



Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Support

Volume 27, Issue 2

March/April 2022

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Last: Deciding When And How to Cope

After a roller coaster of trying to grow a family that might include infertility, loss and even medical issues, we sometimes hit a point when we no longer try to grow our family. Sometimes the decision is made for us; sometimes we must make the difficult decision. This issue shares experiences in this transition in life, as well as other thoughts on the journey of grief.

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May/June Topic

Mother's Day/Father's Day
 Deadline: March 30, 2022

July/August Topic

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 Deadline: May 31, 2022

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to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests it not be published.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.

Heavenly Birthday	Deadline
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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As a national organization, M.E.N.D. Leadership continues to monitor conditions in the United States relating to COVID-19. Since restrictions differ in each state, please follow your chapter on Facebook or connect with your Chapter Director for updates regarding support groups. For information on support groups, including the M.E.N.D. Nationwide Support Group that meets year-round, please see page 15.



Feature Article

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

When I was a little girl, I imagined myself being a mom to three children, all boys. My husband, Byron, was on-board with this plan when we married, though he lightheartedly made sure I realized he could not guarantee he could produce all male babies for me. We got married when I was only 19 years old, so I thought we had many years to fulfill this dream of becoming parents to three children. But just 6 months after our fairytale wedding, I was diagnosed with a serious degenerative kidney disease and was told I would eventually need a kidney transplant. That was a crushing blow to this newly married young woman. But my faith in the Lord was strong, and I was certain He would grant us the desires of our hearts.

Two years later our dream was unfolding the way we had hoped when I delivered our first baby – a son, Byron, Jr. Although my pregnancy with him was wrought with complications and bed-rest due to the kidney disease, he was born full-term and healthy. Three years later we got pregnant with our second baby, also a boy! So far, so good regarding my desire to have three sons! However, Jonathan was tragically stillborn due to a cord accident. This is when my world turned upside down. How did this happen? Why did this happen? Now what? I was a mess emotionally, spiritually, and even physically.

One year later I started M.E.N.D., which has turned my deepest sorrow into something beyond beautiful, but my heart still ached for another baby. My kidneys were continuing to fail, and I eventually was put on the transplant list. Members of my family began the testing process, but one by one, they were all disqualified because they were not a match for me. Almost five years after Jonathan's stillbirth, I was beautifully gifted a new kidney from my friend Valerie. Admittedly, at that time I didn't view my transplant as a life-saving necessity. Instead, I thought of it as a fertility treatment of sorts. I knew I could not go through another pregnancy until I had a good functioning kidney. After the transplant I was obsessed with when I could conceive baby #3. One and half years later, that dream finally came true. I really believed that little baby was going to be our happily ever after, and at that point, I didn't care if

it was a boy or a girl – I just wanted another child to love. I

wanted to give my husband another baby and our son a sibling, and I wanted the hole in my heart to somewhat fill. But it wasn't meant to be. A routine sonogram at my 10-week appointment revealed my tiny baby had joined its brother in heaven. Once again, I was rocked to the core, and my dreams were dashed. That was the last chance we had at having another baby. I knew my doctors would never approve of my body enduring and risking another pregnancy.

Another five years passed before I accepted Byron, Jr. would be our only living child. We considered adoption and talked about it as a family, but for whatever reason, we never felt it was a path for us. More than 10 years had passed since Jonathan's death, our living son was in high school, and honestly, we just weren't up to starting all over again even if pregnancy was somehow an option for us. Eventually Byron and I decided we should take the steps for permanent birth control, so he scheduled a vasectomy. I was emotionally okay with the decision until the morning of the procedure. While getting ready to go with Byron, I had a meltdown. I felt so horrible and responsible that HE was having to do this because of ME! We should have had to make this decision because our quiver was full, not because two of our babies died and I couldn't have any more. Byron sweetly comforted me and assured me this was not my fault; he married me for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. Even though it was my body that couldn't endure pregnancies, we were in this together, as a team. That afternoon the vasectomy was performed, and the possibility of us ever making more babies together became final.

Truly the Lord gave me supernatural peace about accepting we would never bring another child into our home. My deep desire to carry and have another

Our Last.... When and How to Cope

Continued on page 7.

Birthday Tributes



Happy 2nd Birthday, Isabella!

My beautiful angel, Mommy's heart will never be the same without you. I miss you beyond words, sweet girl. I know that Jesus is throwing you a birthday far greater than I ever could, but I hope that even still, you're able to feel the enormity of my love for you. Mommy tries to honor you every day, but the day you came into this world and first looked at me, is the day my heart grew 10 times its size. It is a day I will honor forever. I thank God for the blessing of you, Isabella. I love you with every beat of my heart, with every breath that I take.

Happy birthday in heaven, little one.

Love,
Mommy

Isabella Rose Elkins
February 28 - May 24, 2020

Unknown cause

Also remembering

Daniel James Murphy

August 4, 2014 - March 8, 2015

Parents: Lisa Connolly and Ian Elkins



Happy 1st Birthday, Heath Bradley!

Below are birthday wishes from your family:

Our sweet Heath Bradley, wishing you a happy 1st heavenly birthday. You bring us so much joy and happiness every day.

Our precious grandson Heath, your DG and Pop Pop love you dearly, and we will carry you in our hearts forever.

Beautiful baby Heath, your aunt and cousins love you more than you'll ever know, and you will always be with us.

Sissy, Funcle and JG wish we could hug you BIG and tell you how much we love you! Happiest of heavenly birthdays, sweet boy!

ZuZu thinks about you every day. Wish I could hold you. Our excitement of meeting you will be accomplished when we spend eternity together. I love you.

Love you so much!

Your family and McKinnis family dog, Snowball

Heath Bradley McKinnis

March 24, 2021

Cord accident

Parents: Erin and C.J. McKinnis



Happy 14th Birthday, Our Sweet Chubby Bubbly!

Happy heavenly birthday to our sweet "Chubby Bubbly!" You are forever loved and missed more than you know!

Mummy, Daddy, Mario and Gabe

Isaiah Matthew Campbell

February 4 - April 22, 2008

Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Syndrome (S.I.D.S)

Also remembering

Baby C

Miscarried February 2007

Parents: Ray and Caroline Campbell

Siblings: Mario and Gabriel



Happy 3rd Birthday, Dylan!

Happy 3rd birthday, sweet boy! I can't believe it's been 3 years since we said "Hello" and "Goodbye." I struggle with how to celebrate you every year. I hope you hear your sister and me pray for you each night and know how much you are missed and loved. Until I hold you again, I will forever proudly share your beautiful pictures and say your name to anyone who will listen. Mama, Dada and Charlotte love you so much, Dylan Christopher! We are sending hugs, kisses, and all the dinosaurs!

Dylan Christopher Brown

Stillborn April 19, 2019

Parents: Kevin and Kendra Brown

Sister: Charlotte Everly



Happy Birthday, Michael, Madison and Baby Parris!

Happy birthday, kids! I can't believe you guys are 12 and 13 years old. We hope you have a great heavenly birthday. Your daddy and I love you very much!

Love you to the moon and back!
Mommy, Daddy and your brothers

Michael Stephen Parris

April 9, 2009

Clostridium Innocuum/Infection

Madison Nicole Parris

March 5, 2010

Prevotella Bivia/Infection

Baby Parris (Madison's Twin)

January 2010

Unknown cause

Parents: Sam and Stacey Parris

Brothers: Lucas and Seth



Happy 1st Birthday, Sylvia!

Happy 1st birthday, Sylvie! We miss you every day. God has been good to us, even in our grief, and we are glad to know you're with Him, basking in His love. Thank you for the ways you've expanded our hearts, even as they've been broken. We love you!

Sylvia Margaret Straka
March 1, 2021, at 18 weeks
Placental abruption
Parents: Andrew and Brennan Straka
Brothers: Glen and Malcolm



Happy 10th Birthday, Paislee!

Double digits...I can't believe it! We are always amazed at how quickly the years go by. We miss you so much, but your little sister brings us so much joy when she talks about you on her eye gaze device and says she loves you. Even though y'all never physically met, she knows all about you, and we know one day in heaven you two will be running the streets freely together at last. What a sweet day that will be for us to see our two girls together! Until then, always remember you are constantly thought of and missed! We love you, sweet P!

Paislee Ann Frette
April 4-5, 2012
Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome
Parents: Brent and Courtney Frette
Little sister: Colbie



Happy 12th Birthday, Elliot!

Dear Elliot, as each year passes, you are woven more tightly into the fabric of our family. We imagine what you would be like as a 12 year-old boy. We love thinking about you playing with your granddad. Now that I (your mommy) am battling cancer, I think about how you bravely faced the passing from this life to the next and are waiting for us in the land where there is no sorrow. If only we had more of a vision of heaven, we'd all know the joy that you are experiencing that awaits us. We look forward to that day when our family is whole again.

Love,
 Mommy, Daddy, Evelyn, Ethan, Ezra

Elliot James Gerriets
March 18, 2010
Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS)
Parents: Chris and Faith Gerriets
Siblings: Evelyn, Ethan and Ezra



Happy 1st Birthday, Jelly!

Our sweetest Jelly, where does time go? What an honor it is to be your parents. We miss you every day, but your memory is always with us. We love talking about you and all the sweet adventures we were blessed to have with you. Happy birthday, my baby! I just know you're celebrating your special day with cake. We love you so much and just keep watching over us.

Andy Nava Trujillo
April 24, 2021
Incompetent cervix
Parents: Andres Trujillo and Katherine Chitay



Happy 5th Birthday, Phoebe!

Phoebe, we can't believe you'd already be 5. Papa and I (and your brothers and sisters) thank the Lord for the nine months we got to know you in the womb. What a hole you've left in our family and in our hearts. You are remembered and talked about by all who love you so much! We still visit your grave weekly to update you on our lives. We look forward to the day we are reunited with you around Jesus's throne. Your memory points to our great God every time I share it! Happy birthday!

Phoebe Madalyn Horvat
Stillborn March 24, 2017
Parents: Scott and Anna Horvat
Siblings: Zoe, Elijah, Ayris, Judah and Serah



Happy 5th Birthday, Abigail!

Dear Abi, happy birthday, sweet angel! We can't believe you would have been 5 this year! There are so many things we wonder about you, and we miss you every day. Thank you for the gift of being your parents, and for the empathy we have learned and the help we are able to offer others through your loss. We love you more than we could ever express, and we hope we make you proud.

All our love,
 Mama and Daddy

Abigail Marie Papendick
March 3, 2017 - March 4, 2017
Incompetent cervix
Also remembering
Baby "Darth" Papendick
Miscarried September 6, 2018
Baby "Nugget" Papendick
Miscarried December 27, 2019
Parents: Becky Johnston and Brian Papendick



Happy 11th Birthday, Lily Joy!

Eleven.

In Heaven.

Thankful for our short time together,
Anticipating eternity together, again.

Love,
Mom



Lily Joy Moore

March 2, 2011

Early pregnancy loss

Parents: Jeremy and Kathleen Moore

Siblings: Isaac, Judah, Mercy and Glory

Happy 9th Birthday, Levi!

Happy 9th birthday, sweet boy! Oh, how we miss you! We are so thankful for Jesus Who made a way for us to all be together again one day. We love you so much. We remember you today and always. Shine bright! Life is short. Heaven is forever.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Evie and Val



Levi Samuel Bowmer

April 19, 2013

Trisomy 13

Parents: Sam and Jenae Bowmer

Siblings: Evelin and Valerie Bowmer

Happy 12th Birthday, Sophia!

Our Sophia Rose, 12 years ago we said, "Hello" and "Goodbye." We are grateful for you and all God has given us through your short life. We cherish the thought that you're with Papa and awaiting the day we are all together in heaven.

Sophia Rose McGhee

Stillborn March 29, 2010, at 33 weeks

Unknown cause

Baby McGhee #1

Miscarried 2002

Baby McGhee #3

Miscarried 2009

Baby McGhee #4

Miscarried 2009

Parents: Matt and Stacy McGhee

Siblings: Micah and Scarlett



A Different Kind of "Last Loss"

*Written by Heather Fann
Mommy to Caleb and Baby August
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri*

First off, you need to know I've been the mom of two babies in heaven for almost 19 years. So let's say that "I've seen and heard it all." I used to be the M.E.N.D. Newsletter Editor so "I've written it all, too...or so I thought." Our amazing editor, Jennifer Harrison, challenged me recently. For a few years I could write stories about being a brand-new loss mom. Or perhaps as a mom with multiple failed, barely started, domestic adoptions. I could write stories about being a mom of a miscarried baby or a loss shortly after birth. I could share my grief of being a mom with infertility and loss, or a mom of subsequent losses, or a mom with subsequent high-risk pregnancies. You name it; I could write it. At some point, by the grace of God and after the birth of our now 14-year-old daughter, I could say I am no longer qualified to write an article about "What if your loss is your last?" Sort of.

You see, when Madison was about 3 years old, we started to pursue an international adoption. God had clearly opened a door for us to adopt a child from the country of Colombia. We found an agency; we did the home study, even Skyping my husband during a deployment. We took the online interracial family courses. We spent the money - loads of it; and we gave our full hearts and minds to bringing home a baby to complete our family. Heck, I even got a tattoo of our "family tree" with our birthstone colors in leaves to include me and my husband, our two babies in heaven, Caleb and August, and our miracle baby Madison. I left a sixth leaf blank to fill in with the color of our Colombian baby's birthstone.



And then...as it had when my water broke with Caleb, or I began bleeding with August, or I was put on bedrest with Madison...everything changed. Three years into the process, we received a phone call. Colombia had changed the rules. They had worked out a system that would no longer allow a baby to enter our family, and they left a rule in place that said our biological daughter couldn't remain

"the baby." That meant we had three choices: 1) Change age groups and try to adopt after Madison aged out of the category (a milestone that would require living in limbo for 5 years); 2) Change countries and start over losing time and money (more limbo); or 3) See this bureaucratic nightmare as God clearly closing the door He had previously opened and thus our "final loss."

After what felt like the Biblical description of "wailing and gnashing of teeth," we submitted to what we believed was the Lord's will. We said goodbye to the dreams of our new baby and Madison being a big sister. WHY?! It was all so familiar...this path of grief. After all, we'd traveled it numerous times before. The loss was so profound that I once again sought counseling for my grief and depression. This time I had the added burden of watching my daughter grieve (yet another article I was now qualified to write, and I was so angry at God about it!).

Like before, it took a while. My grief journey and that of my husband and daughter were all different. They still rear their ugly heads, like a few years ago when Madison's teacher began to host orphans from another country and had the option to adopt them. "MOM! I didn't know people could do that! Can we adopt an orphan from Ukraine? PLEASE?!" Ugh. Why, God?!

Eventually, though, as with all our losses, we found our new normal. We began to accept the uniqueness that God designed in our "Triangle Family" here on earth. I completed my counseling and felt like we had "moved through." And then...I'd catch a glimpse in the mirror of that empty leaf. "God, none of this is a surprise to you. I had complete peace about getting the tattoo, but You knew this leaf would remain empty. What are you

working out here, Lord?" So I began to pontificate.

Maybe God knew that the leaf would be empty and that the 450+ students I began to love in my new job at Maddie's elementary school would fill it. Meh. Maybe it's to represent my three nieces and two nephews, all of whom, I love dearly. Nah... that seemed cheesy. Maybe it's for the domestic adoption for which the birthmom interviewed us a couple years ago that no one knew about. Nope, that didn't work out either.

So that tiny leaf remained a giant elephant in my mind. I can't remember when, but sometime in the last several years, one Sunday in church, a song was played during worship (I can't remember it, either). I do, however, remember a moment when I clearly realized that no child, no group of children, past, present or future, would fill that hole. I heard the Lord whisper to my heart that He allowed that leaf, that tattoo, these trials, everything, as a reminder that only He could make me complete. Only my relationship with the one true God, Jesus Christ, would fill the void in my heart. I had been a born-again, baptized believer since I was 16 years old, and only my initial conversion moment compares to the clarity and overwhelming grace I felt right then. God filled my heart...and my tattoo, a representation of my "last loss"...in that precious moment and for that, I'm grateful.

**He allowed that leaf...
as a reminder that
only He could
make me complete.
Only my relationship
with the one true God,
Jesus Christ,
would fill
the void in my heart.**

"Our Last..." continued from page 3.

baby was replaced with true contentment and satisfaction that could have only come from God. I'll never be okay that we couldn't have more babies, but I was finally to the point of being okay with not having more at that stage in my life. I finally no longer wanted to get pregnant, and that was huge for me!

Many years have now gone by. We're older, and in a completely different stage of our lives as grandparents, so certainly that desire has completely diminished. But make no mistake - there are still triggers that cause that old familiar sorrow to resurrect and erupt. I love having a son who is now an adult and who gave us a beautiful daughter when he married Anna, and now the most adorable grandson in Elias Jonathan. But there will always be an emptiness in my heart. I am always fully aware that the laughter in our home during the holidays should be louder with more people. The dinner table should have more seats filled, and our busy lives should be even busier with being a part of more adult kids' lives. But those are thoughts I usually keep to myself. When I remind myself of the blessed assurance that I'll see my two children again one day and will spend eternity with them, my sadness is replaced with excited anticipation and peace.

Thank you, Lord for that wonderful promise of the expectant hope we have in You!

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Most Precious and Life-Giving Cross

*Written by Brennan Straka
Mommy to Sylvia Margaret
M.E.N.D.—Tulsa*

As we follow the path that leads from our church to Sylvia's grave, I ponder how

strange it feels that this walk is starting to become "normal." I'm home with my son, Malcolm, during the day, so after weekday liturgies, it is starting to become routine now. I park under one of the big oak trees and Malcolm runs to the children's section of the cemetery. He spins one and then another pinwheel as I walk slowly to her grave, which is shaded by another big old tree. I brush off the grass clippings and dirt



that have accumulated since our last visit. I want so badly to stoop down and kiss it, but I don't. After all, it's not her little face or her tiny hands. It's cold and hard - dusty granite.

And there is a busy road nearby with cars and trucks rushing past.

Malcolm draws me away from her as we move down the rows of miniature headstones. We stop in the small garden to play with rocks and angel sculptures. Malcolm starts picking up rocks to throw over the angels' heads. I try to distract him and make a game of picking up stray, artificial flower petals and placing them in the smallest angel's lap. He plays for a bit before he realizes I'm trying to get him to "clean up." He goes back to throwing rocks, and I decide to pick my battles. Instead I start to pull weeds. I think it's, in part, so that I can make this messy, painful world a neater, more tidy place. That and I want it to look pretty for Sylvia and all the other babies. I imagine starting a group for bereaved moms to gather and tend to the small bed. I wish I knew these women. I wish we could share our pain together. How are they 3, 5, 20 years out? How do they remember and honor their babies? How has their grief changed? At one point, each of them visited the newest grave in the cemetery. In a way, it comforts me to see all of the headstones that came before hers. I want to comfort the one whose baby now shares a row with Sylvia. The

baby who arrived in June and was buried the same month. Whose headstone only has one date on it like Sylvia's. Do her parents have the support they need and want? Do they visit here often?

My thoughts are interrupted by Malcolm pointing out a dump truck passing by - "A beep beep!" he exclaims joyfully. And with that I return to tending to him, teaching him about the fast cars and "beep beeps" going by and our need to keep away from the road. I hold my hand firmly across his chest and show him the row of trees and flagpoles that stand between us and the busy street. "We stay on this side," I say, pointing to the baby cemetery. "We don't go towards the street. Yes, mama?" "Yes mama," he replies and then he scampers off to spin another pinwheel.

We move further down the rows, out of this millennium and into the 90s, the 80s, the 1970s. Babies' names and lives are recorded on the tiny stones. Some lived a couple days, some over a year. Malcolm points out Winnie-the-Pooh on one. I show him a butterfly and a sheep. He finds a stone covered with toys, and I let him pick up the rubber ducky, the monster truck, the teddy bear. The bear is covered in grass clippings, and its hair is matted down from years of wind and rain. It is the scariest looking thing in the cemetery if you ask me, but he doesn't know to be afraid of places like this. He hasn't learned to associate the cemetery with skeletons or ghosts or even death and I'm glad for that. Perhaps because his little sister is here, he never will. "We have to put these toys back now," I say after a couple minutes, "they belong here on this baby's grave." Finally we get to the oldest row of baby graves, and he scans the horizon for more pinwheels. "Those are grown up graves, and they don't get pinwheels," I say. He turns around and looks back at the biggest one in the center of the little garden plot. "A big blue one!" he shouts excitedly and runs back to spin it.

Thank God for his exuberance and innocence that temper my grief. Thank God that he survived his early birth and a 12-week NICU stay, despite my fears that he wouldn't survive. Thank God he is healthy and happy and brings so much joy to our lives. We walk back towards Sylvie's grave. Hers is new and shiny and bare. I grab two sticks and a long piece of grass to fashion a cross for her. This cross that we prostrated in front of and venerated less than an hour ago. This cross that Father John said is hidden everywhere in the world, if only we have eyes to see. This cross

that we are asked to pick up and bear with Christ as our example. And yet even Christ asked His Father in the garden if it could be different. This cross is not comfortable. So often I want to throw it off and run in any other direction. I don't want it to be normal to visit my daughter's grave. But it is becoming normal now and that, too, is part of God's will. I may never understand, but I try to give Him thanks - Glory to God in ALL things. I put the stick cross down on her headstone and we start to walk back to the car.

"Me want a peet sandwich," Malcolm asks, oblivious to the heartache I still feel when I turn my back on her grave. Peet is his word for peanut butter. "Well good, I've got one in the car! We just said goodbye to baby Sylvie, can you say Sylvie, Malcolm?" He doesn't, he just keeps on marching toward the car and the promise of a snack. "Sylvie was the baby who was in mommy's tummy," I remind him. I want him to know who she was, who she would have been to him. "She's in heaven now and we can visit her here to remember." We reach the car, and I hoist my 30-pound toddler into his car-seat. I say a silent prayer of thanksgiving that he didn't even try to run into the busy road. I wipe off his hands, which are filthy from playing in the dirt and rocks. "You sure got dirty out there!" I say to him. "Me was playing in Sylvie's beep beep dirt!" he says with a smile. "Oh yeah?" I smile back. I hand him his snack, close the car door and burst into tears. The first time hearing her name in his sweet little voice uncovers a new layer of loss I hadn't yet known. I think of the hundreds of thousands of times I would have heard him say her name had she lived. I imagine sweet moments and frustrating ones. I get in the car and turn up the music and the air conditioner to full blast to drown out the sound of my sobs. We sit there for a few minutes, him enjoying his sandwich and me allowing yet another layer of grief to wash over me.

This cross can feel so heavy, so painful and so seemingly unfair. And yet it reminds me I am still alive. I will carry it. I will walk through life with it and let it become my new normal. I will offer it back to God when I think I can bear it no longer because He knows the weight of it all. Thank God, this blessed cross comes with a promise of resurrection and a hope of heaven. Where, God willing, I will see my baby Sylvie once again.

"Unknown Child"

By: Kasi Serrano

I will never get to hear your heart beat,
Or get to cover up your tiny feet.

I will never get to rock you to sleep,
Or wipe your tears when you weep.

I will never get to read you a story when you go to bed.
I will never get to hear anything you've said.

I will never know if you were a girl or boy.
I will never know your favorite toy.

Will I ever get the chance to hear tiny feet?
Is there ever going to be a baby of mine to meet?

I look at terrible moms and get so mad,
Why was it easy for them, and for me things get bad?

I look at pictures of people's babies and feel so much envy,
When will I be able to look and be happy?

My heart is crushed I'll never meet you,
Or get to see the things that you'll do.

I'll always have a piece of me missing,
Thinking about the boo boos I won't be kissing.

With you went a piece of my heart,
Please protect the next baby if we can ever start.

It will never replace the sadness we feel,
This heartbreak we have will eventually heal.

In God's hands, I know you'll be fine,
I'll always love you unknown child of mine



Nuestro Último.... Cuándo y cómo afrontar

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

Cuando era niña, me imaginaba siendo mamá de tres niños, todos varones. Mi esposo, Byron, estaba de acuerdo con este plan cuando nos casamos, aunque alegremente se aseguró de que me diera cuenta de que no podía garantizar que pudiera producir los bebés todos varones. Nos casamos cuando yo tenía sólo diecinueve años, así que pensé que teníamos muchos años para cumplir este sueño de convertirnos en padres de tres hijos. Pero solo 6 meses después de nuestra boda de cuento de hadas, me diagnosticaron una enfermedad renal degenerativa grave y me dijeron que eventualmente necesitaría un trasplante de riñón. Ese fue un golpe aplastante para esta joven recién casada, pero mi fe en el Señor era fuerte y estaba segura de que Él nos concederá los deseos de nuestro corazón.

Dos años más tarde, nuestro sueño se estaba desarrollando de la manera que esperábamos cuando di a luz a nuestro primer bebé: un niño, Byron, Jr. Aunque mi embarazo con él se vio afectado por complicaciones y reposo en cama debido a la enfermedad renal, nació a término completo y sano. Tres años después quedamos embarazados de nuestro segundo bebé, ¡también un niño! ¡Hasta ese momento estábamos muy bien con respecto a mi deseo de tener tres hijos! Sin embargo, Jonathan nació trágicamente sin vida debido a un accidente de cordón. Fue entonces cuando mi mundo se puso patas arriba. ¿Cómo pasó esto? ¿Por qué pasó esto? ¿Ahora que? Era un desastre emocional, espiritual e incluso físicamente. Un año después es cuando comencé M.E.N.D., que ha convertido mi tristeza más profunda en algo más que hermoso, pero mi corazón todavía dolía por otro bebé. Mis riñones seguían fallando y finalmente me pusieron en la lista de trasplantes. Los miembros de mi familia comenzaron el proceso de prueba, pero uno por uno, todos fueron descalificados debido a que no eran compatibles conmigo. Casi cinco años después de la muerte fetal de Jonathan, mi amiga

Valerie me regaló maravillosamente un nuevo riñón. Es cierto que en ese momento no veía mi trasplante como una necesidad para salvar mi vida. En cambio, pensé en ello como una especie de tratamiento de fertilidad. Sabía que no podía pasar por otro embarazo hasta que tuviera un riñón que funcionara bien. Después del trasplante, estaba obsesionada con saber cuándo podría tener el tercer bebé. Un año y medio después, ese sueño finalmente se hizo realidad. Realmente creía que ese pequeño bebé sería nuestro feliz para siempre, y en ese momento, no me importaba si era un niño o una niña, solo quería otro bebe a quien amar. Quería darle a mi esposo otro bebé, a nuestro hijo un hermano, y quería que el vacío en mi corazón se llenara un poco. Pero no estaba destinado a ser. Una ecografía de rutina en mi cita de 10 semanas reveló que mi pequeño bebé se había unido a su hermano en el cielo. Una vez más, me sacudieron hasta la médula y mis sueños se desvanecieron. Esa fue la última oportunidad que teníamos de tener otro bebé. Sabía que mis médicos nunca aprobarían que mi cuerpo soportara y arriesgara otro embarazo.

Pasaron otros cinco años antes de que aceptara que Byron, Jr. sería nuestro único hijo vivo. Consideramos la adopción y hablamos de ello como familia, pero por alguna razón, nunca sentimos que fuera un camino para nosotros. Habían pasado más de diez años desde la muerte de Jonathan, nuestro hijo vivo estaba en la escuela secundaria y, sinceramente, no estábamos preparados para comenzar de nuevo, incluso si el embarazo era de alguna manera una opción para nosotros. Eventualmente, Byron y yo decidimos que deberíamos tomar los pasos para el control de la natalidad permanente, por lo que Byron programó una vasectomía. Estaba emocionalmente de acuerdo con la decisión hasta la mañana del procedimiento. Mientras me preparaba para ir con Byron, tuve un colapso. ¡Me sentí tan horrible y responsable de que ÉL tuviera que hacer esto por mi! Deberíamos haber tenido que tomar esta decisión porque nuestro nido estaba lleno de bendiciones de Dios, no porque dos de nuestros bebés murieran y yo no pudiera tener más. Byron me consoló dulcemente y me aseguró que esto no era mi culpa, se casó conmigo para bien o para mal, en la enfermedad y en la salud. Aunque era mi cuerpo el que no soportaba los embarazos, estábamos juntos en esto, como un equipo. Esa tarde se realizó la vasectomía y la posibilidad de tener más bebés juntos se hizo definitiva.

Verdaderamente el Señor me dio una paz sobrenatural al aceptar que nunca traeremos otro

niño a nuestro hogar. Mi profundo deseo de llevar y tener otro bebé fue reemplazado por un verdadero gozo y satisfacción que solo podía provenir de Dios. Nunca estaré bien de que no pudiéramos tener más bebés, pero finalmente llegué al punto de estar bien con no tener más en esa etapa de mi vida. Finalmente ya no quería quedar embarazada, ¡y eso fue enorme para mí!

Ya han pasado muchos años. Somos mayores y estamos en una etapa completamente diferente de nuestras vidas como abuelos, por lo que ciertamente ese deseo ha disminuido por completo. Pero no se equivoquen, todavía hay desencadenantes que hacen que esa tristeza familiar resucite y estalle. Me encanta tener un hijo que ahora es adulto y nos dio una hermosa hija cuando se casó con Anna, y ahora el nieto más adorable en Elias Jonathan, pero siempre habrá un vacío en mi corazón. Siempre soy plenamente consciente de que las risas en nuestra casa durante las vacaciones deberían ser más fuertes con más gente. La mesa de la cena debería tener más asientos ocupados, y nuestras vidas ocupadas deberían estar aún más ocupadas al ser parte de la vida de más niños adultos. Pero esos son pensamientos que normalmente me guardo para mí. Cuando recuerdo la bendita seguridad de que volveré a ver a mis dos hijos algún día y pasaré la eternidad con ellos, mi tristeza es reemplazada por una anticipación emocionada y paz.

¡Gracias, Señor, por esa maravillosa promesa de la esperanza expectante que tenemos en Ti!

In Loving Memory

William John Aleshire

Stillborn February 17, 2016
8 Aleshire Babies
 Given by Tabitha Aleshire

Kimani Rose Bray

Miscarried February 2005

Jeremiah Earl Bray

Miscarried February 2011

Laila Joyce Bray

Miscarried May 2011

Parents: LaTrina and Earl Bray
 Given by grandfather Fred Dixon

David Jaden Brown

November 1-2, 2021

Parents: Andrea and Kevin Brown
 Given by Margaret and Donald Maurer

Charlee Grace Clay

Stillborn April 16, 2021

Given by Peyton Clay

Riley and Parker Davis

November 14, 2006

Premature

Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis
 and siblings Annalise and Owen

Ashley Renee Dedear

October 29 – November 1, 1999

Parents: Cindy and Tim Dedear

Siblings: Laura (Ashley's twin) and Katherine
 Given by Melene Dedear

Grace Kathryn Dell

Stillborn March 17, 2008

PPROM

Rose Dell

Miscarried January 3, 2014

Given by parents Rachel and Peter Dell

Paislee Ann Frette

April 4-5, 2012

Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome

Parents: Brent and Courtney Frette

Little sister: Colbie

Given by Grandparents James and LuAnn Junkin

Arrington Hope Fumagalli

Stillborn December 22, 2013

Unknown cause

Jakoebi Michael Fumagalli

Miscarried November 22, 2011

Ectopic pregnancy

Kirsten June Frederick Fumagalli

Mommy to Arrington and Jakoebi

April 25, 1981 - March 14, 2018

Given by daddy Michael Fumagalli
 and brother Gabriel and Maverick

Jackson K.D. Haynes

Stillborn August 11, 2021

Maternal floor infarction

Given by parents Justin and Kaycie Haynes

Timothy "Tim Tim" Hood III

Stillborn May 26, 2019

Given by Nicole Cummins

Ethan Alexander Kozar

March 29 – April 2, 2020

SIDS

Parents: Katelynn and Ryan Kozar

Given by grandparents Jane and Dan Lucas

Baby L

June 14, 2018

Baby LV

July 11, 2020

Given by parents Corrine and Andrew Latham

Chase Austin Miller

April 21, 2011

Incompetent cervix

Baby "Blueberry" Miller

Miscarried May 4, 2015

Given by parents Greg and Stefanie Miller
 and sisters Cora, Hazel and Violet

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995

Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001

Gifts given by parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
 Grandmother (Mimi) Marnie Mitchell

Lexie Richardson

Given by Susan Tipton

Blakeleigh Rougeau

Given by mommy Brook Rougeau

Andrew "Jordan" Santiago

June 14, 1995 – October 5, 2020

Given by parents Heather and Drew Santiago

Olivia Taylor

Given by Casey Woodruff

Blake Ted Wren

Given by Joel Wren

Gifts of Support:

Kila Hilton

April Jenkins

Amy Yen

Kenderek Harris

Jessica VanderWoude

Kelsey VanEngelenburg

Joseph Leahy

Dr. Jeff and Lana Montgomery

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO

Mercy Hospital, Springfield, Missouri

M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES

Greater Houston Area

My name is Nikisha Perry, I have led the satellite chapter in Kingwood for several years and am now the new M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area Chapter Director as Stormy retires from this position. My son, Raekwon, was born still December 2, 2000. The umbilical cord was wrapped three times around his neck when I was 39 weeks pregnant. I have been married for 14 years, and Curtis and I have two living daughters who are 12 and 10. After my son died, I became passionate about helping parents who experience pregnancy and infant loss because I did not want anyone else to experience the helplessness, hopelessness and loneliness that I felt.



We hope you can join us for our online support groups on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM. Please continue to watch our Facebook group for updates on our support groups.

Nikisha

NW Washington

We continue to welcome new families, and pray for their healing as we walk alongside them in their grief.



We hope you'll register and join us for our 2022 M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5K. Watch our Facebook page for information on registration and our group meetup to walk together at Clear Creek Trail again this year.

Stacy

San Antonio, Texas

M.E.N.D.–San Antonio is gathering in person to offer support to families. We are continuing outreach in our community and hope to have a wonderful year of expansion, fellowship and support. M.E.N.D. is hosting a virtual 5k in May and details will be available soon!



Katie

East Valley, Arizona

M.E.N.D.–East Valley Arizona continues to meet in person monthly. We are looking forward to a spring event, so please follow our Facebook group for the details to come!



Danielle

Columbus, Ohio

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." Psalm 133:1 NIV

Our monthly support group continues to grow as we meet virtually to share our journeys. We're gearing up for the annual M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k Walk in May...Get your tennis shoes out! Please join our private Facebook group where you can share your story and be encouraged...You're NOT alone!



If you need M.E.N.D.-Columbus services, contact me at latrina@mend.org.

LaTrina

Chicagoland

M.E.N.D.–Chicagoland is thankful to continue to meet in person at our facility. Thank you to St. Peter Lutheran Church for continuing to let us use their newly renovated space for our support groups on the 1st Tuesday of each month. While it hurts our hearts to welcome new families each month, we are so grateful to be able to grieve and remember our babies together.



Sara

Tulsa, Oklahoma

M.E.N.D.–Tulsa is grateful to continue to serve grieving families in the Tulsa community in person at our location in Jenks. We are looking forward to our 2022 M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5K in May. More info will be shared on our social media sites soon!



Cat

Southwest Missouri

M.E.N.D.–Southwest Missouri continues to care for our local grieving families. The year 2022 has started us off with snow days for both our January and our February support groups. However, we already knew how to Zoom so we didn't miss a beat and even had new mommies join us on our snowed-in Zooms. Remember to join our Facebook group if you would like to keep updated on our chapter happenings like snow cancellations or get-togethers. Join us and together we will navigate our loss journey with hope.



Rachel

Men of M.E.N.D.

Come join us for a time of sharing and discussion about our babies. We consistently have several dads who need a shoulder on which to lean. Men of M.E.N.D holds a monthly Zoom support group every 3rd Monday of the month at 8:00 PM CST.



Matt

National Online Support

The National Online Support Group meets via Zoom on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Your online M.E.N.D. family is here for you, even between your in person support groups. We also have a private Facebook group where you can feel safe to share your baby. If you are new to the group, please complete the info sheet found on the M.E.N.D. website. Please email mallory@mend.org if you have any questions.



Mallory

MidMichigan

M.E.N.D.–MidMichigan is looking forward to honoring our babes in the 2022 M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5K the week of Mother's Day. We'll be sharing more information as May approaches, but we would love to have everyone who has been touched by pregnancy and infant loss to join us on the Rail Trail to remember together.



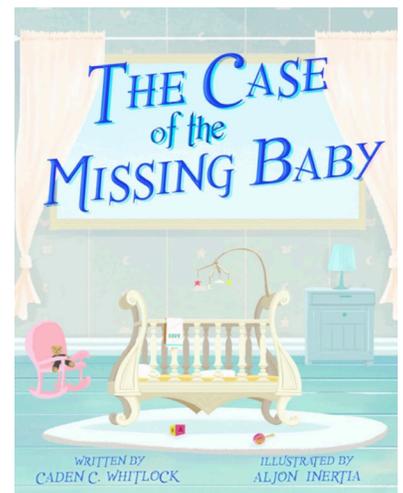
Karen

Book Review

The Case of the Missing Baby
Written by Caden C. Whitlock
Illustrated by Aljon Inertia

This book was written by a young boy as a way to assimilate the loss of his twin brother. The story is adventure-esque as Caden searches for his brother, Cody, who died in infancy. This is a sweet book written by a child for children. It may give a child some closure and help gain community in a way they have not yet found.

Reviewed by Katie McClelland,
M.E.N.D.-San Antonio Chapter Director



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
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M.E.N.D. Leadership

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and Becky Johnston

New Support Group Location!

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

Mommies AND Daddies are welcome at all M.E.N.D. support groups.

Unless otherwise noted, all support groups are held at:

Irving Archives Museum, 801 W Irving Blvd, Irving, TX 75060.

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

M.E.N.D. chapter support groups meet the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM

Daddies group meets the 2nd Thursday of March, June, Sept. and Dec., at 7:30 PM

Moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups.

Rowlett Satellite Chapter

A satellite chapter in Rowlett holds support groups to serve families in the eastern area of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Support groups are held the 1st Wednesday at 7:00 PM at the Veterans Resource & Outreach Center, 4210 Industrial St, Rowlett, TX 75088. Visit our Facebook group or email terri@mend.org.



Irving Archives Museum
801 W Irving Blvd
Irving, TX 75060

Subsequent pregnancy group
meets the 4th Tuesday

from 7:30 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

Please visit www.mend.org to join.

Led by Marisa Perry: marisa@mend.org
For families who are considering
becoming pregnant or are currently
pregnant after a loss.

M.E.N.D. Chapter Information

Due to COVID gathering guidelines, please follow your chapter on Facebook or connect with your local Director for updates if your chapter will meet in person or virtually.

M.E.N.D.–NW Washington

Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 PM
The Oak Table Cafe'
3290 NW Mt. Vintage Way
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: Rachel Dell
rachel@mend.org, (417) 770-0600

M.E.N.D.–Columbus, Ohio

Meets on the 2nd Monday, at 6:30 PM
Paul Mitchell-The School of Columbus
3000 Morse Road
(Upstairs Conference Room)
Columbus, Ohio 43231
Director: LaTrina Bray
latrina@mend.org (614) 530-5128

M.E.N.D.–Tulsa, Oklahoma

Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 PM
117 S 7th St.
Jenks, Oklahoma 74037
Director: Cat Markham
cat@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

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
Crossroads Community Church
9900 S. Twenty Mile Rd.
Parker, Colorado 80134
Director: Kimberly Adams
kimberly@mend.org, (720) 593-0166

M.E.N.D.–San Antonio, Texas

Meets the 4th Monday, at 7:00 PM
8620 N New Braunfels Ave
San Antonio, Texas 78217
Director: Katie McClelland
katie@mend.org

M.E.N.D.–East Valley, Arizona

Meets the 2nd Thursday, at 6:30 PM
Queen Creek Library
Edward Abbey room
21802 S Ellsworth Rd
Queen Creek, Arizona 85142
Director: Danielle Radler
danielle@mend.org, (602) 699-6228

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.–Greater Houston Area

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

Online Support

Men of M.E.N.D.

Held the 3rd Monday at 8:00 PM (CST)
to join, contact,
Director: Matt McGhee
Matt@mend.org
Facebook Group:

www.facebook.com/groups/MENofMEND

M.E.N.D.–Nationwide Online Support Group

Held the 3rd Thursday at 8:00 PM (CST)
Please visit <https://www.mend.org/virtual-support-group-links>



The Garden of Hope is a place of peace and solace where families can come for a quiet time of reflection, prayer, or even to celebrate the life of their loved one.

The Garden of Hope was established by M.E.N.D. in 2016, and is located on property of Calvary Church in Irving, Texas.

You can remember your loved one by purchasing a brick in the Garden of Hope. Brick purchases can be made at <https://www.mend.org/garden-of-hope>. Bricks purchased by August 15, 2022, will be installed prior to the Walk to Remember in October 2022.



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Did you know?

You can give to M.E.N.D. every time you shop on Amazon?

Go to smile.amazon.com and set Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death as your charity! It's so simple!

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible smile.amazon.com purchases.

We appreciate your support!