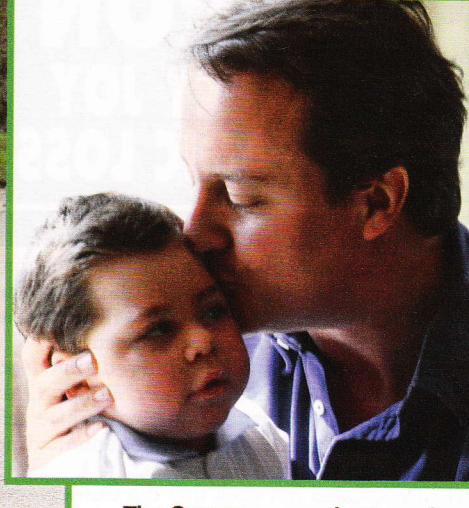




Former TV-am presenter and a regular panellist on *The Wright Stuff*, Anne Diamond is the mother of five boys. In July 1991, her third son Sebastian, died from cot death aged just four months



The Camerons are due to welcome the new addition to their family in September. Samantha's pregnancy comes a year after the death of their son Ivan, six (above), who suffered from a rare combination of cerebral palsy and epilepsy

TV PRESENTER, JOURNALIST AND DEVOTED MOTHER

ANNE DIAMOND

SPEAKS MOVINGLY OF HOW A NEW BABY CAN HELP EASE THE PAIN OF LOSING ONE OF YOUR CHILDREN

Never mind the rigours of a nail-bitingly close election, or the prospect of a barbecue summer pregnancy, the first lady of the Tory party, Samantha Cameron faces a far bigger challenge – how to stop drowning in a sea of sentiment and schmaltz following the announcement that she is pregnant.

A new baby can never replace a lost one, so let's not pretend it could.

Media commentators and columnists happily broke out the champagne headlines such as "So Brave!" "Babyjoy after Ivan heartbreak" and 'Cameron's Courage', as though Samantha and David had made a plucky and even heroic choice.

But these trite, saccharine tributes get it so wrong. In our thirst for a happy ending we seek to close the door on a tragedy that will live with this young couple forever.

The Camerons will never get over the harrowing life and death of their beloved son Ivan, who was born in 2002 with a rare combination of cerebral palsy and epilepsy. He could not crawl, walk or talk, and needed full-time nursing. He died just over a year ago and the Camerons found their grief plastered all over the papers, as I once did when my four-month-old son Sebastian died from cot death 19 years ago.

A LESSON IN LOSS

Suddenly you find how appalling we are, in this country, at handling death and bereavement. If you're famous, you find yourself disturbingly portrayed as a tragic, romantic figure. Then you discover that your friends

rather stay away because they feel so uncomfortable. The old saying that people cross the street to avoid you is true – it happened several times to me and it hurt.

I'll bet the Camerons found that many friends suddenly preferred to talk about anything other than their heartbreaking loss – as though their child never existed.

Or what about those who deal with grief by being hearty? They slap you on the back and really do say, "Cheer up; you can always have another!"

Now the Camerons *are* having another, and we're overjoyed for them. We feel like sending a congratulations card, don't we? Even though we failed to send a note of condolence upon Ivan's death...

personal, it also follows a pattern. Psychologists refer to "stages of grief", an order of emotions that you have to suffer. It starts with shock and ends with a sense of acceptance. At first, you resist any idea that one day you'll "accept". But in the end, you do.

Having another baby is, in my view, the best thing to happen to the Camerons. Not because the new child will replace the lost one. Nor because it will make them feel better. Indeed, how can they ever feel less bereaved when it comes to their little, lost Ivan?

But a new baby will fill Samantha's aching arms. Any bereaved mum knows, as I do, how your arms physically ache for your lost child – even if you have two other wonderful children to cuddle. It will fill the

'Any bereaved mum knows, as I do, how your arms physically ache for your lost child – even if you have two other wonderful children to cuddle'

What we're actually celebrating is our own, rather selfish need for these bereaved parents to be normal again – to be expectant parents, so that we can all feel better.

And the headline writers need to think deeper. It's not courage that the Camerons have displayed. I have no doubt they're gutsy, but it's fatuous to bestow upon them some grand virtue, when what they have actually shown is basic, raw, primitive instinct – a reassuringly human reaction to an

house with baby clutter once more; prams in the hallway, sterilisers on the sink, a baby alarm on their bedside table and nappy sacks in the loo.

It will, in short, be a new boss in the house, as babies always are. It will deprive them of sleep, no matter how many nannies, grannies and aunts are there to help.

with a new beaming face will go up the windowsill, beside those daughter, Nancy, six, and son Arthur, four, and of course the one of Ivan.

Sadly, the new child will never know his or her bigger brother. But he/she will know all about him. Perhaps as I did, they'll incorporate one of Ivan's names into the new baby's, a way of bonding the family together just felt right.

I had two more sons after Sebastian died. They're teenagers now and they sometimes mention that it's sad they never knew their older brother. But I reckon it's important they know he's still a member of the family, even though he's not around. To me, that's what families are about – a bond that can never be broken, even by death.

FACING THE FUTURE

But it's important that a family move forward. I always rationalise it that way: if there really is a Heaven, Sebastian wouldn't want to be looking down on a family in a constant state of mourning. He'd want us to be happy.

Who knows what the Camerons believe? I just hope they have found a way of rationalising their terrible loss and their new joy. It seems they have.

But I would like to warn other parents – as you congratulate them on their new baby, don't be afraid to mention their lost son. They won't have forgotten Ivan's name, and the new baby doesn't erase his existence.

I'll never forget when my four-year-old son, Jake, arrived. Some relatives and friends were, I could sense, squeamish about mentioning Sebastian. It took our experienced paediatrician, who had known all my boys, to say the right thing. "Here is a new life, and we welcome a new Diamond into the world, but we'll never forget Sebastian. I never will. Now you go home and add this little chap to your family!"

It's a ritual I am sure the next little Cameron will go through. It'll be a new addition, not a replacement. The sooner we all understand that, the better we'll all be at dealing with