

Termination For Medical Reasons

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Termination for medical reasons can be a heartbreaking experience. It usually refers to ending a wanted pregnancy because of serious concerns about the baby's development or the health of the pregnant person. This can happen after unexpected news during pregnancy, often when you were preparing to welcome your baby.

There is no right or wrong way to feel after termination for medical reasons. You may experience sadness, disbelief, anger, guilt, numbness, anxiety, relief or confusion, sometimes all at once. However you are feeling, your experience is valid and deserves care and support.

Understanding Termination for Medical Reasons

Termination for medical reasons may be considered when there are serious concerns about the pregnancy, including major foetal anomalies or complications affecting the health of the pregnant person. For many families, this follows much-wanted hopes and plans for the future.

Advances in screening and testing mean some conditions can be identified during pregnancy, but this news can come as a shock. In a short time, you may need to absorb complex medical information and make deeply personal decisions.

Even when a decision is made with care, love and medical advice, it can leave a lasting emotional impact. You may grieve the loss of your baby and the future you had imagined. Compassionate support can help you feel less alone.

Emotional and Mental Health Impact

Termination for medical reasons can affect both emotional and physical wellbeing. Some people feel the impact straight away, while others process it over time. You may feel:

- Shock, disbelief or emotional numbness
- Deep sadness, grief or emptiness
- Guilt, self-blame or a sense of unfairness
- Anxiety, panic or difficulty relaxing
- Anger, frustration or resentment
- Relief alongside grief or sadness

- Difficulty concentrating or making sense of what happened
- Worry about future pregnancies or your body
- Isolation, especially if few people knew about the pregnancy

Hormonal changes, medical procedures, bleeding, pain, poor sleep and exhaustion can also affect how you are coping. Anniversaries, due dates, medical appointments, pregnancy announcements or seeing other babies may bring up strong feelings. If the experience feels traumatic, extra support can help.

Relationships & Support

Partners and support people can be affected too. They may be grieving while also trying to support you, and different ways of coping can place strain on relationships.

You and your partner may grieve, communicate or need support differently. This does not mean either of you is coping incorrectly.

Support from others can help, even if they do not always know what to say. If you can, let trusted people know what feels supportive, whether that is practical help, quiet company or simply having your baby acknowledged.

If you are supporting someone after termination for medical reasons, gentle listening and acknowledging the baby and the loss can be deeply meaningful.

Meaningful Ways to Honour Your Baby

Finding a meaningful way to acknowledge your baby and your loss can be comforting. For some people, rituals or keepsakes help them feel connected. Others may feel unsure about what they need, and that is okay. There is no right or wrong way to honour your baby.

- Keep a special item, such as an ultrasound image, hospital bracelet, letter, piece of jewellery or memory box
- Name your baby or write them a letter
- Mark important dates in a personal way, such as lighting a candle or spending quiet time reflecting

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- Create something in their memory, such as artwork, a keepsake or planting a tree
- Take part in cultural, spiritual or religious rituals that feel important to you
- Make a donation in your baby's name to a charity or hospital if this feels meaningful

You may return to these rituals at different times, especially around anniversaries, due dates or other reminders. Some days you may want to remember deeply, and other days you may need space. Both are okay.

Looking After Yourself

Grief can be exhausting, and looking after yourself may feel hard right now. Small, gentle steps can support your mental health and recovery.

- Rest as much as you can and allow yourself time to recover physically and emotionally
- Eat and drink regularly, even if your appetite is low
- Accept help with meals, household tasks or caring responsibilities
- Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling
- Limit time with people who feel dismissive or unhelpful
- Reduce pressure on yourself to "move on" or explain your experience to others
- Write, journal or find another gentle outlet for your thoughts and feelings
- Seek clear medical information and follow-up care if you have questions about your recovery or future pregnancies.

Try to notice what feels most supportive for you. Healing is not linear, but with time and care, many people begin to find steadier ground.

Getting Extra Support

It may help to seek extra support if your distress feels overwhelming, you are struggling in daily life, or reminders of the experience leave you feeling panicked or shut down. Support can help you process what has happened, manage anxiety or low mood, and feel less alone. If your partner or support person is also struggling, they may benefit from support too.

- **GP, Obstetrician or Midwife:** They can support your physical recovery, answer questions, and refer you for extra support.
- **Gidget Foundation Australia:** Individual psychological therapy services for those affected by pregnancy related loss, such as termination, with a perinatal mental health clinician
- **Additional Support & Resources:** The following organisations may also offer helpful information and support.
 - **Miscarriage Australia**
 - **PANDA**
 - **Pink Elephants**
 - **Red Nose Grief and Loss Support**
 - **The Royal Women's Hospital**
- **Family & Friends:** Practical help and understanding can make a big difference.

Healing after termination for medical reasons takes time, and everyone's experience is different. With care, support and compassion, many people begin to make space for hope, meaning and moments of peace.

If you or your partner have concerning symptoms, or you are worried about a pregnancy at any time, contact your healthcare provider or go to the nearest emergency department. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000. If you need urgent mental health support, call **Lifeline** on 13 11 14 or **Beyond Blue** on 1300 22 4636.