHING, will ever, replace or be the same as the baby we lost.

Try saying this instead: "I haven't had a chance to see all his pictures...I would love to see them when you are up for it."

1 "God has a plan." (or any variation of this)

Gods' plan sucks. There I said it. I said it for every single bereaved mother and father that wanted to say it. It. SUCKS. Any plan/will/idea/reason by any person, being or entity that involves my baby being dead sucks in the worst way possible. I don't like it. I hate it. I am a violently angry human being that is grieving in the worst way possible. I do not want to hear how "God needed an angel." God can MAKE angels. I needed my baby. This is – hands down – the one thing that bereaved mothers and fathers complain about – we may nod our heads and smile but inside we want to scream. Also, a lot of us are ANGRY with God and are wrestling with that internally. I understand that this really does seem a good thing to say, but sometimes just saying nothing is better. The last thing we need to hear is tired clichés. It isn't that we are against religion or God. It is just that for us, there was no better plan than our babies here, physically, on earth, with us.

Try saying this instead: "He was such a beautiful child."