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Remember ALL Mothers on Mother's Day

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SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY – On a day when most of us go out of our way to make our mothers feel special and appreciated, there are mothers whose role is left unacknowledged. Friends and family may ignore these mothers out of fear of upsetting them or, perhaps, because they do not understand that bereaved mothers often share the same thoughts and feelings about motherhood as other mothers.

Angel Names Association (ANA), a Saratoga Springs nonprofit organization that assists families of stillborn children, talked recently with area mothers whose babies were stillborn. ANA found that their perception of themselves as mothers was untouched by the baby's death, and that Mother's Day has the same meaning for them as for mothers who have not experienced the tragedy of stillbirth.

"I took care of my son for nine months. During my entire pregnancy I mothered him – I took the best care of myself possible to ensure his wellbeing. I sang to him, talked to him about the world and all my dreams for him, and told him every day how much I loved him," said Lori, whose son was stillborn at 37 weeks. "Though he is not here with me physically now, he will always be my son, and I his mother."

Added Kelly, a young mother whose son was stillborn at 40 weeks, "Bryce is my son and I will love him forever, and I am no less his mother because of the distance that is now between us. Still, it seems people ignore me on Mother's Day."

Bereaved mothers and their families can find themselves in a precarious position on a holiday that celebrates motherhood "These mothers often long to be remembered, to have their motherhood acknowledged, but everyone around them is too afraid to do so," said Michelle Mosca, ANA Cofounder and President. "Often the best thing to do is simply to let bereaved mothers know you are thinking of them on this special day."

To guide friends, family, employers and coworkers in their attempts to appropriately support bereaved parents, ANA offers the following suggestions.

1. One of the most comforting things to say is "I'm sorry."
2. Remember to ask about both parents. They both lost their baby, and though they may express grief differently, they are both hurting.
3. Refer to the baby by name. It lets parents know that their baby is not forgotten.
4. It is okay to ask how parents doing. Their baby is always with them; you are not "bringing up" anything that's not already there.
5. Respect that everyone grieves differently and in their own time. Don't try to put a time line on their grief or expect them to "get over it;" grieving the death of one's

child is a lifelong process.

6. If you have questions about the baby, ask. Though they may not want to talk every day, asking gives them the opportunity to share their beloved child.
7. Anniversaries (birth/death day, due date, etc.) and holidays may be particularly difficult. Let parents know if you're thinking of them on those days.
8. Expect parents to be different. Their child's death has forever changed them and added new dimensions to who they are. They may no longer laugh at the same jokes, may take life more seriously (or the opposite), may need more companionship or more solitude than before, but are essentially the same.

What NOT to do:

1. Do not use platitudes to make parents feel better. Sayings like "It was meant to be," or "At least he didn't suffer," may intend to take away the pain, but most often they do just the opposite.

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