

You don't leave your baby a talk held in 2012

This study describes women's experiences of the farewell of their stillborn baby at discharge from hospital. Twenty-six women who suffered stillbirth were interviewed and the replies were analysed using content analysis.

The mothers describe the separation from the child as unnatural and that the separation ruins the motherhood they felt during pregnancy.

Five categories were identified: Unnatural to leave the child; Going home empty-handed; Access to the child; Security and insecurity in the separation and To let go. The overarching theme that we recognized from these responses we have formulated as: You don't leave your baby. Here you can read some quotes from the women in this study:

"But I think that was the worst thing of all, it was sick to leave your own baby, to leave it at the hospital. To return home empty handed. You just do not leave your baby. Only mentally sick people leave their child. It was the worst of all, to leave her there." (mother to a baby born in week 41)

"And then we just packed our things, and we left the room, yes and it did feel a bit strange... Should we be taking something with us? Should we just go home? It just felt unreal, that we left and did not have a baby with us." (mother to a baby born in week 38)

"They had told us that we could come back... and we did, every single day for two weeks, during a whole two weeks... that I couldn't go home first, no, but God, am I going to just leave him here in the department... Yes, we did take him home then." (mother to a baby born in week 38)

"... but then really I thought that it felt good, to be, that he would thus be left there with us. Not to have to go down and leave him with some pathologist or something similar." (mother to a baby born in week 32)

"It was just as we had thought, that we would say goodbye there at the hospital. Like we just said, "Goodbye". We thought that in some way this probably was best. That he would begin to change and that it was best for us to see him at his best, and that was really how we thought about it." (mother to a baby born in week 38)

The experience of motherhood was demolished and replaced by a feeling of emptiness. The mothers described the separation from the baby as the worst thing that they could imagine happening and they said that no healthy mother would leave her child. Phrases like "I had to", "I must" or "I couldn't" were frequently used by the mothers.

Leaving the baby goes against the biological instinct to care for and protect one's offspring

Routines for making a dignified goodbye include providing a deputy guardian in whose arms the mother can place the child to facilitate the separation. Taking the baby home may facilitate the farewell process for some

Thank you!