

Death Anniversaries Are Hard

You can't avoid them, and you can't ignore them. Death anniversaries (angelversary) can stir up powerful emotions, grief, sadness, longing, even confusion about how you "should" feel. The first year after a loss is often the hardest. Reliving the pain, or not knowing how to approach the occasion, can make it an emotionally heavy and isolating time.

What's important to remember is this: **everyone grieves differently.**

Marking the anniversary of a loved one's death may help with the grieving process, but there is no "right" or "wrong" way to do it. For some, a quiet day of reflection feels best. For others, gathering friends and family for a celebration of life brings comfort. And for some, choosing not to mark the date at all is the most healing choice.

Whatever you decide, it's okay. The right way is the way that feels right for you.

Why Death Anniversaries Matter

- They give us space to acknowledge the impact of our loved one's life.
- They allow us to express emotions we may have been holding back.
- They help us reflect on how grief changes over time.
- They can bring comfort through rituals, traditions, or shared memories.

Ways to Remember a Lost Loved One

Here are some meaningful ways to honour the memory of someone dear on their anniversary. Choose what resonates with you, and feel free to adapt it for your own journey:

- **Light a Candle** – A simple but powerful symbol of remembrance.
- **Visit Their Resting Place** – Spend time at their grave or memorial site.
- **Cook Their Favourite Meal** – Share it with family, or enjoy it in quiet reflection.
- **Share Stories** – Gather friends or family and talk about the happy moments you shared.
- **Listen to "Their" Song** – Music often brings back treasured memories.
- **Create Something** – Write a poem, paint a picture, or make something that expresses your love.
- **Acts of Kindness** – Donate, volunteer, or perform a random act of kindness in their name.
- **Plant Something Living** – A tree, flowers, or a garden can serve as a lasting tribute.
- **Look Through Photos** – Sometimes revisiting old memories brings both tears and smiles.
- **Hold a Celebration of Life** – If it feels right, gather loved ones to celebrate the joy they brought into the world.

A Gentle Reminder

It's okay if this day feels too heavy. It's okay if you'd rather distract yourself and not think about it at all. It's okay if you cry all day, or laugh while remembering their quirks, or feel nothing at all. Grief doesn't follow rules.

Anniversaries are hard because love was deep. Allow yourself grace and compassion, whatever path you take through the day.

If you're supporting someone who's facing a death anniversary, a simple message like "I'm thinking of you today" can mean more than you realise.

Support and Resources

If you or someone you know is finding things difficult, please remember — you don't have to face grief alone.

Below are some trusted organisations and communities that offer understanding, comfort, and practical help for parents and families coping with loss.

Baby and Child Loss Support

- **Sands (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)** – www.sands.org.uk
Offers support for anyone affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth.
- **The Lullaby Trust** – www.lullabytrust.org.uk
Provides support for bereaved families and raises awareness of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- **Tommy's** – www.tommys.org
Supports parents through miscarriage, stillbirth and premature birth, and funds vital research.
- **Aching Arms** – www.achingarms.co.uk
Offers comfort bears and emotional support to bereaved parents.
- **Petals (The Baby Loss Counselling Charity)** – www.petalscharity.org
Provides specialist counselling for parents following baby loss.

Grief and Emotional Support

- **Cruse Bereavement Support** – www.cruse.org.uk
Offers free, confidential support for anyone coping with grief.
- **Child Bereavement UK** – www.childbereavementuk.org
Helps families rebuild their lives after the death of a child or when a child is grieving.
- **The Compassionate Friends** – www.tcf.org.uk
A peer support network run by bereaved parents, for bereaved parents.

Online Communities

- **Wave of Light (October 15)** – www.babyloss-awareness.org
Join families across the world lighting candles in memory of babies and children gone too soon.

If You Need to Talk Right Now

- **Samaritans** – Call **116 123** (Free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- **Shout** – Text **85258** (Free, confidential 24/7 text support)