

## Where to begin...

During your hospital stay, you may have been given many opportunities to spend time with your baby taking photographs and capturing some treasured mementos. Or, perhaps you were not given many options at all, leaving you feeling frustrated and angry as those moments cannot be relived. If your loss happened early in pregnancy, your choices for memory making may have been more limited, maybe even non-existent. No matter what your experiences were, the time you spent with your baby was too brief, and it is impossible to fit a lifetime of memory making into a few short hours or days.

Everyone honors and remembers their babies in their own way. Each family has different hopes, dreams, and traditions, therefore, the mementos they create now and in future years will be unique to them. However, there are a few basics that most families can get started with.

You can begin by gathering anything that reminds you of your baby:

- Pregnancy test results
- Appointment cards from your doctor's office
- Sonogram pictures (Do NOT laminate them as it will ruin them. Make photocopies on archival paper)
- Cards and/or flowers of congratulations when you announced your pregnancy
- Photos of yourself pregnant, even if you don't yet look pregnant
- Flowers and cards expressing sympathy after your baby died
- Memory book from Share
- Anything used while caring for your baby
- Hospital bracelets
- Hospital birth certificate or recognition of life certificate from Share
- Baby blanket and/or other articles of clothing
- Footprints and/or handprints
- Stuffed animals

## What to do with mementos...

Once you have gathered your mementos, there are countless ways to preserve them. Many parents like to make a special memory box to cradle the things they were given at the hospital; however, these boxes may be small and can only hold so much. Consider these other unique ways to keep and display your mementos:

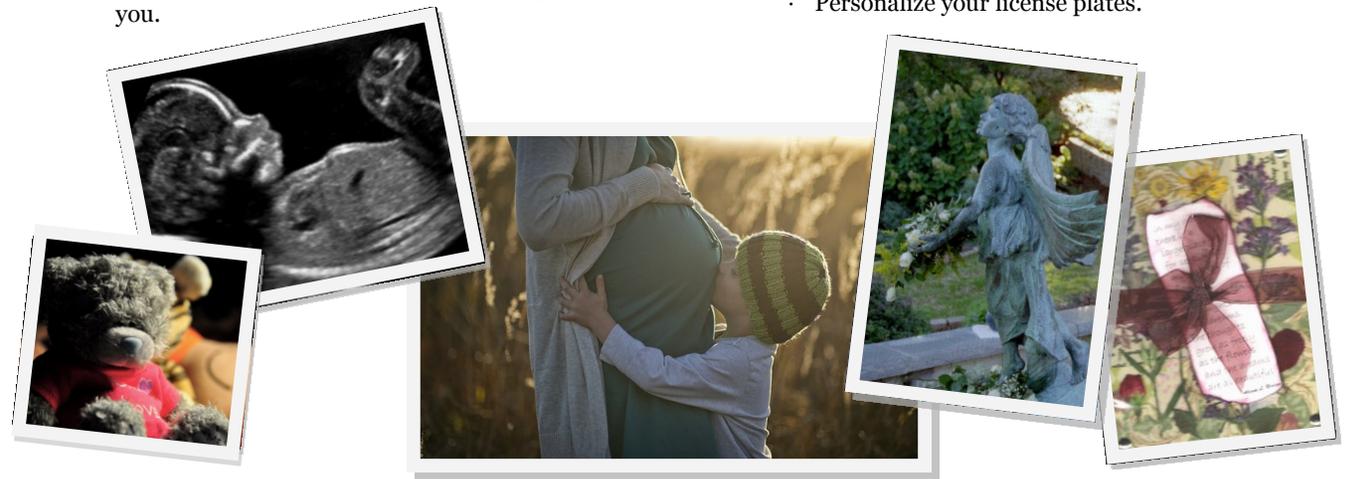
- *Create a photo album or scrapbook*—If you do not have photographs of your baby, make a book of quotes, cards and other things that remind you of your baby.
- *Dry flowers and create things using them*—Use decoupage medium to attach them to the outside of clear glass candle holders, use them to make notecards, put the dried petals in a clear glass holiday ornament, or add them to a scrapbook. Some companies can make beads and jewelry from dried flowers as well.
- *Repurpose clothing and blankets*—If you can bear to part with them, a quilt, pillow or teddy bear made from pieces of your baby's outfits and blankets allows you keep those special items close to you rather than storing them away in a drawer. Consider making items for grandparents, too.
- *Dedicate a small space in your home to your baby*—Display candles, photos, and other items that make you think of your precious baby. This can be as simple as a small table, shelf, or shadow box. Add items to it and/or decorate it for the seasons if that feels right to you.

## As time goes on...

For many families, memory making is an ongoing process that can last a lifetime. The possibilities for ways you can create keepsakes after your baby's death are endless. Use your imagination, keep in mind your family's religious traditions, consider the input of your living children if you have them, and most importantly, let your heart guide you. The new traditions and memories you create may become some of your family's most treasured.

Following are some ideas to get you started, but don't let yourself be limited by these suggestions.

- Start a collection. Special items or symbols can bring you a great deal of comfort. Your loved ones may join in and purchase items or think of you when they see them, which can be very soothing and remind you that others love and miss your baby too.
- Celebrate your baby on birthdays, anniversary dates.
- Include your baby in your holiday traditions.
- Create living memorials such as a garden in your yard or a tree in a park. Over the years, a garden can become a truly special place where you feel close to your baby.
- Participate in memorial events. Many Share chapters and other organizations offer annual memorial services such as holiday ceremonies or a Walk for Remembrance and Hope.
- Personalize your license plates.



- Get a memorial tattoo.
- Make birth announcements.
- Purchase memorial jewelry. Many companies offer items with engraved hand/footprints, birthstones, quotes, etc.
- Include your living children in your new traditions—Children often enjoy being a part of rituals and remembrances of their baby sibling who died.
- Perform random acts of kindness
- Donate money, books, knitted hats, blankets or other items to organizations in memory of your baby

## Planning a special ceremony or funeral...

Many bereaved parents do not realize that memorial services, even for babies who die in early pregnancy, are quite common. It can be extremely overwhelming to even think about such thing, and you may wonder what is the “right” thing to do. It may have only been a few short days ago that you were happily anticipating the birth of your baby, and now you must consider about the unthinkable—the death of your baby and perhaps a funeral. You are likely confused and do not know where to turn. The assistance of a clergy member or funeral director is invaluable, but here are a few ideas for you to keep in mind:

- Call, or ask a friend to call, funeral homes in your area. Many have special services and rates for families who have experienced the death of a baby.
- Some families choose to follow religious traditions that have been important to them in the past, but others may choose to host a farewell ritual for their baby that goes against the common norms. Either is okay. Do what feels right you, and your partner.
- Choose songs, lullabies and poems that are meaningful to you. Even a favorite children's book can be a reading. You are not bound by any “rules.”

- When possible, include your other children if you have them as well as family and friends. If you have a loved one who sings or is a musician, consider asking him or her to be a part of your service. Children often like to write and/or read poems, and including them in this way can make them feel special and valued.
- Think of ways to make your baby's farewell ritual memorable—include your loved ones and their talents; have a balloon release and provide cards for attendees to write messages; take photographs or ask a trusted person do it for you.
- Even if you choose to not have a full funeral, you may wish to have your baby's remains cremated and returned to you for safekeeping.
- Some parents have private ceremonies in parks, lakes or other places that are meaningful to them weeks or months, even years, later.

There is no time line on memory making. Do what feels right to you now. It is okay if your plans and traditions change over the years. Grieving the death of your baby will likely be a life-long process, and the ways you choose to remember and honor your baby will like be an ever-changing, life-long process as well. Always let your heart guide you.

*Grief is a journey. Along the way you feel many emotions, remember your baby, and talk and cry about the precious life you lost. Creating and recalling priceless memories can be important in making connections with your baby, as well as facilitating positive healing.*



## Creating Keepsakes When a Baby Dies

*A brief reference for creating memories in honor of a baby who has died due to early pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or in the first few months of life*