

# PATHWAYS CENTER *for* GRIEF & LOSS

## COUPLES COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A CHILD

The death of a child can be a tragic event. You may anticipate the death of a grandparent, or even a parent, but no one expects a child to die before they do. Realize that this may be the most difficult experience you will ever face together as a couple. Your individual grief will have a significant impact on your relationship with your partner. Consider the following suggestions:

- Grieving the death of your child is something you will do individually and also as a couple.
- You will each grieve in your own way, according to your own needs. Be sensitive and allow for each other's differences and coping styles. Don't expect your partner to react in the same way you do.
- Don't assume your partner is not grieving, or doesn't care because he/she responds in a different manner than you do.
- You are each unique in how readily you express your feelings. Find healthy ways that work for you. You may or may not be able to cry. This will happen when the time is right.
- Beware of the impulse you may have to "fix things" or give advice to "make it better."
- One of you may have more of a need to talk and process your feelings than the other. Know that this need can be overwhelming to your partner and lead to avoidance.
- Don't expect your partner to meet all your needs. Support each others' efforts to look beyond yourselves for help and healing.
- Find ways to spend time together and care for each other outside of the realm of your loss.
- You may experience intense anger over this loss which may be directed at each other. Explore what you need to do to work through feelings in a healthy way.

Keep in mind, other parents have survived this grief. Life will have meaning for you again. In time your memories will bring you more comfort than pain.