Sands Helpline is here for bereaved dads on Father's Day

Tuesday 11 June, 2019

Sands (stillbirth and neonatal death charity) is extending the opening hours of its Freephone Helpline on the weekend of Father's Day so that any dads affected by pregnancy or baby loss can reach out for vital emotional support.

The extended helpline opening hours are:

- Saturday 15 June - 9.30am to 12.30pm.
- Sunday 16 June (Father's Day) - 9.30am to 11.30am.

The confidential helpline provides a safe place for anyone affected by the death of a baby to seek comfort and support. The charity's experienced bereavement support team is there to listen and signpost to further help.

Father's Day can be a particularly difficult and lonely day for fathers whose baby has died, however long ago. Sands also recognises the impact on other male family members like grandfathers, brothers and uncles who are experiencing loss and grief.

Something as simple as sending a thoughtful card can go a long way to helping bereaved dads feel less isolated, and Sands has launched a special range of Father's Day cards so that anyone can show their support at this difficult time of the year.[1]

During June, Sands is running the #FindingYourWay2019 campaign to tackle the taboo and help continue to break the silence that can exist around baby loss for men.

Many men can feel overlooked when a baby dies and sometimes struggle to reach out or find ways to deal with the emotions they experience. Sands wants to make it easier for bereaved men to be able to find the right kind of support for them in the easiest possible way.

Clea Harmer, Chief Executive of Sands, said: "Bereaved parents tell us that Father's Day can be a highly emotional day for them as they spend time with their close friends and families and remember their babies who have died. So we have responded by extending the opening hours of our Helpline at a time they may need us the most.

"I would urge anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby not to suffer in silence and to get in touch if they want to talk to us on Father's Day. We are dedicated to providing emotional support and information right from the early hours after a baby's death, through to the weeks, months and years ahead."

Sands has put together the following advice for bereaved dads and for anyone who knows a family member or male friend whose baby has died and wants to offer them support around Father's Day.

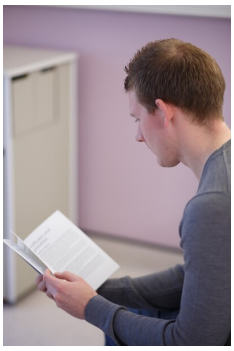
Advice for bereaved dads:

1. Remember the build up to Father's Day or any anniversary may feel much worse than the day itself. Think about who you can turn to for support. If you're working, consider letting your employer know you are finding this week hard and whether you need to take some time off.
2. Whether you have other children or not, it's important to remember you are still a dad to your baby.
3. Think about what you could do – on your own or with others – to make Father's Day special for you. That could include visiting a special place, looking at photos if you have them, and simply having quiet time to think about your baby.

Advice on supporting a bereaved dad:

1. Talk about their baby and if you know it, say their baby's name. Follow their lead, if they change the subject they may not want to talk about their loss but you have let them know you care. Let them know that you're available to talk or share stories about their child.
2. If you want to, you could give a thoughtful gift, or write a card that they can read when they're

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ready. If they have other children give a card that celebrates that relationship and a separate one to acknowledge their baby, or simply add their baby's name to the same card.
3. On the day just being aware and sensitive, showing that you understand that it can be hard may be enough. Don't be afraid to laugh or use humour – you'll know if it isn't appropriate, but it can break tension and allow someone to open up a bit.

Many men are finding other practical ways to cope with their grief by playing football with other bereaved fathers. For further information on setting up a new Sands United football club or joining an existing local club visit: www.sands.org.uk/sands-united-fc

The Sands Freephone Helpline number is: **0808 164 3332**. Bereaved parents and their families can also get in touch by email helpline@sands.org.uk,
join the online community www.sands.community or download the free Sands bereavement support app from their app store.

-Ends-

For further information, please contact Lee Armitt, Press and PR Officer on 020 3897 3449/07587 925411 or media@sands.org.uk

Notes to editors

1. Sands Father's Day cards can be purchased from the Sands online shop: http://portal.uk-sands.org/public/shop/default.aspx#Cards

About Sands

Every day in the UK, 15 babies are stillborn or die shortly after birth.

Sands is the leading stillbirth and neonatal death charity and exists to reduce the number of babies dying and to support anyone affected by the death of a baby, before, during or shortly after birth.

Sands provides bereavement support services both nationally through its Freephone helpline, mobile app, online community and resources, and locally through a network of around 100 regional support groups based across the UK and run by trained befrienders.

Sands works in partnership with health care professionals, trusts and health boards and offers a range of training programmes and bereavement care resources to ensure that every bereaved parent and family receives the best possible care wherever they are in the UK.

Sands promotes and funds research to better understand the causes of baby deaths and save babies' lives. The charity also raises awareness of baby loss and works with governments, key influencers and other stakeholders to make reducing the number of babies dying a priority nationally and locally.

Over the past 40 years, Sands has grown into a national charity with a powerful vision, to create a world where fewer babies die, shared by dedicated volunteers, fundraisers, members, donors, healthcare professionals, partners, staff and bereaved parents and families. www.sands.org.uk
#15babiesaday

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