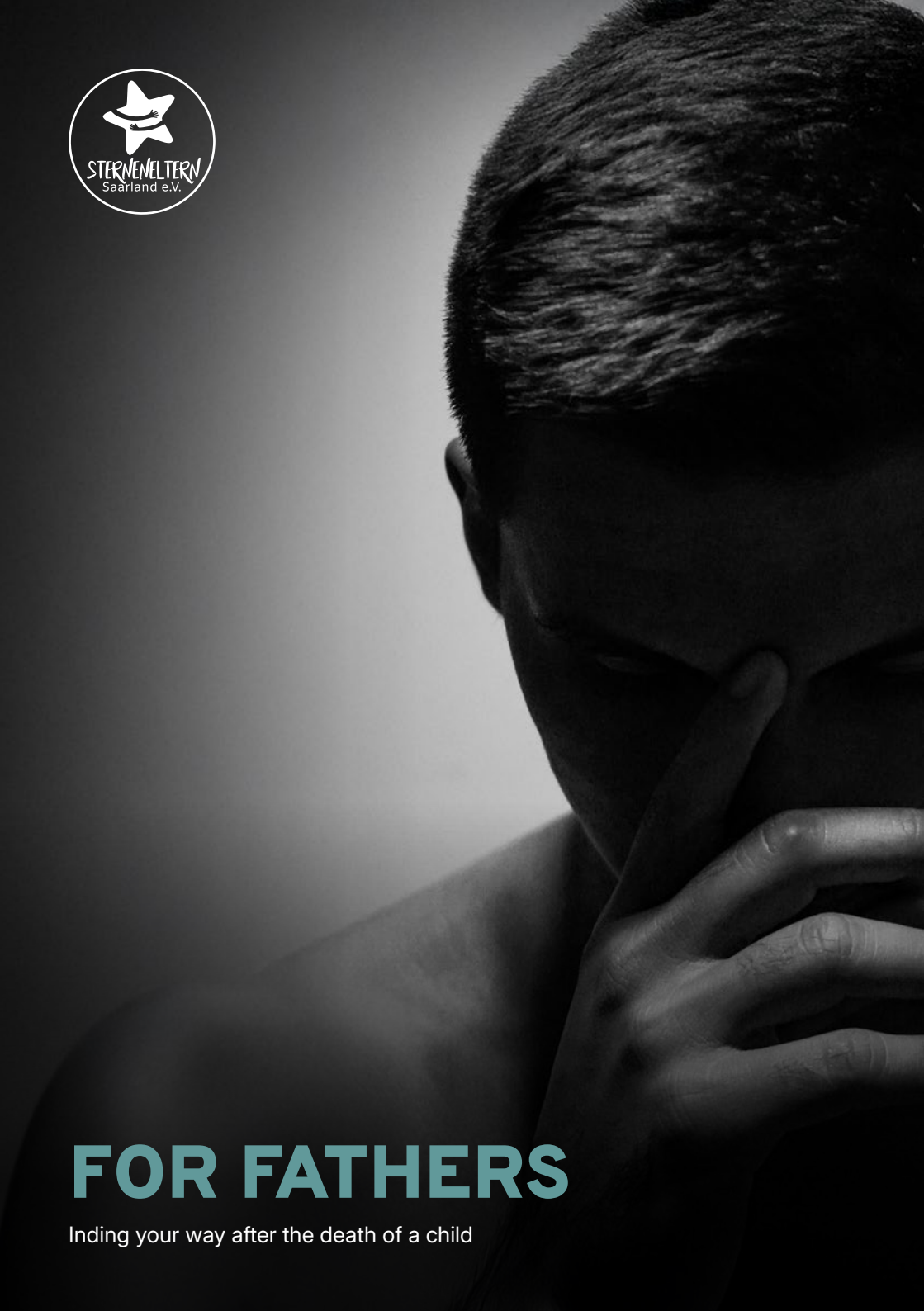




FOR FATHERS

Inding your way after the death of a child



**MANY FATHERS FEEL THE
PRESSURE TO REMAIN
STRONG, EVEN THOUGH
THEIR CHILD HAS JUST DIED.**



A close-up, profile view of a man and a woman embracing. The man, on the left, has a short beard and is looking down towards the woman. The woman, on the right, has long brown hair and her eyes are closed. They are both wearing dark clothing. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light grey.

There is no
wrong way
to grieve.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Perhaps you are holding this guide because something has happened that words cannot fully express.

You have lost your child. You are in the midst of a storm that no one is ever prepared for. Many fathers feel they must be „strong“ and keep functioning during this time.

At the same time, something inside you has been shattered.

You may be trying to support those around you while barely able to stay standing yourself. That is a deeply human response. This guide is for you: for the hours in the hospital, the first days at home, and the questions no one prepares you for — even if your child will not grow up by your side.

THE EARLY DAYS IN HOSPITAL

What is happening right now

You may be in shock. Everything can feel like a bad dream, with events unfolding around you in a blur. Nothing about this experience feels “normal.”

In the hospital, many processes continue routinely. For the healthcare team, these situations are part of their daily work. For you and your family, this is a life-changing loss. You have the right to ask as many questions as you need.

If your partner seems distant or withdrawn, it is not because of you. She may be overwhelmed by grief and in need of support—you do not have to have all the answers or fix everything.

Your own feelings matter, too. Exhaustion, anger, sadness, or numbness do not make you weak.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. What will sustain you both is closeness, time, and the knowledge that you have lost this child together.

COMMON FEELINGS YOU MAY BE EXPERIENCING RIGHT NOW

Shock

You may feel as though you are functioning on autopilot, only taking in fragments of what is happening. This is a protective response.

Anger

At life, the circumstances, or the injustice of what has happened. Anger is a natural part of grief.

Feelings of guilt

Could I have prevented this? Thoughts like these often arise automatically. Your mind and your heart may not feel the same.

Helplessness

You cannot fix what has happened. Living with this sense of helplessness can be incredibly difficult.

The need to keep functioning

You may feel that you have to stay strong. But your heart has been broken too. You do not have to carry everything on your own.

Emptiness

Sometimes there are no tears, no words — only emptiness. This, too, is part of grief.

All of these responses are normal. You are having a deeply human response to something profoundly painful. You are allowed to feel whatever you are feeling — and whatever you are not yet able to feel.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK THE HEALTHCARE TEAM

In moments like these, it can be difficult to think of everything.

These questions may help:

- What are the next steps?
- What options are available for pain relief?
- How much time do we have to make decisions and say goodbye?
- What memories can we create? (Photographs, handprints or footprints, clothing, memory cards or keepsakes)
- What will happen to our baby's body, and what choices do we have?
- Who can support us after we leave the hospital? (Midwife, postnatal care, bereavement support organisations, grief counselling, funeral director)

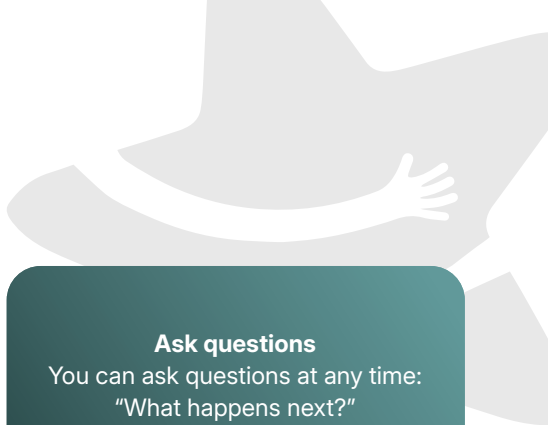
Have you already
contacted SternenEltern
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You do not have to appear strong.
You only need to be truly present.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW



Stay with your partner

Your presence provides comfort and a sense of security. Holding her hand, speaking gently, or simply breathing alongside her is enough. You do not have to explain anything or fix everything.

Ask questions

You can ask questions at any time:
"What happens next?"
"What options do we have?"
"How much time do we have?"
You have the right to clear, honest answers.

Take your time

Take the time you need — to begin to understand what has happened, to make decisions, and to say goodbye. These moments will never come again. They will remain with you as cherished memories.

Consider creating memories

These memories often become precious in the months and years to come. You may wish to see and hold your baby, take photographs, create handprints and footprints, or keep a lock of hair. There is no pressure to do any of these things—but you have the opportunity to do so if you wish.

Share your wishes

Tell the healthcare team what matters most to you—how much time you would like, whether you would prefer to be alone, and what is important to you during this time.
You have the right to a loving and dignified farewell.

Take care of yourself

Try to eat something. Drink plenty of fluids. Take a moment to breathe. Your body is under immense stress and needs strength and care. Stepping outside for a few moments is not a sign of weakness.

THE FIRST DAYS AFTER YOUR LOSS

When you return home

For many fathers, returning home is one of the most difficult moments after the loss of a child. The home that once felt familiar may now feel unfamiliar, and the silence can be overwhelming. Your partner may be physically exhausted, deeply grieving, or withdrawn. You may also be wondering how to explain what has happened to your other children. While you are trying to support those around you, your own feelings often remain in the background. Many fathers feel the pressure to stay strong, organise everything, and make important decisions while feeling as though they are falling apart inside. If you feel overwhelmed, lie awake at night, or find yourself without words, these are all normal responses to an extraordinary loss. You and your partner may grieve in different ways—but you are grieving the loss of your child together.

WHAT CAN HELP RIGHT NOW

Talking without expectations

Silence is okay. Sometimes, a few simple words can provide comfort:

"I'm here."

"I'm listening."

"I miss our baby too."

Protect yourselves from hurtful comments

It is okay to set boundaries:

"We're not ready to talk about this right now."

"We'll reach out when we're ready."

Take time for yourself

Take a few moments just for yourself—a walk, a few deep breaths, music, or some fresh air.

Taking short breaks can help you restore your strength.

Stay connected in your own way

Some couples grow closer, while others need more space. Both are normal.

Tell your partner what you need—and ask what she needs.

Accept Support

Accepting help can ease some of the burden. Lean on your family, friends, bereavement support organisations, or your midwife. You do not have to carry everything on your own.



One step at a time
is enough.

People may say things like, "Everything will be okay again," or "Time heals all wounds."

But the death of a child is not a wound that simply heals. Your child will always be part of you and part of your family. From now on, your child will remain with you in your memories, in your love, and in the place they will always hold in your lives.

You share precious memories of your daughter or your son. You can carry them with pride, cherish them, and speak about your child whenever you wish.

You are, and always will be, parents.



Ihr trauert beide.
Aber vielleicht nicht gleich.

THE PARTNERSHIP

One partner talks. One remains silent. One cries. One keeps going.

This does not mean that one loves the baby any less. Silence is not always distance. Withdrawal is not always emotional coldness. Practical support is not always a sign of emotional detachment.

Sometimes, each partner is simply trying to make it through the next day.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU STAY CONNECTED

„I'M HERE.“

„I MISS OUR
BABY TOO.“

„I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO SAY.“

„TODAY IS A HARD
DAY.“

„WE DON'T HAVE
TO GET THROUGH
THIS PERFECTLY.“

It is okay to grieve differently—and still stay connected.

If you're finding it difficult to connect with each other, don't hesitate to seek support. Not because you've failed, but because what you've been through can be too much for two people to carry on their own.

YOUR GRIEF AS A FATHER

You organise.
You endure.
You take care of things.
You make decisions.

And somewhere in between,
your own grief is left waiting.

Perhaps you don't cry.
Perhaps you cry in private.
Perhaps you feel angry.
Perhaps you feel numb.
Perhaps you're trying to stay strong,
even though you no
longer have the strength.

**THIS, TOO, IS
GRIEF.**

You don't have to prove
that you are a father.

You are a father.

”

Even without everyday life
with your child.
Even without a nursery.
Even without the future
you had imagined together.

**YOUR LOVE IS
REAL.**

YOUR PAIN IS REAL.

**YOUR CHILD WILL
ALWAYS BE A PART
OF YOU.**

Many fathers
function first.





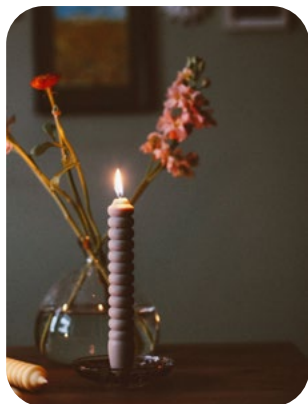
SMALL RITUALS

A letter.
A candle.
A song.
A walk.
A stone in your pocket.
A place that holds your memories.

”

**RITUALS DON'T MAKE THE LOSS
ANY SMALLER.
BUT THEY GIVE YOUR LOVE A
PLACE TO LIVE.**

”



YOU ARE A FATHER

Perhaps you're wondering what remains of your role.

The answer is this: You are a father.

From the very first moment. And forever.

Your love for your child does not end with their death.

IT CHANGES.

IT FINDS NEW WAYS.

BUT IT REMAINS.

In your memories.

In your family.

In your story.

In you.

**YOU ARE A FATHER.
AND THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE.**



YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



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