

Caring & Coping

A Publication of the
Northside Hospital
Perinatal Loss Office

PERINATAL LOSS OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Submissions to our newsletter and website are welcomed and much appreciated! Submissions may be e-mailed, mailed, or faxed to our office.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Caring & Coping Support Group:
2nd Monday of each month, 7-9 p.m.
- Time to Heal Support Group:
3rd Monday of each month,
7-8:30 p.m. (No meeting in August)
- 6th annual Atlanta Walk to Remember:
October 10, 2010
(Check our website for further details)



NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL
www.northside.com

Volunteers Needed For Parent Panel

August 27, 2010 and September 10, 2010 10 am until 12 pm

The Perinatal Loss Office is offering bereavement training classes to hospital employees who work with perinatal loss families. We cover a variety of topics including the unique aspects of perinatal grief, communication skills (what to say and what not to say), and assisting families in creating memories. One of the most meaningful and useful aspects of the class is when parents are invited to share their hospital experience.

We are in need of **moms, dads, and grandparents** who are willing speak about their experience in the hospital. The class takes place in a building near the Northside Hospital Atlanta campus, and we would need you to arrive at 10:00 am. The session will last approximately 2 hours. In the past, parents who were on the panel have said this was a healing and helpful experience for them. They were able to reinforce the positive aspects of the care they received as well as to provide insight and suggestions for improving and enhancing the treatment and support offered to families in the future. If you are interested in participating, please contact us at pnl@atlantapnl.com or (404) 851-8177.

Newsletter and Website

We want to hear from you! Let us know what types of articles and information you would like to see included. In addition, we welcome submissions from parents, grandparents, siblings, and anyone affected by a loss. You can share your story, poetry, memorial tribute to your baby, book review, and birth announcements. Things that you have found valuable might be helpful to someone else. Sharing your personal experience can be very healing for the writer and offers the reader hope and encouragement. Items are welcome in English and in Spanish. You can submit items by email, fax, or mail.

2010 Atlanta Walk to Remember



Register online at www.atlantapnl.com (preferred) or by mailing a completed registration form

The 6th annual Walk to Remember will be held Sunday, October 10, 2010 at the Concourse Corporate Center (the king and queen building complex near Northside Hospital Atlanta). The event begins at 2 pm and lasts approximately two hours. The Walk is a gathering of parents, families, friends, and healthcare providers that is held each October as part of National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. (It is NOT a fundraiser.) There is a short ceremony, a symbolic “walk,” and a balloon release. Our mission is connecting parents to express grief for perinatal loss in a visible and active way with the support of family and friends.

Year-round, the Atlanta Walk to Remember committee works diligently at fundraising in order to keep the event free of charge to participants. Donations pay for: tent, chairs, and table rental, helium balloons, event programs, gifts for speakers, tokens for participants, bottled water, and activities for the kids’ table. Any remaining funds are used for future Walks and to provide perinatal bereavement training to healthcare providers in the Atlanta area. As in previous years, we will sell t-shirts and car magnets at the event. In addition, this year other mementos such as lapel awareness pins will also be available. (Note: all donations may be used as tax deductions.)

But, we need your help!

Please call Tara Spolan at (770) 442-8995:

- If you or anyone you know specializes in fundraising for charitable organizations
- If you own a printing company and can help with our printing needs
- If you sell promotional products or your company can donate gifts for our speakers, lavender balloons, (either filled with helium or donation of helium tanks), or lavender ribbons for the balloons
- If your company can donate a tent, chairs, or tables for use during the event
- If you are willing to donate your time or services
- If you have any ideas or suggestions for fundraising
- If you belong to or aware of any groups that would like to donate their time on the day of the event (to handle check-in/registration, distributing balloons and water, taking photographs)
- If you have a media connection (television, radio, newspaper, internet, etc.) and would like to assist with marketing/advertising of the event
- If you are interested in sharing your story or reading a poem that has brought you peace during the ceremony

Please email Megan Unger at keelismom@gmail.com if you are able to help with set-up or clean-up on the day of the event.

Donations can be made at any time of the year and are tax deductible.

By check: Please make the check payable to “NSH Foundation” and then write “2010 Walk to Remember Fund” on the memo line. Please indicate if the donation is being made in memory of a baby so that we can notify the parents of your gift. Mail the check to: Northside Hospital PNL Office, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30342.

By Credit card: Please go to <https://www2.northside.com/donations/donate.aspx>. Be sure to select “Atlanta Walk to Remember” under the *designation* drop down box.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or want more information, please email Megan at keelismom@gmail.com or call Tara at (770) 442-8995.

REGISTRATION FORM:

2010 ATLANTA WALK TO REMEMBER

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2010 AT 2 PM

How to register (choose one):

- Online at www.atlantapnl.com
- Mail this registration form to:
Northside Hospital PNL Office
1000 Johnson Ferry Rd NE
Atlanta GA 30342

REGISTRATION IS ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED IN ORDER TO ATTEND.

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY:

First and last name of adult participant: _____

Exact (or approximate) number of people attending: _____ adults _____ children

Phone number: _____

Email address (please print clearly): _____

There is a printed program distributed at the event that includes a list of the names of babies who are being remembered. If you give permission for your baby's (or babies') name(s) to be included, please PRINT the FULL name(s) here:

GENERAL RELEASE FROM LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND RELEASE FOR USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO

Atlanta Walk to Remember ~ October 10, 2010

I expressly release Northside Hospital, Inc, the city of Sandy Springs, Cousins Properties Services, LP and their respective agents, employees, and representatives of and from any and all claims, damages, responsibilities, and liabilities inclusive of any claims for personal injury or death which may arise directly or indirectly from the 2010 Atlanta Walk to Remember. I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless Northside Hospital, Inc, the city of Sandy Springs, and Cousins Properties Services, LP and their respective agents, employees, and representatives from and against any and all claims, liabilities, and damages to myself, my property, or others arising out of or in connection with the 2010 Atlanta Walk to Remember. I am aware of and fully understand and assume all risks in regard to my participation in the 2010 Atlanta Walk to Remember.

I understand that pictures and/or video will be taken during the 2010 Atlanta Walk to Remember. I am aware that the pictures and/or video may be used by the Atlanta Walk to Remember Committee, the Northside Hospital Perinatal Loss Office, and/or Northside Hospital, Inc at their discretion for promotion of future Walks, in current and future Walk materials and literature, for display on the Perinatal Loss Office website, and in Perinatal Loss Office literature and materials (such as newsletters and scrapbooks). In addition, video may be provided to the media and made available for viewing on the Perinatal Loss Office website.

Releasor: _____

(Signature of adult participant listed above)

Names of other family participants: _____

REMAINS BLANK



Pregnant with Hope

Faith and Bible Study as Tools for Coping with Loss, Infertility, and Pregnancy After Loss
By Susan Radulovacki



I was a honeymoon baby, born nine months and eight days after my parents eloped.

Conceiving wasn't quite so effortless for my husband and me.

After a year of failed attempts, we began working with a reproductive specialist. We were ecstatic when we got the news that I was pregnant with twins, especially since my father had just died. Then, I lost one baby at eight weeks. Before we had time to metabolize that loss, I miscarried the other baby. We were devastated.

And then, things got worse.

We lost more children than we delivered safely into the world. The two who made it survived only after premature delivery, open-heart surgery, and so many trips to the Pediatric ER, the intake nurses knew us by name.

At the time, it seemed like a constant flow of heartache and trauma. In hindsight, though, I can see that God sustained us through all of it. We received help in many forms: medical and financial assistance, compassionate support, encouragement, guidance and wisdom. We didn't always know where to find help, but it materialized when we needed it most.

Years later, having trained as a Stephen Ministry (a layperson who comforts people struggling through life's hardest challenges), I was asked to lead a non-denominational Bible study for infertile couples. The goal was to create community, to break the silence that makes infertile couples feel abandoned by God and isolated from everyone else, and to wrestle with hard questions like: Why is everyone else able to have a baby? What does it mean to be singled-out for suffering? How long will this grief continue? And where is God in all this?

Many of the participants in the group arrived at our first meeting having experienced multiple failed IUIs and IVFs. Several had undergone surgeries, yet still hadn't been able to conceive. Others had conceived, but had lost their babies part way through their

pregnancies (two of them at 20 weeks, at Northside Hospital). Each week, we tackled their toughest questions – seeking answers together. The class grew and began to draw couples of all denominations from all across the city. Some drove an hour or more each way to participate. Week by week, couples began to move from the darkness of despair toward renewed hope... and, ultimately, to parenthood.

As demand for this unique ministry continued to grow, I received numerous requests from clergy and participants to "write it down." Pregnant with Hope: Good News for Infertile Couples was published earlier this year. In many ways, it is like a support group in book form. It meets couples in the midst of the infertility journey and guides them through ten recognizable stages – including feeling desperate, facing defeat, asking why, answering why, discovering peace, finding the way, and more.

The book incorporates questions to consider and/or discuss, and provides space to journal or jot ideas and insights after each chapter. In addition, ten couples who participated in the class and are now parents share their inspiring stories. Each couple's story – told in their own words – narrates their journey from heartache to renewed hope in a promise-keeping God, and then, to parenthood through birth or adoption. Each unique story demonstrates God's consistent desire to transform a heartbreaking quest into life-changing good news.

If your experience has left you desperate for hope, the messages of Pregnant with Hope can help restore and sustain you. For additional inspiration and cause for hope, please visit www.PregnantWithHope.com, or read my blog, PregnantWithHope.wordpress.com.

The Northside Hospital Perinatal Loss Office has several copies of the book available to lend. To purchase your own copy online: www.PregnantWithHope.com, Amazon, or other major online booksellers

Northside Hospital Perinatal Loss Support Groups

Grief is a complicated, evolving human process. Its universality binds sufferers together. More is shared than is different.

(Arnold & Gemma)

Northside Hospital offers two meetings a month. One is called Caring and Coping and the other is called Time to Heal. Meetings are free and are open to any bereaved parents and grandparents. Moms and dads may attend together or individually. Reservations are not required.

Our groups meet once a month and can be joined at any time. Some people choose to attend shortly after their loss and others wait a few months or even longer. You can attend as few or as many times as you like. In addition, it's not required that you attend each month.

Each meeting begins with a short introduction given by the facilitator (a trained professional from the Perinatal Loss Office). Then, each person is invited to share their story, tell about their baby, ask questions, or discuss any topics in which they have an interest or need. We often discuss the common differences in how moms and dads grieve, returning to work, coping with impending holidays or due dates, managing grief reactions such as anger and depression,

and pregnancy after loss. Interaction among the group is encouraged, however, no one is required to participate more than he or she feels what is comfortable. For driving directions or more information, check our website www.atlantapnl.com or contact us at pnl@atlantapnl.com or (404) 851-8177.

- **Caring and Coping** is our support group for parents and grandparents who have lost a baby due to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, and newborn death. Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of every month from 7-9 pm.
- **Time to Heal** is our support group for parents who have had to make the difficult and painful decision to end a wanted pregnancy due to a poor prenatal diagnosis for their baby. Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of every month from 7- 8:30 pm. **This group does not meet in the month of August.**

When Things Don't Go According to Plan

*The Story Behind the Creation of
The Remember Georgia Children's Foundation and The Children's Park of Georgia
By Christy Cox Zeigler,*

Founding mother of The Children's Park of Georgia

Loving mother to

Alexis Cox Zeigler - July 18, 2004 (2:40 AM - 7:35 PM)

Mason Alexander Zeigler - July 18, 2004

Meredith Alyson Zeigler - April 24, 2009



Six and a half years ago, we were making plans and preparing for the birth of our twins. I had very clear dreams of how life would be after they were born (at Northside Hospital). In the greatest devastation of my life, I had to adjust to a new reality. Our first born daughter, who fought so hard for her life, is no longer with us and our son would have a very difficult journey with struggles that would last well through his childhood. Life today is so completely different than I had imagined.

Emily P. Kingsley wrote a poem called "Welcome to Holland" that is widely known throughout the special needs community; as it was written regarding her son who was born with Downs Syndrome. I feel it is also applicable to my journey as a bereaved parent as well. My dreams were shattered and this hurt will never ever go away. After more than five years, though, I have gotten use to the pain and even grown from it. I am now much more sensitive to the pain of others, particularly as it relates to loss and struggles with children. I do not run when others around me experience suffering. I listen and understand. I have also gained a unique perspective of true appreciation for the importance of every precious child's life. I definitely would not have chosen this path, but I do take comfort in knowing that God's ways and thoughts are so much greater than my own. And, even as vast as the problems of this world, I am assured that He cares about me individually to know the number of hairs on my head. Though it has been tested for sure, I am so glad to have my faith because I also get great comfort from knowing that I will be with sweet Alexis again. Just as King David said when he lost his precious child, I know Alexis cannot come to me but when it is my time, I will go to her and hold her close again. Ironically, the name of our cabin is Paradise View. I just like to imagine how happy and pain free she is in the true paradise.

More than five years ago, I started the long journey to establish Remember Georgia's Children Foundation to build a paradise-like park that would celebrate the lives of all children – those who are with us and those who have gone on, those who are perfectly healthy and those who are medically fragile or have special needs, the very young to adult children. I have been dreaming of this park that would be a place true beauty, comfort, and encouragement. Early in the planning, I came across a web site for The Children's Park in Tyler, TX. I contacted Jennifer Carson who founded this park in memory of her son Braden

Carson who died in her womb just days before he was due. On that first conversation, we talked for hours and she became a wonderful mentor for me through the past several years.

Two RGCF board members and I recently flew to Tyler, TX to meet Jennifer in person and visit the original Children's Park. We had fully scheduled day of five meetings with major donors, board members, a city manager, a landscape planner, and other important people who made their park possible. Jennifer said she is amazed even to this day at how many people are helped by the park. As she was leading us on a tour, we passed some elderly women, and she mentioned how many seniors have honored children. Many have shared with her their life long anguish at never publicly recognizing their loss. Years ago, bereaved parents were discouraged from even talking about a loss. But now, many have told her of the healing and relief it has brought them to finally have a place to tell the world how much the children they lost mean to them.

Throughout the process of developing The Children's Park in Texas, Jennifer kept a scrapbook and a timeline of the awesome journey. It has been such a helpful guidebook to me and proof of concept to show others. I am following this tradition of recording our story. Hopefully, it will help future Children's Park builders across the country. I am just in awe at watching the story unfold. It has never been more apparent that the events of my life have prepared me for this journey. The doors keep opening and there have been so many unbelievable connections (some that date back to my childhood and the childhoods of others on our board of directors). It is like God is showing me His glory through all of this...every step of the way. Looking back, I can say with assurance now that if the events in my life had gone according to my plans, I would have never experienced the desperation, dependence, and ultimate deep connection that I now feel to my heavenly Father. His thoughts are certainly bigger than mine.

I hope that when the park is finally built, you, your family, and your friends will find it a very worthy place to honor the children we miss so dearly. To stay up to date with the latest news on the park and details on the design of the park, please visit our web site: <http://www.RememberGeorgiasChildren.org> and join our Facebook page. You can also email us at info@RememberGeorgiasChildren.org or call (678) 613-7458.

Birth Announcements

Announcements can be submitted to the PNL Office at pnl@atlantapnl.com or (404) 851-8177.

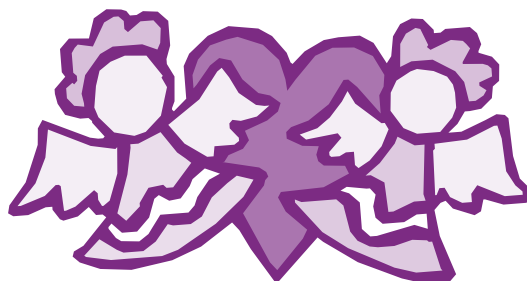
- ♥ Greg and Angie Davenport proudly announce the birth of their daughter Madelaine Kate Davenport on April 13, 2010. Madelaine weighed 6 pounds, 2 ounces and was 18 ½ inches long. She joins big brother Jackson and big sister Hala. The Davenport family remembers Angie's first daughter, Sarah Katherine Purcell, who was stillborn at 24 weeks on May 18, 2004. We prayed for this child and the Lord has granted us what we asked of Him.
- ♥ Scott and Kristin Carnall are so blessed to announce the birth of our beautiful and healthy son Mateo Joseph. He arrived safely on December 4, 2009 and weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces. We are so in love with our sweet Teo! We lovingly remember our first child and Mateo's big sister, Ariana Faith, who went to Heaven just before she was born on October 15, 2008 at 37 weeks. We love and miss her so very much every single day, and we know she is our guardian angel looking down on us. We praise God for His unending love, mercy, and blessings.

Thanks and Gratitude

- ♥ Mela Gallagher of Sunset, LA for the beautiful, hand-crocheted hats and blankets
- ♥ Emmazing Grace for the many keepsakes boxes, quilts, blankets, and outfits
- ♥ Keepsake boxes with blankets and teddy bears donated in memory of Cecilia Ashley White
- ♥ Donations to the PNL Endowment Fund in memory of
 - ♦ Liam Joseph Nulty
 - ♦ Abigail Grace Bitner and Baby Boy Binter

Books and Websites

We welcome parents to submit suggestions of books or websites that were particularly helpful during the grieving process. A short paragraph or even just a few sentences commenting on the content of the book or the website will be appreciated. Send information and suggestions to pnl@atlantapnl.com.





The Cord

Author Unknown

We are connected,
My child and I, by
An invisible cord
Not seen by the eye.

It's not like the cord
That connects us 'til birth
This cord can't be seen
By any on Earth.

This cord does its work
Right from the start.
It binds us together
Attached to my heart.

I know that it's there
Though no one can see
The invisible cord
From my child to me.

The strength of this cord
Is hard to describe.
It can't be destroyed
It can't be denied.

It's stronger than any cord
Man could create
It withstands the test
Can hold any weight.

And though you are gone,
Though you're not here with me,
The cord is still there
But no one can see.

It pulls at my heat
I am bruised . . . I am sore,
But this cord is my lifeline
As never before.

I am thankful that God
Connects us this way
A mother and child
Death can't take it away!

Baby's First Christmas

For our daughter, Addison

(10/28/09-11/04/09)

By Rebecca Rice 12/18/09

Christmas is here
and you should be too;
You've not been forgotten—
there's a stocking for you.

It hangs on the mantle
with your name in red,
The same letters that in wood
hung over your bed.

Just two months ago
you were safe inside,
Now everything's changed
and all joy seems to hide.

To have a girl seemed so scary—
I didn't know how I'd deal;
But after losing you,
I don't know how I'll heal.

My hopes and dreams for your future
died with you,
But you'll always be my daughter—
that much is true.

I loved you so deeply
even before you were born;
Our family's tight-knitted fabric
has now been torn.

Although I did get to meet you,
you'll never know me,
Never feel my embrace,
never bounce on my knee.

Your brother will never
get to teach you "cool moves;"
Your daddy will never
get to hear your sweet coos.

I hope you knew you were loved
and always will be;
Your life, although short,
meant so much to me.

So we hung your stocking
because you belong here with us;
Oh, sweet Addison,
this should have been your first Christmas



Facing the Fears and Uncertainties of Pregnancy and Parenting After a Loss

Deciding to try for another pregnancy can be very difficult. Parents often have a great deal of fear and anxiety as they worry that they may have trouble conceiving, that they may have another loss, or that people will forget about their babies that died. It means juggling feelings of sadness and grief for the babies that have died AND anticipation and joy for the babies that are yet to be born.

Many parents who have experienced a loss describe a pregnancy after a loss as a loss of innocence. They don't feel as carefree and safe as they did with other pregnancies. They are now aware of the variety of problems that can occur, dread appointments with doctors or ultrasounds, and hesitate to bond with the new pregnancy and new baby. They no longer feel that pregnancy is a simple, natural state. It has evolved into a time of medical tests, nervousness, and apprehension. The days of dreaming about bringing home a healthy baby are gone, replaced by nightmares that something will go wrong.

You may be wondering how someone decides that they are ready to embark on this emotional and physical journey. For most, the physical healing is much faster than the emotional. Your OB or midwife may have given you the green light to try, but your heart may not be ready. You can't forget what you have experienced in the past. You can't make yourself ignore the stories you have heard from other parents who have had similar experiences. You can't force yourself to feel ready when you are not.

Some parents have shared that they knew they were ready to try again when the desire for a baby outweighed the fear. It wasn't like a switch had been flipped and they woke up knowing they were ready. It was a process that included recognizing how difficult this decision is, making sure to have the support of an OB or midwife as well as your partner, and knowing where you will find strength and support if/when it is needed during the next pregnancy.

Brian

by Janet M. Vergona

The world melted away.

Gone was the steel bed, so cold and unwelcoming. Gone was the IV, a one-armed soldier delivering its charge. Faded from view were the masked faces of my doctors and nurses. As I gazed down at my son Brian so gingerly placed in my arms just moments before, I whispered, "Welcome to the world, little one."

My eyes poured over him, marveling at his perfection, wanting to forever hold this moment in my heart. The tiny pink and blue knitted cap overwhelmed his face as it sat haphazardly atop his head. The familiar white, pink, and teal striped blanket, a replica of ones tucked away in so many memory boxes, engulfed my son, swaddling him in layers of softness. I counted his fingers- 10! - and smiled as I studied the wrinkles that crossed his forehead like furrows in freshly sowed fields.

"Oh, sweetie," I cooed as I leaned forward to drink in his smell, "how can this be?" Time stood still, yet my mind raced ahead with unanswerable questions. How could so perfect a soul be forever gone? How could I survive not getting to know this son of mine? Never feeling his tiny fingers wrap around mine? Not hearing his laugh? Not watching him grow up like his brother and sister before him? Knowing that our first moments together had become our final ones as well?

My heart ached at these thoughts, and I pressed him closer to me as if I could somehow protect us both from the coldness of my words. His tiny body molded perfectly into mine evoking a flood of memories from so many years earlier. I remembered my heart skipping a beat in awe at the sight of my firstborn son. I can still feel the smile that spread across my face as my doctor announced, "If she's not a perfect ten, I don't know who is!" when he first laid eyes on my daughter.

However, that day there was no heart-skipping or cries of perfection. In their place? A silence as heavy and uncomfortable as an old winter coat on the first day of spring. And yet, there was an undeniable sense of familiarity in the room as well. It was not found in the standard-issue scrubs cloaking my doctor; not in the graying bed sheets crumpled around me; not even in the eyes of my husband of so many years, but rather in the knowledge that I held my child in my arms. The little boy so eagerly anticipated for these past eight months, the one who I loved long before these final fleeting moments together, was safely nestled in my arms. And, despite the many in my room that night, my son and I were the only players on that all too sterile stage. This was our time together, and I needed to capture it, and somehow make it last a lifetime.

Survey Results:

Pregnancy and Parenting After a Loss

Many times, the most helpful encouragement, support, and advice comes from someone who has been through a similar experience. We recently surveyed parents who have experienced pregnancies and parenting after their losses. Even though each person must do what is best for him/her and each couple will have varying circumstances and beliefs, it can often be helpful to hear how others have approached some of the decisions, anxieties, and worries about subsequent pregnancies and/or adoptions. Here are some of their thoughts, opinions, and suggestions regarding some frequently asked questions.

We are grateful to the parents who took the time to share, and we welcome others to submit their answers to pnl@atlantapnl.com for future newsletters.

How long was it between your loss and the next pregnancy or adoption?

- 4 months
- 6 months until we started to try again
- I had a positive test exactly 17 months after our daughter died. It was about 13 months after her death before I could even start to think about facing another pregnancy
- I became pregnant again 3 months after the loss of our baby girl but had a miscarriage at 7 weeks. About 5 months later I found out I was pregnant again with what turned out to be a healthy baby girl.
- A little over a year between the loss of our baby and the beginning of the adoption process
- Because we knew we would need fertility treatments to get pregnant, we made an appointment with our doctor the day after our loss. I can't say we were emotionally ready.
- 10 months

How did you feel when you had a positive pregnancy test for the pregnancy after the loss?

- The only way to describe it was bittersweet. There was cautious excitement but I always knew that a positive pregnancy test doesn't necessarily mean a resulting living or even healthy baby.
- Elated and scared
- Excited and scared - I wasn't sure I was ready
- Relieved that I could get pregnant and then scared that I wouldn't be able to handle it
- I cried tears of joy and tears of happiness
- Worried that people would think I was trying to replace my son that died.

What was it like to go to doctor appointments and ultrasounds?

- Sometimes scary, sometimes tense, mostly anxious. Those feelings, while they lessened as the pregnancy progressed, never fully went away. In a way, I felt like I was grieving a little every time I went in for an ultrasound. I felt a sense of loss for not being able to be excited like "normal people."
- I was alone when I found out about the miscarriage. I never went to another appointment alone again. I always took a friend if my boyfriend couldn't be there.
- Very stressful until it looked like things might be okay at 20 weeks
- I dreaded going to the doctor. I would get nervous, start shaking, and I usually cried.
- I was jealous of the other women who were excited to be there. If someone had a new baby with them, I would lose it.

Did you stay with the same doctor as before, or did you switch to a new one?

What influenced your decision (either way)?

- I switched doctors. I was very unhappy with the way my first OB handled our loss. She lacked compassion and that was very apparent in my post-loss follow up. I knew that we needed someone who could have some understanding and patience with us if we were ever going to go through the process again.
- I switched doctors. It may have been my hypersensitivity, but I felt that when the practiced learned of my baby's fate I was swept under the rug a little.
- I stayed with the same doctor because she was a lifesaver. She cried with us, laughed with us, and allowed me to be "crazy."
- I stayed in the same practice but switched to a different doctor. My original doctor wasn't nearly as supportive and sympathetic as the one who was on duty the night our daughter was stillborn. So, I switched to him for my next pregnancy. That meant that I ran the risk that my original doctor could be on duty when my next baby was born. But I figured by then that I wouldn't need that emotional support and sympathy because my focus would be on the baby.

Were there things that you did differently (or didn't do) during the pregnancy after loss because of your loss?

- Not really because I knew there was nothing I could have done to prevent my son's situation.
- With our first pregnancy, I didn't want to know the sex of the baby or do any other major testing. I was just going to "let nature take its course." With the subsequent pregnancy, I was not up for ANY surprises and took all tests and check-ups available.
- I absolutely REFUSED to take any medication, even those that are considered safe in pregnancy. With my first subsequent pregnancy I was determined to have as "normal" of a pregnancy as I could. My second subsequent pregnancy was a lot harder emotionally on me, and I did not even think about bonding with the baby until I was around 26 weeks.
- With my first two pregnancies (both ended before 20 weeks), I was so careful. Not a drop of caffeine, never missed a vitamin, no sugar, and exercised religiously. With my third pregnancy (resulting in a healthy baby), I wasn't as "careful." I didn't smoke or do anything dangerous, but I did allow myself one cup of coffee a day, didn't get worried if I missed a vitamin, indulged my cravings for ice cream floats and fried chicken, etc. I am not recommending that anyone do anything unhealthy or that would make you or the baby sick. I realize that I can still have a healthy pregnancy without making myself stick to a hard and fast regimen.

What helped you during the pregnancy after loss (with anxiety, fear, emotions, and sadness)?

- Surrounding myself with the people I loved and cared about. I almost did not ever want to be alone except for those times I just needed a really good cry by myself.
- It's so important to have a doctor who is supportive and sensitive to your situation. I cannot tell you how much that meant to feel like she was on "our team." Frequent appointments helped so that we were constantly checking in. I also tried to keep busy. We did a lot of traveling during that time. Just for family events or weekend get-aways but it helped pass the time. I also rented a home doppler even though I used to think that was not something I'd ever do.
- Online message boards, writing in my diary, reading
- Having a doctor that understood was extremely helpful. I knew he would see me at a moment's notice. The medical team that was put together for my second and third pregnancies was what kept me sane - that and a lot of prayer. We also wrote emails to friends and family telling them how the pregnancy was progressing and how we were doing emotionally. This seemed to help some with the dumb and nosey questions we would get.

What did NOT help you during the pregnancy after loss?

- Well-meaning people telling me about this friend or that acquaintance that had this or that horrible situation. I think they were trying to make me feel like I was not alone, but it never helped, just made me more depressed.
- People trying to relate to me that couldn't, no matter how they tried. My outlook on the pregnancy could change at a moment's notice and people that could not understand that made things worse for me.
- The anniversary of our loss was much harder than I thought it would be. I really learned the meaning of bittersweet. Planning too far ahead or other people doing so also made me feel anxiety.
- People telling me those trite comments like, "Everything will work out this time" or "Don't worry."
- Questions or comments that created a sense of distrust for my doctor, like second-guessing the tests being done, the timing of ultrasounds, etc.
- Taking a hospital tour and classes with other pregnant couples who obviously had never had a loss. They were worried about getting a room with a certain view. I just wanted my baby to be okay.

Were there books or websites that were helpful during your pregnancy after the loss?

- I got a lot of support from babycenter.com. In fact, I made a really good friend from there and we still keep in touch. It was a safe place to connect with women who had been through similar circumstances. There was a group specific to my loss, one for conception, one for the following pregnancy, and even a board for parenting after. It was a lifesaver.
- Empty Arms was a good one to help me delve into my feelings when I needed to get it all out.
- The Good Grief Club
- To Full Term and Trying Again
- Reading blogs written by moms who had been through the same thing.

What kinds of feelings or expectations did you have regarding the delivery of the baby after the loss?

- My partner and I wanted a completely different experience from the delivery of our son who was born still. That labor was induced. It took a long time to get things going, but once they did it was so fast that I missed the epidural. I was miserable totally exhausted. With my daughter, I wanted to go into labor on my own and then get the epidural so I could rest and enjoy the time with my healthy baby after the birth.

During your pregnancy after the loss, what kinds of planning and preparation did you do to get ready for the baby? Was it different than with the pregnancy that ended in the loss?

- I didn't want to buy anything before the baby was born. I just wanted to pretend that I wasn't really expecting a baby. Actually, I couldn't allow myself to admit I was having a baby.
- I didn't really buy anything until after 24 weeks or so. The nursery came even later. I had to really ration out any excitement or preparation. If I would do too much to prepare, I would get really worried that, surely, something bad would happen. It would really make me nervous if anybody talked about things way in the future.
- I did a lot of the same things. I prepared a nursery and put together everything as though I did not know the pain of a loss. I think this helped me to keep my focus on the new baby instead of allowing the fear to take over.
- In my second pregnancy after my loss, I did not do anything until the very end of the pregnancy. I had a lot of bonding issues.

Did you have a feeling one way or the other regarding the gender of this baby?

- We didn't know the gender of our baby that we miscarried, but I always felt it was a boy. I wanted a boy the next pregnancy. When I found out it was a girl, I really wasn't disappointed because I realized at that minute that my only hope was for a healthy baby of any sex.

How do you think the loss of a baby has affected your parenting skills and attitudes?

- I take nothing for granted. I'm continually amazed at what a miracle she is.
- It's funny, I always thought I would be an overprotective parent but I have turned out to be one that lets my son experience things for himself and learn about life by trial and error. So far that approach has worked out well. I think I might be this way because I feel I have already been through the worst and my family is a little more protected, even if this is a false sense of security. I just feel that God won't give me something so painful to go through again.
- I have no other way to explain it than this: any person that has a child becomes a father or mother. After our son passed away, I became a mommy. When we started having subsequent children, I remained a mommy. A mommy is a person that cares for a child, loves the child, and births/adopts them. A mother is the same person as a mother, just on a whole different level. I take the time to play in the rain with them, snuggle together and talk about nothing. I think I appreciate them more than I would have if I had never had a loss. At the same time though, I am extremely hard on myself especially when I experience normal parenting challenges and frustrations. I tend to tell myself that I should just be grateful I have a living child.
- I think we are much more laid back and relaxed than some of our friends who haven't had a loss. They are worried about little things like if the baby's socks match his outfit or if he has a hair out of place. We don't care if he goes out in public in a stained shirt! We just want him to be healthy and our priority is to enjoy him and our lives together. I guess we no longer "sweat the small stuff."

What are some ways you kept your baby's memory alive during your next pregnancy and after the birth of your new baby?

- I still wear a silver band on my right ring finger with her initials in it. We also purchased a brick with her name on it in Arlington Memorial Park. I spent a lot of time there during my pregnancy and we've taken our daughter there since she was born. We were able to put flowers on her brick on what would have been her 1st birthday.
- We have pictures all around our home and we have just started making it a ritual every night that my 20 month old son will kiss a picture of his big brother and say goodnight.
- Every night our son kisses a picture of his big sister and we say, "See you in Heaven!" He is too young to truly understand, but he will.
- We hang a stocking for her every year. We include her in our prayers.
- We celebrate her birthday every year with cake, balloons, and singing Happy Birthday. We also make a donation every year in her memory.
- We attend the Atlanta Walk to Remember every year. We take our other children with us to pay tribute to their big sister.
- We have pictures of Ryan (our son who died) hanging on the wall with the other children. Also, anytime we do a family picture we take Ryan's teddy bear to be in the picture with us. We celebrate his birthday and both of our other kids know about their older brother that is with Jesus. When my second child Luke was born, I got Ryan two "I'm A Big Brother" buttons from the hospital. I placed one Ryan's bear. Then, when we left the hospital with Luke, we immediately took him over to see Ryan's memorial brick to leave the second button there.

If you could give one piece of advice regarding pregnancy after a loss, what would it be?

- Surround yourself with support. Be patient with your emotions. Cherish every day and do what you can to try to enjoy the experience. Loss, without a doubt, changes you. It's hard not to compare how you're feeling (scared, anxious) with how you "should" be feeling. You really do just have to take it one day at a time and know that your experience now can be fulfilling in its own way.
- Take one day at a time and talk to others about your fears. A support group could be very beneficial either online or in person. I-am-pregnant.com has a great pregnancy after a loss page that was very comforting to me.
- On the days when I would be scared or anxious, I would just remind myself – the only way to the other side is to go through it, and this is how you get there.
- Chances are that what happened to you was a one in a million happening. Try to be positive. If you are spiritual at all, that helps tremendously. It did for me.

If you could give one piece of advice regarding pregnancy after a loss, what would it be? (cont.)

- Pray or meditate. Make private time for yourself.
- Make sure you can trust your doctors with not only your life but with the life of a future baby. If I had listened to my original doctor (and several others I interviewed), I would have lost my second child as well.
- Work through as much of your grief as you can before getting pregnant. There is a whole different kind of grief that comes after you have your new baby home and having worked through the grief from your loss helps.
- Take the time to enjoy it. You have a choice, you can control your fear or you can allow it to control you.

Delivering Hope

By Amy Kassen

On May 4, 2009 I had a little girl named Hope. She passed away within two hours of being born. Unfortunately my husband and I knew this was going to be the outcome. At 20 weeks we went in for an ultrasound and they discovered that I had no amniotic fluid. They later diagnosed Hope with having Potter's Syndrome. As you can imagine we were devastated and our lives have been changed ever since.

Hope was our first child and after going through this traumatic experience, I did not know if I would ever be ready to get pregnant again. My husband and I struggled to know when the "right" time was. We didn't want to do it too soon, as we didn't want to dishonor Hope in anyway. For a while we felt if we got pregnant again, we were moving on from our loss, which was far from the truth.

We ended up getting pregnant eight months after the loss of Hope. I cannot say that I was ever "ready;" I just knew that we wanted a family and we were not ready to give up. When I first read the words "pregnant" on the pregnancy test stick, I could not believe it! I was very excited and knew that my husband was going to be as well.

The excitement was there, but it soon turned into worry. The doctors had explained to us that the odds of our next child having Potter's Syndrome again were close to one in a million, which did comfort us in a way. Although, when we were pregnant with Hope, they had told us that the odds of this happening were 1 in 6,000. For most people when you hear these odds, you think this only happens to "other" people, not me, but after what I had been through I feel like I was those odds.

My doctor had been amazing with handling my first pregnancy so I stayed with the same group since they already knew my history. I am very glad that I did! At my first appointment, they reassured me that they would take extra precaution to make sure that everything was going normally and, more importantly, that I felt comfortable. They had me see a specialist through the first 24 weeks, so I have been

fortunate to have several ultrasounds. I know all mothers would LOVE more ultra sounds! It helped me see for myself that things were going "normal."

Today I am 27 weeks pregnant. Throughout the weeks, I have gone through so many emotions: feelings of guilt, worry, excitement, sadness, and anxiousness. I hadn't had the chance to register, pick out baby bedding, or even have a shower with Hope, so this was all new to me. Even though it is exciting, there is always a momentary feeling of sadness that I did not get to do this for my little angel Hope. In everything I do with our second baby, I still think about how it would have been with Hope and probably always will.

Another difference with this pregnancy is that I feel like this time it is more "clinical." Instead of thinking about what she will look like or what her personality will be, I am constantly worrying if she is developing the way a "normal" baby is supposed to. I count down to every appointment date in anticipation of hearing that beautiful sound . . . her heart beat and seeing that she has plenty of amniotic fluid and hearing the word . . . NORMAL!

As it gets closer to the due date, August 3, 2010, we have begun the nursery. It is all becoming more and more real. It is so exciting to think that I might actually get to bring this one home with me this time. I want so much to just enjoy this time of planning for her arrival, but in the back of my mind I am always wondering, "Is this really going to happen?" I feel as if I have very little control right now. I mean, I can avoid the foods they tell you not to eat, eat the nutritious foods that are good for the baby, take my prenats daily, exercise, get plenty of rest, etc, but I still feel helpless a lot of the times. I long for her to be in my arms where I can take care of her, I long to give her the love and care that a mother is supposed to give and that I never had the chance to give Hope.

If there was one piece of advice that I would give a mother who is going through a similar situation, I would tell her to be patient with herself. Be patient and just know that there is

Delivering Hope

(cont.)

no wrong or right way to feel after such a traumatic loss. You will feel like you are “moving on” and thus will feel guilt. Be patient with yourself; you are not moving on in the sense that you are dishonoring your little girl or little boy who didn’t make it, they will forever be in your hearts.

There is not a day that passes in which I do not think about Hope. We celebrated what would have been her first birthday

this past May. We sent a pink balloon up to her with a note attached. We had cake and ice cream and celebrated her special day. We look forward to making this a family tradition for many years to come. We love her dearly and still wish that she were here with us, but for now she is in Heaven and we cannot wait until we get to see her again! Until then, I know Hope would want brothers and sisters, and so with 14 weeks to go, I just pray that we have a healthy one to bring home!

Pregnancy after Loss

By Shana Stukalsky

Pregnancy after a loss is a very difficult road to travel. You want to be excited, but there is a nagging in the pit of your stomach that reminds you – every single day – that there are no guarantees that this baby will live. Unfortunately for me, my first pregnancy after our first loss did not have the happy ending that everyone insisted was headed our way. Our first son had died in-utero of a congenital birth defect, and although our twins were healthy, they both died at birth after being born prematurely.

I do believe I maintained a relatively healthy attitude during the twin pregnancy. I knew that I was jaded – that a pregnancy did not necessarily mean that healthy babies would be born. I chose to fully engage with my babies during that pregnancy. My thoughts were: if the worst were to happen, I wanted as much time “with them” as possible. So, I talked to them; did prenatal yoga; had a baby shower; decorated their room...all the things that “normal” non-bereaved parents might do during a typical pregnancy. But, the pregnancy was anything but typical. I was SCARED. Every doctor’s appointment brought me heaps of anxiety, and I felt like I was always waiting for some bad news. At the same time, I was still grieving the loss of our first child – and having to remind everyone around me that being pregnant did not erase the pain of his death. These babies were not replacements. The balance of grief and joy was a daily challenge. When the bad news eventually came, I was devastated – but not completely surprised. I knew nothing different. For me, pregnancy equaled loss. And so, we said goodbye to two more sweet babies and tried to figure out how to face the future.

I’ve drawn an analogy between myself and a glass vase. After our first son died, I was shattered – but the pieces were big enough to glue back together, and I think the glue held pretty well. After the twins died, that same glued-together vase was shattered once again. The pieces were even smaller, yet somehow I thought the glue would hold. At that point, however, I worried that if I were to shatter again, that it would be the end of the vase. I did not think I could face another pregnancy, for fear of another loss. From there, we moved to adoption. We had the most wonderful

adoption experience, and our beautiful daughter was born. It was the happiest moment of my life.

Less than a year later, I discovered I was pregnant. I was, of course, very nervous during this pregnancy. I was at the perinatologist office every single week for the duration of my pregnancy and was considered high-risk, given my history. Although he said he’d be fine seeing me every other week at one point, we decided that my mental well-being was important for maintaining a healthy pregnancy, and the weekly visits continued. I took every precaution necessary, but then again – I was a busy mom. I think having a toddler at the time kept me sane. I knew that no matter what happened, I would have to hold it together for her. She became the super glue for my shattered vase. She gave me the strength I needed to face the unknown.

My son was born at 35 weeks and spent a few days in the NICU. Many of the other NICU parents (whose babies were like mine – healthy, just needing some extra care) were in a bad place – this was not the plan they had in mind as to what it would be like when their baby was born. But me? I was cheering. My child was alive, breathing, healthy...did I mention ALIVE? I still, to this day, am shocked that my body brought a living child into this world.

It’s not all sunshine and roses, though. I was discharged from the hospital several days before him. Leaving the hospital without my son was extremely emotional for me. After my first son was born, I vowed that I would never leave the hospital without my baby again. And with my twins, I carried them out with me (to go to the funeral home). When my daughter was born, she went home with me. Having to leave the hospital after giving birth WITHOUT MY CHILD brought such a wave of painful feelings. I cried like I had never cried before. People kept reassuring me that he was fine, that he was healthy, and that he would be coming home in a few days. They didn’t understand that I wasn’t concerned about that, that I wasn’t crying for him. I was crying for them. I was crying for me.

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