



When Grief Revisits

I vividly remember every detail that took place in my hospital room the afternoon of June 24, 1995, when a nurse came in to check Jonathan's and my vital signs. What began as a routine procedure for a pregnant mom on bed rest in the hospital turned into a chaotic scene that perhaps a Hollywood movie writer could have scripted for a television drama. My sweet baby boy no longer had a heartbeat. Somehow while I had been confined to bed, he became completely entangled in his umbilical cord. What was supposed to be his lifeline instead became his cord of death. However awful that day and the months that followed were, I absolutely did not comprehend that the moment I was told of my baby's death, a lifetime of grief had just begun. My life would forever be different. The woman, the wife, and the mom that I was disappeared, and a changed Rebekah Mitchell had begun to evolve.

When a death occurs, it's natural for us to grieve and be sad for a period of time. But how long is that period of time? During those dark days of fresh, raw grief, I often wondered with panic, *How LONG will I feel this way? Will I ever be happy again? Will the life as I once knew it ever come back?*

Over time I came out of my black, swirling pit, was happy again, and created a new life for our family. But that doesn't mean I quit grieving and was never sad again. Even after nearly 15 years, I still have my moments. Not very often, but they do come. Various situations can cause those old emotions to return, like the morning several years ago when I knew Jonathan should be putting on little navy shorts and a white polo for his first day of kindergarten at Trinity Christian Academy. I felt it again when I knew his uniform should have changed to grey pants to begin his years as a middle schooler. That kindergarten moment was repeated when I knew the baby I miscarried should be putting on his navy shorts, or maybe her little plaid jumper. Sometimes I might just be driving down the freeway, when out of nowhere I am assaulted with that old, familiar pain. I think to myself, *I CANNOT believe that really happened. I can't believe I gave birth to a dead baby whom we actually had a funeral for, and is buried in a cemetery.*

Ten weeks after Jonathan's stillbirth someone asked me, "Do you still think about your baby?" I remember it was ten weeks later because the question was asked of me on his due date. Around that same time, another person asked my sister if I was over it yet. Do I still think of him? Am I over it yet? Were they serious?!? Of course I still thought of Jonathan two and a half months after his death! And no I wasn't "over IT yet." In fact, the answers to those questions remain the same 15 years later.

The immense sorrow and tears don't return very often any more, but they aren't too far away under certain circumstances that can trigger them. I think a huge misconception people have is that over the years we no longer miss our babies or think of them anymore. Really—could we ever forget? And for parents who are freshly grieving, sometimes they are afraid to move forward with their lives, because they feel it is a sense of betrayal to their babies. They worry that by moving on, they are leaving their babies behind. If that is you, rest assured you could never leave your baby's memories behind. No matter how many years pass, you'll never completely let your baby go. You heal and you become new, but emerging into that "new you" does not mean you have abandoned your baby. It is normal and natural to resume life after a loss, but that does not mean we'll never feel sad again.

When grief revisits, and it will, go ahead and embrace it. Take a few minutes (or longer) and allow yourself to grieve a little more. Life will then continue, and you can expect that at some point grief will visit again. And that's okay.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell*
mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell

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

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

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Donations make the printing and distribution of this newsletter 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).

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M.E.N.D. is a member of

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International Stillbirth Alliance

Medical Moment



According to a recent study, weight for gestational age affects the mortality of late preterm infants. *Pulver LS, Guest-Warnick G, Stoddard GJ, Byington CL, Young PC. Pediatrics. 2009 Jun; 123(6):e1072-7. Department of Pediatrics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84158, USA. laurie.pulver@hsc.utah.edu*

Background: Late preterm infant mortality is higher than that for term newborns. The association between weight for gestational age (WGA) category and late preterm mortality has not been well described.

Objectives: Our objectives for this research were as follows: (1) to compare neonatal and infant mortality rates of SGA, AGA, and LGA late preterm, early term, and term newborns; (2) to determine the relative risk of neonatal and infant death for each WGA category; and (3) to examine causes of neonatal and infant death.

Methods: We reviewed linked birth and death certificate data for all infants from Utah born between 1999 and 2005 with a GA $>$ or $=$ 34 weeks. We calculated neonatal and infant mortality rates for each GA/birth weight stratum and estimated mortality rate ratios using AGA term infants as the reference. International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, codes were used to classify cause of death.

Results: There were 343,322 newborns with GA $>$ or $=$ 34 weeks from 1999 to 2005. Late preterm SGA infants were approximately 44 times more likely than term AGA newborns to die in their first month and 22 times more likely to die in their first year. When infants dying from congenital conditions were excluded, the differences in mortality rate ratios persisted for SGA infants, especially those born in the late preterm period.

Conclusions: Being SGA substantially increases the already higher mortality of late preterm and early term newborns. This increased risk cannot be fully explained by an increased prevalence of lethal congenital conditions among SGA late preterm newborns. Clinicians caring for late preterm and early term newborns should be cognizant of their WGA category.

Source and full-text available at: <http://www.pediatrics.org>

Reader's Corner

Heather,

I wanted to say thank you for writing such a great article in the M.E.N.D. newsletter. The article was "Grieving vs. Remembering."

I appreciate that you talk about how each family member deals with loss in a different way. My in-laws wanted some pictures of one of the babies after they passed. It made me very upset because I was blessed and got to see them and be with them when they were alive. Yes, everyone grieves and remembers differently.

I am not sure how we will handle the babies' first birthdays on March 4, but I have a very supportive husband and we will be all right.

Thank you, Heather, for writing such a wonderful and heartfelt article. It really touched me.

♥ Mary A. Garland,
Mommy to Ella and Evan
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Book Reviews

A Tear from My Heart

Compiled by Elva Shirk

Not much is written about tubal (or ectopic) pregnancies. *A Tear from My Heart* is a compilation of 29 personal stories from women who experienced the pain and loss of a tubal pregnancy. This collection is extra interesting because the women who share their experiences are Amish and Mennonite. Although their culture is vastly different from most of ours, this book proves how loss is loss, and grief is grief, despite different backgrounds and lifestyles.

To purchase a copy of *A Tear from My Heart*, send \$10 to:

Elva Shirk

5954 St. Rte. 14 - A

Dundee, NY 14837

Finlay's Garden

An Intuitive Look Into Death and The Miracle of Life
Written by Cary Jane Ballas and Hunter George Ballas
2009 Halo Publishing Company

Cary Jane Ballas and her small son Hunter George wrote this book together after the death of Hunter George's younger brother, Finlay, who died at five months of age.

One morning Hunter George awakened and found his parents very sad. He decided to go play with his baby brother, Finlay, only he couldn't find him anywhere, so he asked his parents where Finlay was. They sat him down and very sadly explained that Finlay had gone to heaven to be with God. Hunter George and his parents created a memory garden in the shape of a heart and named it Finlay's Garden. The book then takes Hunter George into adulthood and even into his role as a grandfather. Hunter George tells his grandson Oliver about the meaning of Finlay's Garden, who then creates one of his own when Hunter George eventually dies and goes to heaven himself.

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

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

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

*A sorrow shared
is a sorrow halved.*

May/June Topic

Mother's Day and Father's Day

Deadline: March 30, 2010

July/August Topic

Military Families and Loss

Deadline: May 31, 2010

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

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www.mend.org



Birthday Tributes

Happy 1st Birthday, Alethia Joy!

Dear sweet baby girl,

We miss you every day and long to hold you in our arms and watch you grow up.

God has used your little life to touch so many hearts for His glory.

We praise and thank our Lord Jesus that He is holding you safe in His arms.

We look forward to the day when we will see you again! Happy birthday in heaven, baby Alli.

We love you so much!
Daddy and Mommy

Alethia Joy Myers
February 3, 2009
Stillborn at 39 weeks
Unknown cause
Parents: Tony and Charity Myers



Happy 2nd Birthday, Dharma Lucille!

We miss you so much, baby girl! I think about you when I see pink polka dot dresses, a tie-dye sunset, or during praise and worship at church. You always kicked a lot then. Daddy and I tell your little brother, Max, all about you. He smiles when I show him your pictures. Sometimes it feels like I had you yesterday. I will never forget the time we had you with us. You really are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen! Happy birthday, Dharma! Don't worry, we will be eating our chili cheese dogs from Sonic on your birthday...I know they were your favorite! I love you.

Love,
Mom

Dharma Lucille Drude
March 31- April 1, 2008
Anencephaly
Parents: Jennie and Jason Drude
Baby Brother: Max



Happy 3rd Birthday, Benjamin!

Your absence is felt every day. We miss you, love you, and Mommy thinks about you everyday.

Love,

Mommy, Daddy, Ashlyn, Grace, Anna, Gaby, and Josiah

Benjamin Kent
Stillborn January 10, 2007
Cord accident
Parents: Kent and Karen Baack
Siblings: Ashlyn, Grace, Anna, Gabrielle, and Josiah Kent



Happy 1st Birthday, Hayden Ryan!

“Rest now, momma’s Lil’ Stinkyman,
on God’s knee you play.”

Hayden,

As this year without you approaches, Mommy still feels as if it were only yesterday I was holding you near me, watching you smile that sweet, heart-warming smile of yours, grasping your hands, which you had just recently discovered, and just listening to the precious cooing you did as if you were having a complete conversation between only me and you!

Not a moment of any day goes by when you are not thought of and missed. I do thank the Lord daily for allowing me the chance to show you what love from a mother’s heart felt like, as well as allowing me to experience the feeling of being able to hold an angel in my arms for 3 ½ months, and also allowing your big brother to experience brotherly love. Mommy loves you, baby boy!

We love and miss you!
Momma, Bubba Kota, Nana, and the rest of the family

Hayden Ryan Keith
April 9 - July 26, 2009
Hardening of the Coronary Artery
—Heart Attack
Mommy: Jessica Keith
Big brother: Dakota Thomas



Happy 11th Birthday, Chandler!

We love and miss you!

Have a wonderful birthday in Heaven!

Love,

Mom, Dad, Christopher, Kyleigh, and Caleb

Chandler Allred
Stillborn March 4, 1999
Neural Tube Defects
Parents: Mark and Amy Allred
Siblings: Christopher, Kyleigh, and Caleb



Happy 4th Birthday, Annslee!

Our Wish® by Pam Harvey

Your time here was shorter
than we'd wanted it to be,
and every moment you've been gone,
there's emptiness in me.

We thought we'd have a lifetime
that we could share with you
we hoped and wished for many things
that now will not come true

But no matter what may come our way,
we'll always have one wish:
to tell you, now and ever more;
how much you're loved and missed.



Annslee,
even from Heaven, you are still loved
and touch our lives daily.
We love you,
Daddy, Nonna and Poppaw

Annslee Mae Gilbert

March 18, 2006

Stillborn

Daddy: William Gilbert

Grandparents: Larry and Donna Daugherty

Happy 1st Birthday, Kinley!

Our dearest Kinley,

We cannot believe that it has been a year already since we first held you in our arms. That is a feeling that I will never be able to forget! You were so very beautiful. There is not a day that goes by that we do not think of you! You have forever changed our lives in the short time that we were with you. No matter how much we miss you every day, we know that God had a better plan for you, and we cannot wait until the day that He brings our family together again.

We hope that you know how much we love you and miss you. We hope that you have a wonderful first birthday with Jesus and all of your angel friends.

We love you so very much, baby girl!
Mommy, Daddy,
Kylee, and soon to be little brother Colton

Kinley Alexis Miles

March 14, 2009

Full term stillborn

Placental abruption

Parents: Andy and Christine Miles

Siblings: Kylee, and Colton (due March 2010)



Happy Birthdays, Sweet Ones!

Elizabeth Kaye,
happy third heavenly birthday!
Baby Brown,
happy first heavenly birthday to our fourth angel!

Elizabeth Kaye

April 3, 2007

Anencephaly

Baby Brown

Miscarried April 2009

Parents: Tony and Ashley Brown



Happy 4th Birthday, Alan John!

It is hard to believe that it has been four years since you were born. Some days it seems like a lifetime, and some days it seems as if it were just yesterday.

We often wonder what sort of mischief you and your little brother Cayden would be getting into, or what kind of mischief your big sisters, Ashlie and Courtnie, would be instigating for the two of you.

We held you in our arms for a short time but hold you in our hearts forever.

Have an awesome fourth birthday with Jesus!

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Ashlie, Courtnie and Cayden

Alan John Huelsebusch

Stillborn March 9, 2006

Unknown cause

Parents: Don and Sandy Huelsebusch

Siblings: Ashlie, Courtnie, and Cayden



Happy 2nd Birthday, Andrew!

Happy second birthday, my dearest angel. There is not a day that goes by that we do not think of you. I know that you are with God being a little man.

We love you so much. Big hugs and kisses to you on your birthday.

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

Andrew Michael Mallette

March 21, 2008

CMV

Parents: Michael and Nicole Mallette

Grandparents: Todd, Kathy and Richard

Aunt: Ashley



Continued on page 6...

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Happy 1st Birthday, Baby Worley!

We can't wait to meet you in heaven.
Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Jacob, Caleb, and Gabriel

Baby Worley
July 10, 2009 (Due March 1, 2010)
Ectopic pregnancy
Parents: Jeremy and Jennifer Worley
Siblings: Jacob, Caleb, and Gabriel



Happy 4th Birthday, Morgan!

Dear Baby Morgan,
Knowing you were coming to join our family was the best Valentine's present ever. We are so sorry we did not get to have you in our earthly family. You are dearly loved and missed. We look forward to the day we meet you in heaven! We know you will have a happy birthday with Jesus!

Love and kisses,
Mommy, Daddy, Big Brother,
Grandma, Grandpa, and "Auntie" Michelle

Morgan Schear
Miscarried March 28, 2006
Parents: Nobel and Paula Schear
Big Brother: Isaac
Grandparents: Don and Carol Kellogg
Friend: Michelle



Happy 1st Birthday, Baby!

To our sweet little baby,
It is hard to believe that it has been a year since you went to heaven to be with the Lord. Happy first birthday, sweet baby! Your daddy and I wish that we could have had you here with us. We wish that we could have been able to hold you, hug and kiss you. Your brothers and sister miss you, too. They were so excited that they were going to have a new little brother or sister. We all know that we will get to see you when we get to heaven. I hope you know how very much we love you. Have a great first birthday with Jesus!

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

Baby Hinnenkamp
Miscarried at 14 weeks April 1, 2009
Parents:
Christopher and Kimberly Hinnenkamp
Siblings: Jacob, Jonathan, and Haley



Happy 10th Birthday, Boys!

Happy tenth birthday, Joshua and Caleb Davis!
Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Landon, and Kylie

Joshua and Caleb Davis
April 14, 2000
Incompetent Cervix
Parents: Monica and Shawn Davis
Siblings: Landon and Kylie



Happy 4th Birthday, Connor!

We love you so much and are glad to have you in our lives
... past, present, and future.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, and Ally

Connor Boston Reid
Born to heaven April 27, 2006
Also remembering Celeste Kimberly Reid
December 7 – 8, 2004
Parents: Andie Boston and Skip Reid
Little Sister: Allyson Kate



Happy 3rd Birthday, AJ!

It seems like just yesterday we were holding you in our arms, wondering how we were going to go through life with such a large void in our hearts. There has not been one day since you went to heaven that Mommy and Daddy have not thought about you. Your big brother, Eli, asks about you a bunch. He tells us how much he misses you and always wants to see pictures of you. He is so proud that he has two little brothers and tells us that is just what he always wanted. We see you in your baby brother's smile and the angel kisses on his forehead. Until we meet you in heaven, see you in our dreams. Our love for you is endless.

We love you MORE!
Mommy, Daddy, Eli, and Alex

Adrian Joseph "AJ" Zuckerman
March 30, 2007
True knot cord accident
Parents: Alfredo and Amber Zuckerman
Big Brother: Eli
Little Brother: Alex



Happy 2nd Birthday, Elliot!

You are never far from our thoughts, sweet baby boy! We think of you and speak of you constantly, wishing we could have had you for so much longer, but knowing that the Lord's plans are always perfect.

We love you with all our hearts,
Mom, Dad, Sydney, and Brady

Elliot Skaggs

April 28, 2008

Multicystic Kidneys

Parents: Brandon and Sara Skaggs

Siblings: Sydney and Brady



Happy 3rd birthday to my dear baby Carsen!

Mother Earth's loss is our heavenly Father's gain. I will rejoice in this day for the blessing of having you to call my "Angel Son" for the rest of my life. What a gift you have given me!

We miss you tremendously, and can only imagine what a sweet, tender, and silly child you would have been. All my love and kisses to the stars. You are forever my saving grace.

Love,
Mommy

Carsen Matthew Landis

April 30, 2007

*Birth injury due to
forceps-vacuum extraction*

Also remembering

"Baby May"

Miscarried May 1, 2008

Parents: Josh and Jenny Landis

Siblings: Fisher Chael and Brysen Conner



Happy 1st Birthday, Terry II!

My darling, Terry II, you will always be apart of us. We miss you dearly and wish you were here with us to celebrate your first birthday. We know that God is taking great care of you and that you are with us in spirit.

Love,
Daddy, Mommie, Andrew, and Kianna

Terry Tyrone Hawkins II

March 15 - April 3, 2009

Septic shock

Parents: Terry and Carmyn Hawkins, Sr.

Siblings: Andrew and Kianna



Our Heavenly Twin

I'll never forget when the doctor said twins.
The words made my head start doing spins.

Are you sure, is it true, can this really be?
Are there really two babies inside of me?

The news brought reaction of shock and surprise,
And pink matching outfits so tiny in size.

To think that they'd look exactly the same.
Identical twins—now to pick out their names.

Our thoughts filled with dreams of what life would be,
With matching little girls added to our family.

Double strollers, two car seats, two highchairs, two cribs.
Twice the diapers, twice the clothes, twice the baby food and bibs.

We see twins in the store and we stare and we say
I can hardly believe that'll be us one day.

By c-section they came, too early, too small.
Would they make it, would we really have twins after all?

Then far too quickly little Katie Beth died,
Leaving tiny little Ellie struggling to survive.

Gone was our hope of bringing home two.
A prayer for strength was all we could do.

God blessed us with Ellie, and for that we are glad,
But the loss of her twin makes us so very sad.

Seeing twins always brings a twinge of pain inside,
Of what we would have if she wouldn't have died.

There'd be two in my arms or making that mess
Or giggling at each other, in the same dress.

Two playing dolls, kitchen or chase
Or wearing chocolate ice cream all over their face.

Two girls dancing round, two girls holding hands-
Only those who have been there can really understand.

What it's like to plan two and then have just one,
I would never wish that on anyone.

But God is still good and we praise Him for one.
She's our precious little miracle and is bundles of fun.

She's a single right now, but in heaven she'll see
Her sweet sister Katie and a twin she will be.

♥ *Meredith Skrabanek,
mommy to Katie Beth
April 17 - 18, 2006
Texas*

In Loving Memory



Malen Huck Anderson

Stillborn February 4, 2008
Possible heart attack
Given by parents
Becky and Wesley Anderson
and siblings Lenea and Nathan

Jonathan Rexford Beckwith

October 16 - December 29, 2008
SIDS
Parents: Andrew and Karen Beckwith
Siblings: Jacob, Gabriel, and Abigail
Given by Tim and Traci Garrison

Jordan Alexander Booker

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

Sydney Lynne Brown

May 18, 2000
Cord Problem and other unknown conditions

Ashley MacKenzie Brown

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

Abigail Marie Buddin

April 13 - June 17, 2006
SIDS
Parents: Nathan and Cara Buddin
Siblings: Alexander and Anthony
Given by Hubert and Emily Clements
Also given in memory of
Emily Fields Buddin Honeycutt

Kehinde Fredrick Burns

December 6, 2009
Premature
Parents: Raymond and Remi Burns
and siblings Shay and twin brother TJ
Given by Mid Cities Mothers of Multiples

Abigail Grace Crump

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

Joshua and Caleb Davis

Stillborn April 14, 2000
Incompetent cervix
Parents: Shawn and Monica Davis
Siblings: Landon and Kylie
Given by grandparents: David and Lajuan
Fannin, and Uncle Pat Fannin

Riley and Parker Davis

November 14, 2006
Prematurity
Given by parents Robert and Cheryl Davis
and little sister Annalise

Baby Dill

Miscarried May, 2002

Cooper Graham Dill

May 26, 2003
Twin to twin transfusion / cord accident
Given by parents Jim and Brandee Dill
and siblings Avery, Tate, and Paxton
(Cooper's twin)

Kyler Paul English

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

Dylan Carolos and Trystan Macario Estala

December 11, 2008
PROM, pre-term labor at 22 weeks
Parents: Stephanie and Adrian Estala
Given by Kiark and Diana Light

Caleb Scott Fann

December 1, 2003
PROM

Baby August

Miscarried August 13, 2004
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann
Little sister: Madison Grace
Given by David and Melinda Brandenburg

Diane Flores

Given by Lana Cook

Mackenzie Noelle Frederickson

Stillborn June 17, 2009
Unknown cause
Parents: Mike and Ashley Frederickson
Given by Lyndsey Whorley

Jacob Andrew Fritsch

Stillborn March 21, 2002
Cord accident
Given by parents Cheryl and Eric Fritsch
and siblings Jerod, Joley, Jadyn, and Jaxon

Camden Asher Haltom

Stillborn October 31, 2009
Unknown cause
Parents: James and Jill Haltom
Given by friends at
Metro-CREST and MSSSA

James "Jack" Henvey

July 4, 2001
Tetralogy of fallot
Baby Henvey
Miscarried October, 2003
Given by parents Renee and Chris Henvey
and siblings Evan and Luke

Caleb David Hoff

Miscarried February 1, 2000

Summer Baby Hoff

Miscarried July 1, 2005

Joshua Nathaniel Hoff

Miscarried November 21, 2005

Baby August Hoff

September 28, 2009
Blighted ovum
Given by parents Tim and Heather Hoff
In honor of Dr. Robert C. Gramann

Alan John Huelsebash

Stillborn March 9, 2006
Unknown cause
Parents: Dan and Sandy Huelsebash
Siblings: Ashlie, Courtnie, and Cayden Alan
Given by Keith and Christine Kuhn

Tyler Lee-Carlos Huerta

October 7, 2009 - January 22, 2010
Mommy: Marisa Huerta Lehmann
Big sister: Kayleigh Catherine
Given by Don, Sandy, Ashlie, Courtnie, and
Cayden Huelsebusch

William Joseph Kowalski

Stillborn August 12, 1997
Premature labor due to fibroid tumors
Given by parents Robert and Sheri Kowalski
and little siblings Robert and Ashley

Joseph Charles Libby

Stillborn May 26, 1999
Cord accident
Given by parents Wim and Sharlene Libby
and siblings Will, John, and Mary Grace

Jack Malloy

Stillborn June 14, 2004
Unknown cause
Given by parents
Terry and Stephanie Malloy

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December 2001
Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell

Big brother: Byron, Jr.
Gift given by grandparents
Dennis and Sue Brewer
Gift given by grandparents
Lyle and Marnie Mitchell
Given by Dr. Jeff and Lana Montgomery

Cailey Elizabeth Ottinger

Stillborn June 7, 1996
Cord accident
Parents: George and Laurie Ottinger
Little sisters: Hannah and Emily
Given by Richard and Patricia Williams

Carter Patrick Outen

Stillborn November 6, 2000
Unknown cause

Baby Outen

Miscarried April 3, 2001

Baby Outen II

Miscarried October 14, 2002
Given by parents Chris and Shannon Outen
and little sisters Erin and Charlie

Christopher Michael Peplinski

Stillborn September 25, 2006
Cord accident

Blessing #2

Miscarried May 2008

Blessing #3

Miscarried September 2008
Given by parents
Chris and Chrissy Peplinski

Lillie Rhoades

September 10, 1997
Incompetent cervix
Given by parents
Richard and Glynis Rhoades

Ethan Kane Spurrier

Stillborn September 5, 2007
Cord accident
Given by parents Bruce and Sandra Spurrier
and siblings Thomas and Jakob

David Atkins Stephens

October 23, 2003
MTHFR mutation

Baby Stephens I

June 30, 2008
Ectopic pregnancy

Baby Stephens II

January, 2009
MTHFR mutation
Given by parents Rob and Melissa Stephens
and brother C.J.

Braley Lake Thomas

February 2, 2007
Unknown cause
Parents: Cory and Melissa Thomas
Siblings: Hunter and Rip
Anonymous gift

William Robert Thurlow

Stillborn January 30, 2007
Unknown cause
Parents: Rebecca and Micah Thurlow
Given by Barbara Dunlap

Kelly Lynne Turner

September 22 - 23, 1997
ARPKD
Given by parents John and Cheryl Turner

Aidan Shaw VanderCruyssen

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

Ryan Ashley Walker

Anonymous gift

Kyle Charles Walton

November 19, 1998
Group B Strep/Lack of proper nourishment
Given by parents Jason and Kristen Walton
and siblings Jessica, Laura, and Joshua

Baby Wilson I

Miscarried January, 2007

Baby Wilson II

Miscarried June, 2007
Given by parents Doug and Michele Wilson
and little brother Gabe

Elaine Kelly Wilson

Stillborn February 28, 2000
Unknown cause
Given by parents Bryan and Brandy Wilson
and siblings Emma, Evelyn, and Eli

Shauna Elisabeth Winebrenner

April 12, 2003
Trisomy 18
Given by parents
Sarah and Tim Winebrenner
and siblings Saul and Ella

Annabelle Elyse Zahara

November 9, 1973
Given by mommy Dianne

Adrian Joseph "AJ" Zuckerman

Stillborn March 30, 2007
Cord accident
Parents: Al and Amber Zuckerman
Brothers: Eli and Alex
Given by: Rob and Cheryl Davis

Gift of Support

West Conroe Baptist Church
Conroe, Texas

Gift of Support

AMPCO Marketing, LLC / Houston, TX

Gift of Support

Given by Medical City Dallas Hospital
Auxiliary, Dallas, TX

Gift of Support

Metropolitan Baptist Church, Houston, TX

Gift of Support

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO

Gift of Support

IBM Employee Charitable Campaign,
Dallas, TX

Gift of Support

UnitedHealth Group Employee Giving
Campaign, Dallas, TX

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 dona-
tions help us to continue

M.E.N.D.'s mission by providing
this newsletter and other services to
bereaved parents free of charge.
Please refer to page 2 of this news-
letter for more information regard-
ing where to send your donations
and what information to include.

Thank you so much!



M.E.N.D.

*Chapter Corner**Chapter Meeting Information***M.E.N.D.—Kansas**

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

M.E.N.D.—Houston

Meets the 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
HEALTHSOUTH Houston
Rehabilitation Institute
17506 Red Oak Drive, Houston, TX 77090
Director: Jaimie Crump
jaimie@mend.org, (281) 374-8528
Subsequent pregnancy group meets bi-
monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Sarah Winebrenner
(swinebrenner2004@yahoo.com).
Daddy's group meets quarterly on the 3rd
Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Tim Winebrenner
(swinebrenner2004@yahoo.com).

M.E.N.D.—Georgia

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

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana

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

M.E.N.D.—Hill Country

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

M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates*NW Arkansas*

After five years of reaching out to families in NW Arkansas and with much prayer and consideration, we will be closing M.E.N.D.—NW Arkansas as of March 2010. As chapter leader for this group, I have been blessed beyond measure by the families that have turned to our chapter for help and healing during the loss of their precious babies. I've rejoiced with the families who have gone on to welcome subsequent babies, biologically and some through adoptions. For members of this chapter, please remember that you will remain on the mailing list, receiving the newsletter regularly. If you are in the NW Arkansas area and wish to learn more about reopening our chapter, please contact Rebekah Mitchell at rebekah@mend.org.

*April Moreton**Kansas*

M.E.N.D.—Kansas continues to minister to families grieving in Kansas. We are looking for support groups in Wichita for families grieving losses there. I have not yet been able to find any. If you know of any or are interested in helping grieving families in Wichita, please contact stephanie@mend.org.

*Stephanie Metzger**Houston*

The start of 2010 has already been a blessing to many of our hurting M.E.N.D.—Houston families with the news of subsequent pregnancies. We pray that God will protect and comfort these families as they go into another phase of grief and change, and for the protection of the pregnancies. We also pray that God would provide his comfort and peace daily to our entire group, and that each hurting family would continue to see the blessings He has brought to our lives through the loss of our babies.

*Jaimie Crump**Georgia*

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

*Marie Stockdale**Texarkana*

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana continues to minister to families who have experience the loss of a baby. If you know of parents in need of help, please contact monica@mend.org.

*Monica Davis**Hill Country*

M.E.N.D.—Hill Country is reaching out to surrounding towns to generate more attendance for our monthly support group meetings.

Larissa Hallford

Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa continues to meet every month to offer support and meet the needs of those who have lost a baby. This year will be a big year for our chapter as we will have our first Walk to Remember ceremony in October. If you are in Oklahoma but are unable to attend group and would like to stay in touch with us via email, please contact me at michele@mend.org.

Michele Wilson

SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—Southwest Missouri begins a wonderful partnership with Second Baptist Church, Springfield, Missouri this spring. We also had the opportunity to present our ministry to thirty Parents As Teachers educators, thus widening our reach throughout the area. We're most excited about securing the most sought-after chapel in Springfield for our first Christmas Candlelight Ceremony, at Elfindale Chapel on Thursday, December 9, 2010. More details to come!

Heather Fann

Bryan/College Station

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station will have their first meeting March 9. Christine, Sandy, and I have been handing out M.E.N.D. information all over the area to spread the word. I have already had women contact me with interest in our chapter! God has really opened doors for us and our chapter. We are all three looking forward to our first meeting and all God has for us!

Jennie Drude

Amarillo

We are very excited to announce another chapter of our organization. M.E.N.D.—Amarillo, Texas, will be coming soon. Contact me with any questions (806)570-4344 or email becky@mend.org.

Becky Anderson

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

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

M.E.N.D.—**Bryan/College Station**
Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
Hawthorn Suites
1010 University Drive East
College Station, Texas 77840
Director: Jennie Drude
jennie@mend.org, (979) 220-7851

M.E.N.D.—**Amarillo**
Opening 2010
Amarillo, Texas
Director: Becky Anderson
becky@mend.org, (806) 570-4344

M.E.N.D. *Support Group Meetings in the Dallas Metroplex*

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings
are held the 2nd Thursday of
every month
from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

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

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

Food and Fellowship
*A time to relax and meet with other
M.E.N.D. parents in a social setting*
Contact Brittney Fish:
brittney@mend.org

Subsequent pregnancy group
meets the 4th Tuesday
from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Led by Liz Walker:
liz@mend.org

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

Playgroup
*For families with children born prior to
or subsequent to a loss.
Meeting at various locations.*
Contact Paula Schear or Brandee Dill for
more info: pkschear@yahoo.com
or dillsforchrist@yahoo.com

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

**All main chapter support group
meetings are held at:
NEW LOCATION JANUARY 2010
Wells Fargo Bank
800 W. Airport Freeway
Irving, TX 75062**
(Located in the Crystals Pizza parking
lot, between MacArthur and O'Connor)
Meetings will be in the bank board room,
located on the first floor.
For more information,
call (972) 506-9000.

Infertility group
Meets the upon request only.
Led by Paula Schear:
pkschear@yahoo.com
*For families experiencing
infertility after a loss.*

I Wish

I wish I could hold you forever
I wish you weren't taken away,
I wish that I could always see you
Each night and every day.

I wish I could hear you crying
Instead of feeling my tears drop down,
I wish you were here to see your sister
She would let you take the crown.

I wish you could see the way
She still longs to hold you tight,
I wish you knew how much
She thought having a brother was right.

I wish we didn't have this hole
Inside each of our big hearts,
I wish that everyone knew you
The way I did before we had to part.

I wish I could say I love you
While seeing that precious face,
I wish I didn't have to constantly say
"Landon's in a better place."

I wish this didn't happen
Though I know it may be for your best,
I wish I didn't lose you
And watch you have to "rest."

I wish that you knew how I loved you
It is beyond what I can ever describe,
I wish that you could see me hover
Over your things and be by your side.

I wish you didn't have to watch
Me sit by your graveside,
I wish I didn't have to think
Why did my baby die?

I wish that you knew your father
Him waiting to play soccer in the fields,
I wish I could see ya'll give high fives
It would be such a great big deal.

I wish that I knew the reasons
Behind you having to leave,
But for now my precious Landon
All I can do is sit here and grieve.

I wish that this will all end
In what I would like to say,
Is us all up in heaven
By your side one precious day.

♥ *Melissa Schuchman,*
mommy to Landon Blaine,
Stillborn February 12, 2009
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

Grief Revisited

The human spirit has an amazing ability to help us grow and accept even the most horrific of tragedies. My journey through grief began 522 days ago when I lost my son Blaise due to preterm premature rupture of membranes (pPROM) at 21 weeks. Like most people who experience a tragic event in their lives, I immediately felt intense anger because I had lost the most amazing thing that had ever happened to me. I was also consumed by guilt over the belief that somehow I must have caused this to happen, and as a result my son suffered a horrific death. It was very difficult to resume living a normal life each day, and at times I wondered if I ever would.

I still feel numb when I recall the words of the perinatologists. At nearly 19 weeks my membranes had ruptured, and I learned that my chances of continuing the pregnancy and delivering a viable baby were no greater than five percent. I felt intense panic and helplessness and immediately began recounting every possible event that could have caused this to happen. My obstetrician and the perinatologists told me that nothing I did caused it, that it only occurs that early in about three percent of pregnancies, and that I should not blame myself. But I did.

Since Blaise was not considered to be able to survive outside the womb at that age, there was nothing that could be done medically to save my pregnancy. I was simply advised to stay in bed with my feet elevated and to be prepared to go into labor within 24-48 hours. I knew babies were considered to be medically viable at 24 weeks, so I was determined to do whatever was necessary to carry my son for at least five more weeks. Every day that passed without going into labor was a victory for us, but I found that my determination was turning to desperation. The doctors told me to prepare for the worst, and I did not believe I could accept losing my baby. The thought was incomprehensible to me. But 20 days later Blaise was gone, hope was gone, and I was faced with that reality.

In the days and weeks that followed I was overwhelmed by the emptiness I felt. I had to visit my obstetrician several times after my son was delivered due to the amount of infection they found in the placenta. I even faced the possibility of a hysterectomy. As I lay looking at the sonogram monitor, it seemed as though I could hear my cries echoing in that dark, empty, lonely space on the screen. At that point, the only physical remnants of my baby that I had were his death certificate, the urn that held his ashes, and the photos taken of him after his delivery, and all of these things made me angry because they proved that my baby was dead.

I was fortunate to learn about M.E.N.D. from the chaplain at Baylor Hospital. When I met with her to pick up the photographs of my son, she suggested that I contact a support group and gave me some brochures for various organizations, including M.E.N.D. I noticed that the Walk to Remember was to be held within a few weeks, and my husband and I decided to attend. I wasn't able to have a memorial service for my son, and this was an opportunity for us to remember our son along with many other people who wanted to celebrate the lives of the babies they lost. It was a positive step in a new direction toward acceptance for me, because I began to realize that my anger was distracting me from staying connected to Blaise, which is what I really needed.

I wanted to share the pictures of my baby with our family and friends, but they

Continued on page 13...

Continued from page 12...

were so difficult for even his mommy and daddy to look at that they surely would be disturbing to others. I was heartbroken by all of the bruises, and swelling because I believed that he had surely suffered a horrible death. As I reflect on this early stage of grief, I am surprised I was able to refrain from acting on my urges to break windows and punch walls whenever I saw those photographs. One of my relatives said he didn't think I should have kept those photographs, but I now know that getting rid of them would have been a terrible mistake. I would hate to not have pictures of my son!

I now have a beautiful sketch of Blaise hanging next to my bed. When my husband and I attended the Fort Worth Stock Show last year we met an artist who had beautiful sketches on display and I asked him if he would do a sketch of my son. I explained that he was born at just 21 weeks and the photos were difficult to look at, so I would like to have him sketch the photo as it is but to look beneath all the bruising, and swelling and draw what he "sees." He was reluctant since he had never done anything like this before, but after viewing the photo he agreed to try to do this for us. The sketch I received from this artist is a magnificent piece of art. A complete stranger was able to see my baby beneath the physical trauma, and he gave me ability to look at my son without dwelling on the signs of suffering that brought me so much pain.

Even during periods of unimaginable sadness and torment, there can be beautiful moments that should be seized to help heal a broken spirit. One of these moments came to me when I viewed the photographs of Blaise that were taken at the hospital. He held his thumb and little finger on his left together, and each of the three remaining fingers were arched over them. While some people have a nervous habit of biting their nails or twirling their hair, mine is holding my left (non-dominant) hand in this exact position, especially when I'm driving. Seeing this brought me comfort, because it was a sign to me that was as clear and meaningful as if he had been holding a written note with a message just for me.

I have grieved for 522 days and will continue to lament the loss of Blaise for as many days as are left in my lifetime. Each of us has to feel our way through the grieving process in whatever way we can to "fake it until we make it." For me, the M.E.N.D. Walk to Remember ceremony and the sketch of my son helped me find moments of peace that I needed to get through periods of profound grief. Although I once viewed his death certificate, his cremation urn and the photographs as proof that my baby was dead, I now remind myself that they are proof that he lived.

Blaise now has a baby brother, Zelan, who squeals whenever I show him the sketch hanging on our wall. Even a six-month-old infant recognizes that Blaise is real and sees something in his image that causes him to respond with a hearty baby laugh. It is truly amazing to connect with my boys!



♥ Michele Isbell,
mommy to Blaise Edgar Isbell,
August 22, 2008
M.E.N.D.—Dallas



Missing Paul

Baby Paul,

In September of this year it will be 36 years since you left us to live in heaven, where the angels have taken care of you and watched over you. Each year on your birthday, Christmas, or Mother's Day the hurt has seemed as fresh as when you first left us. We watched your twin brother grow up and become a man, and we wonder what it would have been like to see the two of you grow up together, and what kind of a man would you have grown to be.

Yes, on September 8 of this year it will be 36 years since we had to say goodbye. But, you have always been in our thoughts, our hearts, and our arms have never stopped aching to hold you. Our comfort has been that we know Jesus has held you in His arms, and one day we will get to hold you in ours.

We want to thank the M.E.N.D. group in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where even though it was many years later, I was finally able to come to peace over Paul's death.

We love you Paul,
Mommy and Daddy,
brother Rod, sister Heidi,
and twin brother Peter

♥ David and Catherine Choate,
parents to Paul Choate
M.E.N.D.—Tulsa



Easter Comfort

Happy Easter, Jordan, my love!

I thank God for Easter! Easter gives me hope with the absolute assurance that you are in heaven with Jesus and that I will be reunited there with you, Jordan, my love!

This is the time of year when I can truly breathe, and the pain of living apart from you is a little less unbearable because of the comfort Easter brings. I love and miss you, dearly, Jordan!

Happy Easter, my love!
Mommy and Jazz
(Your Puppy-Doggie)

Jordan Alexander Booker
January 11, 2007
True knot in cord
Mommy: Norma Jordan
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

Thankful for Grief

I never imagined I could be thankful for something like grief. Until our son's death on March 30, 2007, our family had been relatively spared by the tragedy of death. Death is an expected part of life, but it is NOT an expected part of birth.

Our grief journey has been full of ups, downs, twists, turns, and at times—all-out crashes! Times of joy, sadness, sorrow, hope, praise, anger, denial, trust and peace. To this day, any number of these feelings can resurface, and back onto the roller coaster we go. The rides are sometimes short with less intensity but always purposeful and sweet in the end as we trust that each moment is part of God's plan. With reflection comes appreciation for the lessons learned, friends made, personal growth, and faith strengthened.

Three years later, I find myself healing, but not healed. In fact, I don't anticipate that pain this deep is ever healed; it just becomes part of life, and our coping abilities get better along the way. It is a good part of life. We appreciate things that we might have taken for granted before: a butterfly fluttering around at the perfect moment, the birds singing on a gloomy day, rainbows peaking from the clouds, and the delicate snowflakes sent like little messengers of hope. All of this reminding us to "Be still and know..."

As we watch our two living sons play on the floor, our hearts ache with the should-have-beens, the wish-it-weres, and the desperate desire to understand the plan. Grief knocks us down time and time again, but we somehow find the strength to get back up and live for the living—while we long for the lost. We are richer because we are the parents of three boys, not two. We are blessed because God chose us to endure the death of our son. To us, every day of our life is a reflection of AJ's legacy that brings us one day closer to God's promise. Indeed, through it all, we are thankful for grief!

♥ *Amber Zuckerman,*
mommy to Adrian Joseph "AJ",
M.E.N.D.—Dallas

The Burden and Blessing of Grief

Grief: a burden and a blessing. It's a strange statement, but one that I've found so true throughout these six years of grieving our two children in heaven, Caleb and August.

In those early days of grief, I never thought the pain would go away. I cried every day, sometimes all day, for what seemed like weeks on end. And then one day it happened—I didn't cry. I thought, "What a blessing! But wait...I didn't cry...what a horrible mother I am!" Thus, the burden of grief.

We're not happy when we feel grief fully, and we're not happy when we don't. I soon learned that there would eventually be days that I didn't cry. Then weeks I didn't, then months, and so on. There's never been a Mother's Day or heavenly birthday or Christmas where I haven't cried, but I've come to see those tearful moments as a blessing.

Don't get me wrong. It took a LONG time to get to that point. What I've chosen to do with my grief is allow it to come, whether anticipated by a holiday or surprised by some random commercial on television. But allowing it to come is no longer a burden. It's a blessing, because it's a reminder to me that I still love and miss my children. That as their mother, I have been changed for the better, for the rest of my life. All children are a blessing in that way, and for that I'm thankful.

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

Living Through Loss

by Margot B

Usually words can't comfort the grieving. Just being there in silence or listening is comforting. Nothing can change what has happened, but being with the bereaved is the best we can do. The bereaved need companions who will truly listen and perhaps do some of the small, every day things that need doing—mowing the lawn, changing the oil in the car, preparing a meal—any number of things.

Grieving is normal and unavoidable—it is a part of life, and it takes time. We don't get over it; we get through it. Going through grief is a series of stages: shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and then acceptance, which is the first step that brings a feeling of moving forward. You must come to terms with your loss and accept that it is real and permanent.

The stages of grief are not necessarily in this order, but it usually takes one or two years, or sometimes four, five or more years for a person to work through the loss of a child or spouse, as well as a divorce. The loss of a job, home, or health all require a significant amount of time to work through. There is no timeframe. We can't control the process, and this makes us feel vulnerable and sensitive to outside stimuli. It needs to take its natural course, because if we try to deny our grief and keep our emotions bottled up inside, this can lead to chronic depression or physical illness.

Recent research indicates that some kind of ceremonial farewell is helpful in aiding the bereaved to adjust to the death of someone close. We must acknowledge publicly and formally that something significant has happened or we may find more difficulty in the grieving process. During the grieving process, it's normal to cry, lose your appetite, and withdraw socially. Eventually instead of living moment-to-moment with our deep feeling of sadness, we will experience these feelings intermittently. Then we can think about getting back to work, resuming our social life, doing our routine daily tasks again, such as cleaning house, paying the bills, caring for the children—even if we sometimes have to ask for help from a friend or relative.

It's a good idea to keep a journal of one's thoughts and feelings, or write letters to the one who has died, or write a story of your memories, or write poetry. Grief can be expressed through painting or sculpture, or by participating in whatever you are proficient in doing. Perhaps sewing or woodworking—perhaps starting a project that will help others. Spend time outdoors in a park or at the seashore. Being in touch with nature can be both healing and restorative. It's important to retain our friendships, because feelings of alienation and abandonment are part of the grieving process.

The best method of fighting these feelings is to look for others to console. The person who has gone through the loss of a loved one is uniquely qualified and best able to understand others going through the same pain. Spending time with people who have undergone a similar loss can be very therapeutic. You discover how natural your emotions are that you go through during the grieving process. You can receive moral support and learn from the experiences and the ideas of others. Support groups are not for everyone, but many people swear by them.

Taking care of your health is an important part of getting through your loss. Some physical problems, such as insomnia, loss of appetite, and muscle tenseness, are to be expected. Avoid becoming overly tired, get enough rest and sleep, eat nutritious meals, find support, hope and comfort from something you have faith in or are interested in, and life will be better. Avoid making major decisions and changes in your life, as routine and familiarity with your surroundings give you a feeling of stability and permanence when you feel in chaos.

The scriptures state: A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance. The time of weeping and mourning will be over. You can pick up the pieces and go on. The wound heals but the scar remains.

Margot B is a writer, proofreader, and web developer. Her Web sites are:

<http://margotb.mybravenet.com>

<http://websitebldg.tripod.com>

Article Acknowledgment

This article was reprinted from Bereavement Poems & Articles (www.bereavement-poems-articles.com).

Bereavement Poems & Articles is a free service to both visitors and to authors whose work is published on this site. The intention of this website is to help people suffering from grief and loss to find comfort in the work and advice of these authors.

Memories Minus Grief

I remember those early days of grief well. Some memories don't easily fade.

I remember walking into a bookstore and standing near the entrance, feeling completely lost because I knew there was no self-help book that would make my overwhelming grief go away. I recall crying out for Jesus to return, because I didn't think I could bear the pain of loss any longer. I remember fleeing from church and restaurants when a baby would cry. I can still sense the isolation I felt as the rest of the world carried on around me while I watched from the lonely prison of pain only I could see.

I remember those days and still wonder sometimes if they actually happened. I know they were real, but now my mind doesn't seem to paint an accurate picture of how things were back then. The thing is, though the memories are vivid, the emotions aren't. I remember feeling the pain, but the pain itself is no longer part of the recall. I know it hurt, but it's as if the sharpness of the pain and the deep ache of anguish are no longer a true part of the memory. The knowledge of grief is there, but the grief is not.

That's why it's so surprising sometimes when a little flash of grief will burst forth at the most unexpected time, even now, ten years after my son died. These moments are never as sharp and breathtaking as they were in those early days of grieving, but their unexpectedness makes them unnerving. I can't always put my finger on why some things will bring back those twinges of melancholy, for that's what they seem now, rather than stabs of pain. It can be an event for which I brace myself, but never quite enough, like the kindergarten graduation in which Joseph would have participated. Or, it can be something seemingly insignificant, like the smell of magnolia blossoms. One day such an event will seem mundane, and the next it will bring back memories of Joseph. These grief visits are never predictable.

Yet, they are manageable. Like the memories, these moments aren't held in the clutches of a strong, relentless grief. Instead, there's a sadness that eventually gives way to hope. Perhaps that's what sapped grief of its power along the way: hope. I would like to say that hope was always there, and perhaps it was, but those early days of grief were pretty dark. There were times when I couldn't see light anywhere. It was then that I cried out to God with all my being, knowing that His Son died, too. I clung to the knowledge that my Creator understood my pain. Eventually, that tiny spark of hope overcame the darkness and won.

It took walking through the dark days of grief to be able to see that there was light on the other side, much like it took a death on the cross for us to see beyond death into eternal life.

Grief is never truly over, at least in this existence. It subsides and loses its edge. It loses its power over you after a while. It never feels like it did in those first weeks, days, or even years. However, it never really leaves. Like sin, grief leaves a mark on its bearer that will only be gone when the earthly body is traded for a glorious, everlasting, perfect one. We live an imperfect existence now, marred by sin and pain and death, but it's only temporary.

One day all the memories will forever be separated from the pain, and we will see that hope did indeed prevail.

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

Counting the Days

After my son Jaylen passed away, on June 8, 2009, I would count each week that passed like "a week ago today he was born" or "two weeks ago today was his funeral."

I no longer count the days or weeks, but I do still count the months. Each time another month has passed since he has passed away I spend just a little more time talking to him. I let everybody know that another month has passed.

As of January I'm seven months out, and it doesn't even feel like it. Although I count each month, it still doesn't seem like so much time has passed.

I don't think I'll ever stop counting away the months or years, because I will never forget my king. Mommy loves you, Jaylen Rey!

♥ *Joelle Hernandez,*
mommy to Jaylen Rey,
M.E.N.D.—Dallas



Subsequent Births

Mike and Sang Tran
of Spring, Texas,
along with big sisters Sara and Kaitlyn,
joyfully welcome
Emily Haneul-Tu,
born December 8, 2009,
measuring 7 lb., 6 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Tran family lovingly remembers
Kaden,
April 18 - September 17, 2008,
heart condition.

Desmond and Tiffany Vincent
of Magnolia, Texas,
along with big siblings
Ayden and Kyndal,
joyfully announce the arrival of
McKynzie Paige,
born December 13, 2009,
measuring 6 lb., 6 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Vincent family lovingly remembers
Austyn Alan,
stillborn January 11, 2007,
cord accident.

Daniel and Kristah Slate
of Houston, Texas,
along with big siblings
Camden and Everett,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Anna Claire,
born December 17, 2009,
measuring 7 lb., 5 oz.,
and 19 ¾ inches long.
The Slate family lovingly remembers
Rylan Elisabeth,
October 17 – October 20, 2008,
unknown cause.

Bryan and Stephanie Johnson,
of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma,
along with big brothers
Tyler and Brody,
joyfully announce the adoption of
Emery Kate,
born December 3, 2009,
measuring 7 lb., 13 oz.,
and 22 inches long.
The Johnson family lovingly remembers
Tatum Olivia,
February 21, 2009,
possible cord accident.

Doniece Muskrat and Kenneth Davis
of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
along with big sisters
Aaliyah, Emmie, and Gracie,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Josslyn,
born January 4, 2010,
measuring 6 lb., 12 oz.,
and 20 inches long.
The Davis family lovingly remembers
Baby Davis I,
miscarried March 17, 2009,
due to uterine complications.

Joahna and Clint Cockrell
of Grand Prairie, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Ellis,
born December 31, 2009,
measuring 7 lb., 15 oz.,
and 20 1/2 inches long.
The Cockrells lovingly remember
Leah Grace Bravo Cockrell,
February 6 - 8, 2009,
Hydrops.

Sam and April Morton
of Siloam Springs, Arkansas,
along with siblings
Asher, Ava, and Brock,
joyfully announce the adoption of
Scarlett Lele,
born February 18, 2009,
Jiangxi Province, China,
forever theirs, January 18, 2010.
The Moretons lovingly remember
Baby M,
miscarried October 15, 1999,
Baby Boy Moreton,
miscarried March 17, 2000,
and Angel #3,
miscarried August 1, 2000,
Antiphospholipid Antibody Syndrome.

Looking Ahead

October 2

- M.E.N.D.—Houston
Walk To Remember

October 3

- Walk To Remember
in Irving, TX

December 9

- M.E.N.D.—Houston
Christmas Ceremony

December 8

- Christmas Ceremony
in Irving, TX

December 9

- M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri
Christmas Ceremony



Cuando Regresa el Dolor

Recuerdo vívidamente cada detalle de lo que sucedió en mi habitación del hospital la tarde del 24 de junio de 1995, cuando una enfermera entró para revisar los signos vitales míos y de Jonathan. Lo que comenzó como un procedimiento rutinario para una madre embarazada en reposo en cama en el hospital se transformo a una escena caótica que quizás un escritor de películas de Hollywood podría haber escrito para un drama de televisión. Mi dulce bebé ya no tenía un latido. De alguna manera mientras estaba limitada a la cama, él se enredó completamente en su cordón umbilical. Lo que se suponía que iba a ser su cordón de vida se convirtió en su cordón de muerte. Aunque los días y meses que siguieron fueron penosos, absolutamente no comprendí que al momento que me informaron de la muerte de mi bebé toda una vida de dolor sólo había comenzado. Mi vida sería diferente por siempre. La mujer, la esposa y la madre que yo era desapareció, y una cambiada Rebekah Mitchell había comenzado a evolucionar.

Cuando ocurre una muerte, es natural sentir dolor y tristeza por una temporada. Pero, ¿cuánto tiempo es 'una temporada'? ¿Durante esos días oscuros de dolor fresco y crudo, yo misma me preguntaba con pánico "Cuanto tiempo me sentiría así? ¿Sera que nunca sería feliz de nuevo? Será que la vida como yo la conocía nunca volverá?"

Con el tiempo logre salir de mi hoyo negro, era feliz de nuevo y creí una nueva vida para nuestra familia. Pero eso no significa que ya no me sentía dolor y que ya nunca sentía tristeza. Incluso, después de casi 15 años, todavía tengo mis momentos. No muy seguidos, pero ocurren mis momentos. Varias situaciones pueden causar las emociones antiguas que vuelvan. Como la mañana hace varios años, cuando recordaba que Jonathan debería de estar poniendo sus pantalones cortos de color azul marino y su polo blanco para atender su primer día de kindergarten en la Academia de Trinity Christian. Y otra vez cuando sabía que su uniforme debería de ver cambiado a pantalones gris para comenzar sus años como un estudiante de la escuela secundaria. Ese momento de Kindergarten se repitió cuando recordé que el segundo bebé que perdimos también debería de estar poniéndose sus pantalones cortos de color azul marino, o tal vez ella su vestidito de uniforme. De vez en cuando simplemente podría ser mientras manejando el automóvil cuando de repente me siento asaltada con ese dolor tan intenso y tan conocido. Entre mis propios pensamientos digo "NO PUEDO creer que realmente ha ocurrido todo esto. No puedo creer que di a luz a un bebé mortinato y que actualmente tuvimos un funeral para él y que está enterrado en un cementerio."

Diez semanas después del nacimiento mortinato de Jonathan alguien me preguntó, "todavía piensas de tu bebé?" Recuerdo que fueron 10 semanas después porque la pregunta me la hicieron el día que él supuestamente iba nacer. Aproximadamente al mismo tiempo, otra persona le pregunto a mi hermana que si ya supere lo ocurrió. ¿Sigo pensando de él? ¿Supere lo ocurrió? Qué tipo de preguntas son estas?!? No sólo pensaba en Jonathan dos meses y medio después de su muerte y no, no había superado lo que ocurrió pero las respuestas a estas preguntas siguen siendo los mismos 15 años después.

La tristeza inmensa y las lágrimas no siguen con la misma frecuencia pero no están demasiado lejos si determinadas circunstancias las provocan. Me parece que una equivocación enorme que tiene la gente es que piensan que mientras pasan los años que ya no extrañamos nuestros bebés o que ya no pesamos en ellos. ¿Podríamos nosotros olvidarlos realmente? Y para los padres que son recién afligidos, a veces tienen temor seguir adelante con sus vidas porque piensan que es un sentimiento de traición a su bebé y que de manera de seguir adelante, están olvidando a su bebé. Si usted siente esto, tenga la seguridad que nunca podría olvidar los recuerdos de su bebé. No importa cuántos años pasen, usted nunca olvidara a su bebe completamente. Se mejora y se convierte nueva persona pero la transformación a una persona nueva no significa que ha abandonado a su bebé. Es normal y natural seguir adelante con su vida después de una pérdida, pero no significa que nunca sentirá tristeza nuevamente.

Cuando regrese de nuevo el dolor, y si pasara, acéptelo. Tome su tiempo, (minutos o más), y permítase el momento de la tristeza. El ciclo de la vida continuara y se puede asegurar que en algún momento el dolor regresara a visitar de nuevo. Y está bien que regrese.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell*
mama de Jonathan Daniel y Bebé Mitchell

Images

Sometimes, in remembering, it feels like I am looking back at someone else's life. I see images, as though I'm on the outside looking in.

I see my shaky hands holding that positive pregnancy test in January 2009, wondering if I should wake my husband or if I should wait a few more days to tell him, after I've taken a few more tests. I can see his sleep-filled face, not fully registering what I was telling him, afraid to believe this positive could stick. I see a trash can full of positive pregnancy tests, for it took a full week of testing to convince myself I was going to stay pregnant.

I see myself reading pregnancy books about things to avoid, what to eat, what not to eat, and all about the baby's development. One week in early pregnancy the book said the baby was the size of a blueberry. I held a blueberry in my hand and imagined it was my baby.

I see myself scared—so fearful of a miscarriage. I buy a home Doppler so I can check in and make sure the heart is still beating. I remember when I thought a miscarriage was the only thing I had to fear in pregnancy. I was sure once the first trimester ended my worries would be over. Then I was introduced to a new fear—I read about someone having a miscarriage at 16 weeks. I breathed a huge sigh of relief once I passed that week.

I see myself lying on the couch, so still, waiting for those flutters I had read about. I feel something. Was that my baby? It happens again, and this time I'm sure. My baby has gotten big enough for me to feel her moving. Lying on the couch becomes a nightly ritual: my time to close my eyes and wait for that little life inside me to make herself known.

I see myself filled with excitement. Soon I would find out the gender of my baby. Soon we would know if we were having Madelyn or Wyatt. Soon I could start buying baby clothes. I was so excited to register. We went to Babies R Us and looked around in preparation.

I see myself the night before the ultrasound. I am nervous and scared. What if we find out something is wrong? What if something has happened and there's no heartbeat? My husband tells me not to worry. I also tell myself not to worry. Nothing is going to be wrong. I know so many people who have had babies, and nothing has ever been wrong for them. Why should I be so afraid? I'm overreacting. I need to learn to stop worrying—I don't want to be that kind of mom. I calm down, but still get little sleep. I'm too excited.

I see myself in the waiting room. My husband joins me there. Our appointment time passes by, and we still wait. I'm in so much torture, both with anticipation and nervousness. They call our name. I lie on the table and practically hold my breath while she puts gel on my stomach. This is the moment I've been waiting for since the positive pregnancy test. She checks the heartbeat. It's perfect. Then, those words. The words no one wants to hear. The words: "Something's wrong. I need to get a doctor."

I see us in shock. This can't be happening. I see tears falling down my face as we wait in a room while they get us a perinatal appointment. They let us leave from a special exit—an exit that allows us to avoid the waiting room full of pregnant women. Women with hopes and dreams. My hopes and dreams. The ones that had been taken away from me.

I see me at home, in bed. Unable to get up or do anything but cry. What was going to happen to my baby?

I see us at subsequent ultrasounds and in the hospital. The baby is doing so well. Surely she is going to be ok. She is a fighter. So many prayers are being prayed. Miracles happen every day for babies. I have every hope my baby will be one of those stories.

I see my stomach twitching and jerking through my clothes. Nothing makes me happier. I grab my husband's hand so he can feel the movements, too. Sometimes she kicks so hard it hurts. But I don't care. That's my baby in there.

I see myself excited that I will be meeting my baby soon. The one I've gotten to know so well. The one whose heart rate goes up when I speak. The one who has been my world since that first pregnancy test. My little one.

I see myself now, looking at my husband as he sleeps. Seeing her in his face. He gave her the shape of his eyes and his mouth. I see tears on my cheeks as fresh grief washes over me. I realize I am not on the outside looking in. This is my life.

♥ Heather Mohr,
mommy to Madelyn Rebecca,
August 28, 2009
Illinois

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

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

- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Kroger Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D.
- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- **Glenn Martin** is looking for M.E.N.D. families willing to grant space for small gumball machines in order to raise funds for M.E.N.D. If you have a retail business or connections to a high traffic location in the Grapevine, Southlake, or metroplex area, Glenn will place, stock, and service the equipment and give M.E.N.D. 35 percent of the proceeds. Glenn can be contacted at (817) 874-5366 or glmartin@attg.net.
- M.E.N.D. can now earn funds through **i.think inc.**, an online marketing research firm. You can help by signing up as a survey panel member and designating us as the recipient of your fee. Just go to the Web site at <http://www.ithink.inc.com> and choose "Sign up to become an i.think inc. panel member." Fill out the sign-up survey. Under the "Funds for Charity" section, select M.E.N.D. from the list of names.
- **Little Beads and Macaroni and Cheese**, owned by M.E.N.D. member Marilyn Brown, offers custom jewelry. Her keepsake angel bracelets are \$20 each, and ten percent of each angel bracelet sale will be donated to M.E.N.D. Marilyn can be reached at (817) 996-1920 or mbsbrown16@hotmail.com.
- **IBM** employees may now make charitable donations to M.E.N.D. through automatic payroll deductions. Choose Charity Code 0M562 from the *IBM Employee/Retiree Approved Charity List*.
- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to www.goodsearch.com and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.
- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D., visit www.missionfish.org to find out how.
- **Tastefully Simple** consultant Angie Saurer would like to offer 10 percent off purchases to M.E.N.D. members, and then donate 10 percent of purchases to M.E.N.D. Call or email your orders to Angie at (952) 322-1343 or angelasaurer@yahoo.com. Shop the entertaining, cooking and home décor products online at www.tastefullysimple.com/web/asaurer.
- **Mary Kay** consultant Trina Echols would like to donate 15 percent of all sales when you mention M.E.N.D. If you live in the Houston area and are interested in a free facial, please call (832) 276-3664 or shop online at www.marykay.com/trinaechols.