

Miscarriage and Pregnancy Loss: A Silent Grief

INTO Equality Conference

Hodson Bay Athlone

3rd February 2023

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- Together we will examine the significance of these losses and their impact on a family unit
- This workshop will explore the multiple nuances involved in these losses nuances
- It will offer support and advice that can enable this process of grief to a healthy accommodation for those who experience such loss

Types of losses

- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Peri-natal loss

Loss through miscarriage/stillbirth

- Sudden and unexpected and can be traumatic
- Experience is lonely and frightening
- Can cause low mood for months
- Need to communicate with partner
- The experience is unique to each
- Emotional loss is universal
- Shatters hopes and fills with doubts for the future
- Saying “Goodbye” before we say “Hello”
- Months later can be hard as the reality of the loss dawns at the due date
- Partners grieve differently and this can cause tension

The range of response to grief (Machin)

- Overwhelmed
- Controlled
- Resilient
- Vulnerable



Factors influencing our grief reaction

- The unique meaning of the loss
- Circumstances surrounding the loss
- Context of the loss/prior losses etc.
- Personality of the griever
- Coping style
- Social variables
- Support
- Personal variables
- Gender difference

Western attitudes to miscarriage and perinatal loss

- Only since the 90's have these losses been recognised
- Interventions aimed to facilitate attachmentreinforced the reality of the loss
- Society does not socially recognise these losses or give them public mourning ..they are disenfranchised
- We need a creation of memories
- Giving a name to our loss helps the grieving process



Health
Information
and Quality
Authority
an NHS trust

National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services

Safer Better Care

2016

Reactions to loss

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Behavioural
- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual

Physical

When Grief Gets Physical



Physical

- Feeling weak and nauseous
- Heaviness in your body
- Weakness in the muscles
- “Empty arms” sensation
- Hollowness in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest
- Heartache
- Oversensitivity to noise
- Lack of energy
- Breathlessness

Cognitive



Cognitive

- There is a brain fog in the head
- Lack of concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Indecisiveness
- Want to withdraw for a time
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Preoccupation
- Sense of presence
- Hallucinations

Behavioural

- Disturbed sleep
- Appetite affected: Over eating or loss of appetite.
- Dreams
- Searching and pining
- Sighing
- Over activity
- Crying

Social

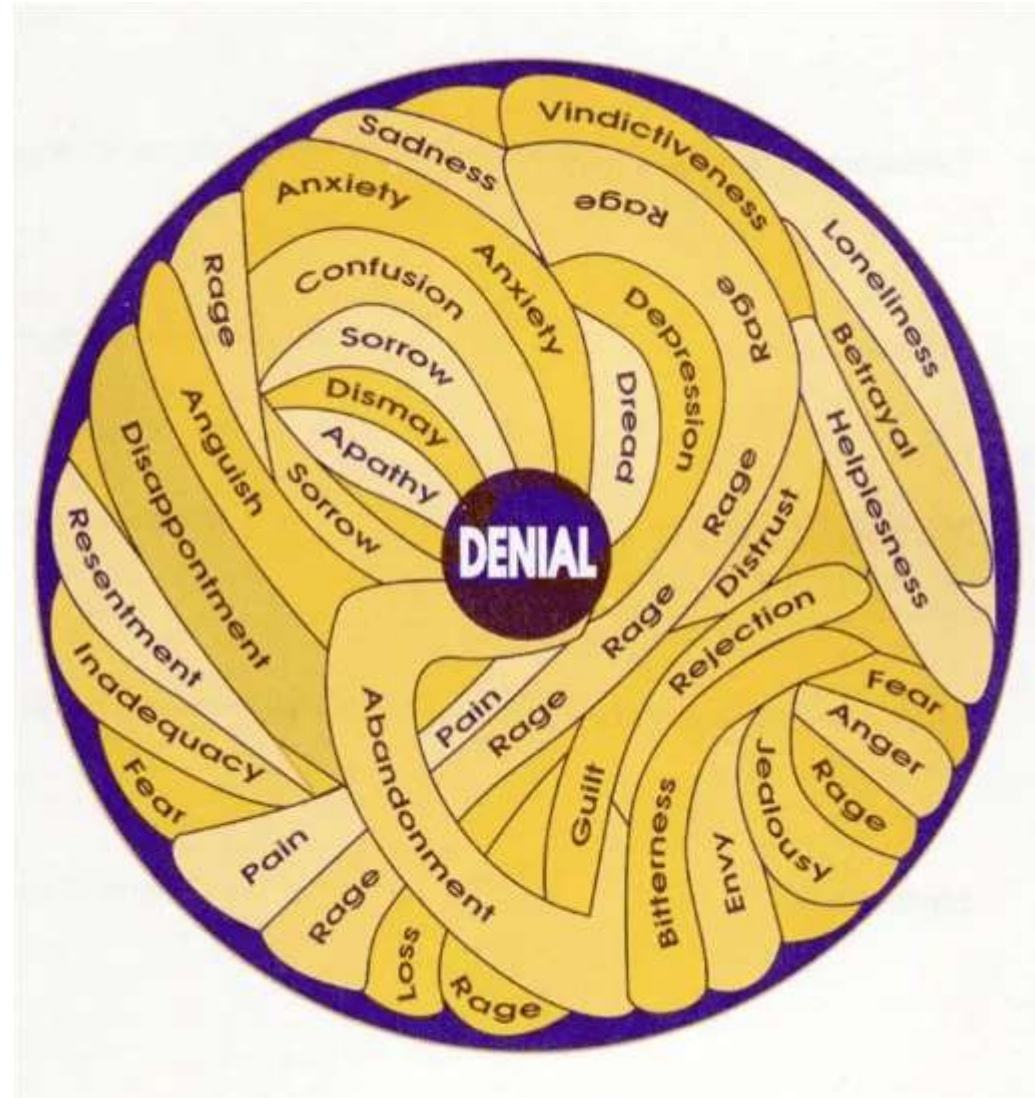


Social difficulties

- In interpersonal relationships
- Siblings/children/partner/relatives/friends
- Functioning within an organisation
- Disorientation
- Feeling different to others
- Loss of enthusiasm

Feelings

- Numbness and shock
- Intense yearning
- Acute longing
- Preoccupation
- Insomnia
- Deep Sadness
- Distress
- Anxious and irritable
- Anger
- Despair
- Guilt
- Sense of failure
- Resentment
- Fear
- Isolation



Spiritual

- Search for meaning
- Hostility towards God, life etc.
- Shattered assumptions..... Causing fear and insecurity
- Trying to make sense of life

The grieving process following peri-natal loss

- Shock, disbelief, denial
- Very frightening period
- Loss of control
- Nightmares of the birth
- Phantom movement in-utero
- Hearing baby cries
- Our body has nothing to show for its scars
- Self-reproach
- Misunderstood

The grieving process requires

- We take time with our grief
- Grieving the baby we lost
- Finding our new identity Who am I now?
- Making connection with our baby internally
- Coming to accommodation of our loss into our own story

Most difficult aspects of the loss

- People's attitudes
- Lack of support
- Uncertainty about the future
- Lack of information
- People creating false hope
- Things people say
- "How many children do you have?"
- We have a choice to respond or react
- Remember to practice self-preservation

What is beneficial?

- Information
- Support of medical consultants
- Support of nursing staff
- Peer support of others who 'get it'
- Giving oneself time to recover
- How one feels is normal... not going mad!
- Allow privacy
- Tell others what is needed...don't assume they know
- Support of PHNs and family doctor
- Family/friend support

Gender and Loss

- Women talk
- Men think
- Women have more access to tears/emotions due to biology
- Men appear silent
- Women are expected to be emotional
- Men have been socially expected to not show emotion.

e.g. “Big boys don’t cry”

- In neo-natal loss Dad’s are trying to protect their partners as well as grieve.
- **Dissonant grieving** is when the individual grieves differently than expected

Fathers grieve too

- They may be the target of a partner's anger
- There is gender difference in grief
- Seen as the protector but can't protect from pain
- Thinking is a man's strength
- Shattered dreams
- Encourage shared grieving
- Huge strain on the relationship
- May see miscarriage as an event
- Resolution of the loss may be quicker with fathers
- Fathers need to be involved



Intuitive Grief

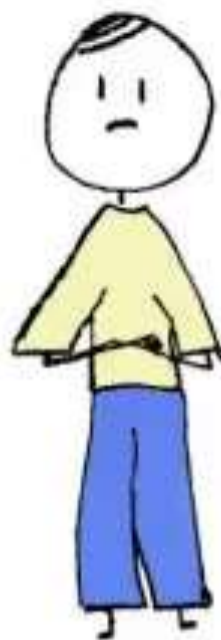
based on work by Terry Martin & Kenneth Doka

- * Grief is experienced as waves of emotion.
- * Grief expression mirrors inner feelings and emotions.
- * More feeling than thinking
- * Focused on exploring and expressing feelings and processing emotions.
- * More "feminine" way of grieving.

www.whatsyourgrief.com

Instrumental Grief

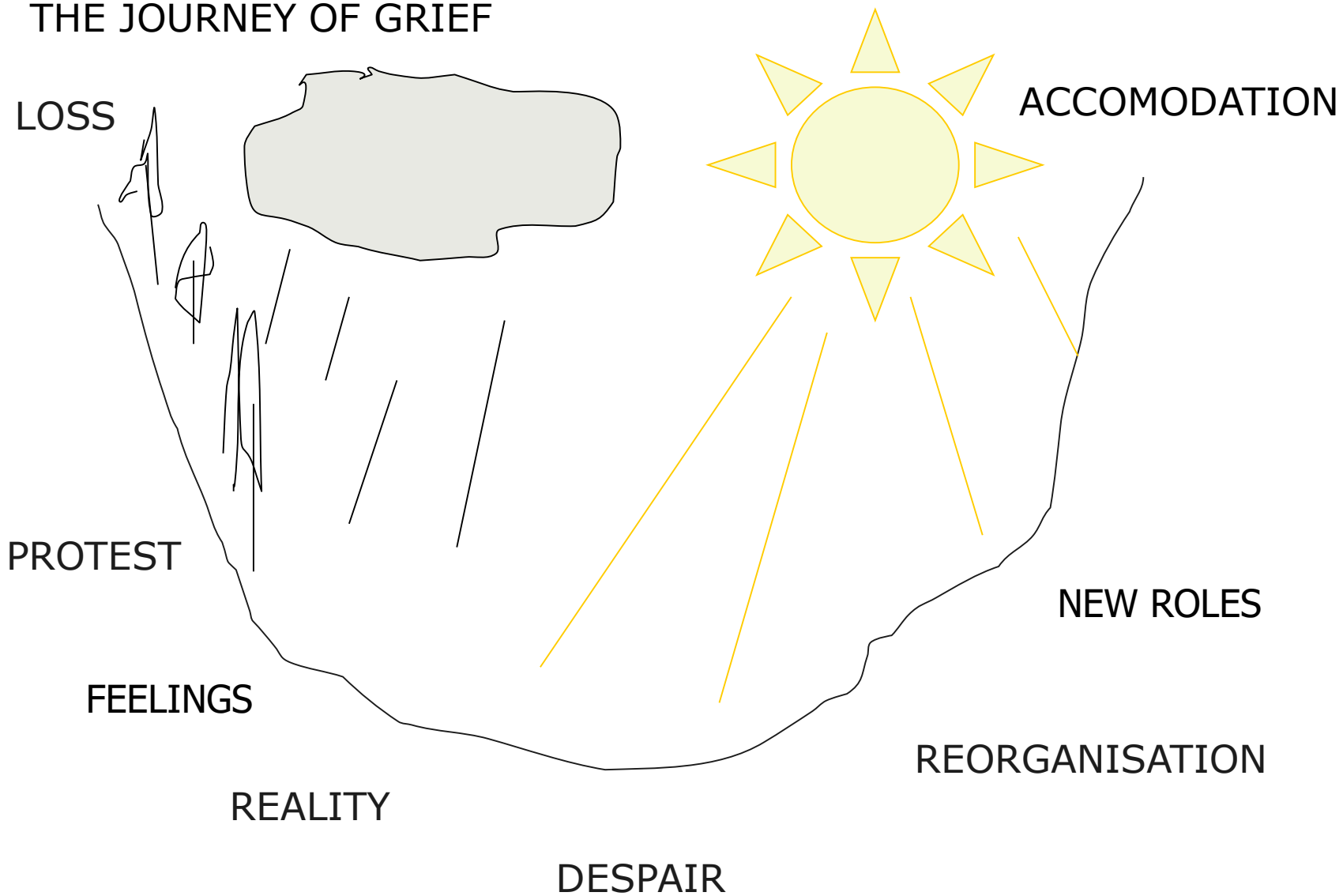
based on work by Terry Martin & Kenneth Doka



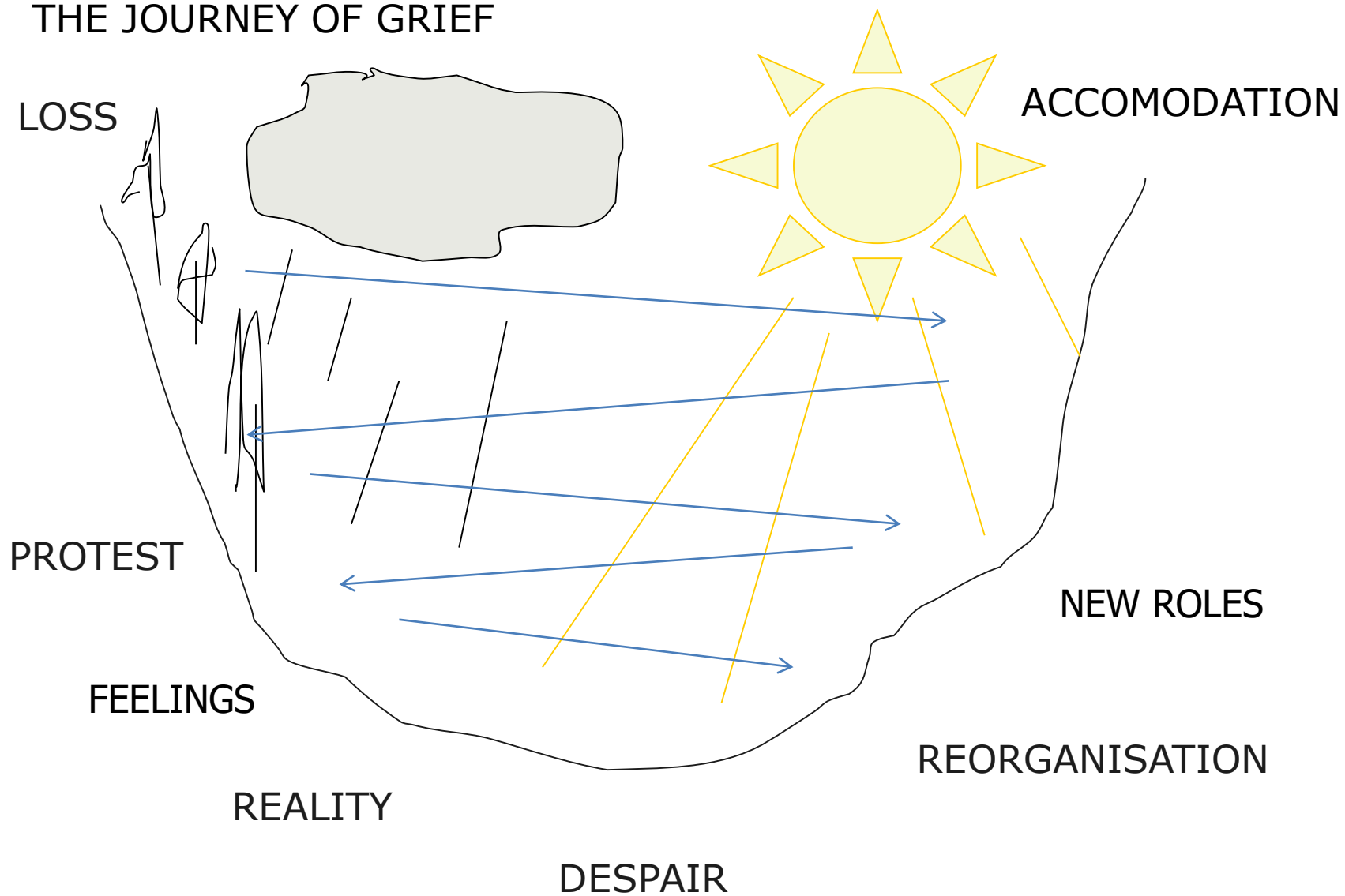
- * Grief is experienced in more physical or cognitive ways
- * Grief is expressed in more physical, cognitive or behavioral ways
- * More thinking than feeling
- * Focused on doing and actively responding to grief
- * More "masculine" way of grieving

www.whatsyourgrief.com

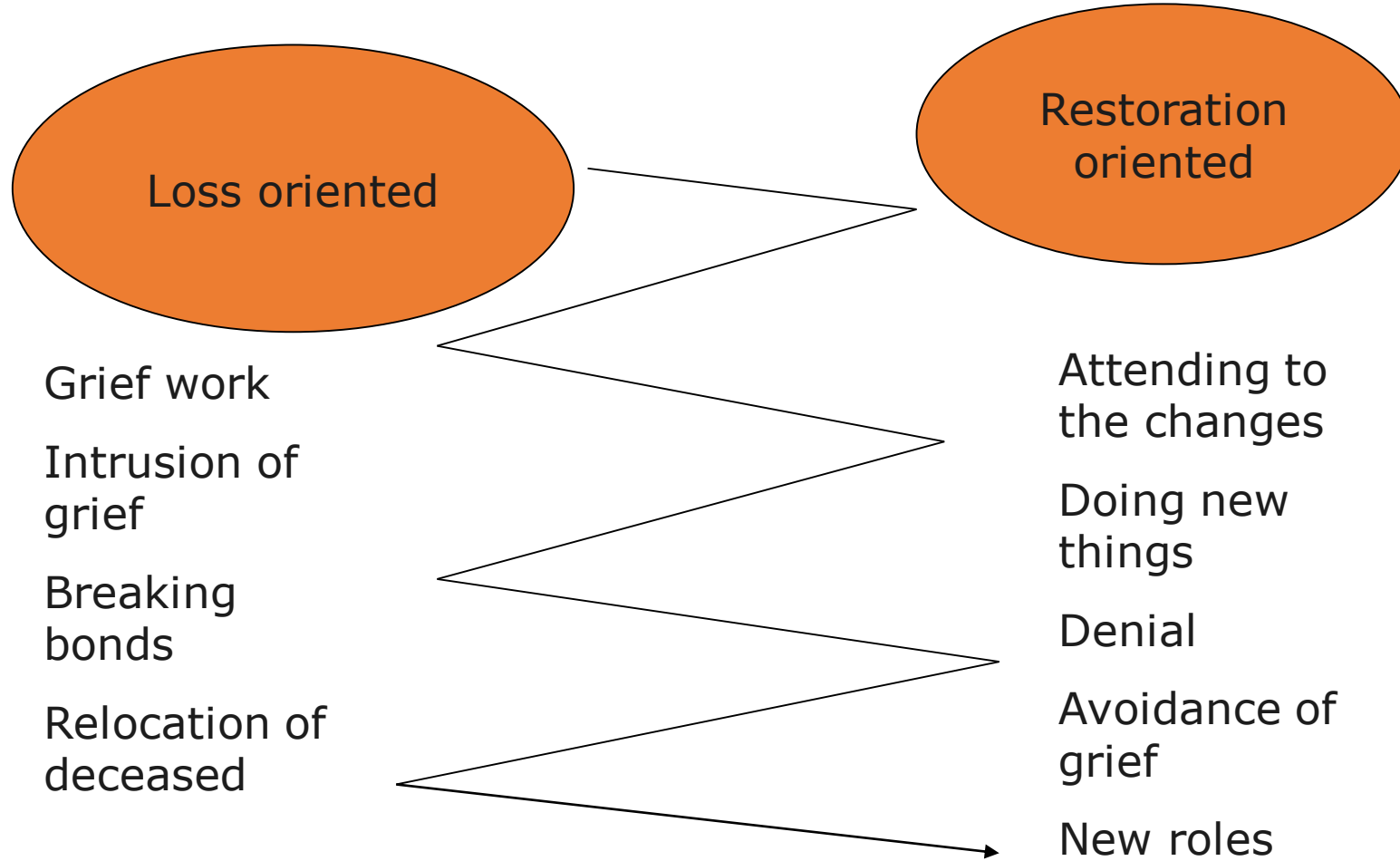
THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF



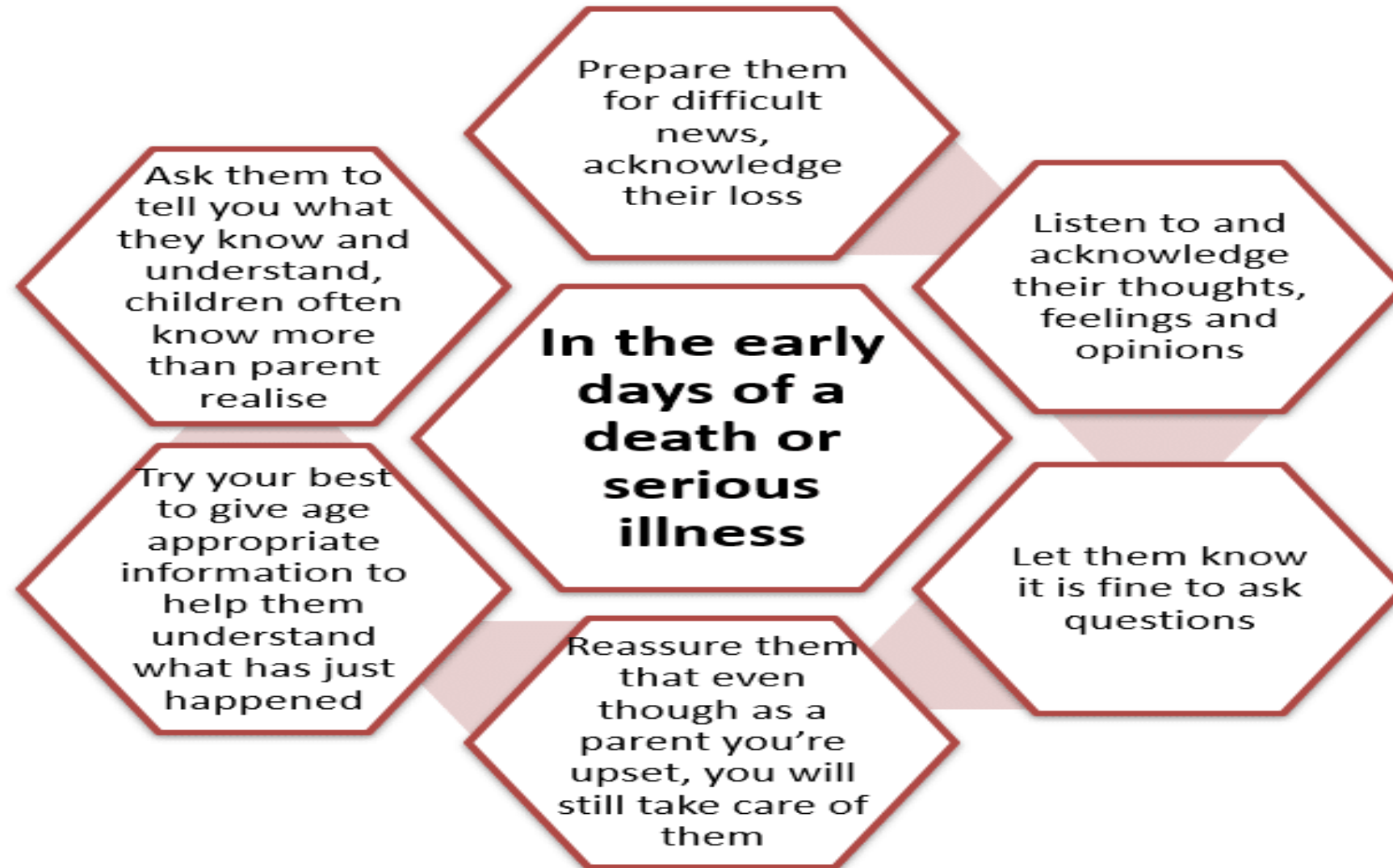
THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF



Dual Process Model



How do we talk to our children?



Information on talking to children

- www.childhoodbereavement.ie
- The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network



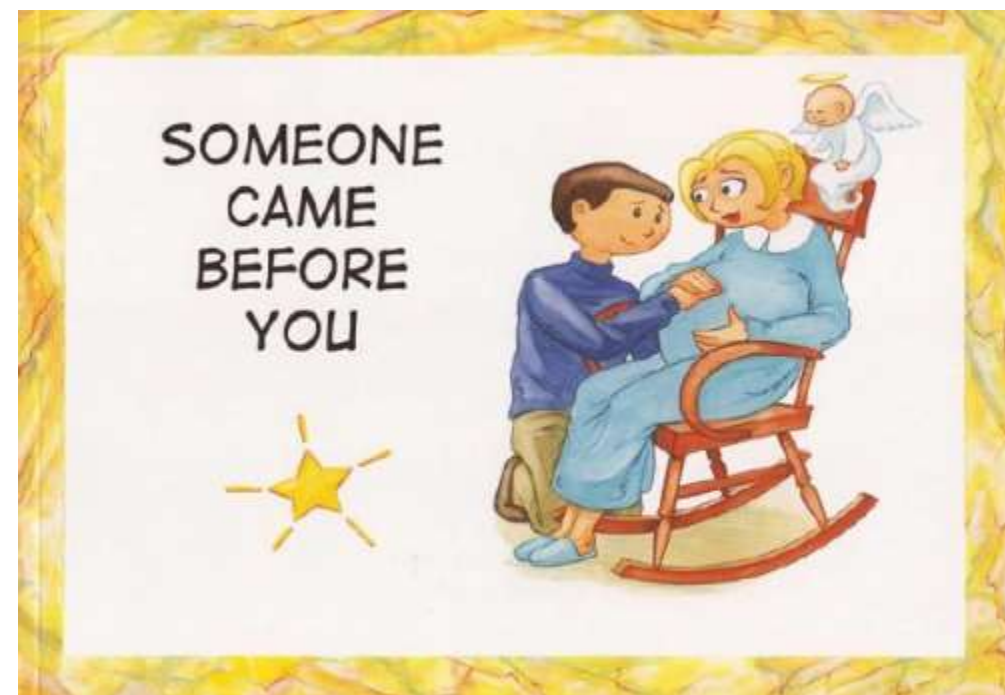
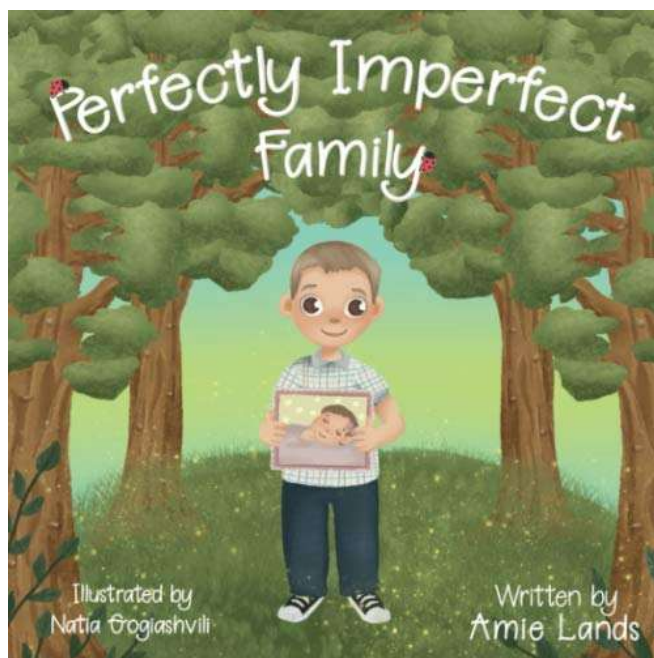
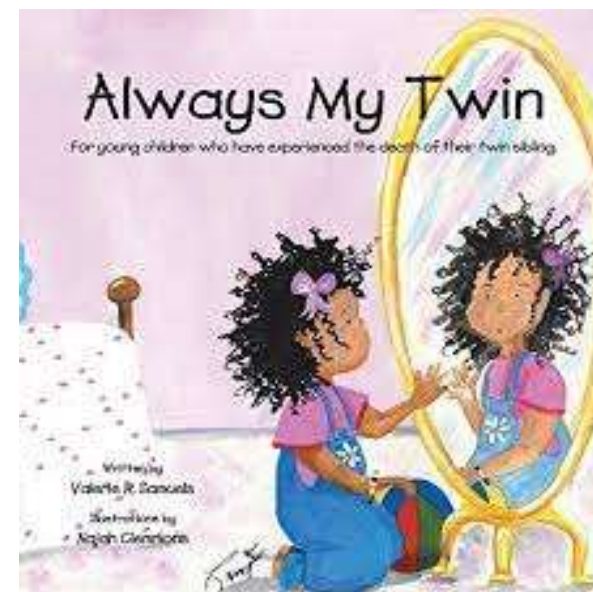
**The Irish Childhood
Bereavement Network**

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**Irish
Hospice
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Support Organisations



*A Little
Lifetime*
Foundation
Formerly ISANDS - founded 1983



Support Organisations Websites

- Féileacáin:

www.feileacain.ie

- A Little Lifetime

www.alittlelifetime.ie

- Firstlight

• www.firstlight.ie

- Miscarriage Association

www.miscarriage.ie

- [Leanbh Mo Chroí](http://www.leanbhmochoi.ie)

<https://lmcsupport.ie/>

- Anam Cara

www.anamcara.ie

The Irish Childhood
Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavement.ie

Information

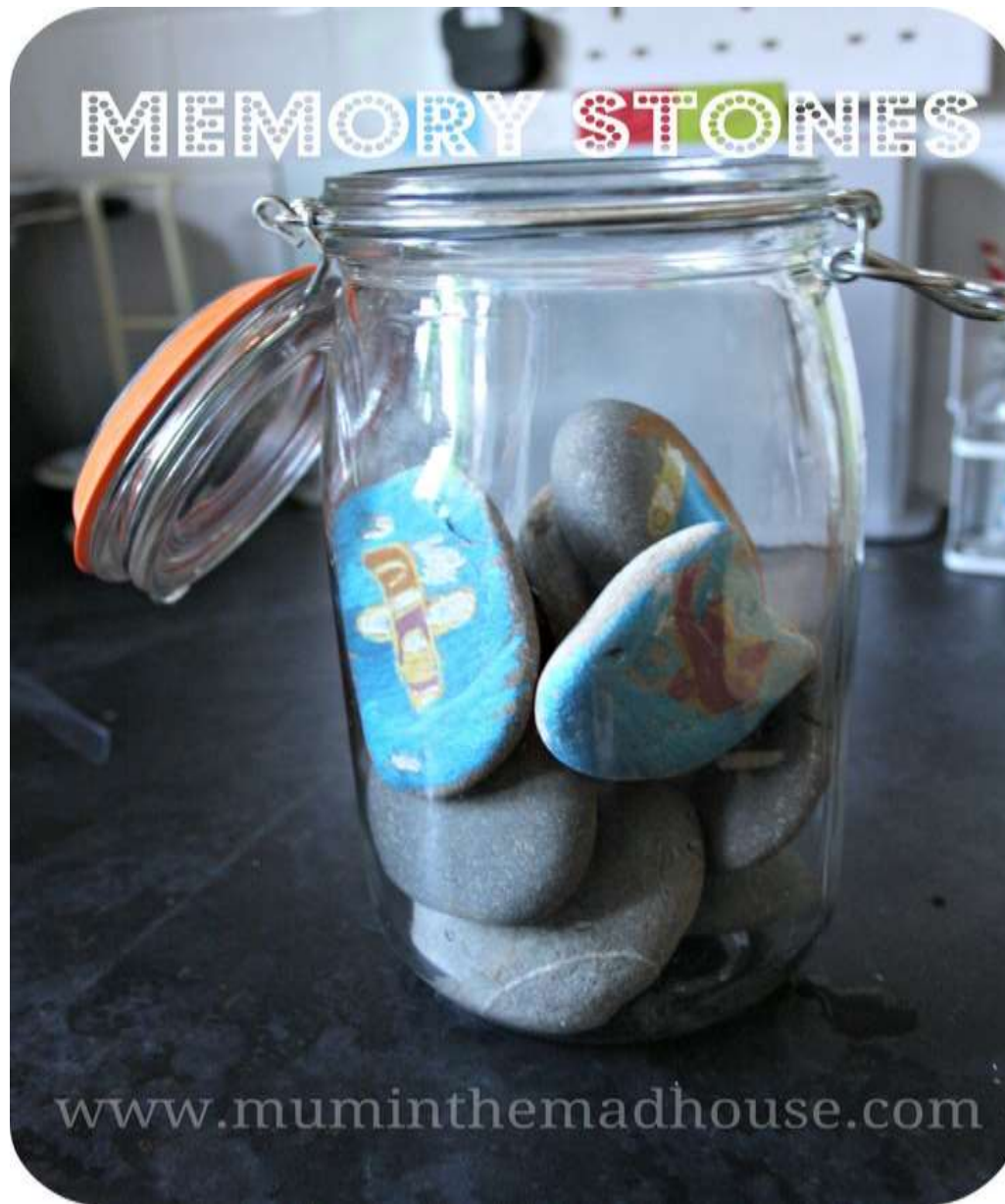
- <http://pregnancyandinfantloss.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/homepage-support-linkO-copy.png>
- This is a directory of supports and information on all aspects of pregnancy loss for parents and professionals
- See Resource page



Making Memories

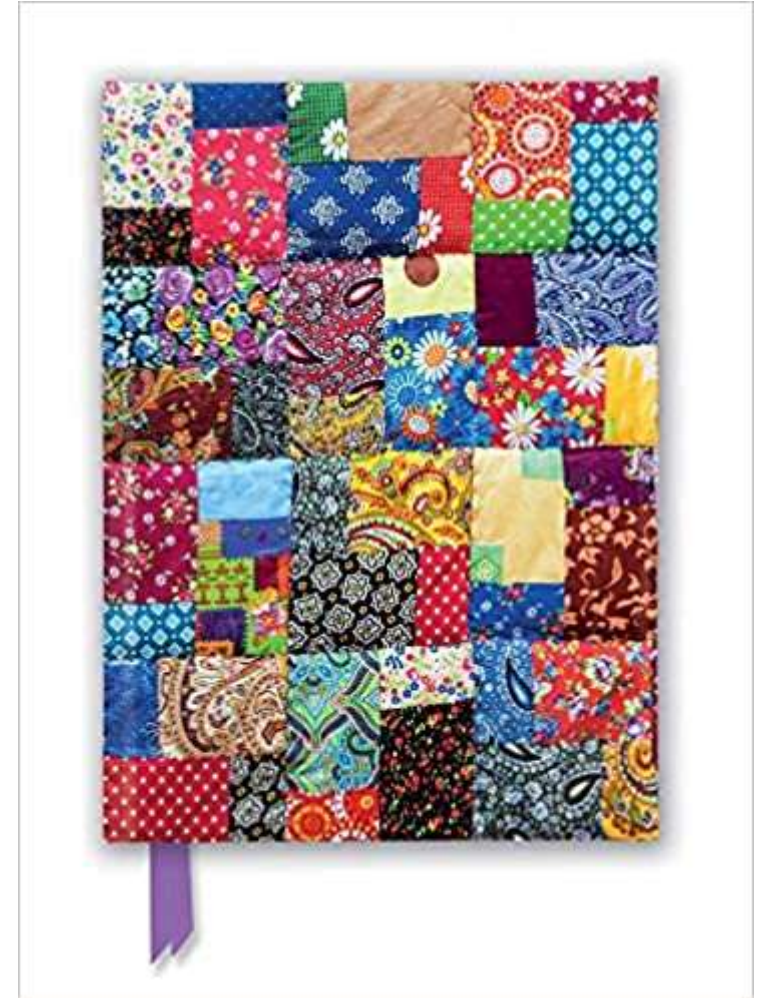
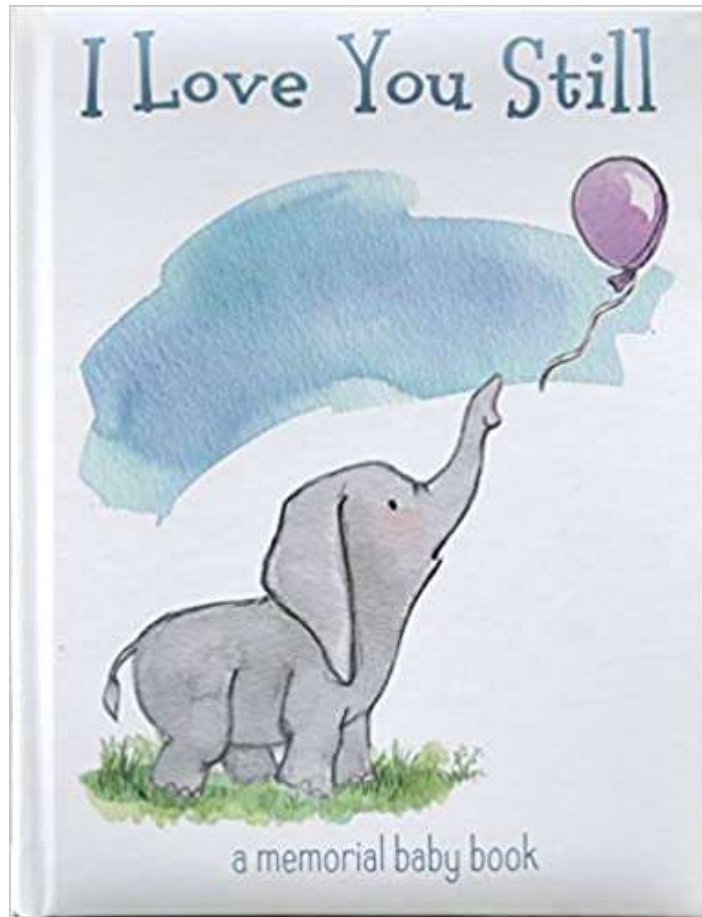
- Photos
- Memory boxes
- Hand or footprints
- Poems
- Memory jars
- Journal
- Candles

MEMORY STONES



www.muminthemadhouse.com

Journalling



Memory Jars



Employee, School and Community

- Loss in a Multiple Pregnancy: Staff Guide
- Féileacáin: Rights and Financial Benefits
- A Little Lifetime – Returning to work (leaflet)
- A Little Lifetime: Teachers (How teachers can meet pupils bereaved of a sibling)
- IHF: Someone You Care about Is Bereaved
- Anam Cara: Employer leaflet

Registration

- Since the 1st January 1995 all stillborn babies in Ireland must be registered.
- You can register a stillbirth even if the baby was born prior to that date.
- The civil registration Act (2004) states that a stillbirth is one in which the child weighs at least 500grammes or has a gestational age of not less than 24 weeks.
- Stillbirths may be registered in the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths



A Snowflake

A snowflake falls so gently
It has a beauty within it.
Each is unique and fragile,
Millions fall unseen,
Their beauty ignored.

They gently melt unknown to anyone
We knew you
And we remember.

Pat Clunas