



Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Support

Volume 24, Issue 4

July/August 2019

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Whens and Whys, Infertility and Loss

When and Why
Small yet overwhelming words
Surrounding
Before Life Begins
After Life Ends
And Everything in Between
Sometimes Never Answered
Until Our Ever After

In this issue...

Journey to Rainbows

Journey to Adoption

Journey Still Unknown

Journey Closing a Door

Each journey shared in this issue is this family's journey of parenthood.
Some include rainbow/subsequent babies. Some include adoption.
Some include doors closing. Some are still on their journey.
All include loss.

September/October Topic

Families: Issues and Resolutions
Deadline: July 31, 2019

November/December Topic

Holidays
Deadline: September 30, 2019

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcome. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the magazine. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Please send any submissions to our Magazine Editor, Jennifer Harrison, at jennifer@mend.org. Any submission printed in our magazine will also be posted to our website indefinitely. Because our magazines are posted online, please understand your name will be attached to your submission when searched on the Internet.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to jennifer@mend.org. All letters submitted to the editor are subject to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests it not be published.

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Birthday Tributes: M.E.N.D. publishes heavenly birthday tributes in the corresponding magazine. Tributes must be submitted via the online form at www.mend.org.

<u>Heavenly Birthday</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
January/February	November 30
March/April	January 31
May/June	March 31
July/August	May 31
September/October	July 31
November/December	September 30



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Feature Article

Feature from our M.E.N.D. President and Founder, Rebekah Mitchell, Mommy to Jonathan and Baby Mitchell

Fertile Myrtles. That's what people have called my mom, my four sisters and me at times. All six of us became pregnant the first time we tried, which resulted in twenty-two babies, though three were miscarried and one was stillborn. So how is it then, that even though my three babies were conceived very quickly, I'm also labeled as Infertile? Fertile Myrtle and Infertile - seems like an oxymoron to me, but it's really not. During my childbearing years, I had what is referred to as a type of "Secondary Infertility." I had one living child who was delivered at term, but did not successfully carry my two subsequent babies to term. My baby Jonathan was stillborn at 29 weeks due to a cord accident, and my third baby was miscarried at 10 weeks.

When I was a little girl, I had my life planned out. I wanted to marry young and be a stay-at-home mom to three boys. I did marry young, and was a stay-at-home mom, but I only had one son - or at least only one who lived. The loud, rambunctious household I had imagined did not happen. We had a wonderful, loving home when our son was growing up, but it just didn't look like what I had imagined when I was a young woman dreaming of my future family. My story is a bit different in that I could not continue to "try again" after our losses because of a kidney disease I was diagnosed with soon after my husband Byron and I married, then several years later, I had a kidney transplant. I actually did conceive again after my transplant, but that's the little baby we lost at 10 weeks, and my doctors did not recommend another attempt at a pregnancy.

I deeply grieved the loss of our son Jonathan and our little Baby Mitchell. But I also had to learn to grieve the loss of my dream of raising multiple children. It was beyond frustrating, emotional and heartbreaking to not be able to get pregnant, but I could, if that makes sense. I never felt a peace about going against my transplant doctors' advice of not attempting a subsequent pregnancy. They reminded me a number of times that I had a living son I needed to be here for and trying to give him a sibling was not worth the risk.

Loss & Infertility

I often wondered, how come other couples have "oopsies," but we never did? If I had "accidentally" gotten pregnant, I would have considered that baby as a special gift and would have taken the chance of all the potential hazards the doctors warned me of. But it never happened.

I spent years crushed by seemingly everyone I knew having all the children they wanted without difficulty. Some assumed I was okay with our circumstance because at least I had one child who was and is still the joy of our lives, and surely I understood it wasn't ideal to have a baby after a kidney transplant, for goodness sake! But I devastatingly, and often secretly, mourned my inability to give my husband another child and my son a brother or sister. My family did not develop the way I always thought it would. I had to learn to be content with that, but it took many years to be at peace with God's plan, rather than mine. Our little family of three has now finally grown into four with our daughter-in-law, Anna, and by the time this magazine is published, we will be a family of five with the birth of our grandson, Elias Jonathan.

**It took many years to
be at peace
with God's plan,
rather than mine**

As I reflect on those hard years of longing to have another baby, I am grateful for the immense happiness I truly have today. It was a lengthy, arduous road of having to find my way to a place of contented settlement, but I made it, and you will, too! Trust in the Lord, lean on Him, and consider the prophet Jeremiah's lament:

"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'" Lamentations 3:19-24



Birthday Tributes

Happy 1st Birthday, Athena!

Happy birthday to the Oreo and donut loving girl. Mommy, Daddy and Tristian love you and miss you so much! I wish I could hold you just one last time. We decorate your spot every season. We wish it was different. I know you are in heaven celebrating your life. I am so honored to have been able to be your mother even just for a short period of time. Thank you for the constant butterfly kisses.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy and Tristian



Athena Rae Rindahl

July 3, 2018

Cord accident

Parents: Michael Rindahl and Casandra Lewis

Brother: Tristian Lewis

Happy 3rd Birthday, Connor!

Happy heavenly 3rd birthday, buddy! How we wish you were here with us to be a big brother to your new siblings here on earth. We know you are celebrating in heaven, and some day our family will be complete and together again. We will be honoring you here with your birthday cake and collecting school supplies for children in need. We love you so much, Connor!

Love, Mommy, Daddy, Kelsey and Cooper

Connor Nathaniel Cash

Stillborn August 31, 2016

Parents: Dustin and Jenna Cash

Siblings: Kelsey and Cooper



Happy 15th Birthday, Jordyn!

Jordyn, as we reflect on yesterday, today and think of the future, you are always with us. You have a special place in our hearts. We are blessed to have shared those three days with you 15 years ago. As we all know that God called you home as one of his angels, we continue to pray that you watch over us.

We love you!
Dad, Mom, Jada and Bruce Jr.

Jordyn Lynae Johnson

July 13-16, 2004

Cord problems

Parents: Bruce and Debra Johnson

Siblings: Jada and Bruce Jr.



Happy 8th Birthday, Aubree!

You are 8! Aubree, Mommy can't believe what a big girl you are. You would have finished 2nd grade and would be enjoying summer break. You would have a blast traveling with us this summer for Sissy's softball tournaments. I know you would be her biggest cheerleader! Your brother would drive you all around and would take you out for surprise treats. Oh the fun we would have if you could have stayed. But God chose a different path for you. One where you get to live in heaven with Him. I am eternally grateful for God's promise of eternity with you! Until we meet again, my love.

Love,
Mommy

Aubree Faith Carmichall

August 18, 2011

Uterine rupture

Mommy: Kelly Carmichall

Siblings: Ryan and Breean



Happy 3rd Birthday, Saul!

Happy 3rd birthday to our handsome, baby boy! Even though you are now 3, you will always be our baby and our greatest blessing. I know you're getting spoiled up there, and we wish we could be celebrating your birthday by your side. Continue to be the best big brother to your little sisters in heaven. Thank you, mijo, for coming into our lives for the better. You are missed and never forgotten. We will always wonder who you would have turned out to be. It's hard to believe it has been three years, three years too many. We love you, and we miss you, mijo.

Love,
Your mom and dad

Mario Saul Montes

August 30, 2016

Placenta abruption

Also remembering

Emilia Lucia Montes

May 26 - July 1, 2018

Congenital heart defects

Celeste Montes

Miscarried May 13, 2019

Parents: Mario Montes and Alva Montes

Siblings: Bear, Lady and Elaine



Happy 3rd Birthday, Chandler Lee Michael!

Our dear baby boy Chandler, we miss you every day. We are blessed to have the 25 minutes we had with you. Every day we live is a day for us to speak of your precious life with us.

Love always,
Daddy, Mommy, little sis and brother
May you be held in the arms of our love.

Chandler Lee Michael Groves

August 16, 2013

Premature birth

Parents: James and Teresa Groves

Siblings: Alyssa, Cole and Wyatt

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Cuddles!**

Happy 2nd birthday, Zoey! We love you so much sweetness! I can only wonder what you would be like and how we would be celebrating your birthday. You're missed so much, Cuddle Bug! We were blessed to have you in our lives. You will always be our baby. Continue to watch over us and guide your sisters in the right direction. Zoey, you will always be forever loved and missed!

As long as I live, you will live.
As long as I live, you will be remembered.
As long as I live, you will be loved.
As long as I live, my baby you will be.

Zoey Von Martinez

August 16 - December 16, 2017

Respiratory failure

Parents: Vanessa Hernandez and Eli Martinez

Sisters: Cecilia, Deja and Peyton

**Happy 13th Birthday, Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker!**

Sweet Livi, 13 years! How can that be? I saw a picture the other day of the first baby I held after we lost you, and she was standing next to her mom. I thought, our Livi would have been that big. WOW! I hope you know you are missed every day; in every picture, meal, lows and highs...you are missed. May your heavenly 13th birthday be very sweet. You have your dog, Walker, and Auntie Marilyn with you now, so enjoy them to the fullest. Don't let your Aunt eat all your cake! Love you so much, sweet princess of the King!

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Jaxson and Lauryn

Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker

July 24, 2006

Incompetent cervix

Parents: Robert and Liz Walker

Siblings: Jaxson and Lauryn

**Happy 4th Birthday, Sweet Rebekah!**

You would be in pre-K this year! I wish we could watch you play with your siblings, learn to ride a bike, learn to write your name and hear your laugh. We miss you every day. A message from your siblings:

Isaac: Wish you were here with us. We love you and miss you. Love, your big bro.

Abby: I love you and miss you and I wish you were alive. Love, Abby

Esther: I wish you were alive, and I very miss you, and you are very cute. Love, Esther.

Tirzah: I want Bekah too!

Mom and Dad love you more than we could ever say. Happy birthday in heaven, Baby Girl.

Rebekah Tikvah Nymeyer

July 16, 2015

Premature birth

Also remembering

Baby Amasiah Nymeyer

Miscarried October 2010

Baby Jonah Nymeyer

Miscarried July 2012

Parents: Jonathan and Terri Nymeyer

Siblings: Isaac, Abby, Esther and Tirzah

**Happy 1st Birthday, Phoenix!**

My sweet, beautiful Phoenix Lucas, you were the answer to my prayers and so perfect. Looking into your deep blue eyes, I saw more than words can express. You were so smart!

I smile when I remember you watching me eat pasta, and with every bite I took, you made sweet sounds and moved your own hand to your mouth! You always loved to eat! Before you were born, every time I ate, you danced inside of me!

You always gave a little protest when bath time was over, but you loved getting lotion on your legs after! You were fascinated with lights, liked cartoons, and so aware of other baby sounds. You were going to be so social and have so many friends!

You were the king of the side eye. I have wondered if it was because you saw the angels in the room... waiting for you. I am forever planning my days around you still. I love you, my sweet Phoenix Lucas. You left me on your 7-week birthday. Happy 1st birthday in heaven, my beautiful Phinn.

Phoenix Lucas Hunkler

June 15 - August 3, 2018

SIDS/Pneumonia (no symptoms)

*Parents: Keri Ann Kavanaugh-Hunkler
and Lucas Xavier Hunkler*



Happy 7th Birthday, Catherine!

Happy 7th birthday, sweetheart! I can't believe it's been seven years since I saw your beautiful face in my arms. I miss you so much. I look at your brother and often wonder how many of his traits you would have. I think you'd both have the same smile. I know someday I'll find out in heaven when we are reunited again. I wish you were here with me and playing with your little brother. I hate that you're not here for him. I know you're up in heaven watching over us. I love and miss you so much, my girl. All my love until we meet again.

Love,
Mommy



Catherine Grace Wilkerson

August 10-12, 2012

Extreme prematurity due to H.E.L.L.P.

Parents: Charlie and Kara Wilkerson

Little brother: Cannon

Something to Hold

M.E.N.D.-Greater Houston Area donated 300 bears to local hospitals, and most were donated in memory of a precious baby or child. We hope these bears help fill the empty arms of



the mamas who leave the hospital. We know nothing can replace our babies; we would rather have them in our arms. But we know having something to hold can help with the empty arms syndrome so many mommies experience. We hope these bears can be used in family photos to represent their baby they lost, or something to snuggle when times get especially hard. Thank you so much to all who



donated! You made this possible. We hope this gets bigger each year so we can keep providing more and more bears to local hospitals.



Happy 3rd Birthday, Dylan!

My darling girl, wow, 3 years old already! I can't help but imagine all the wild things you would be getting into now! Would you be sporty like your dad? Artsy like me? We love you, oh so much, and miss you terribly. I hope we make you proud. I know you are being an amazing big sister and helping watch over Elaine. We can't wait to hold you again in our arms, sweet girl!

Dylan Hailey McClelland

August 26 - September 1, 2016

Accident at home

Parents: Katie and Mike McClelland

Sister: Elaine



Happy 2nd Birthday, Wilson!

It's been two years! Two years since I felt fluttering in my womb. Two years since I felt you thumping my belly. I cannot believe it has been two years since the last time we heard your strong, courageous heartbeat. How can it be that it's been two years since that bittersweet moment we saw and kissed your sweet face? We have spent the last two years saying your name with an aching in our hearts but a smile on our face as we continue to carry out the legacy you left behind. We are so proud to be your Mommy and Daddy, sweet boy. We miss you so very much! Happy birthday, Wilson Glenn!

Wilson Glenn Gaddie

August 17, 2017

Incompetent cervix

Also remembering

Angel Gaddie

Miscarried October 24, 2008

Parents: Russell and Jessica Gaddie

Brothers: Chris and Alex



In Loving Memory

Thank YOU for your support

Jackson David Crowe

August 22 - September 9, 1998
Heart Defect / Failure
Parents: Marie and David Crowe
Siblings: Hannah and Andrew
Given by Gail Bohdan

Abigail Grace Crump

July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Gifts given by
Parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump
and little sisters Cami and Karli

Parker and Riley Davis

November 14, 2006
Premature
Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis
and siblings Annalise and Owen

Paislee Ann Frette

April 4-5, 2012
Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome
Parents: Brent and Courtney Frette
Little sister: Colbie
Gifts given by
Grandparents James and LuAnn Junkin
Anonymous

Serenity Harrison

Miscarried December 3, 2009
Given by parents Curtis and Jennifer Harrison
and siblings Levi, Ziva and Evie

Cambri Jade Jenkins

September 8, 2010

Baby Jenkins

July 8, 2013
Given by parents Jeff and April Jenkins
and siblings Clara, Chandler and Colt

Judson Hank Jordan

Given by Charities Aid Foundation of America

Baby K. Kallsen

September 21, 2013
Mommy: Kimberly Sisk
Given by Lance Loken

Matthew Joel Mifflin

Stillborn June 6, 2003
Cord accident
Parents: Janet and Dennis Mifflin
Given by Fidelity Charitable

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December 2001
Given by parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell

Emmett Michael Moerbe

April 17, 2019
Parents: Katelyn and Tyler Moerbe
Given by Jaime Sorg

Lillian Belle Noto

January 10, 2019
Parents: Jeff and Anna Noto
Gifts given by Charlotte Noto

Dylan McClelland

August 26 – September 1, 2016
Accident at home
Parents: Katie and Mike McClelland
Sibling: Elaine
Given by grandmother Karen Eyster

Margot Lily Perry

Stillborn June 10, 2013
Cord accident
Parents: Brandon and Marisa Perry
Siblings: Adeline, Bennett and Noelle
Given grandmother Marie Perry

Abigail Marie Papendick

March 3-4, 2017
Insufficient cervix
Baby Papendick
Miscarried September 6, 2018
Parents: Becky Johnston and Brian Papendick
Gifts given by
Michele Johnston
Grandparents John and Micky Johnston

Mindy and Maggie Smith

Stillborn November 4, 1997
TTTS and Polyhydramnios
Gifts given by parents Scott and Karla Smith
and siblings Travis and Julia

Thank you to those who recently held a Facebook fundraising campaign or donated to M.E.N.D. through one of these. We are so thankful for our family and friends who show love and support during activities like these or other areas such as sharing about M.E.N.D., assisting at events, or simply and most importantly, praying for us.

Eleanor "Nora" Vaughn

October 5 - November 6, 2018
Hydrocephalus
Mommy: Megan Vaughn
Given anonymously

Baby Girl Wexler

Given by Lana Western

Gifts of Support:

Christ Church Assembly of God, Fort Worth, TX
Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
Nicholas Morgan
Janis Kidder
Edith and Daryle Wieland
Ashley Hazlewood
Margarita Anderson

Thank you to those who lovingly gave in memory of Robin Prizzi, mommy to Nathan John Prizzi.

Robin Prizzi

June 7, 1962 – April 14, 2019

Baby Nathan John Prizzi

December 30, 1988

Given by:

Lucille and Jim Boyer
Jenell and Michael Gensler
Allison and Zachary Wunder
SUN hydraulics
Palmyra Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
Denise Munson
Donald Grimm
Nancy Michel
Anonymous
James McNeil
Donna Chappell
Andrew Zeiner
Marie and Earl Chapman
Tilli Kirkingburg
Theresa and Paul Mancini
Roxanne and Allan Ruffalo
Tracy Skvarek
Maureen and Thomas Richardson
Cadette and Robert Finewood

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 magazine and other services to bereaved parents free of charge. For more information on how you can support M.E.N.D., please see the "About M.E.N.D." section in the back of this magazine.

I Can Only Imagine...

Written by LaTrina Bray

Mommy to Kimani, Jeremiah and Laila

M.E.N.D.— *Columbus, Ohio, Chapter Director*

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted children. As a child, I played with my baby dolls incessantly. Then as a teenager, I was a regular babysitter for my younger cousins. I always fantasized about what it would be like to have my own babies... to be a mom. I imagined feeling my baby "kick" and seeing that angelic little face for the first time. I imagined holding my babies when they were born, how they smelled after a bath, blowing out birthday candles, nursing their colds, and snuggling "just because." I imagined combing my daughter's hair and watching her play dress-up in my clothes closet. I imagined teaching my son to dance with a girl for his first date. Mostly, I longed for the beautiful sound of my children calling me "Mama."

Yet, for all my hopeful imaginations, I never included the doctor saying, "We can't find a heart beat." I did not anticipate the well-meaning, but extremely hurtful comments, like "Well, you can have another one" or "It's God's will." I did not foresee the depression I would fall into because I did not know how to deal with the grief I was feeling. The jealous feelings I would experience when I saw another woman pregnant or holding her baby. I did not predict the anger I would feel when I heard a mother complaining of "mother duties" - all the while I was thinking "well, at least your baby is here."

I do not have any living children. I have three angel babies. I miscarried my daughter, Kimani, in 2005. After consulting with my gynecologist, I had to have a medical procedure in 2008, due to fibroid tumors. After more than a year of trying to conceive, my husband and I consulted an infertility specialist, in the hopes of increasing my chances of becoming pregnant again and carrying the baby to term. However, in 2011, I miscarried our babies, Jeremiah and Laila. Painfully, I am unable to have any more children. And with all I have experienced, I did not want to believe I was infertile, but my life seemed to tell a different story. How is that?

Infertility means not being able to get pregnant after one year of trying (or six months if a woman is 35 or older). Women who can get pregnant but are unable to stay pregnant may also be infertile. About 10% of women (6.1 million) in the United States,

ages 15-44 have difficulty becoming pregnant and staying pregnant, according to the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention.¹ Infertility is not always a woman's problem. About one-third of infertility cases are caused by women's problems. Another one-third of fertility problems are due to men's issues. The other cases are caused by a mixture of male and female problems or by unknown problems.² Infertility is "fairly common." After one year of having unprotected sex, about 15 percent of couples are unable to get pregnant.³

While the statistics reflect infertility is common, the research does not tell us how to deal with the emotional stress that accompanies infertility. For years, I felt completely isolated and guilt-ridden. In addition, I had feelings of envy, anger, loneliness, shame and failure. Even though my husband was always there, supporting, encouraging and loving on me, I still felt like I failed. Many times, I felt as if I was not a "good Christian" because I was confused and emotionally distraught. And to be honest, I did not feel like praying...I was too angry! I had let well-meaning people "guilt" me into feeling like something was wrong with me.

Broken, I finally cried out to the LORD, honestly admitting I did not understand why this happened and confessing all the pain, anger, sadness and hurt feelings that was plaguing me. In prayer, I sincerely told God I also did not want to live angry and bitter anymore. I began really seeking the LORD, asking Him to help me, and expressed my trust in Him. This was a very big step and sometimes felt like I wasn't "doing it right." However, when I reflect on my experience, I can see how the LORD moved because He showed me that He NEVER left me...He NEVER did forsake me. And He ALWAYS loved me! All glory belongs to God and I am grateful for where He has brought my husband and me throughout this experience.

I want to share with you some things I have learned over the course of my journey toward healing.

- Pray - Talk to the LORD about your hurt, struggles, guilt, anger - everything! The LORD knows what you are experiencing, AND He cares. "Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT). He can handle it and He will help you.

1 <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/infertility>

2 <https://medlineplus.gov/infertility.html>

3 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/infertility.htm>

- Be honest about your feelings – Being honest about my feelings gave me strength. Sometimes people will try to minimize your feeling with their comments, or confused stares. You do not have to “put on a smile” or hide your feelings to accommodate the comfort of others – who do not understand your pain.
- Have someone to confide in – Don’t hold your grief inside. Talk to other women who understand what you are going through and support one another. I am glad you found M.E.N.D. “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)
- Allow yourself adequate time to grieve – There is no “grief clock” telling you when you need to be “over it,” or “better now.” If you are feeling sadness, it is okay. Give yourself latitude to process what you are experiencing so you can deal with your feelings in a healthy way. But try not to wallow in sadness for long periods of time – for me it led to depression.
- Know your triggers – Sometimes, even unconsciously, I would be more edgy, melancholy, etc. and didn’t know why. Then I realized it was around a due date, or the month I miscarried, and so on. So, if you know those times are difficult for you, if possible, try to plan for it.
- It’s okay to be unique – We are all one-of-a-kind originals...and so are our journeys! For example, I miscarried and named all my babies. Naming our babies helped me a lot. Just know that you are NOT alone and NOT a failure!
- Have an outlet – When you are feeling sad or overwhelmed, it helps to do something that takes your focus away from grieving. I began making floral arrangements to relieve stress. In doing so, I discovered a new hobby and way to bless others.
- Share with your spouse – If you are married, don’t forget your spouse. Remember...men (fathers) grieve, too! They may not show it the same way, but they are hurting as well. Check in on your husband and ask him to share his feelings. Support one another.

While I am still a work in progress, I am grateful to God for His love and comfort. I am so thankful He blessed me with my husband, Earl, who is not only the love of my life, but my partner in this journey. I am thankful to M.E.N.D. for embracing me and allowing me to be a partner in ministering to the needs of others. “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago,” Ephesians 2:10 (NLT). After my miscarriages, I could never “imagine” I would ever want to sing again...couldn’t “imagine” having joy again...didn’t “imagine” ever being able to share my testimony. But God! For what He has in store for me next, I Can Only *Imagine*...!

A Grannie’s Sorrow

Written by LaTrina Bray

Mommy to Kimani, Jeremiah and Laila

M.E.N.D.— *Columbus, Ohio, Chapter Director*

Why a grannie has sorrow
Understood – only by a few
Well, take a moment to ponder
Just what does a grannie do?

Baking chocolate chip cookies
With tender loving care
Or my favorite birthday cheesecake
“Now baby, don’t forget to share”

Watering your roses,
With your special big, yellow can
Riding our bikes together
Crossing the street, holding your hand

Gently correcting my grammar
Or watching sports on TV
Or snuggling in Grannie’s bed
Yes, that’s the place for me

From Easter baskets to Christmas cards
I’m never lost in the crowd
To graduating high school and college
In life, just want to make her proud

Kneeling down in prayer
You showed me the way
Teaching me to really listen
What the LORD has to say

Well, my daughters are in heaven now
Along with my son
Three angels left my arms empty
Lives ended before begun

A mother’s pain and anguish
For my children I’ve yet to see
What is a grannie’s sorrow you ask
It’s for the grannie I will never be

Journey to Parenthood

Written by Liz Walker

Mommy to Alivia

M.E.N.D.—Board of Directors

The beginning of our dream to become parents started in 2002. We had been married five years, traveled and had good careers and thought like most do, "Let's try to have a baby." Never did we have in mind that our bodies would not do the natural, normal thing we see happening to others every day. By this I mean try, get pregnant and have a baby in 9 to 10 months. That fairy tale quickly faded, and we became a statistic we were never aware of. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10% of women (6.1 million) in the United States ages 15-44 have difficulty getting pregnant or staying pregnant.¹

In my own family my mother had seven successful pregnancies, my grandmother had 11 successful pregnancies, so why in the world did I have trouble even getting pregnant? God made my body so why am I not like every other woman? These questions ruffled my brain month after month... each time my cycle came. Our marriage and bond became so close as we were going through this. My husband, Robert, felt the pain of disappointment too. Even with the closeness, I felt I was letting everyone down because I could not get this to work... like I was in control. It really took a toll on my self-esteem, confidence and love for myself because I felt I could do nothing right.

After about two years of being off the pill, having surgeries to remove scar tissue, cysts and tumors, we made the decision to see a specialist. Insurance did not cover as much as we needed it to back then, but we did what we could and started taking Clomid to try to get things going, but month after month, nothing. Then we switched to Clomid and artificial insemination (AI), and, after three rounds, nothing again! We decided to try invitro (IVF), but had no idea how we would pay for it. In the month between the failed AI and IVF start up, we became pregnant; it seems all the Clomid I had been taking did something to my ovaries.

We were so beyond happy; it was awesome! I was PREGNANT and going to have a baby, be a Mommy! Our dreams were coming true, and I would be like all the other moms with their baby bags, breastfeeding, strollers, car seats...just all the "I am a parent" things.

But guess what? At 20 weeks and 6 days, I woke up feeling funny, but went on to work because I

knew I would see the doctor that day for a scheduled sonogram to find out the sex of the baby; my husband and parents would be there with me. We saw our baby was a girl and were so excited. The sono tech saw something else, too, and slipped out of the room.

The doctor came in and said she saw I was dilated to a two for some reason, and I needed to be admitted to the long-term pregnancy care area at the hospital and meet with a specialist to see what was happening. She believed my cervix was opening, and I had an incompetent cervix; the specialist would explain more and what could be done. It sounded strange but did not alarm us too much. We checked in, and I continued having back pain the whole time in the room while we waited to see the specialist.

The specialist came in and saw I was having a lot of pain. He took a look and showed us that our dream to become parents was in great jeopardy. The baby had separated from the sac and was in my cervix. With that I went into labor. Within three hours I held a sweet 11.8-ounce little girl who did not take a breath. I looked to heaven and said, "How do you give after such pain and then take away?" It hurt to the core that when my body seemed to work, it failed again. So now I have two female inadequacies: infertility issues and incompetent cervix. The hurt turned to anger, and my worth plummeted. I fell apart those first few months and then after I was just living and hurting.

Through all of that, I had friends and M.E.N.D., who loved, encouraged

and walked with me in the pain and suffering, and I was able to get closer to God than ever before. I was willing to trust Him again to start the journey again. August 13, 2007, I went in for my first round of AI and it was successful, and I became pregnant. I was watched very closely and got a cerclage. By December I was put on bedrest until early April when the cerclage was removed, and I had Jaxson on April 23, 2008, by emergency c-section due to low heartbeat.

The year between Alivia and Jaxson, I was a crumbled vase and the only thing getting me through was going to M.E.N.D. After Jaxson came, I had to

"How do You give after such pain and then take away?"

1 <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/infertility>

really let God do His work on me to make me into the person He wanted me to be. He became what He should have always been: "the Potter" and I "the clay."

Fast forward to 2012, we had been trying on our own because I could no longer deal with the ups and downs of Clomid or any other infertility drug. We told GOD (funny, huh) that if we were not pregnant by June of 2012, we would be content with Jaxson. We were not pregnant and started selling our baby items. But in August a routine OB/GYN appointment turned into a confirmation: I was pregnant. To say we were beyond shocked is an understatement! It took us two months to believe it was true. I got the cerclage again and worked until the day before I delivered. Lauryn Blair was born on March 30, 2013, 5 weeks early just because she wanted to.

I know it may be tough to see these photos of my sweet earthly babies, but just know through the pain and suffering of infertility and loss, I would not change any of it to have these two to raise here on earth. While I wish their sister was here, I can go to sleep every night knowing she is well taken care of and the best person to raise her is doing that. The desire never left my heart to have babies, so I continued to trust God in order to receive those desires of my heart. I saw all my friends having baby after baby and while it hurt, I believed God would do that for me too. The sun did shine for me on the other side and can for you too. If you have the desire, never give up but know it may not come when you want or how you want but God will fulfill his promises.

Rest in these verses: Psalm 37: 4-7 (NIV)
4 Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:
6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
7 Be still before the LORD
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.



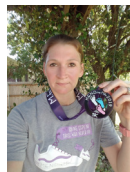
M.E.N.D.ing Miles 5K 2019

Our 2nd Annual Virtual 5K was even more of a success than last year. We loved seeing all the ways families and friends participated and honored our babies. This year, we included a custom designed t-shirt with the registration packet. We

really enjoyed seeing all the pictures of everyone in their shirts, bibs and medals! Walking, running, biking, jogging, skipping, treadmill, there was no end to the ways YOU did your 5K with us! Thank you!

We look forward to next year...

Taking even more steps for those who never did.



Missed the 5K?
Still want to do it?
(it's virtual, so you can still do it for your baby!)
or just need some swag?
Check out our
M.E.N.D. Shop!
Limited supplies are available!

VISIT shop.mend.org for 5K race gear

- T-Shirt \$20
- Medal \$15
- Bib \$10
- Full Packet \$40



Roller Coaster of Infertility

Written by Melissa Thomas

Mommy to Jason Hunter, June and Jade

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area

On February 26, 2014, my husband and I found out we were pregnant. It was more of a blessing than we could ever imagine because I had been struggling with infertility for more than 10 years. I had two laparoscopy procedures done for endometriosis and a blocked fallopian tube. I also suffer from Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). My OB/GYN tried to help with many oral medications like Clomid, Serophene and Metformin for about six months, but none worked. I saw a Reproductive Endocrinologist (RE) who had me do injections in my stomach. He changed the medication three times before we found one that actually worked. We were ready to do Intrauterine Insemination (IUI). I had to do a trigger shot the day before the procedure that would make me ovulate. We had to wait two long weeks to find out if we were pregnant or not. It was so hard not to take an at home pregnancy test. They told me because of all the hormones I was taking, it could give me a false positive, and they did not want that to happen.

I will never forget getting that phone call. I was at work when they called to tell me it had worked. I was pregnant. Our prayers had been answered. A few weeks later we heard the heart beat, and a few weeks after that, through genetic testing, we learned we were having a little boy. He was due to arrive on November 5. We already had his name picked out: Jason Hunter Thomas.

At 20 weeks, we had the ultrasound scan done where they measure the baby and all his organs to check that he was developing normally. Little did we know that would be the last ultrasound. A week later I was in the emergency room due to Preterm Premature Rupture of Membranes (PPROM). They put me on antibiotics, plenty of fluids and bed rest. Five days later I was back due to cord prolapse.

At 21 weeks and 5 days gestation, we found out I was in labor, and our son would not survive because his lungs were not yet developed. It felt like time just stopped. I couldn't breathe, move, hear or feel.

Why would God answer our prayers to just take it away?

This couldn't be real. In one moment we went from planning our son's future to planning his funeral.

I was full of anger and sadness. Why would God answer our prayers to just take it away? How does one prepare themselves for the death of a child? You simple cannot. June 30, 2014, at 4:16 PM was the first and last time we held Jason. His perfect little body weighed 440 grams. He was 10 inches long.



A nurse at the hospital gave me a M.E.N.D. brochure. At first I was nervous about attending a group. I wasn't sure if I could talk about my experience, or if I even wanted to. But after sitting in a room filled with other mommies who knew my pain, it somehow brought a little peace and comfort to my broken heart. I realized that if they could survive, I could too.

Three years later my husband and I finally thought we were ready to try again. After more blood work, my RE said I had a blood clotting disorder called Lupus Anticoagulant. So this time he wanted us to do In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). I did the same injections but in my hip. He added Lovenox shots in my stomach and estrogen patches too. On top of that I was taking progesterone pills, vitamin D and folic acid. Before we were able to do the procedure, he noticed that one of my ovaries looked abnormal. I went in for another laparoscopy to remove a cyst on my right ovary. After a small wait, I was ready to go in for my egg retrieval. I produced 25 eggs and 17 made it through the fertilization and freezing process. We transferred one healthy egg and we were back to the long two week wait.

Once again we cried tears of joy when we got the phone call that I was pregnant. January 15, 2018, at 7 weeks we got to hear the heart beat. That was one of the best and worst days of our life. After the doctor's appointment, I went back to work. After a few hours I started hurting. I started to leave work so I could get some rest, but before I made it to the car, I started bleeding. I was terrified. This could not happen again. I just heard the heart beat. I went back to the doctor, and he confirmed my fears. I was having a miscarriage. We named our second baby June.

I wanted to try one more time because we already had the embryos frozen. The RE said we needed to let my body rest before we tried again.

We were happy when it worked again, but at the same time so scared this third pregnancy was going to end up like the last two pregnancies. We were doing well, and the RE wanted me to start seeing a regular OB/GYN. My first time seeing him was on July 16, 2018, at 9 weeks. I felt that something was wrong.

He wasn't talking about the baby. Instead he was asking me questions about my last ultrasound. Finally he told me to get dressed, and he would come back. When he returned, he told me he could not find a heartbeat. I lost it. I knew this could not be true.

I wanted to go back to the RE. The RE took me in right away because I was so upset. Once again my biggest fear was laid out in front of me. Another baby died. After a week, I had to go in for a Dilation and curettage (D&C) because things were not happening naturally by themselves. We named our third baby Jade.

I still have my embryos frozen. I feel this is the hardest decision that my husband and I have ever had to make. You have to pay every year for your embryos to remain frozen. With all the heartache, physical and emotional pain and financial burden, we have decided to end our fertility journey. It breaks our hearts to know we will never have a biological child. I don't understand why this has happened to us and why this has to be our story, but one day when I get to heaven I know all will come to light.

Even Miracles Take A Little Bit of Time

Written by Jessica Gaddie

Mommy to Angel Wilson and Wilson Glenn

M.E.N.D.—Palm Beach, Florida Chapter Director

At age 11, doctors delivered the devastating news that I would never conceive a child. My ovaries were both covered by benign cysts that would make it difficult or impossible for me to get pregnant due to severe PCOS. With no known cure and very little information available at the time, they said it would take a miracle for me to ever get pregnant. So I prayed for a miracle.

The moment most girls dream of was finally here: I was getting ready to marry my Prince Charming who knew of my challenges. His response was "All I need is you," a simple remedy to a happily ever after, or so we thought. We prayed for that miracle doctors spoke of and one day we had a positive pregnancy test! We were so excited until we arrived at the doctor and were told it was a false pregnancy. There, doctors confirmed what we already knew that my PCOS was too severe for me to conceive and our options were limited.

We continued to pray for a miracle until God opened our hearts to the possibility of adoption and brought us two wonderful little boys. Chris came first at age 9, and Alex came next at age 6. We had finally accepted the fact we would never conceive and adoption was God's plan for our family.

A few short weeks before both adoptions were finalized, I find out I was pregnant! We were shocked but quickly fell in love with the idea of this growing miracle in my belly. At my first doctor's appointment, instead of only seeing my baby on the ultrasound, I held the body of my 6.5 week baby in the palm of my hand. Sorrow filled my heart causing it to break. I had never experienced such grief and vowed to stop trying to conceive.

We raised our boys into adulthood. Chris was now about to graduate from college and move back to

Texas. Alex was about to graduate high school and move away for college. Russ and I were celebrating our 40th birthdays and our 20th wedding anniversary, getting ready for our empty nest, when once

again we find out there was a miracle growing inside me. Shock and disbelief would not begin to describe what we felt, but we knew this was our miracle.

After 20 weeks we were confident we were bringing home another little boy we named Wilson Glenn, but my body betrayed us once again. Due to an incompetent cervix, we lost Wilson at nearly six months gestation. The grief we felt was as overwhelming as the joy we felt in the months prior.

This time I could not ignore God's call for action, so through divine appointment we helped launch M.E.N.D.-Palm Beach. We knew our precious little boy had left a legacy of hope. We are convinced that he was conceived to bring hope to infertile couples because according to multiple doctors, he was never supposed to even be conceived to begin with. Then later, through his death, Wilson continues to bring the hope of healing to those who have suffered the loss of their own precious baby; the ones conceived but were never brought home.

Apparently our story doesn't end there. We believe God still has something in store for our happily ever after. Wilson woke a desire in me that had laid dormant for so long. A desire both Russ and I suppressed because it was too painful to live with. A desire to hold a newborn baby in our arms. Through a series of incredible events, we have been blessed with the possibility of fostering a beautiful baby boy that I had the privilege of watching being born and whose umbilical cord I cut myself. We can honestly say that because of Wilson, we re-opened our hearts again to the possibility of a baby. We hoped to conceive again, but maybe it was for a little boy who needs a loving and stable home. It seems our happily ever after is still being written!



My Story

Written by Kristina Cobler

Mommy to Keiran David, Fred and George

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa Assistant Chapter Director

Everyone has that talk before they get married. You know the one: "Do you want kids?" You test the waters to make sure you're on the same page as the love of your life before making that commitment... You want nothing more than total agreement on a the matter. When we had "the talk," my now-husband and I agreed fully: If God would bless us with children, we'd be happy; if not, we'd be happy. I don't think it ever occurred to us in our 20s that what God had in store for us was so much more complicated than our own want.

In 2006, after a year of marriage, my husband and I were tactfully informed by my doctor that we were likely dealing with "infertility of unknown origin." I remember crying on my drive home while I tried to explain to Brian over the phone what I had just been told. We were not actively trying to get pregnant at the time...but then again, we weren't actively trying to prevent it either. In situations like ours, 90% of couples get pregnant within a year... we were now thrown into the mysterious 10%.

Instead of dwelling on the subject, we decided to take a few years to enjoy life as a twosome before we would tackle the issue. We kept our "infertility of unknown origin" a secret from family and friends for years. We developed a true talent for dodging the "when are you having kids?" inquiries. Seven years down the line, we decided it was time. Time for test after test after test. After just a few months of medical scrutiny we were able to get pregnant by tweaking just a few hormone levels. It seemed almost too easy. In May of 2013, we found out we were expecting our first. We made the announcements, moved into a new home, and started planning our little one's future... college plans included. People never talk about that life lost when you lose a baby-not the short life that they lived, but the life that they didn't.

My first pregnancy seemed pretty normal. Once we made it past the first trimester, we thought we were "in the clear." Babies that make it past the first trimester always make it to the end, right? I remember my doctor talking about transferring me to a high risk doctor-she said it wasn't a matter of if I would get pre-eclampsia, but when. I had no idea what that meant, but it sounded ominous. At 27 weeks pregnant, I suddenly felt really, really sick. I ended up in the hospital with constant testing for pre-eclampsia. Pre-eclampsia never developed....Instead

my body went straight into HELLP syndrome. The only cure for HELLP is to deliver the baby, and so I gave birth to my son, Keiran, at 28 weeks via emergency C-section on October 25, 2013. He lived for 7 days in the NICU. I can still hear the doctor telling us "he had a bad night" on the morning of November 1. Just a few hours later, he passed away in my arms from complications due to necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC). It seems so cold to say it like that...he was so much more than that.

After we lost Keiran, we went into survival mode for a year before deciding to try again. This time our options had changed vastly. More fertility tests showed our chances of having another child had greatly decreased. Cysts on my ovaries, scarring from the emergency C-section, age... so many things stacked against us. This time would not be a matter of simple hormone adjustments. This time meant Clomid and timed intercourse (doesn't that sound romantic?), intrauterine insemination (IUI), more testing, Metformin, progesterone shots, lots of pineapple and Mucinex (desperation had set in), until we finally decided to go through IVF.

When we started the IVF process, everything magically fell into place. My cycle lined up perfectly, no cysts, just the right amount of eggs became the perfect amount of embryos... we just felt like our luck had finally turned around. In February 2016, I became pregnant with twins. We were absolutely elated. We had even joked that if they were red-headed little boys we would name them Fred and George. On March 3, we saw their two little heartbeats perfectly in sync. A week later, they stopped. Our double rainbow was gone. Genetic testing after a D&C showed no reason for our loss, but we did find out that they were boys...they were meant to be our Fred and George.

So much anger and frustration follows you around when you deal with infertility and loss. I felt so betrayed by my own body. It wouldn't do the one thing it is supposed to be perfectly designed to do. I didn't feel like a woman. I was an un-woman. All of that time and money spent with nothing to hold, literally. Losing the twins was the lowest point for us, but somehow our desire for children was still strong enough to keep us coming back for more tests and more treatments. We were going to give IVF just one more chance.

I have a hard time telling this last part. Not because it makes me unhappy, but because it seems the most unfair. In the end, we got our rainbow...but not

**I didn't feel
like a woman.
I was an un-woman.**

everybody does. Just as we were ready to begin our final attempt at IVF, I became pregnant “spontaneously” (that’s what they call it when an infertile woman becomes pregnant without any fertility assistance). After 13 years of marriage, somehow my body decided to do the one thing it was designed to do. In May 2018, we welcomed a perfectly healthy little girl. She was born on May 17 - NEC awareness day (the disease that took her oldest brother) and with a head full of red hair like we always imagined the twins would have. She is so much more than our rainbow. She is our sunshine.

Loss and Infertility: Healing and Connecting through Nature

Written by Leslie Casarez

Mommy to Cora Anne

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area



After we lost our daughter, Cora Anne, we purchased 11 acres of land in Navasota. It was a dream of my husband to have land and I thought it was the perfect time to make a change. Almost a year

later in 2018, we purchased a mobile home and sold our house in Houston, Texas, to move to our beautiful property of Navasota that Cora helped us buy.

Along with this land, we inherited an Agricultural Tax Exemption and had ranchers continue to use our land to raise their cattle. Andrew and I love these cows and have named them all. For the past year we have lived here, there have been some losses. The most recent was the end of March 2019, when Sassy Sally was found dead early Sunday morning. She had been pregnant and we knew she was expecting soon. I was heartbroken to see she had died during labor. When Andrew went to check on her to confirm her demise, he found her baby. Sassy was able to deliver one of her calves but struggled to deliver her second. Andrew and I bottle fed this calf until the owners could come and take her to the vet. We named her, Sally, after her mother. I often find myself relating to these beautiful cows and makes me think about how even nature struggles with loss and hardship.

It brings us joy that our land is being used to house mothering and pregnant cows; however, it does make me think about my own fertility. Soon after moving to our land, our struggle with getting pregnant again began.

It was about 3 months after losing Cora when I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). Our OB/GYN recommended we wait to try again until one year regardless. So, we waited. In 2018, we decided to officially start trying for another baby.

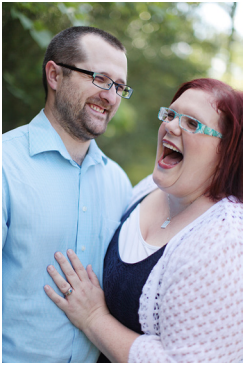
After six months worth of negative pregnancy tests, we headed back to the OB/GYN office to determine any other issues. After further review on an ultrasound, a large hemorrhagic cyst was found on my right ovary. Several options were discussed including surgery that may or may not need to remove the ovary or starting birth control medications for four months to reduce the size of the cyst. After hearing this news, my heart sank with the potential loss of an ovary as well as putting trying for a baby on hold again. We opted for the less risky option of medication, and, after two months of being back on the medications, the cyst had disappeared completely. After our struggle with the cyst, our OB/GYN had been less reluctant to start us on Clomid.

After being on Clomid for eight months, my husband and I decided that we should seek a second opinion and made an appointment with a Reproductive Endocrinologist at the end of April 2019. We are currently getting some testing to determine the best approach.

Reflecting on our land and mothering cows, I find it interesting that our land provides a fertile land for life, but not for me. However, seeing how the cows continue to move forward even after enduring their own loss of their calves, gives us hope that we can move forward and embrace joyful moments that come our way. Having hope does not mean that we don’t have horrible days full of grief and despair, but if the cows can continue to bask in the sunlight, we can do so as well.



Love and Loss, But Never Love Lost



*Interview with Todd and Stormy Mitchell
Daddy and Mommy to Avery, Gideon and Joy
M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area
Chapter Director*

Stormy Mitchell has served as the Chapter Director of M.E.N.D. - Greater Houston Area since 2013. The first part of this article Stormy shares their journey to parenthood that includes infertility, loss and rainbow babies. The second part we dove a little deeper, hearing from each of them how infertility and loss impacted them in their marriage.

Tell me about your pregnancy journey.

We started trying after we had been married about four years. We were excited to add to our family. Each month we would figure out when my due date would be if we got pregnant that month.

We noticed there was a problem soon after starting to try, though. I wasn't having a period hardly at all, and so my OB/GYN did some hormonal testing and a transvaginal ultrasound. Based on those results, he sent us to a Reproductive Endocrinologist (RE). They did even more testing to learn I had Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). My husband had testing done as well, but his results all came back fairly normal. We started fertility treatment, which included lots of expensive injectable hormonal medications and intrauterine inseminations (IUI).

You've had multiple losses. When did those occur during your pregnancy journey?

We had our first miscarriage during the thick of our fertility treatment. After the 2nd IUI and over a year after starting to try, we were excited to learn I was pregnant. The HCG was low, so we weren't sure what would happen. But, it doubled, and we assumed everything would be ok. It wasn't. We ended up miscarrying our little one soon thereafter. We decided, after another IUI, we weren't up for any more treatment emotionally, or financially. We stopped seeing the RE, and we tried naturally. I lost about 75 pounds to get healthy to hopefully help my fertility.

In October 2010, two and a half years later after stopping fertility treatment and after three and a half years of trying to get pregnant, we became pregnant naturally with our son, Gideon. Everything was perfect with my pregnancy with him. It was a dream come true. Until he died. He was stillborn at 33 weeks and 4 days pregnant on our 8th wedding anniversary. He died due to an undetected Velamentous Cord Insertion which caused growth restriction. He was our little miracle baby. And he still is. We went on to amazingly have a living son less than one year later after we lost Gideon with no fertility treatment. He was born completely healthy.

We wanted to give our living son a younger sibling, so we tried again. We experienced secondary infertility trying to get pregnant. After months of trying, we tried Clomid to get pregnant, and it worked. We got pregnant...with twins! We were all so shocked! The lady who was told by the RE that there was a tiny percentage to get pregnant was now pregnant with two babies at one time! Heartbreakingly, though, we lost one of the babies by 7 weeks due to Vanishing Twin Syndrome. Thankfully, we welcomed our youngest son, the surviving twin, into the world healthy.

Loss is hard, but you've also dealt with infertility. How have the two of those impacted your relationship?

Overall, it has made our relationship stronger. No one else knows what it is like to lose our babies. We are the only ones who are the parents to these babies. We are the only ones who loved them the way we did. It was difficult during the middle of it; it often felt like we were speaking a different language. But overall, we had to cling to each other to make it. We knew, no matter what, we would support each other in our pain. For 10 years of our marriage, we were dealing with infertility and losing babies. That can put a huge strain on your relationship. At the end of each day, we knew we wanted to be together. That helped us get through a lot. We love each other in a way we didn't know was possible. We love each other so much more than we did before we went through all of the pain and loss. While we will always wish our babies could still be here, we are thankful for that gift. The gift of this beautiful, consuming love we have for each other. We loved each other before, but now our love is experienced in a truly a different way because of what we have walked through.

Stronger Together: Answers from Todd and Stormy

How did infertility impact you personally in your marriage?

Stormy: I felt like I failed my husband. I felt like I failed as a woman and as a wife. I couldn't give my husband any babies. There were times when I would tell him that I would understand if he wanted to leave and find a wife who could give him children. He never once demanded we have children and never once placed any blame on me. But I felt like a failure. I couldn't give him a family. I was the reason for all the pain we had been through. Month after month of negative tests broke my spirit. And I am sure for a while, I was not a pleasant person to be around. And my husband loved me so deeply through it all. Eventually, I found peace and joy in whatever circumstance we were in, but that took time for me to get there. I was able to truly be happy. I remember getting to the place where I said to the Lord, "God, if just me and Todd are it in our little family, that is ok. We will be happy, and we will do whatever work You have for us. If that is never having kids, then that is ok. We will be a great aunt and uncle to our nieces and nephews. We will serve You however You want. And I will do so joyfully. I have found true contentment and joy right now."

When dealing with secondary infertility before our last pregnancy, I was much more positive the whole time. I was determined to try to not get bogged down by the let down, and it made the whole process of trying to get pregnant again less stressful than the first time around. This helped to keep our marriage from getting weighed down by the stress of trying.

Todd: I felt worthless and inferior as a man, that it was my fault. The one thing that she wanted more than anything in the world wasn't something I could provide.

How did infertility impact you as a spouse (toward the other person)?

Stormy: For a while, infertility made me bitter and angry. However, I was never angry or bitter towards my husband. I think for a while; I was not a very good wife. He might say otherwise, but looking back I can see how my brokenness and desperation was hard on him. And, being honest, trying for a baby year after year can really put a strain on your sex life with your

spouse.

Todd was the one I leaned on through everything. I may have leaned on him too much, causing extra



stress on him. During our first round of infertility, I didn't have any friends who had been through it, so I had to lean on him a lot. During our secondary infertility, I had more than one friend from M.E.N.D. who had similar experiences as we did, so I was able to talk to them more, lessening the stress overall.

Todd was my rock and the one who made me smile no matter what. He was always a bright light in a dark time. Once I was determined to get healthy again, mentally and physically, my attitude toward everything changed and it made me see him in an even better light. Watching how he loved me through it all, made me love him more.

Todd: I didn't really want to talk about or engage in sex much because it was a reminder of (what I perceived to be) my failure.

How does loss and infertility impact your future?

Stormy: We have recently decided to permanently end our fertility journey. I am 37 years old and we are blessed with 2 living sons. We have three babies in heaven, and I have PCOS. I also had very high-risk pregnancies with my living sons, dealing with preeclampsia and having to deliver them early. After all the things we have been through, it is time for us to close the baby making chapters of our book. I never thought I would get to the point where I would be ok with us not having any more babies, but I am. I am thankful for the life we have and am very content.

Our losses will always be with us. Our grief has molded us into these new and better people. Because of them, we live with more passion and purpose. We love deeper because of them. We will always remember our babies and hold them close to our hearts. Always. Losing them gives us perspective and has taught us about grace, joy and faith. In the future, we will cling to the love we have for them until we see them in eternity.

Todd: It has given my wife a calling to help and support others. I will stand by her and help her achieve that goal. For us as a couple, we were able to have subsequent children. We decided to voluntarily end after two living children.

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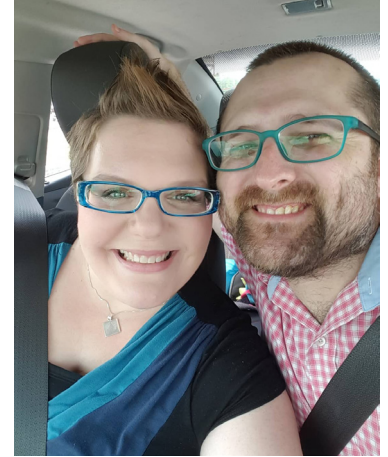
What advice would you give others facing loss and infertility?

Stormy: Hold on tight to each other and to the Lord. Read the Bible and books on loss/infertility. Reading the Truth and hearing other's stories can help. Pray. It's ok to be angry, it is ok to yell. It is even ok to ask God "why?" Try to keep talking to Him. Try to keep reading the Bible. But if you can't, that is truly ok, too. Ask others to be praying for you. I kept a lot of our infertility quiet because I didn't want a lot of other people to know. I wish I had shared with more than just a few friends and my close family. I wish we had more people praying for us, because in those dark moments, you will need other people's prayers. Take time to care for yourself. If you love exercise or you love vacationing, or you love eating queso, do that. Take time to find joy in the areas where you can find it. Find those moments with your spouse where you can laugh. Go do stuff you enjoy.

Our losses were the hardest thing we have ever been through. Having a baby and losing a baby is devastating. Cling to each other. Cry with each other. Also give each other grace. And give each other space. After Gideon died, I was a total wreck and completely heartbroken. We talked a lot. We

processed our feelings together, but I knew my husband would need a lot of space to grieve, as he is an introvert. I am an extrovert, so while I did talk to my husband, I had other people I talked to, too. I knew I couldn't dump all of my hurt on him, because he was hurting deeply, as well. Lean on your spouse, but also find a couple other people to lean on. At the end of it all, the only person you will truly have is each other. If you never end up having living babies or you never get that positive pregnancy test, the person you are laying beside at night is the one you will have for the rest of your life. Remember that.

Todd: Don't get consumed by pressure to get pregnant. Try not to make infertility an identity. Set yourself up mentally for how you will be able to find happiness if you never conceive. Finally, see each day as a new opportunity for hope to shine in your heart.



Not for the *Faint of Heart*

Walking the road of infertility is not for the faint of heart. Thankfully, our relationship was built on a firm foundation, as it would be tested through countless challenges. Brian and I were married on July 14, 2001, but our story began four years before that, when we took a college spring term course together. Brian had been friends with my older brothers before he even met me; I did not need their approval when we started dating, but it helped that they watched out for me as our relationship grew. At our wedding, my sister/maid of honor presented a list of the Top 10 Reasons Brian and Becky HAD to Get Married, and one of the top reasons was that I was put on earth to become a mom. I have felt this calling deeply since I was a child; I am number four of eight children—the oldest daughter, and I always played the mom and the teacher in our pretend play as kids. I knew the joys of having lots of siblings, and wanted six children of my own "someday."

We waited to start our family. When we were first married, we lived in Chicago, and we were young—

Written by Becky Johnston

Mommy to Abigail Marie and "Darth"

M.E.N.D.—MidMichigan Assistant Chapter Director

it felt like we had our whole lives ahead of us to have children. After three years, we moved back to Michigan so Brian could pursue an apprenticeship with a theatre company, and I started off working part-time at a Christian school. We waited even longer, because we were not in a financially responsible place to start a family.

Three years later, we moved again, this time to my husband's hometown, so we could live closer to our families. Both of our moms were going through health challenges, and we felt called to be nearer to them to help serve them better. We took this leap of faith with only my part-time income from another Christian school, but knew this was the door we were meant to walk through.

Thankfully, we both eventually found full-time work, but then I decided it was time to go back to graduate school. We never had the conversation, but I found out later that Brian wanted to wait to start our family until I was done with grad school, because

he was worried I would never finish. Cut to four years later, and we were finally “ready” to start trying. We tried, and we waited...and waited. I was in my early 30s by now, so my doctor let us be tested early instead of trying for a year.

After my doctor’s suspicions and several tests, I was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). It is not impossible to get pregnant with PCOS, but it can be difficult for some women. I fell into this category. To kick start ovulation, we opted to go the Clomid route, which had worked for several women I knew. I went through three rounds, with progressively higher amounts of the medication, and each time had my blood drawn to see if I had ovulated...70 to 80% of women have success ovulating on Clomid, but I did not. Next came Femara, another medication that can work for some women when Clomid does not—same result. Several months (years?) passed during this time; it is a frustrating process, dealing with the medication side effects, having to time everything just right, taking SO many pregnancy tests and blood draws, and still not ovulating.

We were finally referred to a reproductive endocrinologist (IVF specialist). Even taking that first step to call the doctor was difficult—it was like admitting defeat. We scheduled a consult, and were so impressed with our doctor; he was so kind and offered us so much hope. The financial obligations required another leap of faith. Brian spent a weekend crunching numbers and figuring out a way we could make this happen. We were compelled to continue moving forward with starting our family.

The IVF process can be long and physically draining. Mine involved a hysteroscopy to remove polyps in my uterus, the retrieval of 45 eggs, and a mild case of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome. Of those 45 eggs, 23 eggs were fertilized and monitored, and only 13 of those embryos were able to be frozen. We felt blessed by those results: most women have fewer eggs at their retrieval, fewer still get fertilized, and even fewer survive the freezing process (and some do not survive the thawing process!).

My first frozen embryo transfer was October 27, 2016. I had this strange sense of calm; Brian got to be there to hold my hand in the operating room for this procedure—modern medicine is truly miraculous! I cried when we received our first ultrasound of our embryos, after all the years of trying. Not everyone can say they have seen their babies on a cellular level.

November 7, 2016, was the day we confirmed my pregnancy. I cannot describe the elation we felt after receiving that first positive result. Of course, the

peaks and valleys of this journey did not stop there; otherwise I would not have found M.E.N.D. But to have experienced that joy with my beloved husband made the years of trying, medication side effects, surgical procedures, and expense all worth it. Just getting pregnant was a miracle for me, and I knew it was only the tip of the iceberg.

I had pregnancy cravings (Sausage McMuffin with Egg) and aversions (Cheerios and baby carrots), went through morning sickness most days, and grew out of my regular pants. I was more tired and my brain was fuzzier than ever before in my life. I experienced the joy of feeling my baby kick starting sometime during my 17th week. I hold onto all of those memories with fervor. Due to an insufficient cervix, I gave birth to Abigail Marie at 21 weeks, 11:57 PM on March 3, 2017, and she died at 12:04 AM on March 4. Brian held my hand in the hospital the whole night long. Since then, we have tried two more rounds of IVF; one was unsuccessful, and the most recent round ended in a miscarriage at six weeks on September 6, 2018. We are “invisible” parents, and still hope to parent here on earth.

I remember every number and every date of our journey. We find purpose in creating a legacy for our babies: donating to the nursing program at the college where we met; fundraising to help other families experiencing premature birth; honoring the nurse who took such good care of us when I delivered Abigail with a Maternity Care Hero award; and assisting with the new chapter of M.E.N.D.-MidMichigan. I won’t know until after I’m gone from this earth, but one question I have for God is whether He was using the long road of infertility to prepare me for our losses. Despite our tragic losses, our hearts are filled with love from the tremendous support we have received from our village. We are so thankful for all the people who have shared their stories, walked this path before us, and come through the other side with joy; I pray God will give me the words and strength to be that person for someone else who is just beginning.



Infertility

One in Eight
We are all around you.

Sometimes our fight is silent. A war that you would never know was being fought, unless you notice the tears we fight so hard to keep from spilling over as we find out we are at the end of yet another failed cycle. As another pregnancy is announced. As another unwanted child is reported on the news.

Sometimes we stand up and make our fight known. We open our hearts and our lives to those around us, making us available for love and support, but also so very vulnerable to your criticisms. Hoping for nothing more or less than understanding in the fact that this is not always easy, and we are struggling.

Sometimes we stay in our smaller starter homes longer, we drive older cars. We skimp and save, we fight for every last dime to cover the medical treatments that might give us what comes so easily for others.

Sometimes it is still not enough. We go from being a couple you assume will have children later to a couple you assume decided to never have children at all.

Sometimes those extra bedrooms never become anything more than a home office or a guest room. Sometimes that perfect nook for a crib never gets filled with anything at all.

But sometimes it does. Sometimes the treatments work and our heart is filled with the love we have been waiting for. And yet still, we are scarred by the war. We love our children differently than we would have, we love each other differently. Our battle has changed our hearts, for better or worse we can't really say. But we are most definitely changed.

We are one in eight women. We are suffering from infertility. Please Don't Ignore us.

Written by Sarah of The Bio Girl on April 23, 2012, at <http://www.biogirlblog.com>. Retrieved June 9, 2019.

A Poem and a Prayer by Davy of The Sea of TTC

A Poem and A Prayer
 We're left behind again today.
 I don't know how to feel.
 Tears are streaming down my face.
 Lord, what are you calling us to?
 I'm in an in-between with no end in sight.
 I never wanted a career.
 I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom and wife.
 Now what?

Are You calling us to adopt?
 To be foster parents?
 Are You teaching us to wait?
 Waiting for us to obey?
 Good gifts come from You.
 We don't earn them.
 Should we try? (No.)

Give me patience and faith in the waiting.
 Guide us to any steps we should take.

I try to include myself, plan events, stay engaged. It's hard when talk revolves around kids; I just can't relate.

I love kids. I love my friends and their kids. I'm thrilled for them when they are expecting more kids. So where do I fit in? Should I be the ever-faithful babysitter? Do I dare try to do a ladies event that isn't a play date?

It's a lonely place: infertility. My husband feels it, too. Few people understand. None of our local friends do.

Lord, please help us. Get our hearts in the right place. Align our desires with Yours. May we rely on You and be united. Give us grace to be thankful, whatever the circumstances.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen

Posted November 27, 2013, at <http://theseaofTTC.blogspot.com/>,
 retrieved June 9, 2019.



Pérdida e Infertilidad

*Artículo de Presidente y Fundadora,
Rebekah Mitchell,
Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y bebé Mitchell*

Myrtles fértiles. Así es como la gente han llamado a mi madre, a mis cuatro hermanas y a mí a veces. Los seis quedamos embarazadas la primera vez que lo intentamos, lo que resultó en veintidós bebés, aunque tres fueron involuntariamente abortados y uno nacido sin vida. Entonces, ¿cómo es que aunque mis tres bebés fueron concebidos muy rápidamente, también estoy etiquetado como Infértil? Myrtle fértil e infértil- me parece un oxímoron, pero en realidad no lo es. Durante mis años de gestación, tuve lo que se conoce como un tipo de "infertilidad secundaria". Tuve un hijo vivo que fue dado a luz a término, pero no llevó con éxito a mis dos bebés subsiguientes a término. Mi bebé Jonathan nació sin vida a las 29 semanas debido a un accidente del cordón umbilical, y mi tercer bebé fue abortado involuntariamente a las 10 semanas.

Cuando era pequeña, tenía mi vida planeada. Quería casarme joven y ser una madre del hogar con tres hijos. Me casé joven, y era una madre que se quedaba en casa, pero sólo tenía un hijo, o al menos sólo uno que vivía. La casa ruidosa, que había imaginado no sucedió. Teníamos un hogar maravilloso y amoroso cuando nuestro hijo estaba creciendo, pero simplemente no se parecía a lo que había imaginado cuando era una mujer joven soñando con mi futura familia. Mi historia es un poco diferente en que no pude seguir "intentando de nuevo" después de nuestras pérdidas debido a una enfermedad renal con la que me diagnosticaron poco después de que mi esposo Byron y yo nos casamos, luego varios años más tarde, tuve un trasplante de riñón. En realidad concebí de nuevo después de mi trasplante, pero ese es el bebé que perdimos a las 10 semanas, y mis médicos no recomendaron otro intento de un embarazo.

Lamennte profundamente la pérdida de nuestro hijo Jonathan y nuestro pequeño Baby Mitchell. Pero también tuve que aprender a lamentar la pérdida de mi sueño de criar a varios hijos. Fue más que frustrante, emocional y desgarrador no poder quedar embarazada, pero podría, si eso tiene sentido. Nunca sentí la paz acerca de ir en contra de los consejos de mis médicos de trasplante de no intentar un embarazo posterior. Me recordaron varias veces que tenía un hijo vivo quien me necesitaba estar aquí y tratando de darle un hermano no valía la pena el riesgo. A menudo me preguntaba, ¿cómo es que otras parejas tienen "oopsies", pero nunca lo hicimos? Si me hubiera quedado embarazada "accidentalmente", habría considerado a ese bebé como un regalo especial y habría tomado el riesgo de todos los peligros potenciales de los que me advirtieron los médicos. Pero nunca sucedió.

Pasé años aplastada por aparentemente todos los conocidos teniendo todos los niños que querían sin dificultad. Algunos asumieron que estaba bien con nuestra circunstancia porque al menos tuve un hijo que era y sigue siendo la alegría de nuestras vidas, y seguramente entendía que no era ideal tener un bebé después de un trasplante de riñón, ¡por el amor de Dios! Pero desdevastadoramente, y a menudo en secreto, lamentaba mi incapacidad para darle a mi esposo otro hijo y a mi hijo un hermano o hermana. Mi familia no desarrolló a la forma en que siempre pensé que lo haría, y tuve que aprender a contentarme con eso, pero tomó muchos años estar en paz con el plan de Dios, en lugar del mío. Nuestra pequeña familia de tres años finalmente ha crecido en cuatro con nuestra nuera, Anna, y para cuando se publique esta revista, seremos una familia de cinco con el nacimiento de nuestro nieto, Elias Jonathan.

Al reflexionar sobre esos duros años de anhelo de tener otro bebé, estoy agradecido por la inmensa felicidad que realmente tengo hoy. Fue un largo y arduo camino de tener que encontrar mi camino a un lugar de asentamiento contenta, pero lo hice, ¡y tú los haras también! Confía en el Señor, apóyate en el y considera el lamento del profeta Jeremías:

"Recuerdo mi aflicción y mi vagabundeo, la amargura y la agalla. Los recuerdo bien, y mi alma está desmizada dentro de mí. Sin embargo, esto recuerdo a la mente y, por lo tanto, tengo esperanza: Debido al gran amor del Señor no somos consumidos, porque sus compasiones nunca fallan. Son nuevos cada mañana; grande es tu fidelidad. Me digo a mí mismo: 'El Señor es mi parte; por lo tanto, voy a esperar por él. Lamentaciones 3:19-24

M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES

Greater Houston Area

M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area is preparing for our 14th Annual Walk to Remember. It will be held on October 12, at 1:00 PM at Bammel Church of Christ. We expect about 1,000 people in attendance to remember the lives of 250 babies. We look forward to honoring and remembering your babies with you. For more details, go to www.mend.org.

We are also getting items for the raffle at our Walk to Remember. The raffle helps offset the cost of the Walk. If you or your company would like to donate toward that, please email stormym@mend.org. If you want to help the day of the Walk, or would like to help with our ornament assembly, please email Kara Wilkerson, our volunteer coordinator, at kara@mend.org. Please know that we are praying for you all and for all the families in the Greater Houston area who are walking this journey.



Stormy

NW Washington

We want to thank all who participated in our M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5K! What a great turnout we had



walking together and sharing stories with each other and our families. We are already looking forward to next year's 5K.



Stacy

MidMichigan

M.E.N.D.–MidMichigan continues to welcome new families into our Chapter. We are looking forward to spreading the word about M.E.N.D. at the Auburn Cornfest on July 14! We're also setting up a couple fundraisers with details that will be available in our Facebook group. If you're local and would like to be involved, please contact Karen (karen@mend.org) to find out more information! Thank you for your support as we reach MidMichigan with the message of hope.



Karen

Southwest Missouri

M.E.N.D. - SW Missouri continues to help families through our support groups and Facebook page. Our July meeting will be canceled and will not be rescheduled, due to Independence Day. Our next support group will be August 1. Our Balloon Release is September 7, at The Springs Church starting at 10:00 AM. Register by emailing the number attending and number of babies being honored to kathryn@mend.org.



Kathryn

Bryan/College Station, Texas

M.E.N.D.–Bryan/College Station has been busy serving the families of Brazos County. Our monthly support group in May was held at Michaels Craft Store. We made personalized Mother's Day gifts for us to remember our babies. We are excited about our annual Painting With a Purpose night at PWAT on July 23. We will soon begin donating miscarriage bags to local hospitals and doctors offices. For more information about M.E.N.D. - BCS, please email Jennie@mend.org or call/text 402-704-6363.



Jennie

Palm Beach, Florida

M.E.N.D.–Palm Beach, Florida continues to stay busy in the community with constant outreach, presentations, and awareness. With big future goals in mind to expand our reach to Belle Glade, to the Spanish and Creole speaking community, and to daddies, Christine and I are looking forward to meeting those interested in joining the M.E.N.D. Leadership Team by becoming a volunteer Assistant Chapter Director! We will also need some caring and compassionate friends to help us with our October remembrance events! A big thank you to all who participated in our Virtual 5K and to those who joined us at Freedom Park.



Jessica

Columbus, Ohio

We are still raising funds for our chapter of M.E.N.D.-Columbus, Ohio. We are close to 90% of our goal. We are thankful for all the donations we have received, and welcome more as we continue to serve the needs of our area through our new chapter.



We are close to selecting a venue for our monthly support groups and hope to make an announcement about it by the next issue! I am seeking assistants to help with this chapter, so if you are in the Columbus, Ohio area and interested in as an assistant, please contact me at latrina@mend.org.

LaTrina

Chicagoland

M.E.N.D.-Chicagoland knows summer is a time for relaxing and vacation, but we also know that no matter the time of year, infant loss and grief aren't something we can take a break from. Sadly, moms and dads in our area continue to experience the loss of their babies and we consider it a privilege and honor to walk with them during these difficult times.



Sara

Denver

M.E.N.D.-Denver had a busy month in May. We hosted a M.E.N.D. Mommies Mother's Day Brunch for our chapter along with a couple new mamas. Directly following, we regrouped at a nearby open space to complete the Virtual 5K together.



Kimberly

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Thank you to all of the M.E.N.D.-Tulsa families that participated in our 2nd Annual M.E.N.D.ing Miles 5K! We had 49 participants join us to commemorate our babies. Thank you all for your support!



Lisa

Online

From New Jersey to California, our online support group is meeting, reaching and comforting families where they are. Our next online support groups will be on July 18 and August 15. To join, email larhesa@mend.org for the link.



LaRhessa

NEW LOCATIONS!

San Antonio, Texas

We are doing great and well on our way to getting our first support group started! We are currently trying to finalize a venue to hold our monthly gathering and looking for at least one more assistant chapter director. If you are in the San Antonio area and would like more information about being part of the M.E.N.D. leadership team please contact me at Katie@mend.org.



Katie

Lynchburg, Virginia

Hello I'm Melissa. My husband and I have two kids. Jaxson was stillborn at 35 weeks on November 27, 2016, to an unknown cause. Our daughter, Fiona, is 1. We moved to Virginia in 2018 from Texas. I cannot wait to start our chapter here in Lynchburg and get to know everyone.



Melissa Scifres

"In those few weeks of pregnancy you mock up an entire life—who the baby is going to look like, where it's going to go to college. That's the loss we suffered."

- Kirstie Alley -

Rainbow/Subsequent Babies

Subsequent Births

Celebrating our Rainbow Babies

Kyle and Cara Saba,
of Silverdale, Washington,
along with big brother Talon,
joyfully announce the arrival of Vialetta,
born April 5, 2019,
measuring 6 lb., 8 oz.,
and 19 inches long.

The family lovingly remembers
Malik James,
December 11, 2013,
incompetent cervix,
and April,
April 13, 2017,
molar pregnancy

No, I don't think my children
should know babies die,
and I wish with
every piece of my broken heart
that I didn't have to be
the one to tell them.

Jessica Watson,
fourplusanangel.com

Parenting After Loss

5 Tips on How to Talk to Kids about Death

Posted by Dorina Gilmore | November 10, 2017

It can be difficult to speak with our own kids about our grief, but we must remember they are grieving too, and need help as they work through it. Below are some tips Dorina Gilmore shared.

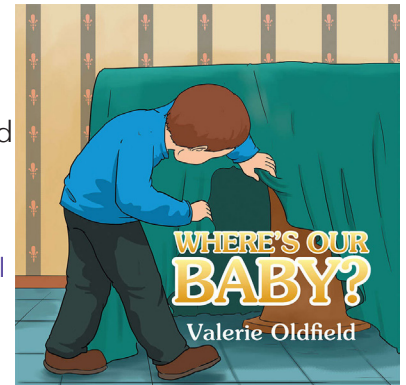
- Be direct with your language: Kids don't always understand "lost a baby" or "passed away," but they do understand when you say the "baby died."
- Do something creative to help them share: They might need to draw or color or role play in order to express the emotions they don't understand.
- Give them permission to cry: It's important for them to see you cry, because then they know it's okay for them to cry.
- Engage them in ways to honor the person who died: Let them celebrate the anniversaries/birthdates.
- Check in often: Just as our grief continues to change, so does theirs. Continue the conversations.

To read the full article on how to support your child through grief and loss, please visit https://dorinagilmore.com/5-tips-on-how-to-talk-to-kids-about-death/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest&utm_campaign=tailwind_tribes&utm_content=tribes

Book Review

Where's Our Baby?
Written by Valerie Oldfield

Reviewed by
Rebekah Mitchell,
Mommy to Jonathan Daniel
and Baby Mitchell
M.E.N.D.
President/Founder



This is about a little boy whose baby sister died. The adults in this boy's life use confusing terminology as they try to tell him the baby isn't coming home, using phrases like, "we lost the baby," so the book illustrates the young man looking underneath a table, trying to find his baby sister. Although the book is primarily for children, adults can learn what words and phrases may be scary and bewildering to kids as they attempt to explain the concept of death.

The author is a bereaved mom herself, as well as a certified teacher, and holds a certificate in Thanatology (the study of death, dying, and bereavement).

This book is available through Amazon. Make sure to select M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice through Amazon Smile so M.E.N.D. will benefit through your everyday shopping!

Life After Loss

Comfort Other Moms

Sometimes we can help our own grief, by helping others in their grief. Here are some ideas for a care packet for a grieving mom:

Journal: She can write about her baby, grief, emotions as an outlet for grief.

Calming Tea: Chamomile is soothing and calming, which can help during the stressful and painful times.

Lavender oils or lotions: The scent of lavender is not only calming, but when they smell that scent in the future, they will remember the peaceful times.

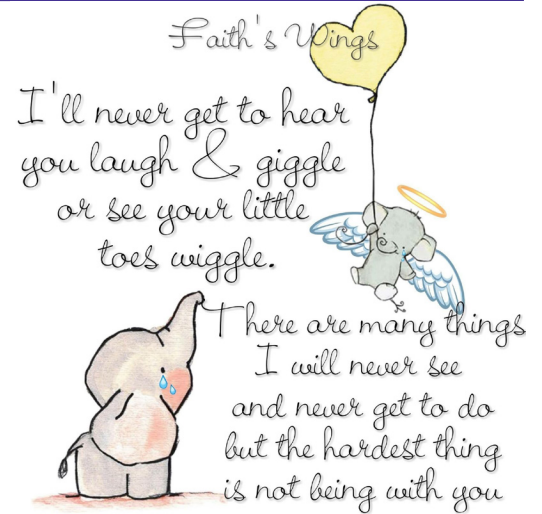
Chocolate: Enough said.

Chapstick/Lip Balm: It seems like there is never enough or missing when you need it after a crying spell.

Candle: Another great way to associate a sense with a baby, plus it is calming instead of harsh lighting. Candles are generally lit in remembrance too.

Book: A comforting book on loss they can reference and help lift their souls is a great addition.

Gift card: Perhaps a massage, coffee shop, something to get them out when it feels like the walls are closing in on them.



Caring Cradle

M.E.N.D. - Greater Houston Area parents, Andrew and Leslie Casarez, donated a Caring Cradle to Memorial Hermann Cypress in memory of their beautiful daughter, Cora Anne. Cora went to heaven on January 20, 2017.

The hospital had a very special dedication ceremony. Here are the words Cora's mommy spoke at the dedication of the Caring Cradle:

"Our journey began the morning of January 20, 2017. Our precious Cora Anne was born and went to heaven early in the morning after an emergency C-section when she lost oxygen due to a cord accident.

When we finally got to hold our daughter, the nursing staff brought in a cooling baby cradle that we could place her in when she became too warm. We were able to keep Cora at our side for more than 12 hours before the funeral home arrived to take her.

During this time, our family and friends were able to have the chance to see and hold our precious daughter. We never imagined such a tragedy could

occur, let alone know what we would need to help us process the grief that day and years to follow. Having those hours to spend with Cora are priceless and have helped us in our grieving process to have such memories.

After experiencing the loss of Cora and having such a great piece of equipment to help us get through the worst day of our lives, we wanted to make sure other families would have this same opportunity. We decided we wanted to donate a Caring Cradle to a new hospital who did not have one and where Andrew works so he can visit whenever he needs. We wish we did not need such a thing as this, but it truly is amazing. We cannot express how powerful having Cora with us as long as possible truly is for our grieving process. I know this type of grieving is not for everyone, but to have the option to have your baby with you for hours is incredible."



Are you doing something in memory of your baby to help others?
Please share! Send your story to jennifer@mend.org.

About M.E.N.D.

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 support groups, this magazine, and our website at www.mend.org. For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the magazine, contact us at:

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Donations make the printing and distribution of this magazine possible. Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and should be sent to the address listed above. If your gift is made in memory of a baby, please include that baby's name (if named), date of birth and/or date of death, the parents' names, and the name of the benefactor. You may also include the cause of death (if known).

M.E.N.D. is a member of
First Candle/SIDS Alliance
International Stillbirth Alliance
Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance



international
stillbirth alliance



• Helping Babies Survive & Thrive •

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and Stormy Mitchell

Legacy Giving

Losing a child has changed each of our lives forever. We appreciate all financial support of the services our organization gives to bereaved parents—no matter the size of the contribution. However, some of you may have the capacity and desire to give a lifelong gift to M.E.N.D.

If you are interested in creating a legacy gift or endowment in honor of your baby, M.E.N.D. would be happy to assist you in gathering the necessary information to remember our organization in your will or trust. For more information about legacy giving, please contact Rebekah Mitchell at rebekah@mend.org.

M.E.N.D. Chapter Information

M.E.N.D.–NW Washington
Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 PM
Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room
1800 Myhre Rd.
Silverdale, Washington 98383
Director: Stacy McGhee
stacym@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.–SW Missouri
Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 PM
Project H.O.P.E.
1419 S. Enterprise Ave
Springfield, Missouri 65804
Director: Kathryn Gold
kathryn@mend.org, (417) 770-0600

M.E.N.D.–Bryan/College Station
Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:30 PM
Hawthorne Suites
1010 University Drive East
College Station, Texas 77840
Director: Jennie Drude
jennie@mend.org, (402) 704-6363

M.E.N.D.–Tulsa, Oklahoma
Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 PM
Canyon Crossing
1651 E Old North Rd.
Sand Springs, Oklahoma 74063
Director: Lisa Daily
lisa@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

M.E.N.D.–Lynchburg, Virginia
Coming Soon!
Director: Melissa Scifres
melissa@mend.org

M.E.N.D.–Chicagoland, Illinois
Meets the 1st Tuesday at 7:00 PM
St Peter Lutheran Church
202 E Schaumburg Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194
Director: Sara Hintz
saraann@mend.org, (630) 267-9134

M.E.N.D.–Palm Beach, Florida
Meets the 2nd Thursday at 7:00 PM
Embark Lake Worth
3927 Hadjes Dr
Lake Worth, FL 33467
(close to Turnpike and Lake Worth Rd)
Director: Jessica Gaddie
Jessica@mend.org, (561) 843-3509

M.E.N.D.–MidMichigan
Meets the 1st Tuesday, at 7:00 PM
Ashman Plaza
713 Ashman Street,
Midland Michigan 48640
Director: Karen Kilbourn
karen@mend.org, (989) 577 5755

M.E.N.D.–Denver
Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 PM
Journey Church
9009 Clydesdale Rd.
Castle Rock, Colorado 80108
Director: Kimberly Adams
kimberly@mend.org, (720) 593-0166

M.E.N.D.–Online Support Group
Held the 3rd Thursday at 9:00 PM (CST)
to join, contact
Director: Victoria Alcorn
victoria@mend.org (469) 412-2786

M.E.N.D.–San Antonio, Texas
Coming Soon!
Director: Katie McClelland
katie@mend.org

M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area
Greater Houston Area Main Chapter:
Meets the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 PM
Lone Star College,
3200 College Park Dr, Room A228,
The Woodlands, Texas 77384
Greater Houston Area Director:
Stormy Mitchell
stormym@mend.org, (405) 529-6363

Satellites in Greater Houston Chapter:
Katy, Texas:
Meets the 2nd Thursday at 7:00 PM
Katy Community Fellowship
24102 Kingsland Blvd
Katy, Texas 77494
Katy Director:
Kessi Wilhite, kessi@mend.org

Kingwood Area, Texas:
Meets the 2nd Thursday at 6:30 PM
6450 Kings Parkway
Kingwood, Texas 77346
At Rosemont Assisted Living,
2nd Floor Community Room
Kingwood Director:
Nikisha Perry, nikisha@mend.org

Subsequent pregnancy group
Meets every other month
on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 PM,
led by Stormy Mitchell
(stormym@mend.org)

Daddy's group
Meets quarterly
on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 PM,
led by Greg Miller
(stefaniem@mend.org)

M.E.N.D. Support Groups in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex

Mommies AND Daddies are both welcome at all M.E.N.D. support groups. Unless otherwise noted, all support groups are held at: Wells Fargo Bank (building with black windows), 800 W. Airport Freeway Irving, TX 75062 (Located off 183, between MacArthur and O'Connor). Support groups will be held at the bank board room, located on the first floor. For more information, call (972) 506-9000.

M.E.N.D. chapter support groups are held the 2nd Thursday of every month from 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Daddies group meets the 2nd Thursday of March, June, Sept. and Dec., from 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups for discussion.

Parenting Groups:

Subsequent pregnancy group
meets the 4th Tuesday
from 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Led by Marisa Perry: marisa@mend.org
For families who are considering
becoming pregnant or are currently
pregnant after a loss.

Parenting After Loss group
(parents only)
meets the 1st Thursday at 7:30 PM
at Panera Bread
1900 Preston Rd.
Plano, Texas 75093
Contact:
Laura Bateman at laura@mend.org or
Tina Rusert at Tina@mend.org.

Parenting After Loss groups are for families
raising living children after a loss.

Parenting After Loss Playgroup
(children welcome)
Currently it meets in Irving at the play
area inside Irving Bible Church, but will
eventually meet in various locations
For more details, contact:
Corley Rinaldi at Corley@mend.org.

M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
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We appreciate your support!