

How to Talk to People Who Are Struggling with Infertility and Pregnancy Loss

Do:

- **Listen.** Give them time without interrupting (even to comfort or ask questions). Hold space for them to experience their emotions in your presence.
- If you are uncertain whether they want to talk about their experience or not, try something simple like, “*What’s on your mind today?*” or “*What do you want to talk about?*”
- The power of nonverbal communication should not be underestimated. **The power of a hug, making eye contact when speaking, or simply nodding your head in validation can go a long way.**
- If you are at a loss for words, say so. Saying “*I have no words*” is validating and acknowledging.
- A simple “*I’m here for you*” or “*I love you*” is beautiful.
- **Offer to help in specific ways** like delivering dinner, walking the dog, or babysitting other kids. Avoid hollow-sounding phrases like “reach out if you need anything.”
- Forgive yourself if you make a mistake. It is impossible to fully understand another person’s situation. But if you recognize that you said or did something wrong, own up to it, and express your remorse. Honesty will go a long way to bridging the awkwardness. “*Oh my Gd - I can’t believe I just said that. That was horrible. Please forgive me.*”

Don’t:

- **Avoid toxic positivity.** None of these comments are helpful.
 - “*G-d only gives you what you can handle.*”
 - “*Just stay strong.*”
 - “*At least it wasn’t worse...*”
 - “*Think positively - it will be better next time.*”
- “*You’re young - you have plenty of time to have a baby.*” Unless you were asked or you’re an expert on the topic, **don’t give advice.** They need you as a friend, with an open heart and a listening ear. Giving advice instead of listening when someone is in pain invalidates their feelings and makes them feel like you have no room to hold their pain.
- **Talk about their situation,** not someone else’s. It doesn’t matter what someone else has gone through/is going through. Your focus should be on them.
- **Don’t assume they won’t want to come to your bris, baby shower, or any other gathering.** Treat them the same as you did before you knew what they were going through, and invite them. But understand that they might not be up to attending, and be kind when they decline or need to leave early.
- **Don’t share details about their situation with others.** If someone shared their story with you, **consider it confidential unless specifically told otherwise.** Ask for consent to share.
- **Don’t forget about them in the weeks, months and years later.** Check in with warm “*I’m thinking about you*” texts or calls, let people know you care. Drop off flowers, cookies, soup in the months ahead. Due Dates, Birthdays, Yahrzeits (date of death) can be very triggering too, so give your person some TLC then as well.