

It is important for the club and its members to realize that awareness of loss and being supportive is not limited to the one or two kind hearted individuals in the group. It is something that the board should find a way to discuss and have presentations on loss at least once per year. By recognizing loss and informing yourselves you may be in a position to be helpful to others in the community on how the needs of multiple birth loss parents can be met. It also brings respect to the club and a greater ability to deal with the not so happy side of the world of multiples.

This article is excerpted from "Encountering Multiple Birth Loss: What You Can Do" by the Center for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB), Inc. It is copyrighted by CLIMB and reprinted by permission. For more information, please visit CLIMB's website,

www.climb-support.org

Website Links for Support Groups

Center for Loss in a Multiple Birth, Inc. (CLIMB)

PO Box 91377

Anchorage, AK 99509

1-907-222-5321

www.climb-support.org

Support groups and newsletter for parents who experienced the death of one, both or all children in a twin or higher order multiple pregnancy, birth or infancy.

Elizabeth A. Pector, MD

www.synspectrum.com/multiplicity.html

... includes articles on many aspects of multiple birth loss for parents and caregivers, and an extensive resource listing, by a physician who is also a bereaved multiple birth parent.

Tender Hearts Support, the Triplet Connection

PO Box 99571

Stockton, CA 95209

1-209-474-0885

www.tripletconnection.org

Offers resources for families who have lost one or more of their triplets, quadruplets, or quintuplets, including a forum board for bereaved parents.

eLIMBO (electronicLoss In Multiple Birth Outreach)

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/eLIMBO

...an e-mail support group of bereaved multiple birth parents, most with the loss of one of their twins or higher multiples in pregnancy or infancy.

LAMBS (Loss of All in Multiple Birth Support)

www.public.iastate.edu/~cjenks/lambs.html

...an e-mail support group of parents who have experienced the death of both twins or all their higher order multiples.

Sidelines High Risk Pregnancy Support National Office:

P. O. Box 1808 Laguna Beach, CA 92652

Toll Free Phone Number: (888)447-4754 (HI-RISK4)

Fax: (949) 497-5598

sidelines@sidelines.org

Offers support to women who are on bed rest with a high risk pregnancy.

Southern California Mothers of Twins Club

www.scmotc.org

You can click on support services and it will bring up support sites for bereavement.

National Organization for Mothers of Twins Clubs

www.nomotc.org

Email: Bereavementsupport@nomtc.org

Bereavement Support for Twins and Multiples Clubs

How to deal with a loss in a multiple birth pregnancy



Southern California
Mothers of Twins Clubs
www.scmotc.org

Bereavement Information What Your Club Can Do...

When a member or prospective member experiences the death of one or more, both or all of her babies there are a few things the club can do to provide support for the bereaved parent...

- Definitely do send a card. The card should include both or all babies regardless of how many have lived and how many have died or whose outcome is uncertain. It can be very simple and sincere.
- Use this opportunity to let them know about support sites. This lets them know up front that they're not alone. For multiple birth loss a major resource is CLIMB, Center for Loss in a Multiple Birth. You can visit them at www.climb-support.org.
- It's also a good time to let them know that they will always be the mother/parents of twins (or triplets or higher) even though sadly one or more of the babies is no longer here.
- Parents who have lost of course tend to feel that we have flunked out of a special club, have been specially "un-chosen" and so on. One of the main reasons for doing the things mentioned here is that almost ANYthing is better than awkward silence, which parents take to mean that the club has rejected them and their babies.

The suggestions above of course apply to talking with people in person or on the phone, too, which is what often happens first when checking on a prospective member or contact, or when one of them calls you to let you know what has happened. It is essential that the person or people dealing with membership be prepared to hear about loss and be able to respond appropriately. Some things that can help: If a phone call is made to someone who is pregnant or recently due, ask "How are you doing by now?" instead of something like "Your babies must have been born, tell me their weights so we can put it in the newsletter!"--i.e., don't assume a good outcome.

There are several kinds of practical help that may be

possible:

- Childcare for older children or a surviving multiple/s while the parents visit a multiple who is in the NICU, or help with meals while one or more of the babies is hospitalized. Having someone who is experienced in caring for tiny multiples is especially helpful when there is more than one surviving baby at home.
- Assistance with storing, selling, giving away, trading or otherwise dealing with the items that won't be needed such as the double or triple stroller. The club could offer to pick up and store any such items, and to assist with selling or trading them, and it can be a fantastic help with a very painful aspect.
- If someone's loss involves continuing to be pregnant after one or more of the babies has died in-utero, one has been delivered prematurely, or knowing ahead that one of the babies won't live long after birth, offer any possible practical support and help make sure that they are in touch with any resources in the community that may be helpful for them, such as bed-rest support.
- A card at the time of the 6-month anniversary and the one-year anniversary, especially for someone you know, is usually very much appreciated, along with a phone call or note from time to time in the first year.

Some general thoughts...

All multiple birth loss is complicated: there is the numbers of babies, and all the things that can occur, suddenly or over a period of time. Parents' reactions at any given time are complicated as they try to withstand and process such an experience (often, as first-time parents). Often they are focusing on one particular aspect of their experience at any given time, yet really feeling all of them. Parents are grieving for "my twins" or triplets as well as for each baby. Everyone is an individual and there is no "right" way and no schedule. A long period of time and lots of support are needed until parents can regain their balance and find a "new normal" for their life.

Twins and multiples are so special--and one of the main reasons you are able to be supportive is that you truly understand that. With that being said, you would never say "at least you have one" or "oh well, they weren't meant to be" and all the other things that people can say who haven't experienced loving two or more at once and the joys and challenges of the experience of having multiples, and the kids' relationship to each other.

It IS difficult and there is nothing anyone can do to just make it better, so it's better not to have the illusion that

there is something you (or anyone) can do to make it ok...just BE with them...Also, it's difficult and challenging for you, and can bring up fears and discomfort for you as the parent of young children. It's also easy to think that there must have been something that the mom did or didn't do that resulted in or influenced the loss. It really helps to just realize all that and be able to put the needs of those who have lost ahead of your personal situation or discomfort, for the sake of what it will mean to them.

Newsletters. Most clubs posts the birth announcements of the members' children. Include the birth/loss announcement in your newsletter along with or near the other birth announcements, along with your condolences. Understand that labeling issues are very important to bereaved parents. Always check with the parents to know how they would like their children mentioned or referred to. Many bereaved parents will refer to their living children as surviving twins, triplets, quads, etc. depending on what the original group was. Also be aware some parents may not want to make it so public. Some parents want to normalize their situation and may simply refer to the surviving child or children as what they seem like.

Membership. If someone is already a member of the club, let them know that they will remain a member for as long as they wish. This doesn't mean that they will necessarily want to get the newsletter, or come to meetings, or be around the babies and kids, and they should not be expected to--but it's really good for the parents to know that the loss has not ended their membership (then they can renew or not as they wish later on). Some do remain involved in their club, especially those with surviving multiples, and quite a few have offered to work with the club on bereavement support and be a contact later on.

Parents who have lost one or more of their babies are starting off on a path that they never would have chosen but are suddenly having to take. Because of who you are, you are there at the beginning of that path. You are in a position to make it even more difficult by blocking it--or to make it better, less difficult than it already is, by helping to shine some light on it, so to speak. It may be difficult for the parents to respond, and it is important to remember and not take it personally. But kindness, caring and relevant information are appreciated so, so much and really do make a difference for parents in the long run...and