



Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Support

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When Things Don't Turn Out As Planned



Many of us plan our days, months and years into the future. Sometimes it's simple plans for work the next day, or our future families and careers. But when the unexpected happens, and now the ordinary becomes heart-wrenching and even debilitating, what do we do? Our readers share with us their stories of worlds falling apart, yet, for some, finding hope and an unexpected future.

In this issue...

Upset Plans

Charleen not only grieved the death of her baby, but also her dreams and job. Yet she is finding hope.

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Second Chance at Life

The effects of loss sometimes necessitates us to unexpectedly change our future plans for our family.

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My Story

Elleigh had planned to share her pregnancy and baby as a social media influencer, yet now shares her story of losing Penelope and journey for a rainbow baby.

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November/December Topic

Holidays

Deadline: September 30, 2023

January/February Topic

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss

Deadline: November 30, 2023

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

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to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests it not be published.

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

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



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Feature Article

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

As a planner, I admittedly do not transition well when an event or an appointment written in my old-fashioned book calendar is canceled or re-scheduled, especially if it was something I was looking forward to. My Day-Timer fills up quickly and many people don't understand why I need to know dates for things far in advance. I've been this way since I was a young girl.

My husband Byron and I began dating when we were teenagers. Even though I was only 16, I knew Byron was THE ONE! In my mind I quickly began planning our life together: when we'd get married, when we'd start a family, and how many children we'd have - three boys was my plan! My ideas and goals of a big wedding happened right on time, as did conceiving our first baby, our first son! What wasn't penciled in my month-by-month calendar was getting diagnosed with a degenerative kidney disease not long after our fairytale wedding, having our second son stillborn due to a cord accident, receiving a kidney transplant, then losing our third little baby 10 weeks into the pregnancy. And certainly, devoting my adult life to directing a pregnancy and infant loss ministry was not anywhere on my agenda. But here I am. Living a life that is only a fraction of what I had planned so many years ago.

Feeling cheated and betrayed by God was a big part of my grief. I could not fathom why God didn't go along with all of my plans. They were good, wholesome dreams, not with ill-intent or seemingly anything that would obviously be outside His will for Byron's and my life. It took years for me to process and accept that my ways aren't always His ways.

Recently I was outside with our 4-year-old grandson shortly after a brief summer rain storm. He said, "Glammie, let's pray and ask God to show us a rainbow!" I so badly wanted to see even just a glimpse of that colorful arch in the sky so I could prove to Elias that God always keeps His promises. But on this cloudy day, there was not even a hint of a rainbow to be seen from our backyard. So, I took the opportunity to explain to him that when we ask

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God for things, it's not magic; that just because we ask our Heavenly Father for things that seem good, it doesn't mean that it will automatically happen simply because we asked. And sometimes those prayers are answered, we just don't realize it. Like that rainbow might really be up there, but we can't see it because it's hidden behind the clouds. If our prayers aren't answered, we have to trust that for some reason God wants something different for us. God always has a better plan for us, even if we don't see it or understand it.

Now I know that's a hard concept to accept when it comes to relating that theology to our babies dying. But knowing that God's ways are higher than our ways is what got me through the darkest days of my sorrow. I had to learn that even though only 1 of our 3 much-wanted and planned-for babies lived, God had something else in store for us. Our story of loss resulted in the founding of M.E.N.D. I know not everyone can yet attest to something beautiful coming from your loss, but I hope you search for what that may be and own it as part of your baby's legacy. Maybe it's a career change, a reconciled relationship, or reaching out to fellow loss families like we do in M.E.N.D.

It hasn't been easy rearranging my life to a new plan, but by the help of the Lord, I have. And I don't claim to love this new plan better than what I formerly decided for my life, but I do love what God has created from my sorrows. I trust Him and strive to not lean on my own understanding of His ways. I challenge you to do the same. Pour your broken heart out to Him, and let Him guide you into a new and different plan. It may not be what you wanted or imagined, but He can turn your path into something still filled with love and beauty.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:11 -14



Happy 4th Birthday, Angel!

You brought so much love and joy to all of us. Even though you are not here with us, you are truly loved and missed by so many. We honor you on this special day, and celebrate you, Angel Michael! Happy 4th birthday. Mommy and Daddy love you to the moon and back.

Angel Michael Reyes III
September 3-11, 2019
Premature birth, Pseudomonas Sepsis,
Pulmonary Hypertension
Parents: Lillian and Angel Reyes
Siblings: Ashton, Julianna and Elijah



Happy 45th Birthday, Elizabeth!

Happy heavenly birthday, Elizabeth. You would be 45 years old this year, yet still my beautiful baby girl. Momma still misses you no matter how long it's been. Your sisters Monica, Sylvia, Christina, and Stephanie, your nieces Alexis and Leah, your nephews Issac, Samuel, Xavier misses you. What would it be like if you were here? You would probably be spoiling them all. Give your Grandpa Paul a hug and kiss for me. Again, happy heavenly birthday to you.

Love,
 Mom

Elizabeth Nicole Garcia
Miscarried October 18, 1978
Parents: Paul and Jeannie Garcia
Siblings: Monica, Sylvia, Christina and Stephanie



Happy 1st Birthday, Stassi!

To our dearest daughter Stassi: on the day you were born, earth received such an amazing gift. On the day you died, heaven received a very special angel. Happy 1st birthday in heaven, Anastassia. Mommy and Daddy love you and miss you so much! Not a day goes by we don't think of you.

Anastassia James
October 16-17, 2022
Premature birth
Parents: Shirley and Donald James



Happy 24th Birthday, Ashley!

Loving and missing you today and always.

Ashley Renee Dedear
October 29 – November 1, 1999
Premature birth
Parents: Tim and Cindy Dedear
Siblings: Laura (Ashley's twin) and Katherine



Happy 16th Birthday, Brandon!

It's been 16 years that you had to leave us, yet it now brings comfort your mommy is with you to enjoy you after all these years. We will continue to celebrate you today and every day until we see you again. You were a treasure when you came into the world. I will never forget the day you were born, because I got to be with your mom on that special day. It was love at first sight. I hope every day is a celebration in the beautiful kingdom of heaven. We love and miss you dearly!

Love,

Yaya, Papaw Seynaeve and brother Ethan

Brandon Isaiah Alfaro
October 19, 2007 – February 7, 2008
Spinal Muscular Atrophy
Also remembering
Brandon's mother, Jennifer Alfaro
June 13, 1983 – February 14, 2020
Grandparents: Tim and Diana Seynaeve
Little brother: Ethan



Happy 1st Birthday, Angel Baby!

Happy 1st birthday, my angel baby! I can't believe a year has gone by already. Our lives will never be the same without you. We look forward to the day we see you again in heaven. Until then, I'll hold you close in my heart, and while here on earth, I'll keep your memory alive. Keep watching out for us, my angel baby. If I could go back in time, I would do it all over again just to hold you one more time. We love you so much. Happy 1st birthday!

Ismael Hermosillo Merino
October 5, 2022
Unknown cause
Parents: Fernando Hermosillo and Emeli Merino
Siblings: Daleny and Fernando



Happy 2nd Birthday, Hadley!

Happy 2nd birthday, baby girl! This year has felt a little lighter – we’re finding our way as a family with a child/sibling in heaven. You will always be our #4, and we love including you in our everyday life as it keeps you close to us. Some days your signs are louder than others, keeping us on our toes.

Grandma Joanie told you she’d see you soon, and now that she has joined you, picturing you together gives us a little comfort. She spoiled the other grandkids while she was here, and now it’s your turn.

We cannot wait to hold you in our arms again and watch you grow. Hadley, you will never be forgotten.

Hadley Joan Peterson

Stillborn October 7, 2021

Parents: Matt and Sammy Peterson

Siblings: Malia, Pryor and Case



Happy 10th Birthday, Keiran!

Oh my sweet, sweet shining star,
How loved you are!

Ten years old... it feels like yesterday, and yet so far away. Every bit of me wishes you were here every day. To see you grow through the years would be such an adventure! The good times, the bad times, the ordinary everyday times... it's all a sweet dream we'll hold onto until we see you again. There is nothing as great as a life well-loved, and your little life is so very well-loved!

Wishing you a well-loved 10th birthday,
Mom, Dad and lil' sis

Keiran David Cobler

October 25 – November 1, 2013

NEC

Also remembering:

Fred and George Cobler

Miscarried March 3, 2017

Parents: Brian and Kristina Cobler

Little sister: Karsyn



Happy 2nd Birthday, Drew!

Happy 2nd birthday, sweet boy! We wish you were here, but know you are having the greatest celebration in heaven. You are forever loved and missed.

Andrew Hudson Conley

October 10, 2021

Premature birth

Parents: Jim and Erin Conley

Siblings: Jamie, Brayden and Asher



Happy 13th Birthday, Ginger!

We miss you dearly and often wonder what our family would look like if you were still here. How have we survived the last 13 years without you? We look forward to the time when we'll be reunited. Until then, we'll keep on missing you, remembering you, and honoring the special place you have in our hearts. We love you!

Ginger Sandoval

September 25, 2010

Renal anomalies

Parents: Keith and Katherine Sandoval

Siblings: Kegan, Kastle and Kanon



Happy 14th Birthday, Sereana Joy!

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit,...the Spirit of God lives in you...Christ is in you, even though the body is subject to death...the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He...will also give life to your mortal bodies...” Romans 8:9-11

LIFE!

THANK YOU, JESUS!

Oh, Sereana, I miss you! How I love you! How thankful I am to Abba! He gave wonderful, delightful YOU for us to celebrate. Happy birthday, sweet daughter! I love you!

Sereana Joy

Stillborn September 9, 2009, at full-term

Unknown cause

Also remembering

Samuel Goodness

Stillborn April 29, 2021, at 21 weeks

Lee Elliot

Miscarried November 23, 2021

Parents: Semi and Laura Ratulele

Siblings: Noela Esiteri and Talei Jewel





Upset Plans

*Written by Charleen Burghardt
Mommy to Baby Burghardt*

My pregnancy didn't go as planned. I was 39 and newly remarried. When the home pregnancy test showed a positive pregnancy, excitement filled us. This would be my husband's first child. I assumed all would go well since I had two healthy pregnancies from a previous marriage. We began to dream and plan, sharing the joyful news with family.

I saw the doctor after an accident with a student in my classroom. The sonogram showed no heartbeat, and we understood we had lost the baby. I wondered if the accident affected my pregnancy, but I did not know. The doctor performed a surgical procedure, a D&C, the next day, which was my 40th birthday – a significant day to lose a baby. Still in shock, I returned to teaching after only a few days off.

I expected to grieve for a few months after my miscarriage and then move on. Because of the grief, I went through the motions of teaching, and the days blurred together. Family and friends showed compassion and concern and gave a listening ear, for which I was thankful. I hoped as summer arrived to separate myself from the accident, and provide time for a needed vacation with my two young sons. Summer vacation was not what I had hoped it would be.

Halfway through the summer, debilitating grief hit like a tsunami. I felt frozen. Loved ones didn't understand the depth of my sadness. The intensity of the grief interrupted my plans and plunged me into dark days. As I struggled to work through grief, I read books by others who experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth, and that seemed to help some, knowing I was not alone. The joy of summer activities disappeared. Summer provided free time to think, which was torture. I had never experienced grief like that.

I planned to return to teaching at-risk children in the fall, but began thinking about taking a leave of absence. If I returned to the classroom, I would have to face the possibility of a child hurting me. However, with a leave of absence, I would miss education, the students, and my colleagues. I decided on a leave of absence.

So many upset plans:

- The accident with a student
- The loss of our precious baby on my 40th birthday
- The intensity of grief I experienced months after
- Loss of a dream of having a baby together
- The loss of my teaching position

The loss of a baby changed our plans. I came to realize that not only did I grieve the loss of a baby, but I grieved other losses. The other losses were non-death losses, including the loss of my dreams and my job.

I lost so much, but gained a profound awareness of grace. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV). God's grace carried me through all the sadness I experienced when I didn't think I could go on. Looking back, that grace gave me hope. Hope brought strength. My relationship with God enlarged, and God never left my side as I walked in the shadowy valley. The grief changed my perspective. Each person and day is a gift, which I appreciate more now.

Over time, I adjusted to the change in plans, finding new projects like taking graduate classes and volunteering in the community. Fulfillment came with giving back to others. Opportunities to dive deeper into God's Word through Bible Study led to new growth in God's grace. Hope brought a new direction.

Written by Charleen Burghardt, a mother of three here and one in heaven.
She was a teacher, a stay-at-home mother, and a chaplain.

Juggling Normal

*Written by Becky Luedtke
Mommy to Evelyn Faith
M.E.N.D. – Chicagoland Chapter Director*

Many plates in the air.
Each feels heavier with grief in the heart.
Every day is a struggle.
I do not want this juggle.

Normal is to keep them from falling,
Doing whatever it takes.
I don't know how.
I don't have what it takes.

My arms and heart are empty,
Life is heavy and not normal.
Normal?
Where did it go?
Do I want it back?

I will love you forever.
You are mine, for as long as I breathe.
Only, no one sees my new normal.
I see it every day.
It's my juggle.
It's my struggle.

One day at a time.
It gets easier,
I carry the grief.
I love you, in my heart forever.
That is my new normal.

Second Chance at Life

*Written by Ainsley Watkins
Mommy to James*

Not only did I find myself having to handle my baby's dead body, but the trauma from facing such an indescribable horror sent my mind and heart into an absolute tailspin for days and months on end. Five days later I hadn't stopped talking or cleaning, not even to sleep. My blood pressure skyrocketed, and I ended up in a labor and delivery room screaming for my child. The nervous breakdown had me hallucinating all day and enduring night terrors all night. The medical staff did their best, but the only place I belonged was in a psychiatric ward. I drank extra sleepy time tea all day every day, yet it did not touch my brain chemistry. Music slowed and was creepily warped. People moved and talked in slow motion. My thoughts ran a million miles a minute. I believed I could psychically connect to other people I didn't know and could speak languages I could not speak. Postpartum psychosis hijacked my brain. To come down off of all this, I was prescribed three classes of psychiatric medications at the highest dose. The process of weaning off of them took 10 months. I had been on track to homeschool my children, but stillbirth and PTSD stole that dream from me. I love my baby, but handling his body broke me. But that's not the end of the story.

I am being given a second chance at life. Both for me and for another child. At 11 months postpartum we found out we were expecting again. The pregnancy hasn't been without complications, but the baby is alive and so am I. Every appointment is riddled with anxiety and apprehension and a part of me doesn't dare to expect this child to live. But then again, who in my situation would? And yet.

I choose hope. I choose hope because I believe in a God who will take care of me regardless of how this pregnancy turns out. He has healed the wounds inflicted by trauma on my marriage by walking with my husband and me through this valley hand-in-hand. He has given me eyes to see a deep beauty of the earth where I was blind before. He has given me words to offer the newly bereaved I would have never been capable of knowing without my firsthand experience. He has shown me how to have compassion for myself and foster the deepest love for my own soul. He has led us to a quaint religious school in the country in which to entrust our living children.



He has given me words to offer you, dear reader. That you are not alone and that your experience matters. Your baby matters, your grief matters and your healing matters. The road is long and arduous. So much longer or harder than you could ever imagine. But there are fruits. They are there. They will reveal themselves in time if you are only willing to open yourself up to the possibility of seeing them, honoring them, sharing them, and allowing them into the cracks of your broken heart.

My Ray in the Midst of the Gray

*Written by Justin Venegas
Daddy to Everett Michael
Men of M.E.N.D.*

Sun is illuminating everything around,
But my precious boy can't be found.
You are in my memory that is gray and wants to be forgotten,
But I must find the strength to bring you out into the sun's ray.
Although your body has many blemishes,
Grace was given as your face was untouched, and in that, I will cherish.
Lord, help me to see Everett more clearly and perfect,
From a temporary and forsaken body to a permanent body of respect.
We are a happy family in this moment.
We need to accept your loss,
And understand that we have not lost,
For you are ours forever.
Let go of the gray and allow your ray of sunshine to be our shelter,
Forever.

Written in loving memory of
Everett Michael Venegas,
December 4, 2022.
My son passed due to a rare condition
called Limb-body wall complex.
He is loved by his parents Justin and Elena,
and his big brother, Josiah Venegas.

My Story

Written by Elleigh Beck

Mommy to Penelope

Life has a way of throwing unexpected curve balls, and sometimes, those moments can change the course of our lives forever. January 10, 2022, is a day forever etched in my memory. It was the day I found out I was pregnant, a joyous occasion that filled my heart with dreams and hopes for the future. Little did I know that my journey would take an unforeseen turn, leading me down a path of grief and resilience. I want to share my story of loss, healing and my newfound purpose as an influencer trying to conceive a rainbow baby.

A Joyous Discovery and a Tragic Loss

As the "Earth, Wind and Fire" song played in my mind, I eagerly anticipated the arrival of my little one, with a due date of September 21, 2022. Excitement filled my days, and I decided to document my pregnancy journey on TikTok, sharing the ups and downs, the milestones, and the sheer wonder of creating life. My followers became a supportive community, cheering me on and eagerly awaiting the arrival of my baby.

But life had other plans. Tragically, my sweet baby girl passed away just three days after her birth. The pain and grief I experienced were beyond words. It felt as if my world had shattered into a million pieces. In the depths of my sorrow, I knew I had to find a way to heal and honor my baby's memory.

Transforming Grief into Creativity

Amidst the darkness, a flicker of light emerged. I made the courageous decision to transform my grief into creativity, channeling my emotions into a new TikTok page focused on trying to conceive. The pain of loss was transformed into a beacon of hope as I connected with others who shared similar experiences.

The journey to conceive a rainbow baby is filled with uncertainty, hope and resilience. Each month as my husband and I embark on a new cycle, we face a roller coaster of emotions. But through it all, we remain steadfast in our determination, supporting one another and finding solace in the strength of our online community.

Becoming a Professional Influencer

As my TikTok following grew, so did my passion for sharing my story and connecting with others. I realized that my experiences could provide solace, guidance and inspiration to those walking a similar path. My dedication and authenticity resonated with my audience, leading me to become a professional influencer in the trying to conceive community.

With every video and post, I strive to spread awareness, empower individuals and couples on their journey, and break the stigma surrounding pregnancy loss and fertility struggles. I share tips, resources and stories of hope, all while remaining vulnerable and transparent about my own challenges.

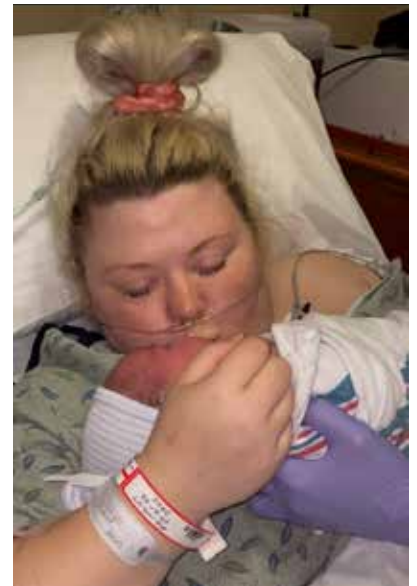
Cycle Six: A New Chapter of Hope

As I write this blog, my husband and I are embarking on our sixth cycle, our first medicated cycle. The road has been long, filled with highs and lows, but we refuse to lose hope. The support and encouragement we receive from our followers and the wider online community fuel our determination and belief that our rainbow baby will one day grace our lives.

Closing Words:

To those who have experienced loss or are struggling to conceive, I want you to know that you are not alone. Together, we can find strength, support and the resilience to navigate this challenging journey. Let us come together, share our stories, uplift one another, and celebrate the triumphs, no matter how small they may seem.

To my followers, I am immensely grateful for your unwavering support and love. Your kind words and messages have given me the strength to keep going. My followers are so supportive, all 80k of them.



To continue to follow Elleigh's story, find her on TikTok at [tiktok.com/@elleighhasababy](https://www.tiktok.com/@elleighhasababy).

What Ifs

Written by Cat Markham

Mommy to Baby Markham 1, Ivy Grace and Asa Matthew

M.E.N.D. — Tulsa Chapter Director

One night, while getting ready for bed, my spaghetti-faced boy helped me read "Jonathan James and the Whatif Monster." We had extra snuggles and loving before he finally fell asleep. Reading that book with this sweet boy brought up a lot of "what ifs" for me. Eleven years ago, while in Iowa for Jesse's work, I had our 2nd miscarriage and lost our 3rd baby in a row. It was a long, scary and lonely night in the emergency room to have the doctor tell me what my heart already knew.

Throughout the course of the last thirteen years, there have been a million "what ifs" that have run through my mind. While time has made my grief turn into manageable sadness, it doesn't ever fully take away the loss of what could have been. We were beyond thankful when our miracle Asher was born after we had given up all hope. Joy radiates from every pore of that bundle of energy. A second does not go by I do not thank God for the blessing of Asher and my other three living children.

Yet there is still a hole left from each of those three lives I carried inside of me, if only for a brief time. Those holes have been lovingly sewn up and patched, but the thing about a hole is that once it appears, even if it's repaired by the most skilled seamstress, it wears down and tears open. Sometimes it's slow, one thread at a time, and sometimes it just tears clean through in an instant. Whatever developed the hole will never be completely whole again. I have learned that for every sad "what if" I have, there are a million thankful "what ifs" to take its place. An endless supply of patches to repair the hole. I wouldn't be who I am today IF I hadn't faced my biggest fear and come out on the other side still standing.

I mourn the loss of Baby Markham 1, 2 and Asa Matthew Markham, yet through that grief God brought joy and peace. He reminds me daily that my "What ifs" came true more than once, and not only did I survive, but HE held my hand and never let go. All this from one silly children's book. God's love never ceases to amaze me!

Born Too Soon

Written by Allie Mace

Mommy to Sora

M.E.N.D. — SW Missouri

My husband, Ethan, and I have been together since 2019, and we desired to have a family. Yet, I knew after never conceiving during my first 5.5 year marriage but never seeking medical advice, we would need help. Thankfully we found Dr. Mary Duff who heard my concerns, provided a list of vitamins to help, and also tested my husband and me to ensure there were no issues. She did a Fallopian tube recanalization (FTR) to also help us.

In February, a month after she performed the procedure, I told my husband I wasn't feeling good but thought it was a cold. My husband suggested I take a pregnancy test, and I remember when I saw the positive result, I started crying because it had finally happened. We were pregnant! We called family to let them know, and called my doctor to make an appointment to confirm the pregnancy. I couldn't believe something so amazing was growing inside me. It was so unbelievable. Everything was going well.

On Thursday, June 2, I felt pain on my left side, but if I laid on that side, it would go away. It wasn't constant, so I thought nothing of it. I went to bed early that night. I woke up feeling fine, feeling like it was another day. As I was looking for my clothes for work, it hit me I really needed to go to the bathroom. When I went to the bathroom I saw mucus in the toilet

with blood. At that point, my heart dropped, and the cramping started. I knew something was wrong. I called my assistant manager to let her know I was going to the Emergency Room. I screamed at my husband to get me some clothes because something was wrong. I don't think I have seen him that worried or moving as fast as he did. I remember him driving fast and holding my hand.

When we arrived at the ER, they took me to Labor and Delivery. They found my mucus plug had come out and my cervix was open, but my water had not broken. The plan was to perform a cervical cerclage, but they had to get me into a room first, which seemed to take forever. I was crying so hard, because I was so scared. I didn't understand what was going on. When they finally got a room, they wanted me to move from one bed to another one, and asked if I could crawl to the other one. I thought I could, but I was so wrong. As I crossed over my water broke. I just started crying so hard, because I felt like hope was leaving me. I was so in shock, I didn't know what to think or do at this point. My husband started calling our family letting them know what was happening.

The medical staff were hoping my placenta hadn't detached and they could keep me in the hospital for four to five weeks, and then he would be okay outside of the womb after that point. They were checking him every hour, and at this point, I thought everything was going to be okay because his heartbeat stayed strong and steady. Yet as time went on, his heartbeat started

Continued on page 10

In Loving Memory

Edith Agu-Udemba

May 28 – June 13, 2022
Mommy: Melissa Agu-Udemba
Given by Debbie Castellanos

Maya Denise Ates

Stillborn January 6, 1998
Cord accident
Given by mommy Tammie Ates

Abigail Grace Crump

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

Riley and Parker Davis

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

Paislee Ann Frette

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

Wyatt James Goforth

October 24, 2016
Obstructed bladder, bilateral kidney failure,
pulmonary hypoplasia

Baby Goforth

Miscarried October 28, 2014

Ellie Ryan Goforth

Miscarried April 5, 2017
Given by parents Nichol and Monty
Goforth and siblings Emerson and Claire

Celia Harcourt

Given by Aurelia Loyd

Serenity Harrison

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

Holly Hughes

Given by Gabrielle Conant

Baby Jackson

Miscarried April 22, 2022
Given by parents Katie and Caleb Jackson

Indigo Kilbourn

Miscarried July 28, 2013, at 10 weeks

Red Kilbourn

Miscarried October 8, 2014, at 8 weeks
Parents: Chad and Karen Kilbourn
Siblings: Roxy, Gunner and Sloane
Gifts given by
Grandparents Darla and Robert Williams
and Great Grandparents Daryl and Edith Wieland

Babies Kornilov

Miscarried 2016 and 2020
Parents Hitomi and Petr Kornilov
Given by Beth and John Grant

Will Louie

Given by Anonymous

Matthew Joel Mifflin

June 6, 2003
Cord accident
Given by parents Janet and Dennis Mifflin

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001
Gifts given by parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
Uncle Brad and Aunt Janice Mitchell
Grandmother Marnie Mitchell

Henry Michael Morgret

Given by Maggie Paramski

Bo Mosteller

Given by David Stewart

James Solis

December 9, 2021 – February 3, 2022
Congenital Pulmonary Lymphangiectasia
Given by parents Liliana and Jimmy Solis

Edrow Baldwin Turner

Stillborn May 11, 2022
Unknown cause
Given by parents Tiffani and Edward Turner

Kyle Charles Walton

November 19, 1998
Group B Strep
Parents Kristen and Jason Walton
Given by Walton Holdings, GP, LLC

Hudson Wayne

Given by Rachael and Blake Hultz

In honor of The Laser Family

Given by Andrew Hart

Gifts of Support:

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
Gwen George
Neiman Marcus Group Associate Giving Program
Christian Celebration Center, Midland, MI
David Davis

"Born to Soon" continued from page 9.

dropping. "No, no. Not my sweet little boy Sora," was all I kept thinking. I watched them check me for seven hours as his heartbeat continued to slow until it finally stopped. I just kept saying to myself this can't be happening to us. I felt like I had failed him.

I ended up fully dilated, and I had a blanket covering me. I told the nurse I felt like I was ready to push so she went to get the doctor. Before the doctor returned, I felt the need to push and did, and felt like I had just given birth. I didn't want to see, so I didn't lift the blanket, and told that to the doctor when he entered. He lifted the blanket, and said, "Yes, Sora is here." He let my husband cut the umbilical cord. We were both crying so hard, and the doctor asked me if

I wanted to hold him. I held Sora and rocked him and myself as I cried. Ethan kissed both of us on the head. The nurses were so sweet and made us a memory box for him. There was so much family there, but my mind couldn't deal with it. I felt a little better when it was just my husband and me. We could cry together, and before we went home, I was able to hold Sora one more time so I could say "Goodbye."



Cuando las Cosas no Salen Según lo Planeado



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

Soy una planificadora, y la verdad es que no hago una buena transición cuando un evento o una cita escrita en mi antiguo calendario de libros se cancela o se reprograma, especialmente si era algo que esperaba con ansias. Mi calendario se llena rápidamente y muchas personas no entienden por qué necesito saber las fechas de las cosas con mucha anticipación. Ha sido así desde que era una niña.

Mi esposo Byron y yo comenzamos a salir cuando éramos adolescentes. ¡Aunque solo tenía 16 años, sabía que Byron era EL ÚNICO! En mi mente, rápidamente comencé a planificar nuestra vida juntos: cuándo nos iremos casar, cuándo iremos formar una familia y cuántos hijos tendríamos: ¡tres niños era mi plan! Mis ideas y objetivos de una gran boda sucedieron justo a tiempo, al igual que concebir a nuestro primer bebé, ¡nuestro primer hijo! Lo que no estaba anotado en mi calendario mes a mes fue que me diagnosticaron una enfermedad renal degenerativa poco después de nuestra boda de cuento de hadas, tener a nuestro segundo hijo sin vida debido a un accidente del cordón, recibir un trasplante de riñón y luego perder a nuestro tercer bebé 10 semanas de embarazo. Y ciertamente, dedicar mi vida adulta a dirigir un ministerio de embarazo y pérdida de bebés no estaba en ninguna parte de mi agenda. Pero aquí estoy. Viviendo una vida que es solo una fracción de lo que había planeado hace tantos años.

Sentirme engañado y traicionado por Dios fue una gran parte de mi dolor. No podía entender por qué Dios no estaba de acuerdo con todos mis planes. Eran sueños buenos y saludables, no con malas intenciones ni aparentemente nada que obviamente estaría fuera de Su voluntad para la vida de Byron y la mía. Me tomó años procesar y aceptar que mis caminos no siempre son caminos de El.

Recientemente estaba afuera con nuestro nieto de 4 años poco después de una breve tormenta de lluvia de verano. Él dijo: "Glammié, oremos y pidámosle a Dios que nos muestre un arcoíris". Tenía tantas ganas de ver aunque fuera un atisbo de ese colorido arco en el cielo para poder probarle a Elías que Dios siempre cumple Sus promesas. Pero en este día nublado, no se veía ni una pizca de arcoíris desde nuestro patio trasero. Entonces, aproveché para explicarle que cuando le pedimos cosas a Dios, no es

magia; que solo porque le pidamos a nuestro Padre Celestial cosas que parecen buenas, no significa que sucederá automáticamente simplemente porque lo pedimos. Y a veces esas oraciones son respondidas, simplemente no nos damos cuenta. Como si ese arco iris realmente pudiera estar allá arriba, pero no podemos verlo porque está escondido detrás de las nubes. Si nuestras oraciones no son contestadas, tenemos que confiar en que por alguna razón Dios quiere algo diferente para nosotros. Dios siempre tiene un mejor plan para nosotros, incluso si no lo vemos o no lo entendemos.

Ahora sé que es un concepto difícil de aceptar cuando se trata de relacionar esa teología con la muerte de nuestros bebés. Pero saber que los caminos de Dios son más altos que los nuestros es lo que me ayudó a superar los días más oscuros de mi dolor. Tuve que aprender que aunque solo uno de nuestros tres bebés muy deseados y planeados sobrevivió, Dios tenía algo más reservado para nosotros. Nuestra historia de pérdida resultó en la fundación de M.E.N.D. Sé que no todos pueden atestiguar que algo hermoso viene de su pérdida, pero espero que busquen lo que puede ser y lo reconozcan como parte del legado de su bebé. Tal vez sea un cambio de carrera, una relación reconciliada o compartir con otras familias perdidas como lo hacemos en M.E.N.D.

No ha sido fácil reorganizar mi vida con un nuevo plan, pero con la ayuda del Señor, lo he hecho. Y no pretendo amar este nuevo plan más que lo que antes decidí para mi vida, pero sí amo lo que Dios ha creado de mis dolores. Confío en Él y me esfuerzo por no apoyarme en mi propio entendimiento de Sus caminos. Te reto a hacer lo mismo. Derrama tu corazón roto ante Él y deja que Él te guíe hacia un plan nuevo y diferente. Puede que no sea lo que querías o imaginabas, pero Él puede convertir tu camino en algo todavía lleno de amor y belleza.

"Porque yo sé los planes que tengo para vosotros", declara el Señor, "planes para prosperarte y no para haceros daño, planes para daros esperanza y un futuro. Entonces me invocarás y vendrás a orar, y te escucharé. Me buscaras y me encontraras cuando me busques de todo corazón. seré hallado por ti –declara el Señor.

Jeremías 29:11 -14

M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES

NW Washington

M.E.N.D. - NW Washington meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month at GracePoint Church in Bremerton. We are grateful for our new location! We are planning October events and fundraisers, so keep an eye on our Facebook group and check your email for updates.



Katherine

Greater Houston Area

Save the Date!
 October 14: Walk to Remember
 December 2: Christmas Candlelight Ceremony
 Please follow our Facebook group for more updates about these events. If you are interested in volunteering to serve for either or both of these events, please email nikisha@mend.org for more information.

We will also have our Teddy Bear fundraiser in the fall. Stay tuned for more details. Our Teddy Bear fundraiser allows us to donate bears to local hospitals. Last year 60 bears were donated. When you donate, your baby's name is attached to a bear in memory of your baby. It's a sweet way to remember your baby as well as let a new loss mom know she is not alone. I love hearing that moms are leaving with bears, yet it also still saddens me when I hear that some moms do

not get one. My prayer this year is that we will be able to reach more hospitals and are able to place more bears into the arms of moms. I thank each and every one of those who donated in order to supply bears to the hospitals.



Nikisha

National Online Support

M.E.N.D. National Online Support Group meets the 3rd Thursday of the month. We hope to see you via Zoom at 8:00 PM CST. Please email me at mallory@mend.org for the Zoom link and to answer any question.

In the meantime, please connect with us through Facebook. We are here for you as you grieve the loss of your baby and navigate this "new normal." We are here to help and provide comfort and hope.



Mallory

Columbus, Ohio

"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence." Jeremiah 17:7 NLT

You are invited and welcome to join in our annual Wave of Light ceremony as we remember all our angel babies. You never know when your presence will encourage someone else. There is help and healing available on your journey. Our in-person support group and private Facebook group are available to all who need support. You're NOT alone...you ARE welcome!

If you need M.E.N.D.-Columbus services or desire to serve, contact at latrina@mend.org.



LaTrina

Southwest Missouri

M.E.N.D.-SW Missouri is looking forward to special times in October to remember our babies. We will be participating with other organizations for the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance event on October 1. Our chapter will also have a special time of remembrance and participate in the Wave of Light on October 15. Watch our Facebook group for more details.

We continue to meet for our support groups the 1st Thursday of each month, and have welcomed new families the last few months. Our hearts hurt they are now part of our "club," yet thankful we can be there for them as other M.E.N.D. moms and dads have been there for us, too.



Jennifer

Chicagoland

M.E.N.D. - Chicagoland is grateful for all the ways our members support our chapter so we can support grieving families. Thank you to those who have set up a fundraiser, baked for our monthly support groups, cared for fellow members, supported each other and donated through the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5K. No gift is too small, and each one is a blessing that is deeply appreciated. October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and we will have a special support group at our monthly gathering on Tuesday, October 10. Please watch our Facebook group and emails for our annual Christmas tree decorating at Brookfield Zoo in early November.



Becky

Tulsa, Oklahoma

M.E.N.D.-Tulsa will have a special support group on Tuesday, October 17, at 7:00 PM for Pregnancy and Infant Loss awareness month. Information is available in our Facebook group, and also be on the lookout for emails containing all of our current events and info.



Cat

The Pregnancy and Infant Loss 5k supporting M.E.N.D.-Tulsa and Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep is on Saturday, October 7. Information and registration is available on our Facebook group and at: <https://runsignup.com/Race/OK/SandSprings/PregnancyInfantLoss5k>

MidMichigan

M.E.N.D.-MidMichigan was able to get together and paint some pottery for a fun event over the summer. We enjoyed some social time while being creative! Our chapter is looking forward to our next few events, the Wave of Light in October at the hospital in Midland, and our Memorial Ornament event in December. More details to come in our Facebook group!



Karen

**Pregnancy and Parenting After Loss Support**

M.E.N.D. - Pregnancy and Parenting After Loss Support Group is for parents who are pregnant after a loss or who are considering trying to conceive again after a loss. This is an opportunity for moms to discuss current pregnancies, share feelings about navigating pregnancy after a loss, share experiences and ask questions to the group. The group meets via Zoom at 7:30-8:30 PM CST on the 4th Tuesday of the month January - October, taking a short break in November and December due to the holiday weeks.



Marisa

Men of M.E.N.D.

Let us come together and talk about our babies. Men of M.E.N.D. holds a monthly Zoom support group every 3rd Monday of the month at 8:00 PM CST. I am looking forward to seeing you. If you can't make it, I pray you have some comfort and peace.



Matt

East Valley, Arizona

M.E.N.D.-East Valley Arizona continues to meet on the 2nd Thursday at the Queen Creek Library. Thank you to everyone's continued support of our monthly fundraising efforts. Follow our Facebook group for upcoming events!



Danielle

Book Review

"That Pearl of Great Price: A Year of Birth, Death, and Awakening"
Written by Elise Donovan

After losing our first daughter, Abigail, at 21 weeks, my husband and I were at a loss for what to do. There was no instruction manual for this. How could we possibly move forward? Several well-intentioned people offered books to help us process our grief, and while many were helpful, they weren't specific enough to our situation. I met another loss mom who mentored me through the first several months, and we talked about how we needed to write the book to help other families through pregnancy and infant loss. As it turns out, we did not have to; this is that book!

Elise Donovan shares her journal writings; from the last days of her pregnancy with her daughter Carly, through Carly's stillbirth, and into the year that follows. She processes the raw emotions of her own grief, her family's reactions and varied levels of support, the strain of the loss on her marriage, and a subsequent pregnancy. I found myself riding the waves of emotion along with her, nodding vigorously in agreement at some points, and pondering her questions and feelings at others. As we have experienced with M.E.N.D., knowing you are not alone makes a huge difference. Elise Donovan understands this, offering this book and her own experiences as a helpful resource for those walking through the desolation and loneliness of grief.

Per the author's note inside, this book is available on Amazon, free to anyone with a Kindle Unlimited account.

Content Warning: This book contains some adult language, and details of the author's daughter's stillbirth, which could be triggering for some readers.



Reviewed by Becky Johnston,
M.E.N.D.-MidMichigan Assistant 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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www.mend.org

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
Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance



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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.

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 and Outreach Center,
4210 Industrial St, Rowlett, TX 75088.

Visit our Facebook group or email terri@mend.org.

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

NEW NIGHT AND LOCATION!

Meets the 4th Tuesday at 6:30 PM

GracePoint Church
8278 WA-303

Bremerton, Washington 98311

Chapter Director: Katherine Sandoval
katherines@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

Chapter Director: Jennifer Harrison
jennifer@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

Chapter Director: LaTrina Bray
latrina@mend.org (614) 530-5128

M.E.N.D.–Chicagoland, Illinois

Meets the 1st Tuesday at 7:00 PM

NEW LOCATION!

St. Paul Lutheran Church

545 S. Ardmore Ave.

Villa Park, IL 60181

Chapter Director: Becky Luedtke
becky@mend.org, (630) 267-9134

M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area

Kingwood Area, Texas:

Meets the 2nd Thursday at 6:30 PM

Lone Star College Kingwood
Classroom Building A (CLA) Rm 113
20000 Kingwood Dr.

Kingwood, TX 77339.

Chapter Director: Nikisha Perry
nikisha@mend.org, (346) 235-4714

M.E.N.D.–Tulsa, Oklahoma

Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 PM

The Office Tulsa
5401 S Harvard Ave
Tulsa, OK 74135

Chapter Director: Cat Markham
cat@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

M.E.N.D.–MidMichigan

Meets the 1st Tuesday, at 7:00 PM

NEW LOCATION!

Christian Celebration Center

6100 Swede Ave

Midland, MI 48642

Chapter Director: Karen Kilbourn
karen@mend.org, (989) 577-5755

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

Chapter Director: Danielle Radler
danielle@mend.org, (602) 699-6228

Subsequent pregnancy group

meets the 4th Tuesday

from 7:30 - 8:30 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.

Online Support

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>

Chapter Director: Mallory Gallagher
mallory@mend.org

Men of M.E.N.D.

Held the 3rd Monday at 8:00 PM (CST)

to join, contact,

Chapter Director: Matt McGhee

Matt@mend.org

Facebook Group:

www.facebook.com/groups/MENofMEND



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>.

The order deadline for 2024 installation is July 15, 2024. To ensure the bricks are ready for the 2024 Walk to Remember, brick orders will be closed from July 16 – October 4, 2024.



M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
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*October is
Pregnancy and Infant Loss
Awareness month*



*How will you remember your baby?
Release a balloon at a public or private ceremony?
Light a Candle during the Wave of Light?*



*Make sure to follow
Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death (MEND)
on Facebook for ideas and opportunities
to join us as we remember
our babies in heaven this October.*

