

Professionally Speaking...

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The Dreaded Question

“How many children do you have?” is one of the most dreaded questions a parent of an Angel Baby can be asked. It seems like such a harmless and easy question to ask someone, but for many parents, it immediately brings up heartache, as it is not such a simple question if you have lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. This topic comes up very often in my UNITE Support Group, and I have learned that there are a number of possible answers, and those answers may differ depending on the mood of the parent answering the question. Parents of Angel Babies might go so far as to say that it is an unfair and insensitive question to even ask, but that’s because their hearts are broken from the loss of their baby. Curious people may simply be making conversation, rather than trying to pry into your personal life.

Feeling comfortable with your story is an important part of the grieving process. It is your story to tell and you can tell it however you feel comfortable at that particular moment. I urge couples to practice ahead of time what they want to say to people about their loss. If you don’t have time or you are not in the mood to tell people the truth, then you can simply say the number of living children that you have, if you have any. In that case, you will probably feel guilty about not acknowledging the ones that have died too soon. Here are some suggestions of what to say if you would like to remember your precious babies when answering the dreaded question.

- “I have one child living, and a baby who died early in my pregnancy.”
- “I don’t have any children living with me here, but I have two Angel Babies in Heaven.”
- “I have three children, two with me and one in Heaven.”
- “I have two boys, but my baby girl died shortly before birth.”
- “I had a baby boy named John. He was stillborn at 26 weeks. He would be 2 years old now.”
- “I have one son that is 7 years old, and unfortunately I’ve had 4 miscarriages since then.”
- “I have 4 children.” (When in reality you have 3 living and one in Heaven. It’s the truth!)

As you may have already discovered, people are not expecting such an honest answer, and you sometimes find yourself soothing them as they don’t know how to respond to your answer. People who have not experienced a pregnancy loss among their family or friends have never had the opportunity to understand the magnitude of the loss and how profoundly it affects you. This is a teachable moment! By acknowledging your loss as you answer the dreaded question, you are honoring your baby and you are educating people about how much this baby means to you. Your baby is not forgotten. Your baby can be talked about. Every time that the dreaded question is asked of you, think of it as a time that you can remember your baby and share him/her with the world!