

# PREGNANCY LOSS AWARENESS WEEK 9th - 15th October 2019

October 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 is Pregnancy and Infant loss Awareness week. This includes miscarriage, stillbirth and infant loss. 1 in 4 women experience the heartbreak of the loss of a baby. It is unfortunately one of the most common experiences that is rarely talked about leading women and couples to suffer in silence and feel devastatingly isolated. This is something that we need to change!

This article will focus on pregnancy loss with the aim to increase awareness, tips on ways of coping and information on support available:

## **Why is pregnancy loss not talked about?**

For many reasons women and couples suffer in silence with their grief. Sometimes it can be difficult to put into words the feelings that arise from the loss of a baby and sometimes it can be difficult to cope with people's reactions as death can often make people uncomfortable and therefore the support needs of the parents are often unmet, leading to isolation in their grief. Furthermore, as society encourages women not to tell people of their pregnancy before 12 weeks it sends a clear message of silence.

## **Emotional Impact of Pregnancy Loss**

Experiencing a pregnancy loss can be a confusing time in a woman's life as well as a couple's journey. It can also be traumatic for many.

It can take time to recover. With the emotional impact often taking longer than the physical recovery. The hormonal changes can also intensify emotions. A lot of women that I have worked with in my clinic often express their struggle with feelings of self-blame, guilt and anger but it is important to understand that miscarriage is usually out of an individual's control. Nature can be uncontrollable and unpredictable.

Grief is a natural and healthy response to loss. Grief following a miscarriage or perinatal loss is more complex. Women and couples often report engulfing feelings of sadness to the loss of their much wanted baby and the loss of the vision of the future of what could have been. The attachment and bonding can start as soon as a woman discovers she is pregnant and the planning and vision often begins. When the unexpected miscarriage happens it can feel surreal and working with the new reality of this significant loss can be devastating. For some women that experience a 'missed miscarriage' they have miscarried but their body still continues to produce pregnancy hormones. This can often serve to enhance the complex physical and emotional impact of miscarriage leaving women feeling vulnerable, confused and overwhelmed.

## **Multiple Miscarriages**

Miscarriage that occurs more than once often leads to increased anxiety, low mood and uncertainty about the future of being able to conceive. For many women this is a long journey of uncertainty and fertility investigations often leading to feelings of isolation and anxiety. It is important to reach out for support to work through these fears and your losses.

### **How to cope:**

- Remember you are not alone. There are pregnancy loss support groups and specialised psychologists to help with your grief.
- You don't have to forget. Whether you experienced a loss early or late in your pregnancy, all losses are significant.
- Grief takes time, there is no road map and everyone is different in their experience to grief. Comparison of others often puts pressure on how you should feel and invalidates how you are actually feeling. Grieving for a much wanted baby doesn't happen overnight, it can be with you everyday but there is support available, you don't have to do this alone.
- Increase areas of nourishment in your life and work on reducing and letting go of areas of depletion such as staying in bed, avoiding people etc. While it is often a natural response to grief these areas of depletion often lead to increased anxiety and depression.
- Self-compassion is important. If you notice increasing self-criticism and blame, step back from these thoughts and ask yourself, 'what advice would I say to a friend going through a loss?' this can often help to get unhooked from unhelpful thoughts and take steps towards much needed self-care.
- I would also recommend speaking to a Specialised Fertility Psychologist to help you and your partner to emotionally process your loss and fears you may have for future pregnancies. Furthermore, for those that have been given difficult feedback following miscarriages that may not be able to conceive in the future, I would recommend speaking to a fertility psychologist to prepare for this ending. You don't have to face this alone.

### **Fertility Therapy**

If you are experiencing a pregnancy loss the following support groups and therapy options are helpful.

- Support Groups in Ireland: The Miscarriage Association of Ireland: <http://www.miscarriage.ie>
- Pregnancy and Infant Loss Ireland: <https://pregnancyandinfantloss.ie>
- Counselling: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Mindfulness and Compassion Focused Therapy can be highly effective at processing grief and working through self-blame, self-criticism, fertility concerns.
- Irish Fertility Counselling Association: <http://www.fertilitycounsellors.ie/about-us/>

If you have experienced pregnancy loss(s) and would like to book an appointment with a specialist fertility psychologist at **The Consulting Clinic** you can book online by emailing: [admin@theconsultingclinic.ie](mailto:admin@theconsultingclinic.ie) or by phone 01 6859261.

**Break the silence and speak about your loss.**

**The Consulting Clinic**

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