

Miscarriage: Always a loss, no matter how early, no matter what number

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I have been working with individuals and couples who have experienced miscarriages, treatment for infertility, and loss of a baby, for about ten years now.

There are many paths that lead them to my office, but it usually involves multiple miscarriages, failed Artificial Reproductive Techniques (In Vitro Fertilization; use of a sperm or egg donor), and a referral from an obstetrician/gynecologist or infertility doctor. Some women are able to pass through the cycle of loss and easily move on, while others feel stuck in the grieving process, and need help and permission to grieve their loss. And a tragic loss it can be.

According to Mayo Clinic, 15-20% of confirmed pregnancies end in miscarriage. However, miscarrying is a topic that is not easily or frequently talked about, and the emotional toll it takes is often underestimated.

In addition, those individuals and couples undergoing a failed In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

also experience a similar loss.

Even when the miscarriage is preceded by, or succeeded by the birth of a healthy child, unresolved feelings around the miscarriages can linger. Whether the loss is early or late in the pregnancy, it is still a loss, and "early" losses are no less traumatic than "late" losses. In addition, with today's technology, women know right away whether they are pregnant.

Each of these situations involves the loss of someone(s) potential child, potential motherhood, potential fatherhood, and is likely to be shocking, and involve grieving.

Everyone grieves in different ways and communication in this emotional time can lead to difficulties in the marriage or partnership. Individuals who are used to being in control, experience a loss of control in one of the most important and personal areas in their lives.

In addition, the hormones and drugs that are meant to help with the pregnancy are likely to exacerbate feelings of anxiety and sadness. If the sadness or anxiety becomes debilitating, it may be time to seek some professional help and

support, or seek a support group. Know that you are not alone.

A piece of advice I frequently share with individuals who are struggling to become parents, or have experienced miscarriages or loss, is to be kind to themselves – and to give themselves permission to excuse themselves from baby showers if it is too difficult for them to go. People who they are close to will understand, and those they are not close to, well it probably isn't so important.

Feelings of envy and sadness are normal, and babies and pregnant women will be noticed everywhere. Permission to grieve is essential to healthy healing.

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