



Who Am I? Finding a New Identity in Grief

Several months ago I received a phone call from a very distraught mom. She lost her baby girl three years ago, has since had a healthy little boy, and is happily married to a wonderful man. Yet she felt lost and unsure of who she was.

Oftentimes at our support group, we talk about finding our “new normal,” meaning we cannot go back to “normal,” because what was once normal no longer exists. Therefore, we have to go forward and find our new normal. Same is true for finding the new “us.” It is impossible to return to who we once were because, after experiencing something as traumatic as losing a child, we are not the same person as we were before. Finding or creating that new “us” can be extremely difficult.

I am definitely not the same woman I was before losing my stillborn son, Jonathan, and I changed a little again six years later when I had a miscarriage. I think knowing we have changed is a huge part of what makes grieving so torturous. So many times that first year following Jonathan’s death I asked myself, “who am I now?” And as a couple and family, “who are we?” I felt like I was the poor young woman who was the only one in the world who had just experienced the unimaginable. I felt like the freak in the crowd and as though I was being pitied by all around me. I felt I had failed my husband, my toddler, my family, and my close friends. I decided I no longer had anything in common with anyone I knew and could not imagine life as I once knew it ever resuming. Sounds dramatic I know, but that’s how I felt and perceived my life at the time.

Fourteen years have passed since Jonathan’s stillbirth and I have successfully evolved into the “new me.” I am a wife of 21 years to my husband, a mom to my senior in high school, have lost two babies, have had a kidney transplant, and I direct a national infant loss organization. Not exactly how I dreamed my life would be when I was a little girl. But despite the sufferings I have endured, I am very happy, I love life, and I feel extremely blessed by all God has given me. Yet admittedly, times remain when I feel awkward and out of place in certain crowds. I’m still uncomfortable with the question, “how many children do you have?”, and sometimes it makes me sad when I see a family with multiple children. I’m sure that aspect of grief will never go away.

It’s at those moments of sorrow that I have to remember God created me to be exactly who I am. He molded me with an outgo-

ing, talkative, loud, opinionated, and bold personality. He matched me with the perfect husband, and blessed me with a beautiful son who loves the Lord with all his heart. He decided to make me a twin, and put us at the end of the six kids in our family. He gave me leadership abilities and organizational skills that enable me to do all that He’s called me to do.

I got a little mixed up and confused with all that after losing Jonathan, but finally it came into perspective. I may not have chosen everything about who I am today, but I know God did. I may not always like it or think it’s fair, but I know God has a plan and that I have to trust His sovereignty. At times I decide I’m going to independently take charge of my life, and make things go MY way, but then I humbly admit I only desire His ways for me.

Finding the new you after a tragedy in your life is not easy. It takes time, lots of prayer, and support of those who love you. If you are like my friend Liz was, searching for the new you, be patient. Seek the Lord. She, like me, certainly still has moments of sadness and wondering, but for the most part she found the person God created her to be. She realized through her suffering the Lord has put a call on her to minister to other hurting women by directing one of our support groups. She takes her role very seriously and lovingly shepherds those who have been placed under her leadership. Perhaps God has placed something similar on your heart. Maybe it is not quite to the capacity of directing a group, but most assuredly you are more understanding and compassionate to the sorrows of others.

Sure, we didn’t choose the path on which we have all found ourselves, but after a time of healing, embrace the new you. Be proud and not ashamed of who you have become and ask the Lord to guide and direct you toward His ultimate plan for your life.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell*

mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell

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M.E.N.D. is a Christian nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to reach out to those who have lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death and offer a way to share experiences and information through monthly meetings, this newsletter, and our Web site.

For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the newsletter, contact us at

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This is the New You

The book of Ecclesiastes says that there is a time, and a season, for everything (ch. 3). These seasons are what give life color, what makes us who we are. Unfortunately, it includes a time to weep and grieve.

By age 36, I thought I had seen this “color” already. The season of grief had visited my life in a variety of ways, and I had learned much from those times. But when I visited the grief of having my first two pregnancies end in miscarriage... that was a color I could have never imagined. I was no longer the girl who would announce each pregnancy in a large family setting so we all could celebrate. I was no longer the girl who could get excited just because the pregnancy test was positive. I was no longer the girl who could easily rejoice with her friends when they were pregnant, for fear that they too would have to see this painful color.

But, in time, the color does begin to take on more pleasant hues as life's seasons change. The book of Ecclesiastes calls it, “a time to laugh and dance (vs 4)... a time to mend (vs 7).” Though, in the midst of grief, this may seem impossible. We never get rid of the effect of the experience of our losses. All the colors and seasons of our lives make up who we are, regardless of age. For this is the new you.

♥ Michele Wilson,

mommy to Baby Wilson I and Baby Wilson II

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa Chapter Director

Reader's Corner

Dear Rebekah,

If you'll recall, I emailed you in May about our baby who had been diagnosed with a cystic hygroma when I was 12 weeks pregnant. Many of your members reached out to me and shared their stories. I cannot tell you how grateful I am and always will be for those messages. After considering our options, we made the decision to continue the pregnancy and felt very much at peace. The many messages I received played a huge part in that decision.

The transformation I felt over the next few days was astounding. Initially, I had dreaded the thought of feeling my baby move or watching my belly grow. But I decided that I would treasure every single moment I had with our baby, and I began to feel eager for those things.

We learned a little more about our baby in the week following my email to you. Our baby had a chromosomal abnormality called Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome. We also learned that we were having a little girl. We named her Esme Sage.

One day, when I was 15 weeks, I felt her tiny little movements. Although it was still early, I knew without a doubt that I was feeling her. It was one of the most joyous moments of my life. A week later, at my next scheduled appointment, we learned that she was gone. Our precious daughter was in heaven. Three weeks ago yesterday, I was induced and had a very blessed, uncomplicated delivery. We held our little Esme for several hours and treasured every moment.

Many of the women who messaged me wrote how grateful they were for this experience, and I remember feeling rather surprised by that. But I get it now. While my sadness is still extremely profound, I would not change anything about this. My faith has been strengthened immensely. I look forward to a time when I may be able to provide comfort and strength to someone in a similar situation. Thank you again for the support you and the other M.E.N.D. members gave me. I am so very grateful.

♥ Christy DePardo,

mommy to Esme Sage,

M.E.N.D.—Dallas

Book Reviews

The Fragile Heart

By Shelly L. Rainey
www.xulonpress.com

Author Shelly Rainey shares her journey of losing three babies, the diagnosis of Chrons disease, and the loss of her job. Through it all, Rainey testifies to the comfort, deliverance, and healing through the Lord.

NOTE: When searching www.xulonpress.com, scroll to the bottom of the home page, then search using the author's last name.

♥ Review by Rebekah Mitchell,
M.E.N.D.—President

Holding on to Hope

By Nancy Guthrie
ISBN: 978-1-4143-1296-5

Nancy Guthrie knows what it means to be plunged into life's abyss. Framing her own story of staggering loss and soaring hope with the biblical story of Job, she takes her fellow sufferers by the hand and guides them on a pathway through pain—straight to the heart of God.

I have read a lot of infant loss books and this by far is my favorite! This is the book that helped me get through the loss of Abby six years ago. It is a short, very easy read and a must-read for all who have experienced the loss of a baby, but also very applicable for those going through any other type of suffering (i.e. loss of a job, divorce, loss of someone close).

♥ Review by Jaimie Crump,
M.E.N.D.—Houston Chapter Director

M.E.N.D. has a complete list of books, Web sites, organizations, and music resources available online at www.mend.org.

If you would like to submit a review of books, music, Web sites or other resources dealing with infant loss, please email them to our newsletter editor Heather Fann at heather@mend.org.

Houston's Walk To Remember

Don't miss M.E.N.D.—Houston's 2009 Walk to Remember on Saturday, October 10, featuring Christian author Nancy Guthrie as she speaks about "*Hearing Jesus Speak Into Your Sorrow*." Additionally, Guthrie and her husband David will address "*Holding on to Hope*" on Friday evening October 9 at Metropolitan Baptist Church.

All M.E.N.D. members from other chapters as well as family and friends are welcome to attend. Please plan to attend this wonderful weekend event. For more information, please email chapter director Jaimie Crump at jaimie@mend.org. For a list of published works by Nancy Guthrie, visit her website at www.nancyguthrie.com.

November/December Topic

Holiday Issue

Deadline: September 30, 2009

January/February Topic

How Extended Family Grieves—

Or Doesn't

Deadline: November 30, 2009

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcomed. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the newsletter. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Please see page two of the newsletter for the appropriate address to send your submissions. Any submission printed in our newsletter will also be posted to our Web site indefinitely unless we receive notice in writing that you are only granting permission for your submission to appear in the printed version of the newsletter.

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www.mend.org



Birthday Tributes

Happy 1st Birthday, Rylan!

Happy first birthday in heaven!

As you celebrate with the angels and Jesus, we celebrate and remember you here. You will always be our little angel. We are thankful for you and the many things you taught us this year.

Our prayer is that your life and death would be for God's purpose and glory. You will always be in our hearts and forever our precious baby girl!

We love you and miss you,
Mommy and Daddy

Rylan Elizabeth Slate

October 17- 20, 2008

Unknown cause

Parents: Daniel and Kristah Slate

Big Brothers: Camden and Everett



Happy 10th Birthday, sweet Ashley Renee!

We love and miss you!
Love,

Mommy, Daddy, Laura, and Katherine

Ashley Renee Dedear

October 29—November 1, 1999

Placenta abruption/extreme prematurity

Parents: Tim and Cindy Dedear

Sisters: Laura Elizabeth (twin) and Katherine



Happy 11th Birthday, Jackson!

We love you and miss you still...

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Hannah, and Andy

Jackson David Crowe

August 22, 1998 - September 9, 1998

Congenital Heart Defect, Heart Failure

Parents: Marie and David Crowe

Siblings: Big sister Hannah and

Little brother Andy



Happy 2nd Birthday, my angel, Jayden B!

I love you so much. Happy birthday my little princess. It seems like time went by so fast, but each day I hold your precious memories in my heart. Mommy has found so much comfort in God, and He has kept me sane through this. I didn't think I would make it some days because it has been tough, but my relationship with God allowed me to find a place of peace safe in His arms. Maybe one day I will try again, but this time everything will be right and in order.

We love you! Rest in peace my angel.

Always remembering,

Mom, Grandma "Momma" Clara,

Uncle Jamie, Aunt Michelle,

your cousins

Jeron, Dequincy, J.J, Jessica, Yolanda, and Mark

Jayden Breonna Jenkins

September 25, 2007

Toxemia

Mother: Shanae Jenkins



Happy 7th Birthday, sweet Aiden!

Another year has passed and we miss you as much as ever! Watching your little brothers grow and play I am constantly reminded how you should be here—wrestling with them!

Seven years have come and gone—yet I can feel you in my arms like it was yesterday.

Have a wonderful day in heaven.

We love you!

Mommy, Daddy, Sebastian, and Benjamin

Aiden Xavier Sohn

October 13, 2002

HELLP Syndrome

Also remembering Hope,

Miscarried May 2003,

and Whisper,

Miscarried October 2003

Parents: Doug and Angelique Sohn

Little brothers: Sebastian and Benjamin



Happy 1st Birthday, Lamon!

My precious son, since the first time I looked into your sweet face, I was planning all your birthday parties in my mind. I knew I was going to go all out for your first year. I just never thought you would not be here with us to celebrate. Rest assured, I am still going to celebrate big time for you, my precious son, and I hope you will be joining in from heaven up above. We miss you so much, Lamon. Not a day goes by that I don't speak your name. We love you always.

Happy birthday, Mama's Little Fellow!

William Lamon Thompson
October 7, 2008 - January 23, 2009

SIDS

Parents: Vidal and Andrea Thompson

Siblings: Kristina, Chelsa, and Vidal, Jr.



Happy 1st Birthday, our precious daughter!

Cana Lynn, you would be 1 year old and celebrating your year birthday in the arms of Christ.

As we remember our time with you, we know we would never ever trade our nine months with you safely in mommy's tummy...or the 27 hours God gave us to look into your beautiful eyes.

Cana Lynn Milbrandt, you revealed God's glory.

John 2:11

We miss you, baby girl. Give Jesus a high five from us!
Mommy, Daddy, and big brother Travis

Cana Lynn Milbrandt
October 8-9, 2009

Trisomy 18

Parents: Mitch and Christina Milbrandt

Big brother: Travis



Happy 2nd Birthday, Brandon!

Happy 2nd birthday, my Sweet Angel. I love and miss you every day and always think of you. I know that you're with God moving, playing and being happy. Happy Birthday!

Until I see you again,
Love you always,
Mommie

Brandon Isaiah Alfaro
October 19, 2007—February 7, 2008
Spinal Muscular Atrophy
Mommie: Jennifer Alfaro



Happy 2nd Birthday, Jailyn!

We miss you and know that you are always with us. Big hugs and kisses to you little girl. Continue to shine bright.

We love you,
Mommy, Daddy, Kaitlyn, and Devon

Jailyn Nicole Carter

September 24, 2007

Cord Accident

Parents: Derrick and Cynthia Carter

Siblings: Kaitlyn and Devon



Happy 6th Birthday, sweet David!

Little David, we can hardly believe you would soon be celebrating your sixth birthday! C.J. starts pre-school this year and we can't help but think about how you would be starting kindergarten! What a big year this would have been for us all! We love you, precious little boy, and miss you every day. Thank God for the hope that we have of an eternity together after this momentary sorrow passes.

Love and Love and Love,
Mommy, Daddy, and C.J.

David Atkins Stephens

October 23, 2003

Possible complications from an omphalocele

Also remembering

Baby Stephens III

June 30, 2008

Baby Stephens IV

January, 2009

Parents: Rob and Melissa Stephens

Little Brother: C.J.



Happy 1st Birthday, Holden!

He was our sweet sunshine from heaven
Holden on to his memory!

Holden Matthew Coffman

Complications of an omphalocele

September 22, 2008

Parents: Al and Cindy Coffman

Siblings: Hannah, Hayden, and Harrison



Continued on page 6...

Continued from page 5...

Happy 2nd Birthday, Avery!

We miss you so much. We have a very special balloon that we have been saving all year to send up to you. We wish you were here to meet your little sister with us. We wish you could see all the dolls and baby things we are donating to charity in your memory again this year.

We love you,
Mommy and Daddy

Avery Merae Longgood
August 2-3, 2007
Possible Stroke
Parents: Neil and Jamie Longgood
and little sister



Happy 7th Birthday, Logan!

Logan,

It's so hard to believe you would be turning 7! I look at your brothers and wonder what kinds of mischief y'all would be getting yourselves into. We talk about you often and your brothers often ask about what your birthdays are like there in heaven. Most recently they said that they would imagine birthdays there are "tons of fun with lots of cake ... balloons... more cake... toys... and probably more cake!" (Your brothers really love cake!)

We miss you so much and imagine the day we will all be reunited.

We love you and we'll see you soon.
We are so glad that you are ours!
Mommy, Daddy, Landry, and Hudson

Logan Wayne Fish
September 17, 2002
Thanatophoric Dwarfism
Parents: David and Brittney Fish
Siblings: Landry and Hudson



Happy 2nd Birthday, Ethan!

We miss you so much! Your baby brother, Jakob, was born two days before Christmas 2008. Jakob will know all about you some day. Your big brother, Thomas, is a very good brother to Jakob and he misses you all the time. We are always thinking of you.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Thomas, and Jakob

Ethan Kane Spurrier
Stillborn September 5, 2007
Cord Accident
Parents: Bruce and Sandra Spurrier
Siblings: Thomas and Jakob



One day I will hold my beautiful precious grandson, Ethan, but for now I will dream about it. We love you sweet boy.
Grandmother: Norma Bomar

Happy 4th Birthday, Rylee!

Rylee Lynn,

I can't believe you would be 4 years old. I wonder if you would be a tomboy, and play rough with your Daddy and big brothers. Or would you be girly, and love shopping and girl movies with me. I know you would be the "boss" of the house!

I think about you every day, baby girl! I love you so much!
Happy birthday with love,
Mama, Daddy, Jared, and Hunter

Rylee Lynn Crye
Stillborn October 31, 2005
Vascular Malformation
Also remembering Baby Crye 1
Miscarried March 21, 1994
and Baby Crye II
Miscarried January 14, 1997
Parents: Gene and Randi Crye
Siblings: Jared and Hunter



Happy 1st Birthday, Jaxon!

It hardly seems a year since we held and kissed you, our precious angel. There is not a day that goes by that we have not thought about you or cried for you. We love you and miss you greatly. Your birthday will always hold a special place in our hearts and you will never be forgotten. Have a happy first birthday!

With all of our love,
Mommy, Daddy, Austin, and Jocelyn

Jaxon Henry Massey
September 17, 2008
Trisomy 13
Also remembering
Aiden Christopher Massey
Miscarried March 4, 2009
Trisomy 13
Parents: Damon and Jessica Massey
Siblings: Austin and Jocelyn



Looking Ahead

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>October 3</i> | <i>December 8</i> |
| • Walk To Remember
in Irving, TX | • Christmas Ceremony
in Irving, TX |
| <i>October 9</i> | <i>December 15</i> |
| • M.E.N.D.—Houston
Night With Nancy Guthrie | • Christmas Ceremony
in Irving, TX |
| <i>October 10</i> | |
| • M.E.N.D.—Houston
Walk To Remember | |

Happy 4th Birthday, Aidan!

You came into this world sooner than expected
and with loving arms you were met,
no one knew the short time you would spend with us
the doctors could only guess.

Only moments after our first meeting
the nurses took you away,
no one could explain what was happening
everything was so confusing and your mommy was in a daze.

The first couple weeks of your life were so hard
the doctors were still questioning your fate,
time seemed to stand still in the NICU
and there was nothing to do but wait.

You fought and fought to stay alive
you weren't ready to leave,
but God had a different plan for you
and that's what we all believed.

Your time on earth was too short for me
and I wasn't ready to say goodbye,
but I think of you sitting next to our Father
praising Him with your little hands held high.

It has been four years since you came into my life
and I miss you more and more,
you're are my inspiration, my love, my light
and I can't wait to meet you at heaven's door.

Aidan Shaw Vander Cruyssen
October 2, 2005 – December 3, 2005
Polycystic Kidney Disease
Mommy: Shane
Little sister: Cameron Shaw



Seasons of Life

I think back on my niece's beautiful life.
She was full of wonder even with her strife.

For a season little Autumn was with us all.
She was such an adorable red-haired doll.

She inspired us with her strong will to be.
Although she was weak her soul was free.

It's good to know she's joined her big brother.
And that heavens angels now have another.

Five months old loving her mommy's embrace.
I still wonder why God took her from this place.

She's safe now looking down on us from above.
Always in our hearts and always with our love.

♥ *Aunt Holly Reed,*
written for Summer Williamson,
mommy to Matthia Swithin and Autumn Lily,
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

The Shrinking Cloak

For many months after we lost our little boy, I felt that the largest part of my identity was that of a grieving mother. It was as if every morning when I got up I put on a large, heavy cloak of grief and wore it all day.

Eventually, through the healing powers of faith and the love and support of others, the cloak became smaller and lighter. I still put it on every morning, but it didn't weigh me down quite as much.

I can't say exactly when it happened, probably around two years later, but I wasn't wearing the cloak any longer. There were still times of great sadness and tears, but they were fewer and further apart.

Eventually, I didn't define myself by my loss any longer. Even more than a decade later, our son's short life and his death are still very much a part of me, but not chiefly "who I am" anymore. Healing happened very slowly for me, but surely did happen. I wish the same for all parents who are grieving the loss of their precious child.

♥ *Marie Crowe,*
mommy to Jackson David,
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

In Loving Memory



Jordan Alexander Booker

Stillborn January 11, 2007
True knot in cord
Parents: Norma Jordan and Mark Booker
Given by mommy Norma Jordan

Sydney Lynne Brown

May 18, 2000
Cord Problem & other unknown conditions

Ashley MacKenzie Brown

Antiphospholipid Antibodies
May 18, 2001
Given by parents Brian and Marilyn Brown
and little brother Samuel

Jackson Dean Cochran

April 24 - May 19, 2004
Prematurity
Given by parents
Stacey and DeAnna Cochran
and little sibling Christian

Abigail Grace Crump

Stillborn July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Given by parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump
and little sisters Cami and Karli

Aamiyah Marie Davis

Stillborn November 2, 2007
Cord Accident
Given by mommy Stephanie Curry

Kyler Paul English

Stillborn January 20, 2006
Cord accident
Given by parents Laurie and Bob English
and brothers Justin, Kinser, Kelson,
and Kayden

Caleb Scott Fann

December 1, 2003
PROM

Baby August

Miscarried August 13, 2004
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann
Little Sister: Madison Grace
Given by great-grandparents
Lloyd and Bessie Marshall

Caleb Scott Fann

December 1, 2003
PROM

Baby August

Miscarried August 13, 2004
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann
Little Sister: Madison Grace
Given by Jim and Bonnie Thomas

Caleb Scott Fann

December 1, 2003
PROM

Baby August

Miscarried August 13, 2004
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann
Little Sister: Madison Grace
Given by Bill and Kelly Vaughan

Elizabeth Gentry

Stillborn May 10, 1997
Cystic Hygroma & Anasarca

Baby Gentry

Miscarried May 10, 1997

Meghan "Meggie" Elizabeth Gentry

June 3, 2001
Kidney Abnormality
Given by parents Shary and John Gentry
and siblings Alison and Mark

Erika Brienne Grau

July 9 - August 3, 1997
Anoxic Brain Injury due to ruptured uterus
Given by parents Yvette and Ray Grau
and siblings Nikryan and Nataly

Jackson Lee Graves

October 12, 2004 - February 19, 2005
Complications from Omphalocele
Given by parents
James and Angie Graves

Karlene Jewel Hostetler

August 15, 2004
Congenital Abnormalities
Given by parents
Lyndon and Luann Hostetler
and sisters Kaitlyn, Karen, and Kristen

Gift of Support

West Conroe Baptist Church
Conroe, Texas

Scarlett Lovejoy

Stillborn November 24, 2006
Unknown cause
Given by parents Jeff and Emily Lovejoy
and little brother Benjamin

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001
Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
Big brother: Byron, Jr.
Given by grandparents
Dennis and Sue Brewer

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001
Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
Big brother: Byron, Jr.
Given by grandparents
Lyle and Marnie Mitchell

Sarah Elizabeth Rotello

Miscarried May 31, 2002

Jacob Asher Rotello

Miscarried May 7, 2003

Hannah Ruth Rotello

Miscarried November 18, 2006
Given by parents Paul and Angela Rotello
and brother Jackson

Ethan Kane Spurrier

Stillborn September 5, 2007
Cord Accident
Parents: Bruce and Sandra Spurrier
Brothers: Thomas and Jakob
Given by grandmother Norma Bomar

Aidan Shaw VanderCruyssen

October 2 - December 3, 2005
Polycystic Kidney Disease
Given by mommy Shane VanderCruyssen
and little sister Cameron

Jorden Alexander-Vela

February 26, 2009
Unknown cause
Given by parents
Jessie McGuire and Colton Vela

Gift of Support

Given by UnitedHealth Group Employee
Giving Campaign

Gift of Support

Metropolitan Baptist Church
Houston, Texas

Gift of Support

Given by Monique Moya

M.E.N.D.

gratefully acknowledges these gifts of love given in memory of a baby, relative, friend, or given by someone just wanting to help. These donations help us to continue M.E.N.D.'s mission by providing this newsletter and other services to bereaved parents free of charge. Please refer to page 2 of this newsletter for more information regarding where to send your donations and what information to include.

Thank you so much!



Subsequent Births

Allison and Brian Clark
of McKinney, Texas,
along with big brother Matt,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Tate Landon,
born June 6, 2009,
measuring 6 lb., 2 oz.,
and 20 inches long.
The Clark family lovingly remembers
Tanner Lee,
stillborn March 30, 2008,
cord accident.

Kristen and Mike Burnett
of Keller, Texas,
along with big brother Will,
joyfully announce the birth of
Jack Donald,
born two months early June 12, 2009,
measuring nearly 4 pounds.
The Burnett family lovingly remembers
Charles "Charlie" Michael
July 12, 2008,
premature / incompetent cervix.

Scott and Keri Gerkin
of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Jacob Allan,
born May 29, 2009,
measuring 7 lb., 4 oz.,
and 21½ inches long.
The Gerkin's lovingly remember twins
Baby Gerkin I and Baby Gerkin II,
miscarried January 18, 2008.

Jonathan and Yana Andrus
of McKinney, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Lana Joy,
born April 21, 2009,
measuring 6 lb., 5 oz.,
and 18 inches long.
The Andrus family lovingly remembers
Baby Andrus,
miscarried June 25, 2008.

Jeff and Kimberly Adams
of Spring, Texas,
along with big sister and brother,
Caroline and Joshua,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Weston Daniel,
born June 29, 2009,
measuring 9 lb., 4oz.,
and 22 inches long.
The Adams' lovingly remember
Anna,
miscarried August 29, 2005,
Benjamin Daniel,
stillborn February 14, 2006,
and Baby Adams,
miscarried July 20, 2006.

Rodney and Andrea Burt
of Arlington, Texas,
along with big brother Ethan,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Chloe Juliette,
born June 30, 2009,
measuring 5 lb., 5 oz.,
and 18 inches long.
The Burt family lovingly remembers
Sophie Alyce-Marie,
stillborn June 20, 2008.

Terri and Kent Billingsley
of Coppell, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Turner Kent,
born July 21, 2009,
7 lb., 10 oz.,
and 20½ inches long.
The Billingsleys lovingly remember
Fallon Elise,
stillborn April 4, 2008,
placental abruption due to preeclampsia.

Phil and Katie Goodson
of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
along with big brother Bennett,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Paxen Blake,
born July 12, 2009,
measuring 8 lb., 2 oz.,
and 21 inches long.
The Goodson's lovingly remember
Daniel Joseph,
miscarried July 4, 2005.

Kim and Micah Bevins
of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
along with siblings Ty and Ella,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Cash Daniel,
born April 21, 2009,
measuring 8 lb., 8 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Bevins family lovingly remembers
Carter,
stillborn September 18, 2005,
Hydrops,
and Lucy,
May 9, 2008,
Hydrops.

Jana and Grant Spigener
of Arlington, Texas,
along with brothers
Wyatt, Ford, Porter, and Calvin
joyfully announce the arrival of
Sadie Marie,
born July 20, 2009,
measuring 6 lb., 7 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Spigener's lovingly remember
Mercedes Ruth,
stillborn September 21, 1995,
Intramembranous Insertion of the
Umbilical Cord,
Twin Blossoms Spigener,
miscarried July and August 1996,
and Baby Spigener,
miscarried February 2004.

Alisha Crumley
of Mansfield, Texas,
joyfully announces the birth of twins,
born July 23, 2009.
Collin Reed,
measured 5 lb., 15 oz.,
and
Holden Grey,
measured 5 lb., 12 oz.
Alisha lovingly remembers her triplets,
Hudson, Jackson, and Weston,
June 30, 2008,
premature.



M.E.N.D. Chapter Corner

Chapter Meeting Information

M.E.N.D.—NW Arkansas

Meets the 1st Tuesday from 6:30—8:00 p.m.
Jones Center for Families, Room 206,
922 East Emma Avenue,
Springdale, AR 72765
Director: April Moreton
april@mend.org, (479) 524-3500

M.E.N.D.—Kansas

Meets the 2nd Thursday, 7:00 p.m.
at Cora Miller Hall/Newman
Division of Nursing, Room 107
1127 Chestnut, Emporia, KS 66801
Director: Stephanie Metzger
stephanie@mend.org., (620) 343-6357

M.E.N.D.—Houston

Meets the 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
HEALTHSOUTH Houston
Rehabilitation Institute
17506 Red Oak Drive, Houston, TX 77090
Director: Jaimie Crump
jaimie@mend.org, (281) 374-8528

Subsequent pregnancy group meets bi-monthly
on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Sarah Winebrenner
(swinebrenner2004@yahoo.com).

Daddy's group meets quarterly on the 3rd
Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Tim Winebrenner
(swinebrenner2004@yahoo.com).

M.E.N.D.—Georgia

Offers peer support via phone and email contact.
Director: Marie Stockdale
maries@mend.org, (678) 634-3686

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana

Meets 3rd Thursday 7:00 p.m.
CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehab Hospital
2400 St. Michael Drive
Texarkana, TX 75503
Director: Monica Davis
monica@mend.org, (903) 490-1210

M.E.N.D.—Hill Country

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Gillespie County Historical Society Building
312 W. San Antonio St.
Fredericksburg, TX 78624
Director: Larissa Hallford
larissa@mend.org, (830) 456-4178

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa

Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
Canyon Crossing
1651 E Old North Rd.
Sand Springs, Oklahoma 74063
Director: Michele Wilson
michele@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Project H.O.P.E.
1419 S. Enterprise
Springfield, Missouri 65804
Director: Heather Fann
heather@mend.org, (417) 818-0489

M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates

NW Arkansas

M.E.N.D.—NW Arkansas has wrapped up the summer with steady attendance at their support group meetings, and is preparing for their upcoming Candlelight Christmas Ceremony.

April Moreton

Kansas

M.E.N.D.—Kansas continues to minister to families who have experienced the loss of a baby. If you know of parents in need of help, please contact me at stephanie@mend.org.

Stephanie Metzger

Houston

We are so excited to have David and Nancy Guthrie coming to Houston for a speaking engagement on Friday night, October 9, and as the guest speaker on Saturday, October 10, for the Walk to Remember. M.E.N.D.—Houston is a huge fan of her books, *Holding on to Hope*, *The One Year Book of Hope* and her latest, *Hearing Jesus Speak Into Your Sorrow*. We are so blessed to be able to hear her first-hand, and how God has worked in her life through the loss of her two babies. Everyone is invited to attend both events; however, please RSVP to ensure adequate seating to jaimie@mend.org.

Jaimie Crump

Georgia

The Atlanta chapter continues to minister to hurting families through email and by phone. For more information, email rebekah@mend.org or maries@mend.org or call Rebekah Mitchell at 972-506-9000.

Marie Stockdale

Texarkana

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana is looking forward to our third Candlelight Christmas Ceremony. The date is tentatively set for Saturday, December 5 at 6:00 p.m. More details will be coming at a later date. If you would like to attend or would like more information, please call me at 903-490-1210 or email monica@mend.org.

Monica Davis

Hill Country

M.E.N.D.—Hill Country is growing. We are reaching out into the community and inviting all who have experienced the death of their baby. I continue to pray for those who are suffering, lonely, and grieving. I am thankful for a community that supports and encourages me with M.E.N.D.

Larissa Hallford

Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa is so excited about our upcoming fundraiser event, so if you get this newsletter before September 17th, check out our website at www.mendtulsaevents.com. We hope you can join us.

Michele Wilson

SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri has been nearly six years in the making. I'm so thankful that the Lord's timing is perfect and that we will be hosting our first support group meeting September 3. We've received lots of support from the community from media coverage to members joining our Facebook group, as well as commitments from four great volunteer assistants. We're excited about families finally having a resource for support in this area.

Heather Fann

Finding Me, By Trusting God

The saying goes, “Hind sight is 20/20.” This quote has become so real in my life after losing my first-born daughter, Aamiyah Maria Davis. It’s been almost two years since she passed and I am grateful to say that God has allowed good to come from her death. While I was going through and grieving the loss, I was very angry with God.

I’m sure this is something that comes into most of our minds after losing a child. I fought off thoughts of blaming somebody, anybody. It only seemed normal to put the blame on somebody because it seems to help establish some type of closure. Since a cord accident couldn’t be placed on the doctors, I chose to blame God. How could He take my baby from me after allowing me to conceive when doctors told me I couldn’t.

However, throughout this past year and a half that Aamiyah’s been gone, I can honestly say I have put my faith back in God and become a new person. When I became pregnant with Aamiyah, my life was a mess. Throughout my pregnancy I tried to prepare myself as much as possible for motherhood. The only problem was my lifestyle didn’t change much. It only slowed down. Not to mention I was trying to do it alone and without God’s hand. When God took Aamiyah away from me it seemed that I couldn’t figure out why. However, now as I reflect back, I can see with perfect, or 20/20, vision. God had a different plan for my life.

I have since had a healthy baby boy, who is now 8 months old. I have also become an entirely different woman than I was previously, and I give all the credit to Aamiyah and my Jesus. They wanted more for me than what I was living up to back then. That kind of hurt and pain was probably the only thing in the world that was going to shake my world up and cause a change in my life. Also, besides being a new creation in God, I have become one of the best mothers in the world (in my opinion, of course).

After experiencing such a loss, I have a sincere appreciation for my offspring. My son, Roman Malachi, is the center of my world. I always wonder when I look back if I would have been as great of a mother to Aamiyah as I am to Roman without knowing how truly fragile life really is. So take it from me, finding a new identity through grief doesn’t have to mean finding people to blame or becoming a sad, disheartened person. It’s about trusting God and using your painful experience to become the strong, courageous soldier that God created you to be.

♥ *Stephanie Curry,*
mommy to Aamiyah Marie Davis
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

M.E.N.D. Support Group Meetings

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings

are held the 2nd Thursday of every month from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Daddies group

meets the 2nd Thursday of March, June, Sept. and Dec., from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

A time for dads to meet together and discuss topics relevant to them as fathers. Our moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups for discussion.

Food and Fellowship

A time to relax and meet with other M.E.N.D. parents in a social setting

Contact Brittney Fish:
brittney@mend.org

Subsequent pregnancy group

meets the 4th Tuesday from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Led by Liz Walker:
liz@mend.org

For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss.

Playgroup

For families with children born prior to or subsequent to a loss.

Meeting at various locations.

Contact Paula Schear or Brandee Dill for more info: pkshear@yahoo.com or dillsforchrist@yahoo.com

Mommies AND daddies are both welcome at all M.E.N.D. meetings.

All main chapter support group meetings are held at:

Suggs Law Firm
1522 W. Airport Freeway, Suite 200
Irving, TX 75062

(Located on the south side of the highway, Between MacArthur Boulevard and Story Road)

For more information, call (972) 506-9000.

Infertility group

Meets the 3rd Monday from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Led by Paula Schear:
pkshear@yahoo.com

For families experiencing infertility after a loss.

I'm Mommy.

If I have to begin, I would have to say this story is in two parts. As long as I can remember I have always wanted to be a mother. Due to uterain fibroids and uterain scarring I never thought it was possible to have a child, but in November 2006, I learned I was pregnant. On April 1, 2007 at 22-weeks I gave birth to my son, Julian David.

After five long hours of him fighting for life, I decided that I would let him go to be with the Lord. I suppose as any parent who loses their child, we go through a period of time that we feel empty and lost, but all I wanted to do is honor my son. Although I didn't have a living son, I was no less a mother than those who had their living children. I talk about my son as if he were alive, because he is alive in my heart. I honor my son by talking about him. When I meet someone who has lost a child, I let them know their baby made them a Mommy and Daddy, just like my son did for me. Even though my son lives in heaven, he is still my baby, and I am still his mommy. That is who I am....MOMMY.

In October 2008, I was blessed to learn that I was pregnant again. Immediately, as I did with my son, I began to have complications. There were times that my faith would get weak even though I knew my baby had an angel in heaven watching it, I sometimes thought the worse. I had one aunt in particular who always reminded me to keep my faith, and assured me she was praying every day for a safe delivery.

At 36-weeks, June 2, 2009, I gave birth to my 5 pound, 5 ounce, daughter Sonya Anelecia Wall. Even though she was a premie, my baby was healthy and my complications didn't affect her at all. A few days after I was released from the hospital, I was feeling lonely for my son and decided to visit the cemetery. Those of us with a subsequent child know that a living child can never replace the child you lost. Even two years later I sat at his cemetery crying and wishing he was with me and his baby sister. After I left the cemetery, I went to my parents' house and had another long cry. Then my mother gave me a letter to me from my aunt with the enclosed poem on a newspaper clipping:

"A Newborn's Conversation with God"

A baby asked God, "they tell me you are sending me to earth tomorrow,
but how am I going to live there being so small and helpless?"

God said, "Your angel will be waiting for you and will take care of you."

The child further inquired, "But tell me, here in heaven I don't have to do anything but sing and smile to be happy."

God answered, "Your angel will sing for you, and will also smile for you.

And you will feel your angel's love and be very happy."

Again the child asked, "And how am I going to be able to understand
when people talk to me if I don't know their language?"

God responded, "Your angel will tell you the most beautiful and sweet words you will ever hear.

And with much patience and care, your angel will teach you how to walk and how to speak."

The child asked, "And what am I going to do when I want to talk to you?"

God answered, "Your angel will place your hands together and will teach you how to pray."

The child asked, "Will I always be sad because I do not see you anymore?"

God answered, "Your angel will always talk to you about me and will teach you the way to come back to me,
even though I will always be next to you."

At that moment there was much peace in heaven, but voices from earth could be heard and the child asked God,

"God if I am to leave now to earth, please tell me my angel's name!"

God answered, "You will simply call her Mommy."

At that moment I felt peace. Even though my daughter was created for me in heaven, how could I forget that her brother Julian David was holding her hand when she was born.

The poem was written by the late Mauricio Cardenas of Lubbock, and appeared in the New York Times. The Poem was submitted by his sister, Roda Rios of Lubbock.

♥ Rachel Prado,
mommy to Julian David,
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

Lost in the Clay

On July 24, 2006 I was put into a pit like no other. My baby, Alivia, who I had waited so long to have, died! Many people told me that they were amazed how I made it through such an ordeal. They said that they saw me as the over-worked horse that the owner no longer wanted and threw into a hole. The owner tried to bury the horse by throwing dirt in the hole but with each pile of dirt the horse stepped up onto the new pile and eventually walked right out of that hole.

I took that thought and began to rebuild/remake myself—all the time thinking I was letting God create the “new me” because I could not do it. He was the potter of my life, which was in a big pile of clay, and He had to put me back on the spool and create a new pottery design.

In my mind I saw the “new me” as a piece of pottery a bit bruised and broken, but someone would purchase me. A “new me” with the same friends (for the most part) and a good life for God. I was recreated and my life was moving forward. Then on April 23, 2008 the “new me” began to chip apart. God gave us the miracle we had asked for, our son Jaxson. I was so happy, but it seemed each month a new piece of me would chip off. I wondered what was happening. “How could I be unhappy with who I am now?” A new mother to a living child, decent job, good husband, serving God... “how can I be unhappy with myself?” “What is wrong with me?” I told myself I could talk to my friends, but will they judge me for not being happy. I tried to talk with my husband, my mom, anybody, but no one could really relate to me and what I was going through. I tried so many other things like getting a new job—another chip; felt God’s calling to lead the subsequent pregnancy support group for M.E.N.D.—another chip; go on vacation, Thanksgiving, Christmas—chip, chip, chip.

Everyone seemed like the hole in their hearts was filled by our son, but mine was not. I was the mother of two—one living and one dead—and no one seemed to care that the “new me” was no longer there. I had chipped away and needed to be remolded again. I wondered again, “what was happening to me?”

Everything I created over two to three years had begun to fall apart and my life was not where I wanted it to be. I had forced myself into a show of God’s great fruits in my life, but I was so detached from the source of true life. If you looked at me from the outside, I looked all together, but the inside needed a major overhaul. I finally figured out that I had created the “new me,” not God. I was so desperately needing Him to reshape my clay into something so much more beautiful than I ever could. I had to tell God that I completely let go of it all—my job, my child, my husband, my finances, my voice...whatever you want it is yours! I want to be who You want me to be. I want to do as John 15:4 says: “Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

My road to God’s reshaping of myself has only begun and I am scared, but I know what He has for me is so much better than what I created. I have to force myself everyday to stay attached to the vine by praying and wrapping myself in the word. Soon—and very soon—life will be better because I will no longer be lost in the clay, I will be reshaped the way God has planned.

Psalms 40:2

Isaiah 64: 8

♥ *Liz Walker,
mommy to Alivia Elizabeth-Grace*



Remembering Karlene

Sweet Karlene Jewel
Our baby so dear
Arrived on a Sunday
With relatives near.

We prayed and we waited
For your arrival with fear
Knowing you had problems
And couldn’t stay here.

We held you and loved you
For such a short time
Only fifty blessed minutes
In this world to abide.

Then baby heard Jesus,
Saying, “Come unto me.
There’s glory in heaven,
A perfect angel you’ll be.”

“I love you sweet baby,”
Says Mama, so sad.
My arms are so empty
It’s the same for dear Dad.

Karlene Jewel, we love you
Some day we will go
To heaven with thee
Our joy will be full.

♥ *Luann Hostetler,
mommy to Karlene Jewel Hostetler
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri*



¿Quién Soy?

Encontrando Mi Nueva Identidad en Momentos de Dolor

Hace varios meses recibí una llamada telefónica de una mamá muy angustiada. Ella había perdido a su nena tres años atrás, y después de esa pérdida tuvo a un sano bebe varón. Ella está felizmente casada con un hombre maravilloso. Y sin embargo ella se sentía perdida e insegura de quien era ella en realidad.

Frecuentemente en nuestro grupo de apoyo, nosotros hablamos de encontrar nuestro "nuevo yo" lo que significa que nosotros no podemos volver a lo que antes nos parecía normal, porque lo que una vez fue normal ahora ya no existe. Por lo tanto, tenemos que avanzar y encontrar nuestro nuevo yo. Osea tratar de encontrar a nuestro nuevo yo normal. Es imposible regresar a quien fuimos alguna vez porque después de experimentar algo tan traumático como perder a un niño, nosotros no podemos ser la misma persona de antes. Encontrar o crear ese nuevo yo, puede ser muy difícil.

Definitivamente yo no soy la misma mujer que era antes después de perder a mi hijo Jonathan, y tuve un pequeño cambio otra vez 6 años después cuando tuve un aborto involuntario. Yo pienso que sabiendo que hemos cambiado una gran parte de nosotros, es lo que nos hace torturarnos más después del luto o entierro de un ser amado. Muchas veces después del primer año de la muerte de mi hijo Jonathan, me pregunte " Quien soy yo ahora?" y como pareja y familia "quienes somos nosotros ahora?" Yo sentí que yo era la única pobre mujer joven en todo el mundo que había experimentado o vivido lo inimaginable, me sentía la mas anormal entre la gente y como si toda esta gente A MI ALREDEDOR se compadecían de mi. Yo sentí que les había fallado a mi esposo, a mi hijo pequeño, a mi familia y a mis amigos más cercanos. Yo decidí que no tenia nada en común con ninguno de ellos, yo sabia y no podía imaginar la vida como yo algún día la conocí. Suena dramático, lo se, pero era la forma en que sentía y percibía mi vida en ese momento.

Catorce años han pasado desde el alumbramiento y perdida de nuestro hijo Jonathan, y yo he evolucionado exitosamente a mi nuevo yo. Tengo 21 años de estar casada, soy mama de un adolescente que está en el último año de secundaria, he perdido a dos bebés, he tenido un trasplante de riñón, y dirijo una organización nacional de pérdida de bebes. No es exactamente la vida que soñé cuando era una niña, pero a pesar de los sufrimientos yo he soportado y salido adelante, soy muy feliz, amo la vida, y me siento muy bendecida por todo lo que Dios me ha dado. Aun, admito que hay momentos en los que me siento incómoda y fuera de lugar en ciertos ambientes o con cierta gente. Todavía me siento incómoda con la pregunta, "cuántos hijos tiene usted?", y a veces me pongo triste cuando veo una familia con más de un niño. Estoy segura que ese aspecto de pena y tristeza nunca se irá.

Es, en esos momentos de pena que tengo que recordar que Dios me creó para ser exactamente la persona que soy. El me moldeó con

una personalidad sobresaliente, comunicadora, fuerte, testaruda y brava. El me emparejó con el marido perfecto, y me bendijo con un hijo hermoso que adora al Señor con todo su corazón. El decidió hacerme una gemela, y nos puso de último de los seis niños en nuestra familia. El me dio capacidades de liderazgo y habilidades organizativas que me permiten hacer todo lo que El me ha llamado a hacer.

Me confundí un poco con todo, después de perder a Jonathan, pero finalmente todo entró en perspectiva. Yo no escogí todo acerca de lo que soy hoy, pero sé que Dios si lo escogió para mí. No siempre lo tengo que querer, ni pensar que es justo, pero sé que Dios tiene un plan y que tengo que confiar en Su soberanía. A veces yo decido que yo me haré cargo independientemente de mi vida, y hacer las cosas a mi manera, pero entonces me doy cuenta y admito humildemente que yo sólo deseo hacer las cosas que el señor quiere que haga y a su manera.

Encontrar el "nuevo yo" después de una tragedia en tu vida no es fácil. Toma tiempo, mucha oración, y el apoyo de los que te quieren. Si tu estas como mi amiga Liz, tratando de encontrar su nueva persona o su nuevo yo, ten paciencia. Busca al Señor. Tanto Ella, como yo, definitivamente todavía tenemos momentos de tristeza y de muchas preguntas, pero la mayoría de veces encontramos a la persona que Dios creo y que quiso que así fuera. Ella se dio cuenta que a través de su sufrimiento el Señor la ha llamado a su ministerio dirigiendo un grupo de soporte que ayuda a otras mujeres que sufren el mismo dolor. Ella toma su papel muy en serio y guía amorosamente a los que han sido colocados bajo su liderazgo. Quizás Dios ha colocado algo semejante en tu corazón, talvez no para dirigir un grupo, pero con toda seguridad tú te volverás más comprensiva y compasiva a los sufrimientos de otros. ¿Cómo tú podrías utilizar tu experiencia?

Seguro, nosotros no escogimos el sendero en que todos nosotros nos hemos encontrado, pero después de un tiempo de sanación, ábrete a tu nueva persona o a tu nuevo yo. Siéntete orgullosa y no te avergüences de lo que has llegado a ser y pídele al Señor que te guíe hacia Su último plan que tiene dispuesto para tu vida.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell*

mama de Jonathan Daniel y Bebé Mitchell

Now, Who Am I?

All in one year I became a Mommy, the mother of a baby in heaven, and then a grieving mess. For the next few years I was the one pitied, loved, coddled, cared for, insulted, respected, and misunderstood—the way people reacted to the “new me” was as varied as the “new me” seemed each day.

For a while I didn’t actually care who I was or how people treated me...more often, I didn’t care how I treated people. You see, the “old me” was always the one trying to make others feel better, to consider everyone’s feelings and schedules. However, after I lost two children in less than a year, I figured it was time for people to try and work around me and my “drama” for a while. But that wasn’t very fulfilling for long.

Soon—thankfully—I discovered that even as I was defining the “new me,” there were bits and pieces of the “old me” that not even the death of my children could take away. The only difference now was that I had the tools and shared experience of those with children in heaven, and that they became my focus...or my specialty, for lack of a better term.

Over the course of the last six years I have become the resource friends and family turn to when faced with grief and unsure of their roles or responses. Also, I now have a little one who depends on me every day. What continues to amaze me is that even after all these years, I thought I was done defining the “new me,” but God continues to grow and change that definition all the time. The “new me” recently has become the director of our newest M.E.N.D. chapter here in southwest Missouri. I’m so thankful that He’s not through with me yet and I can’t wait to see how He uses me to reach other hurting moms and dads.

♥ *Heather Fann,
mommy to Caleb Scott and Baby August
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri Chapter Director*

Beyond the Labels

“Tell me about yourself.”

To me, those can be some of the most thought-provoking words in the English language. What do people want to know about me when they speak those words? What are they really asking?

Ever since my son Joseph was stillborn several years ago, telling others about my life has brought about internal debate between my head and my heart. Just how much should I tell people about me, and about him? I choose my words carefully. “Wife” is an easy label to toss out there, and I’ll proudly claim “Mom.” Do I dare include “Bereaved Parent?”

For those of us who have had to relinquish our children to eternity, new people and new situations can seem dangerous. They are minefields of awkward moments threatening to destroy our mild-mannered facades. One misstep and our true identities may be exposed; one wrong comment and people will see us for the broken people we really are. We want people to know about the children we love and can no longer hold in our arms. However, none of us want to be forever labeled “The One Whose Baby Died.”

It’s difficult to live two lives, yet that’s often what we feel like we do. We have an inner life in which we grieve the loss of our children with immeasurable anguish, clinging to the healing that seems to come ever so slowly. I always labeled this aspect of my life “The Mourner.” Then there’s the outer life, the one I call “Business as Usual,” that demands we keep breathing and eating, washing laundry and buying groceries, going to work and church and talking to people when we don’t feel like it.

The two lives must eventually converge if we are to live fully and have joy restored. For this to happen, we must go through the hard work of grief and allow ourselves to feel the pain. We must learn to pour out our hearts to the God of all comfort, even in times when our fragile hearts won’t allow us to fully trust Him. As grief subsides and healing takes place, we find that both the inner and outer lives aren’t in competition. They’re simply two parts of a greater whole. With the Lord’s help, that whole person becomes ready to live again with a richer perspective and a deeper understanding of her true identity. “The Mourner” and “Business as Usual” mesh to become “The Restored.”

No matter how I choose to answer a stranger who innocently questions who I am, my identity is secure. Though the ups and downs of this life have shaped me, they don’t define me. There’s a lot more to me than any particular event, whether that event is tragedy or triumph, or a combination of both. I am more than the sum of my experiences. It is true that I will always be Joseph’s mom, and I am blessed beyond measure to claim that title. However, first and foremost I am a child of God, saved by grace. The Lord picked me up out of the mire and called me His own. That’s bigger than anything I can call myself.

It’s more than a label. It’s an identity.

♥ *Sharlene Libby,
mommy to Joseph Charles
New Mexico*

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“... that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

M.E.N.D. Fundraisers *As a non-profit organization, M.E.N.D. is funded solely by private donations and fundraisers. Any assistance you can give us by participating in any or all of these fundraisers is greatly appreciated.*

- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Kroger Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D.
- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please get a letter from Rebekah Mitchell. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- **Glenn Martin** is looking for M.E.N.D. families willing to grant space for small gumball machines in order to raise funds for M.E.N.D. If you have a retail business or connections to a high traffic location in the Grapevine, Southlake, or metroplex area, Glenn will place, stock, and service the equipment and give M.E.N.D. 35 percent of the proceeds. Glenn can be contacted at (817) 874-5366 or glmartin@attg.net.
- M.E.N.D. can now earn funds through **i.think inc.**, an online marketing research firm. You can help by signing up as a survey panel member and designating us as the recipient of your fee. Just go to the Web site at <http://www.ithink.inc.com> and choose “Sign up to become an i.think inc. panel member.” Fill out the sign-up survey. Under the “Funds for Charity” section, select M.E.N.D. from the list of names.
- **Little Beads and Macaroni and Cheese**, owned by M.E.N.D. member Marilyn Brown, offers custom jewelry. Her keepsake angel bracelets are \$20 each, and ten percent of each angel bracelet sale will be donated to M.E.N.D. Marilyn can be reached at (817) 996-1920 or msbrown16@hotmail.com.
- **IBM** employees may now make charitable donations to M.E.N.D. through automatic payroll deductions. Choose Charity Code 0M562 from the *IBM Employee/Retiree Approved Charity List*.
- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to www.goodsearch.com and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.
- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D., visit www.missionfish.org to find out how.
- **Top to Toe Designs**, owned by M.E.N.D. member Heather Klaassen, offers custom hand-painted frames and room décor. She would like to donate 10 percent of purchases made at www.toptotoedesigns.com that mentions our charity.
- **Tastefully Simple** consultant Angie Saurer would like to offer 10 percent off purchases to M.E.N.D. members, and then donate 10 percent of purchases to M.E.N.D. Call or email your orders to Angie at (952) 322-1343 or angelasaurer@yahoo.com. Shop the entertaining, cooking and home décor products online at www.tastefullysimple.com/web/asaurer.
- **Mary Kay** consultant Trina Echols would like to donate 15 percent of all sales when you mention M.E.N.D. If you live in the Houston area and are interested in a free facial, please call (832) 276-3664 or shop online at www.marykay.com/trinaechols.