

PARALUNAE

The Paralunae Orientation
A Guide for the First Days After

By Dr. Lakisha®

If you are reading this

Your child has died. There is no language that makes this smaller.

This guide offers reflection and practical orientation, not a diagnosis, medical advice or a timetable. You may read one section, skip any part, or return later.

For parents whose child has died at any age and from any cause. No belief or identity language is required.

If this moment feels unsafe, reach a person now. Immediate danger: local emergency services. US: call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org/get-help/. Other countries: findahelpline.com.

Paralunae is not an emergency service, psychotherapy, hospice or medical care. The site and inbox are not monitored for crisis response.

Shock Is Physical

In the first days after your child dies, your body may not feel like your own.

You may feel numb. You may feel detached. You may feel like you are watching this happen from outside yourself. You may forget conversations minutes after they happen. Time may feel distorted. It may not feel real.

Shock and numbness can be part of grief. This guide cannot tell you what is causing a symptom.

Numbness is not a measure of your love. People respond to bereavement differently. If symptoms worry you, seek medical support rather than assume they are grief.

You may hear people speak about "acceptance." You do not need to accept anything in the first days. You do not need to perform composure for other people.

You are not broken because it does not feel real.

You are living through a profound loss.

The unreality may come in waves. It may lift briefly and then return. Your experience may be different.

Do not force clarity. Do not force composure. Do not measure yourself against how you believe you "should" be responding.

Your body is carrying you through the first crossing.

It May Not Feel Real

You may know that your child has died.

You may have signed paperwork. You may have seen their body. You may have made arrangements.

And still, it may not feel real.

In the first days, nothing inside you may register that anything has changed. You may walk into a room and expect to see them. You may reach for your phone to call or text them. You may speak about them in the present tense without thinking.

Knowing and feeling may not arrive together.

There can be a gap between knowing and feeling. It can be disorienting. It can make you question yourself.

You may hear the word "acceptance." Acceptance is not something you produce on command. It unfolds over time, and not in a straight line.

In the beginning, you may move between knowing and not knowing many times a day. Each return to knowing can feel like being told for the first time.

There is no single timetable for grief.

Nothing about this is weakness. It is the mind and body attempting to reconcile something that does not fit into ordinary experience.

The World Will Continue

Very quickly, you will notice something that feels wrong.

The world will continue.

People will go to work. Stores will open. Conversations will move to ordinary things. Bills will arrive. Appointments will be scheduled.

This can feel violent.

You may look around and wonder how anything is still functioning. You may feel older than everyone in the room. You may feel like you are living in a different reality from the people around you.

You are.

When a child dies, your internal timeline fractures. The day before and the day after are not connected in the same way anymore. The world's timeline continues uninterrupted.

This difference can make you feel separate, even in a crowded room.

You may withdraw. You may feel impatient with ordinary conversation. You may feel that you no longer belong in the spaces that once felt natural.

This is not arrogance. It is not bitterness.

It is dislocation.

It takes time to learn how to stand in a world that has not changed when everything inside you has.

People Will Say the Wrong Things

People will try to comfort you.

Many of them will fail.

You may hear: "At least..." "Everything happens for a reason." "They're in a better place." "You're strong." "You have other children." "Time heals."

Some people will avoid you entirely.

Some will talk too much. Some will say nothing. Some will disappear after the funeral.

This is not because your child mattered less. It is because most people do not know how to stand near this kind of rupture.

You are not responsible for managing other people's discomfort.

You do not owe anyone a composed response. You do not have to correct their theology. You do not have to reassure them that you will be okay.

You may say: "I don't have words." Or "I'm not ready to talk about that." Or Nothing at all.

Silence is allowed.

Your energy is limited in the first days. Spend it carefully.

Decision Fatigue and Administrative Demands

In the first days, you may be asked to make decisions that feel too large for your body to hold.

Funeral arrangements. Legal paperwork. Personal belongings. Announcements. Financial details.

You may feel like you are functioning efficiently while feeling nothing at all. Or you may feel unable to process even small choices.

Neither response measures your love.

Complex decisions can feel exhausting in grief.

Where possible, give yourself time for non-urgent decisions. Ask someone you trust to help check deadlines; this guide is not legal or financial advice.

If someone offers to handle logistics, accept help selectively.

If you cannot decide, say: "I need time." Or "Not today."

You do not have to be organized. You do not have to be gracious. You do not have to make permanent decisions in temporary shock.

Move slowly when possible.

You May Feel Like You No Longer Belong

After a child dies, the world may feel unfamiliar.

You may sit in a room with people you have known for years and feel separate from them. Conversations that once felt normal may now feel distant or irrelevant. You may feel older than your age. You may feel like you crossed into a category of life that others around you have not.

One way to name this experience is ontological displacement. Here, it is descriptive language, not a diagnosis.

Ontological displacement simply means that your sense of reality has shifted at its foundation. The assumptions you once carried about time, safety, order, and the future no longer hold in the same way.

When a parent buries a child, something irreversible changes in how the world is experienced. There is a before and an after that cannot be undone.

You may notice: Less tolerance for trivial conversation. Less patience for pretense. A sharper awareness of what is fragile. A desire for depth where there was once ease.

This does not mean you are becoming cold or disconnected.

It means your internal landscape has changed.

It takes time to learn how to stand in spaces that were built for a version of you that no longer exists in the same way.

If you feel separate, you are not failing at grief.

You are adjusting to altered ground.

The Quiet After the First Week

In the beginning, there is movement.

People come. Phones ring. Plans are made. Meals are delivered. There are decisions to make.

Then, very quickly, the world returns to its rhythm.

The house becomes quiet.

This quiet can feel heavier than the first days.

You may notice the absence in practical ways: An empty chair. A room that is untouched. A routine that no longer has a place.

You may also notice it in ways that are harder to explain: The sound of the house at night. The absence of a voice. The absence of ordinary interruption.

The first week often carries adrenaline. The days after can feel slower and more exposed.

This is sometimes called the second wave.

The support lessens. The check-ins decrease. The world assumes you are "getting through it."

You are not required to be further along simply because time has passed.

Grief does not move on a public timeline.

If the quiet feels unbearable, that does not mean you are regressing.

It means the shock is shifting.

You may need to change your environment temporarily. You may need company. You may need solitude.

Pay attention to what steadies you, not what looks strong.

The second wave is not a setback.

It is part of the terrain.

Faith May Feel Like a Betrayal

Faith may remain. Faith may withdraw.

In the first days after a child dies, whatever spiritual or religious framework you carried may shift.

You may feel anger. You may feel silence. You may feel nothing at all.

If your child's death followed a long illness, you may have prayed for deliverance. You may have pleaded. You may have believed that faith would change the outcome.

If your child's death was sudden, you may feel disbelief that something so irreversible could happen without warning.

In either case, faith can feel like a betrayal.

You may question what you believed about protection, purpose, fairness, or divine order. You may wonder whether your faith failed you, or whether you failed it.

This does not make you faithless. It does not make you weak. It does not make you irreverent.

It makes you honest.

You are not required to resolve your theology in the first days. You are not required to defend God to anyone. You are not required to make meaning immediately.

Silence is allowed. Anger is allowed. Doubt is allowed.

If faith remains, it may look different. If faith withdraws, that does not mean it is gone forever.

In the first days, survival is enough.

Name What Brings You Joy

In the first days after a child dies, joy may feel impossible.

That is understandable.

If and when you have the capacity, you can try a small exercise. You may skip it or return to it later.

Name the things that bring you joy.

Not the things that should bring you joy. Not the things other people expect to comfort you.

Your joy.

It may be something small. The sound of rain. A morning walk. Music. The ocean. Cooking. Prayer. Silence. The presence of a particular person.

Write them down.

You may not feel any connection to these things right now. There is no requirement to feel joy now.

This is not about forcing joy. It is about remembering where it lives.

In moments of deep despair, when it feels like nothing remains, return to this list.

Let it remind you that your life has contained joy before.

And that the capacity for it still exists inside you, even if it feels unreachable today.

Hold on to this list. Hold on to this Orientation.

When everything feels like it has been taken from you, these may be the first things that help you find your footing again.

What brings you joy

Write privately, if and when you have the capacity. You may leave these lines blank.

Whatever You Feel Is Allowed

There is no correct way to experience the first days after your child's death.

Whatever you feel is allowed.

Numbness. Rage. Silence. Relief after a long illness. Disbelief. Exhaustion. Clarity. Confusion.

You are entitled to define this experience for yourself. No one can do it for you.

Even if you are partnered and facing this loss together, your experience will not be identical. Two parents can stand in the same room and carry entirely different internal realities.

This difference can create tension. It can create misunderstanding. It can create distance.

Grief does not move at the same pace for two people.

You are not responsible for managing anyone else's feelings. You are not responsible for matching someone else's timeline. You are not responsible for absorbing the emotional responses of extended family, friends, or community.

You are responsible for your own ground.

Protect it.

In the first days, survival is enough.

If and when you are ready, there is language for this. There are others who have crossed this threshold. You are not alone in the terrain, even if it feels that way.

For now, breathe. Move slowly. Stand where you are.

If you need support

United States: call or text 988, or use the free, confidential Lifeline chat at 988lifeline.org/get-help/. Immediate danger: contact local emergency services.

Outside the United States: findahelpline.com lists services by country.

The Compassionate Friends offers peer support after a child dies at any age or from any cause: compassionatefriends.org.

For general bereavement information and when to seek professional support, visit the NHS resource linked from the web guide. UK guidance and services may differ from your location.

These are independent providers, not Paralunae partners. Follow their current eligibility, availability and privacy information. Links checked September 15, 2026.

Shock and numbness, changing feelings and the absence of a fixed order are described by the NHS. This guide does not establish what is causing a symptom. If you are worried or struggling to cope, seek professional support.

Web guide and source links: www.drlakisha.com/paralunae-orientation.html

In the first days,
survival is enough.

When you are ready, visit paralunae.com.