



# Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

*Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Support*

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## Men's Issue: Fathers Grieving



*"We bereaved are not alone.  
We belong to the largest company in all the world –  
the company of those who have known suffering."  
– Helen Keller*

Fathers grieve. They grieve for their baby. They grieve for their wife. They grieve for the past and for the future. They grieve. Yet they should not grieve alone. In this issue, fathers share the story of their grief and advice for others as they also walk this journey.

### In this issue...

#### The Loneliness of Silence

Garret shares his experience after the loss of Aviva with his wife, Rachel, and the struggles he faced.

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#### Dads, Moms and Mutual Support

Sometimes dads are needed to provide support and sometimes they need to be supported.

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#### Wisdom and Hope

In an interview by The Morning, Matt Randall shares his story of loss and advice and encouragement for others.

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**May/June Topic**

*Mother's Day/Father's Day  
Deadline: March 31, 2023*

**July/August Topic**

*Juggling What is Normal  
Deadline: May 31, 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](mailto: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.

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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](http://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 Matt McGhee,  
Chapter Director of Men of M.E.N.D.  
Daddy to McGhee Babies 1, 2 and 3 and Sophia*

# Fathers Grieving

Our topic for this issue focuses on Fathers Grieving, so we asked Matt McGhee, Chapter Director for Men of M.E.N.D., to share his story with our readers. Following is an interview with Matt.

### **Tell us about your losses. You had 3 miscarriages prior to the stillbirth of Sophia. For you, how were each of those different and the same?**

For each of the miscarriages, they were sad and they hurt. Yet, they were somewhat of a blessing because they gave us knowledge on how to keep our future pregnancies. We had fertility issues and weren't sure we could get pregnant for many years. Through their brief lives, they helped us have our other children.

### **How were things different with Sophia?**

With Sophia, we thought we had it made. We progressed past 12 weeks, and things were going great. We had some little things pop up here and there, but nothing too bad and the doctors had explanations for them. When there was suddenly no movement at 33 weeks, we were concerned but never imagined she would be stillborn. We were devastated.

### **How did you grieve?**

For the miscarriages, I really didn't grieve much. They were sad, but they really didn't bother me too much. Don't get me wrong - they hurt. Yet they gave us hope we didn't have before on our journey to have children.

With Sophia, it was like time stood still. My wife was in pain with the c-section, and we were lost and went home empty-handed. We still had to care for our 8-year-old son, too.

At some point I put my grief in a box, shut down and went back to work. I was walking empty but was trying to hold things together.

### **How did you grieve together?**

We cried together. We sat in silence and emptiness. We talked about what we went through. We grieved together openly. Sometimes, as a family, my son, my wife and I, would sit together and just cry.

Some days it was all we could do to just make sure we ate.

### **How did you grieve separately?**

Well, as the saying goes, men are from Mars and women are from Venus. We realized we grieved very differently. My wife sought help from support groups online and reached out to a woman who was the cousin of a woman she worked with that had a stillborn the year before. She was able to talk to her, seek validation of her feelings, and confirm that she was normal in what she was feeling. This all happened before we had M.E.N.D. in our area.

I bottled it up. I didn't want to upset my wife more by talking about what I was feeling. Then one day, about three months later, she asked me what I was thinking or did I even care or was I grieving. I told her I was but I didn't want to burden her with my feelings since it seemed she was doing "better." She was now three months ahead in her journey, and I realized I put my grief on hold and was what felt like back at day one. We talked a ton, and realized I had been supporting her, and neglecting myself. We learned communication is paramount and to let each other grieve how and when we need to.

One thing that helped us was when we came up with a code word. If I was having a hard grief day, or was just sad and needed space or time to talk, I would say I was having a "Sophia day." When I came home, she would just give me a little space. Other days I might be having a good day, and she wasn't. She would let me know when texting or talking that she was having a Sophia day. It was so helpful for both of us to find a way to express our grief and give the other what they needed that day.

It was also helpful for each of us to have someone on the outside to talk to, so we weren't always burdening each other since we both were grieving. Whether it was family or friends, or attending a support group, having others to lean on helped us be able to grieve separately.

*Continued on page 17*

# Birthday Tributes



## Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Jayson!

Happy birthday to my sweet baby boy! Today will never be just another day because it will always be your special day. I am sending a wish upon a star to carry all the love I have to reach you wherever you are. Mommy loves you forever. I miss you so much, my little Nemo.

Jayson Xavier Thigpen  
Stillborn March 1, 2019  
Mommy: Tanera Thigpen



## Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Baby Everly!

Happy birthday, my sweet angel baby! You would be 4 years old today! Your big sister, Jayde, turns 13 tomorrow and your baby sister, Emani, just turned 3. Looking at her reminds me so much of your precious little face in the hospital the day you were born. It makes my heart happy to know you will be celebrating with your great-grandmother, and I know she is taking special care of you. We love you and miss you so much!

Everly Rayne Tamia Mbawa  
Stillborn March 25, 2019  
Parents: Tiffany and Emmanuel Mbawa  
Sisters: Jayde and Emani



## Happy 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Bradley!

My sweet boy, I cannot believe you would be turning 7. As each year passes, I wonder more and more who you would be and what your personality would be like. We all miss you dearly, especially your grandpa and me. I look at your pictures and remember you fondly. Each kick, wiggle and movement I felt, I will cherish them always. We love you, Bradley. Happy birthday to you, my precious son, beloved grandson, brother, nephew and cousin.

Love always,  
Mommy and Daddy

Bradley James Alexander Lipka  
February 10, 2016  
Unknown cause  
Parents: Victoria Coats and Justin Lipka  
Sister: Mikayla



## Happy 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Mollie!

Seven years have come and gone and we have missed you every day of those seven years. Your brothers love and miss you. Your little sister talks of you often and wishes she could have known you. Not a day goes by I don't think of you and wonder who you would have been. 7 years closer.

Mollie Catherine Pickle  
Stillborn March 21, 2016  
Also remembering  
Baby Pickle 1  
Miscarried January 2011  
Baby Pickle 2  
Miscarried August 2011  
Baby Pickle 3  
Miscarried January 2012  
Parents: Derick and Ryan Pickle  
Siblings: Jake, Cohen, and Blair



## Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Dylan!

It seems impossible that you have been in heaven for four years. While time has helped me process my grief, it surely hasn't lessened it any. The tears still flow easily when I think of you. I wonder what things you might be in to this year. Would you love dinosaurs or sports? How I wish I could see you play with your sister. She knows your name and is gentle with the "Dylan bunny" because she knows it's special to Mama. I think you would have been the sweetest, most gentle big brother. We send all our love to you, precious boy! We love and miss you so much! See you soon!

Dylan Christopher Brown  
Stillborn April 19, 2019  
Parents: Kevin and Kendra Brown  
Siblings: Charlotte and Baby Brown due August 27



## Happy 13<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Ari!

Happy birthday, Arianna! This year you would have been 13. Wow! Where does the time go? I think about you. Would you have long hair or curls? Would you look like your mom or your dad? Does heaven have birthday parties? Have you seen Grandpa Paul and Aunt Elizabeth? Have you taken Grandma and Grandpa Wilkinson all over heaven? I miss you too. Happy 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, Arianna.

Love,  
GiGi

Arianna Elizabeth Wilkinson  
Stillborn April 12, 2010  
Parents: Monica and Leroy Wilkinson



**Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Russell!**

We love and miss you so much, sweet boy!  
Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday!  
Mommy, Daddy and Noomie

Russell Woodrow Wisdom  
Stillbirth April 1, 2021  
Parents: Roman I and Casey Wisdom  
Little brother: Roman II

**Happy 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Zane!**

Wow...21!

21 years since we held you in my arms  
and kissed your head.

21 years since we got to hold you  
and sing your song for the first time.

21 years since you entered your forever home.  
Seems like it was just yesterday,  
but it has been 21 years.

We all miss you very much and think about you  
often. We know you are with us, sometimes even  
carrying us through and making us laugh.  
"God has you in heaven,  
but I have you in my heart"

Zane Jeremiah Takoda  
April 19, 2002  
PPROM  
Parents: Kris and John Takoda  
Siblings: Hunter, Chenoa and Kai

**Happy 6<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Abigail!**

Dear Abi, happy 6<sup>th</sup> birthday to our sweet angel  
Abigail! Not a day goes by we don't think about you  
and wonder what you would be like. The hole in our  
hearts is slowly filling with humble gratitude for your  
presence in our lives and for our village of support.  
Yet we will always miss our precious daughter and  
the ability to parent you here on earth. Until we  
meet again,

"i carry your heart with me(i carry it in  
my heart)"--e.e. cummings  
All our love,  
Mama and Daddy

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

**Happy 12<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Lily!**

Dear Lily, this year I am wondering what it  
would be like to be shepherding you as you left  
your childhood years behind and stepped into young  
womanhood. As your sisters get older, I am reminded  
if you were here, I would have already walked these  
paths; I would be experienced in the joys and trials  
of mothering a daughter instead of navigating them  
for the first time.

It brings me great joy knowing you have met your  
other great-grandmother, and that she came bearing  
my message of love for you and the reminder that I  
will see you soon.

Happy birthday, darling.  
All my love,  
Mom

Lily Joy Moore  
March 2, 2011  
Early pregnancy loss  
Parents: Jeremy and Kathleen Moore  
Siblings: Isaac, Judah, Mercy and Glory

**Happy 11<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Paislee!**

My sweet P, we still think of you every day.  
Your sister, Colbie, talks about you on her eye gaze  
device. She asks for you, so I know she misses you,  
but then she'll tell us how you are in heaven, and you  
are happy. Even though we all know that is true, it  
doesn't make missing you any easier. We all wish you  
could be here with us. Every family picture, every  
holiday, every birthday is forever missing one person.  
Yet each day that passes is one day closer to seeing  
and holding you again. So, we will press on and hold  
you in our hearts until we can hold you in our arms  
again. We love and miss you.

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

**Happy 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Jodacie!**

Happy birthday! We love you. There's not a day  
goes by we don't wish you were here. Love you  
always.

Jodacie Diaz Trevino  
March 2, 2005  
Trisomy  
Mommy: Priscilla Diaz  
Sisters: Sofia and Lily



### Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Levi!

I am struggling to believe it has been a decade since I held you in my arms. It's hard to imagine how big you would be had you lived on this earth to be 10 years old. Sweet boy, you are so missed by your little sisters who both wish you were here with them in school. Your life and the love you gave us continues to help those around us. You have taught us perspective and compassion in ways we would never realize without you. We love you so much. I'm longing for the day when I can hold you again in my arms. Life is short. Heaven is forever.

Levi Samuel Bowmer  
April 19, 2013  
Trisomy 13  
Parents: Sam and Jenae Bowmer  
Little sisters: Evelin and Valerie



### Happy 13<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Elliot!

How fun it would've been for you to become the third teenager in our home. I wonder if you look like an adolescent in heaven. On the day that we meet in glory, I won't care what age you are, although I'd love to have the chance to hold you again. I'm trusting all these years of missing you will be redeemed in that reunion.

Until we meet again,  
Mommy, Daddy, Evelyn, Ethan and Ezra

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



### Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, Ethan!

Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> heavenly birthday, Ethan! By now I imagine you'd be running through the house chasing the dog and cats. Mommy and Daddy think of you daily, even more so (if that's possible) since welcoming your little sister into our family. This year for your birthday, Mommy is making an E-shaped chocolate and caramel cake in honor of the one craving you gave her.

We love you always,  
Mommy, Daddy and Elizabeth

Ethan Alexander Kozar  
March 29 - April 2, 2020  
SIDS  
Parents: Ryan and Katelynn Kozar  
Little sister: Elizabeth



### Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Isaias!

My dearest angel, we wish you a heavenly birthday. Please know your short presence in our lives was the best. You changed us in many ways, and even though your body is not with us anymore, I know you're still around us. I want to thank you for sending two precious babies to fill our days with light and hope. We know they won't replace you, as you have your place in our family, but these two boys will forever represent hope, faith and the most pure love any parent could feel after losing you. My baby we love you and miss you, and we will forever keep your memory alive.

Isaias Hernandez  
February 24, 2021  
Damaged placenta  
Parents: Isaias Sr. and Candy Hernandez  
Siblings: Abril, Angel and twins Benjamin and Isaac



### Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Baby G-lil peanut!

Happy birthday to my sweet love, my always and forever. Mommy and Daddy miss you and love you very much.

Baby G Garcia  
Miscarriage February 7, 2019  
Also remembering:  
Benjamin Isaias Garcia  
September 9, 2019  
Premature Birth  
Parents: Norma and Juan Garcia



### Happy Heavenly Birthday, Babies!

We miss you.

Axel Ian Gil  
February 4-20, 2021  
SIDS  
Aria Gil  
Stillborn February 25, 2017  
Axtyn Gil  
Stillborn April 4, 2022  
Mommy: Ruby  
Sister: Azaria



### Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Abigail!

Happy birthday in heaven, our beautiful baby girl. Mommy and Daddy love you very much.

Abigail Hope Stamile  
February 1, 2022  
Incompetent cervix  
Parents: Gretchen and Bryan Stamile



# The Loneliness of Silence

*Written by Garrett M. Carlson*

*Daddy to Aviva*

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

What I remember most about the moment our baby Aviva's heart stopped beating was the silence.

The doctor putting away the transducer probe, staring at the ground. My slowed breathing, my wife Rachel, willing herself to hold on until everyone else left the room.

After the door closed, I reached out to Rachel, and as we held each other, the new world we were building fell apart. And I'm sure there were nurses in the hall speaking to other patients, doors closing, machines beeping, but to me, everything was silent.

When friends asked me how I was feeling after I found out I was going to be a dad for the first time, I always said the same thing. "It feels noisy."

Noisy, but not in a bad way. Even though Rachel and I spent so much time trying to get pregnant, the positive news still rang loudly.

Excited phone calls to our friends and family. The fears and realization we would be in charge of raising a human being. The late nights spent holding each other in our arms dreaming about Aviva's happiness.

But in our doctor's office, once we saw Aviva on the flickering ultrasound machine, her heart no longer beating; all the noise just kind of went away.

Just silence.

Both the happiness and fear faded away.

It was just Rachel, me, and the silence.

What I still struggle to shake is the silence from the questions we would never get the answer to.

What was Aviva's favorite animal? Which one of us would Aviva look like? Who would Aviva grow up to be?

Questions just slowly dissipating in the air.

We were helpless without the noise; there were no answers we could give ourselves to make it come back.

In the following hours, we made obligatory phone calls and text messages. Our parents delivered us food. Our friends offered us support. But no matter what they said, our friends and family couldn't break through the silence.

Rachel's friends provided space for her to talk, grieve, and push past the quietness that filled our home.

As a grieving father, I didn't know what I needed. As young men, we learn what it means to be a man from our fathers, friends and role models. But they don't talk about miscarriage; they never talk about the silence and how much it hurts.

At times, some of me feels like my grief wasn't worthy compared to Rachel's. Mine was emotional pain; hers was physical too.

So instead of reaching out to people for help, I stayed silent.

Research conducted by the University College London and the Miscarriage Association noted that among "160 partners of women who miscarried, 85 percent of them reported sadness, 63 percent grief and 58 percent shock after their partner's pregnancy loss."

I wanted to talk about my sadness, and my grief, and my shock, but what I wanted most was the space to talk about Aviva. But as men, we're conditioned to suffer in silence most of the time.

Besides, how am I supposed to



# Dads, Moms, and Mutual Support

*Written by Michael Stevens  
Daddy to Claire  
Men of M.E.N.D.*

Since the death of my daughter Claire, I have learned things about perinatal loss I never thought I would learn and, frankly, never wanted to know. If you are reading this, I can confidently assume you have been directly affected by miscarriage, stillbirth or infant loss and have learned many of the things I have. Each of these types of losses has its own deep valley of grief to traverse, and each represents the loss of the life of a beautiful, beloved child. We are unfortunately members of the same horrible club - one we can never leave and the dues of which are too high for any of us to pay. I am so sorry you are here, and I am immensely sorrier your child died.

## Our Story

Our daughter - Claire Elisabeth Stevens - was born November 14, 2022, at 1:21 AM. Claire had a little dimple on her right cheek. She had perfect hands and feet, fingers and toes. She had an immense amount of messy dark hair. Even where her body failed her,

Even where her body failed her, she was fearfully and wonderfully made.

she was fearfully and wonderfully made. She brought light and love into my life, and words cannot describe how much I miss her.

Throughout my wife Sarah's pregnancy with Claire, everything progressed as expected and normally. She went into labor at 35 weeks, 2 days and 30 minutes after we finished a maternity photo session. What seemed to be a normal pregnancy, also seemed to be a normal delivery - albeit a few weeks early. No one at the hospital was concerned, and neither were we. Claire had a strong heartbeat and moved regularly. Once born, however, everyone immediately realized that Claire needed help. The doctors and nurses worked to keep her alive and then resuscitate her. Ultimately, an undiagnosed Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia meant that she could not stay with us. Claire's Everlasting Father took her into His arms when she died a short thirty minutes after birth at 1:51 AM.

I am certainly no expert in navigating the deep valley of grief. As I write this, it is less than three months since Claire died. Right now, I live this grief daily; as I know I will for the rest of my life. However, I have

already learned a great deal about grief. As I am certain each of you knows, moms and dads grieve in different ways and therefore need different help. Below are things that have helped me or that I have observed as I have grieved.



**Sarah, Michael and Claire Stevens**  
Photo taken by Mary Ann Ruegamer of  
Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep

## Loss Dads Support Other Loss Dads

Finding a group of other dads who also lost children is the single best thing I have done to gain support. One such group is Men of M.E.N.D. which meets via Zoom on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at 8:00 PM CST. I highly encourage you or the loss dad in your life to attend.

By attending the meetings, I connected with several dads. We text once or twice a week to check on each other and offer support, a listening ear, or a little advice. Knowing there are a few guys who understand and that I can go to when I struggle has been invaluable.

If a group meeting at a set time is not feasible for you, find some of the podcasts that are presented by loss dads. These can help you to know you are not alone in your grief.

## Loss Dad Supports His Partner

Being "strong" for your partner is a fallacy. Sometimes you must be broken and emotional to support her. Sometimes the best support you can give is sitting quietly in an embrace for an hour.

Do not be surprised when she seems to be completely fine for days, and then she breaks down and tells you that she is not doing as well as she appears.

Ask her questions. Listen to her response. Men like to fix things, and this is one situation for which there is no fix. Trying will likely only cause more hurt to you and your relationship.



## Loss Dad Supports Himself

We are not strong enough to do this alone. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Allow your friends, coworkers, strangers, and even your wife to help you.

Allow yourself to grieve now. Your partner's grief is no less or more intense or valid than your own.

**Comparison, in this case, is the thief of peace.**

## Partner Supports a Loss Dad

We need support and help, too. Please be patient with us. Many of us struggle with the expression, understanding, and interpretation of emotions - both ours and others.

For many of us, it feels like our world is falling apart. We just lost our child, and we start to see cracks in our lives everywhere. We cannot fix it.

Is my job secure? What if I lose my job because I am grieving? How will we pay these medical bills? How will we pay the funeral expenses? Is that noise a problem with the car? Is my partner angry with me? Will she still love me through this? What is going to break in my life next? What if I fall apart and start weeping uncontrollably at work?

These questions can start to swirl in our heads and make us fearful and anxious. Remind us that we are not alone.

## Universal Support

While the above generalities may or may not apply to you, the following questions can be useful to anyone wanting to support a grieving parent.

- How can I be a good friend to you?
- Do you need advice, a listening ear, or something else?
- In what ways can I be supportive of you today?
- Will you tell me about [insert child's name] again?

One of the questions Matt McGhee, the Chapter Director of Men of M.E.N.D., asks at the end of the support groups is "What is your child's legacy?" Claire's death brought into sharp relief that my life lacks compassion, caring and kindness. One of Claire's legacies is that when I think of her, I try to bring some level of those qualities into my life. Since I think of her all the time, hopefully they start to become habits.

Patient support of a grieving partner or friend is difficult especially when you are grieving as well. It requires compassion, caring and kindness in abundance. I pray that you find that support for yourself and those qualities to support others.

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## "The Loneliness of Silence" continued from page 7

bring up the miscarriage while my friends argue over whether or not we should fire the Buffalo Bills' offensive coordinator?

A Google search of "men and miscarriage" brings up similar themes: not knowing how to grieve, feeling like a burden, and discomfort talking about miscarriages. We might speak, but we don't make any noise.

After a couple of weeks, you notice that no one asks how you are doing anymore. You'll feel forgotten about. It's easy to spin out when their silence combines with the silence you're experiencing.

I felt like there was no more space left to talk about Aviva.

My wife and I decided to attend an online M.E.N.D. support group where I made a new friend. He was the only other husband on the call, so the pressure or nervousness of being the only guy in the room went away.

We started sending each other text messages, and for the first time, it felt like someone opened the door for me to talk about the miscarriage. He was the first person outside Rachel who wanted to know about Aviva. He understood the silence and didn't want me to let the silence stop me from learning how to heal.

Men and women may grieve differently, but we all need the same thing to start the healing process. We need the space to let our hearts open, to talk about our loss, and to be heard.

*We need the space  
to let our hearts open,  
to talk about our loss,  
and to be heard.*

# A Letter for My Husband

*Written by Kathleen Moore*

*Mommy to Lily*

*M.E.N.D.—Southwest Missouri*

Note: The following is a work of pure fiction. In the wake of baby loss, no grieving husband or wife does everything right...we make countless mistakes along the way. It is simply meant to give some answers to those asking, "What can I do to help her?" For all the dads trying their best to comfort their wives while their own hearts are broken, thank you. And for all those moms navigating their grief alone...I encourage you to try a support group, join an online group, find your people. We can't do this alone.

To my husband,

Let's be honest, nothing prepared us for the death of our baby. One moment we were eagerly anticipating the birth of our son and the next moment we were plunged into a dark sea of grief where it felt like we were drowning. Suffice to say, we made a lot of mistakes along the way. Too often we let the hurt we were feeling inside lead us to hurt each other. But now that we are further along in our grief journey, I want to take a moment to tell you how thankful I am to have had you by my side. I know I was often unreasonable and at times unreachable in my sadness, but you hung in there doing the best you could to tread the dark sea with me.

Eventually you accepted the fact you couldn't fix me or the situation we were in, and you stopped trying to. Instead of asking me what was wrong (a ridiculous question) or if I'd been crying (obviously), you gave me a hug or sat down and held my hand while I cried. Countless times you came home from work, I'm sure tired from your own day, and took the kids outside to play so I could have a few moments to myself. You had my back when you chose to use "we," as in "Mom, we aren't ready to come to a big family gathering yet" instead of "she might not be up for it..." When I said I just needed someone to listen to all the craziness swirling around in my head, you sat quietly as I poured out my heart and my hurt. You never once corrected my feelings. And even when I said the same things over for the hundredth time, "I just wish I could have held him" or "I just wish I could see his face," you didn't say a thing. When I said I wanted to try going to a support group for moms and dads whose babies died, you drove me there and held my hand as we walked in the door. Having you by my side gave me the courage to open my heart to others who understood what I was feeling. Hearing their stories gave me hope.

You always considered any plans we made as subject to change, because I never knew how I would be feeling on a given day or even a given moment. You never complained when I asked if we could just stay home. I remember that Sunday in the church parking lot, I was unsure and undone; you squeezed my hand, put the car in reverse, and said, "Maybe another day." A few weeks later when we made it inside, the first time since our son died, you drove the long way to make sure we arrived late enough to avoid all those "well-intended" comments, and you didn't say a word when I chose the back pew. Although I slipped out halfway through the service, my eyes welling with tears, you stayed through the sermon, but left a bit early and met me outside the bathroom door, having collected our living children from their classrooms, so we could leave before everyone else. And when you took my hand declaring, "We did hard things today; we deserve milkshakes," you made me smile in spite of my tears. That was one of the hardest things for you, figuring out when a light-hearted comment would help and not hurt.

Bedtime was the worst; worn out from grief and life, I rarely went to bed without crying. All I could think of was having to get up and do it all over again the next morning. I don't know many times after we turned out the light, laying there in our bed, I'd feel your hand reach out to mine. And when I felt betrayed by my body and physical intimacy got more complicated, you were understanding and patient... oh, how patient you were. Yet you reassured me in time we would get there, together, and we did; we have. It was there in the dark you spoke most freely about your own grief, and I often fell asleep with your hand in mine.

When you had a bad grief day or when something made you think of our son, you shared it with me. And when special days came, like Mother's Day or Christmas, you always found a way to include our son in heaven, his name added to my card, a rose representing each of our children, a special candle to light on the table. In addition to his birthday, you put his due date and the date we found out I was pregnant in your calendar and set yourself a reminder, so you would remember to say something, to tell me you were thinking of me, of him. And you said his name... Thank you for saying his name, even though it was painful. A few times you even let me see you cry. That was perhaps the greatest gift of all. You might have been shedding tears all along, alone in the car, the garage, the shower, thinking showing me your grief would just add to my burden, but you came to realize that sharing your grief with me actually helped lift mine. I needed to know I wasn't in this alone.

Even now, though some time has passed, you still tell me that you think of our son. It always lifts my heart to hear you were thinking of him. I know it wasn't easy and we still have hard days, but I feel so blessed to have charted that dark sea together. Thank you for letting me grieve in my own time and in my own way, and thank you for holding my hand through it all.

Love,  
Your wife

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## Guys and Grief

Sometimes with death, brings new life. The podcast "Guys and Grief" was created as a way to seek and offer support by three guys, just dads and husbands, who each experienced the loss of their babies..As was shared on the podcast, "We didn't want to be part of this club, yet here we are." This podcast was released in 2022, by dads Brad Kogut (daddy to Beckham and Ariana), Brandon Thurman (daddy to Austin) and Brian Scruton (daddy to Astoria).



Each of these dads shares the story of their baby's time on earth and how their lives had to press forward with a baby in heaven. The podcast focuses on topics such as going back to work, men's coping mechanisms, supporting your partner after loss and even addressing the things nobody prepares you for, plus many others. Special guests are featured, sharing their story of a life once lived, and a legacy that lives on within the family.

For the dads who are in the midst of loss, unsure what is normal after you and your partner lose a baby, this podcast brings to light all the issues you are facing or are even about to face. Some of these are topics you may not have even thought of, yet need to be addressed. These dads share the roads they have traveled in their grief, and also provide advice for those now traveling the road. It addresses not only their personal grief for their baby, but also the role they play as the supporting partner and even the supporting parent to living children.

Dads, especially those in early grief, check out Guys and Grief wherever you listen to podcasts. Follow them on Instagram and Facebook. Listen to their stories. Hear their hearts. Let them help you navigate your grief.

# Wisdom & Hope For Grieving Fathers

Q&A with Matt Randall by The Morning,  
Published on June 17, 2021,  
on <https://www.themorning.com/blog/matt-randall>

## Tell us about your loss.

My wife and I lost our son Leo just after birth at 24 weeks. We had learned at 19 weeks after multiple trips to the emergency room, followed by a specialist appointment and ultrasound, that our boy was not likely to survive. My wife had been diagnosed with placenta previa, and our first little boy's body had begun to show signs of struggle. After going into labor, we made it to our local hospital where we received incredible care at the hands of our OB/GYN and hospital staff.

Our strong faith and weeks of prayer had allowed us to approach that day with some level of peace, which we think surprised the staff we encountered. As they looked to gently care for us, we found ourselves laughing and sharing stories with the doctors and nurses through almost three full days of labor. While the NICU staff had prepared us for the worst, primarily that his frail body was likely not to survive intact through the birth process, our boy overcame every expectation through his journey to our world. Our doctor stayed at the hospital through the night after his on-call shift was over, the nurses rallied round us and checked in on their day off, and the bereavement support staff prepared us to say goodbye. But that Wednesday morning, our Leo came into the world as perfect as his 24-week body could be.

Leo Charles was with us for a short while before his tiny lungs weren't able to keep up with the heavy burden on this side of the womb.

While the labor was long, and his delivery was relatively normal, my wife's condition quickly worsened as a serious blood clot meant emergency surgery within a couple of hours. As they rushed her out and into the operating room, I was alone at the end of the maternity wing, in the grieving room, with my little boy's body a few feet away. It was there that I wept for the first time. I'd lost it. There were no family to be strong for, no wife to support in the room, and I cried more deeply than I probably ever have.

I remember the emotion and crying out how sorry I was that I couldn't have done more to protect him and help him live. I vividly remember praying for peace, asking God to somehow give me peace in the most pain I'd ever felt. And while I would have said that I'd trusted the promise of Philippians 4:6-7 before that day, I experienced what the Apostle Paul speaks of in a way that can't be described. In

that room, alone, I was gifted the Peace of God that is beyond all understanding. It was a watershed moment in my walk with Christ and leaves me no doubt that God cares about our grief. And I believe that peace extended beyond that day as Jen recovered from emergency surgery and we began the long journey of grief that continues today.

## What surprised you most about grief?

No one teaches you how to grieve. And there's a special depth of grief that comes with losing a child. I think the thing that has surprised me most about grief is that somehow, in our culture, grief is largely handled in silence. While millions of families have journeyed through the loss of a child, including many of our friends, family members and church/community members, it is still largely handled in the dark. People don't know what to say, they don't know how to support and maybe most disappointing is that many choose to remain silent as if the loss never occurred. My overwhelming feeling in this space is sadness rather than frustration or anger. This is why my wife and I have committed to be available, to listen to and support families struggling through loss.

## What has marriage and grief looked like for you? What advice would you give to a grieving couple?

One of the most important things my wife and I committed to was the practice of praying together after we learned we were likely to lose our Leo. We did not, and still don't, have a perfect faith or a perfect marriage, but the growth of those relationships have kept us moving forward more often than not in our grief.

We spent time failing to communicate our feelings in times where grief overwhelmed us. We spent time being frustrated, and even angry, with each other when we couldn't understand each other's reactions to grief, especially in the first months after loss.

But even more important than praying together in times of pain was our commitment to one simple foundation in our marriage: **We are on the same team.**

Many times in those weeks and months that would follow our loss, one or both of us would struggle. We'd become frustrated, create tension, retreat from one another when we couldn't communicate that grief was hitting us. The reason we stand stronger today is because of our commitment to each other that we will always remain partners, teammates and co-laborers through grief and whatever else the world throws at us.

The simple advice we have given parents over the years is from our own experience. No matter what, commit to each other that you're on the same team (or whatever analogy makes sense in your marriage). Maybe it's a phrase from your wedding vows or a reminder from the first days of love. And when the grief overwhelms mom or surprises dad, and the words fly (or a bottle of sunscreen at one point for us), you can be reminded of that foundational principle of your union.

### **Did you go back to work after your loss? What was that like for you?**

I went back to work about a week after losing Leo. It was too soon, but I didn't know any better.

Work was simple until that first interaction with the work acquaintance that only knew you were pregnant. I was in the basement of the building, near the "snack shack" where people would come to grab snacks, lunch or a random Mt. Dew when the day got too long. That guy...the super friendly one that knew we were pregnant but wasn't in the circle to know of our loss. It was something like, "Hey, how's it going, Matt? You guys are getting pretty close, right? I heard a baby boy?" I remember pausing for a second and responding instinctively with, "Yeah, he was actually born last week, and we lost him right after birth." The look of dread on his face was a combination of guilt and regret for asking the question. I was confident and was positive in my response, and I assured him it was a perfect question. It was actually relieving for me to tell at least a small part of Leo's story, how he was a blessing to our family. What began as an awkward interaction in the basement at work ended up being the catalyst to becoming comfortable sharing our little boy's story and helping other families as they grieve.

For any dad going back to work: Take every minute that your workplace will allow you to take. And if your workplace doesn't have a healthy paternity policy, fight for one. Spend that time as parents and begin to find a rhythm of communicating with each other. It's a long road, and you'll never regret spending extra time in those first few weeks with each other.

### **Are there any books, Bible studies or Bible verses that have been a source of encouragement or comfort?**

The most valuable encouragement to me was in Paul's words in Philippians 4:6-7. Fully trusting in the promise of God's peace has been a pivotal commitment in our journey.

### **What was the most meaningful thing done for you amidst loss?**

For me, when those around me recognized that I was a dad by saying Leo's name, even after we'd lost him, it was encouraging. My closest friends and family

rarely knew what to say, so they checked in. They invited us to dinner, brought dinner to us, and simply offered to spend time with us. I had some friends offer to help me with projects around the house. It allowed me to stay close to home but shift my mind toward something productive for a while.

### **What advice would you give to someone who loves a grieving dad?**

Offer to be present, be patient, provide the comfortable space to allow him to talk and be willing to hear whatever is on his mind. Don't push, but keep the door open to how the loss is affecting him.

### **What is one family tradition that you have established to remember and celebrate your baby?**

Leo Day is November 2<sup>nd</sup> of every year. A year and a half later, after successful surgery and a healthy pregnancy, we had Graham. Graham is now 8, and every year, our entire family takes the day off to celebrate Leo's birthday as a birthday celebration. We plan family fun throughout the day with cupcakes, etc., but one component is a visit to the park where we were married. We always take a moment to pray as a family and thank God for Leo and wish him a heavenly birthday. In late 2020, after having all of our family travel plans canceled due to Covid, we took our first-ever trip to Disney World. They actually allowed us to celebrate it as a family birthday after hearing of our story. Coolest trip ever. Of course, Leo Day means Graham will never win a perfect attendance at school, but our family is ok with that. Another family tradition is that we incorporate lions into family photos and our home as reminders of Graham's big brother Leo.

### **What encouragement would you give to another dad who is grieving?**

As men, we are sometimes built to focus on the next thing in front of us. When loss happens, there is no next thing. There is actually a loss of all of the dreams and things you'd planned to do with your child. It's ok to grieve those things. And while not every man is built with an inner desire to fix things, I was one of those guys, too. And it's excruciating to know that when we lose our child, we can't fix it. We can't make the pain go away or distract away from the real and natural process of grieving. So if my experience has taught me anything, I'd share with you to take your time.

Grief is a journey, and there will be ups and downs as you learn to navigate that grief together. Support each other, communicate the best you can, give grace and watch how God will use your journey to make you stronger. And if you're in it long enough, God will use you to bring peace to others who might go down the road you're on.

Take heart, dad. You're going to be alright.

# Padres Afligidos

Reportaje de Matt McGhee,  
Director del Capítulo de Hombres de M.E.N.D.,  
Papa de bebés McGhee 1, 2 y 3 y Sophia

Nuestro tema de esta edición se centra en los padres afligidos, por lo que le preguntamos a Matt McGhee, director del capítulo de Hombres de M.E.N.D., que compartiera su historia con nuestros lectores. Lo que sigue es una entrevista con Matt.

**Cuéntanos sobre tus pérdidas. Tuviste 3 abortos espontáneos antes del nacimiento sin vida de Sophia. Para ti, ¿en qué se diferenciaban y en qué se parecían cada uno de ellos?**

Por cada uno de los abortos espontáneos, eran tristes y dolorosos. Sin embargo, fueron algo así como una bendición porque nos dieron conocimiento sobre cómo mantener nuestros futuros embarazos. Teníamos problemas de fertilidad y no estábamos seguros de quedar embarazadas durante muchos años. A través de sus breves vidas, nos ayudaron a tener a nuestros otros hijos.

**¿Cómo fueron las cosas diferentes con Sophia?**

Con Sophia, pensamos que lo habíamos logrado. Avanzamos más allá de las 12 semanas y las cosas iban muy bien. Tuvimos algunas pequeñas cosas que surgieron aquí y allá, pero nada grave y los médicos tenían explicaciones para ellas. Cuando de repente no hubo movimiento a las 33 semanas, nos preocupamos, pero nunca nos imaginamos que nacería sin vida. Estábamos devastados.

**¿Cómo afliges?**

Por los abortos espontáneos, realmente no sufrí mucho. Estaba triste, pero realmente no me molestaron demasiado. No me malinterpretas, duele. Sin embargo, nos dieron la esperanza que no teníamos antes en nuestro viaje para tener hijos.

Con Sophia, fue como si el tiempo se hubiera detenido. A mi esposa le dolía la cesárea, estábamos perdidos y nos fuimos a casa con las manos vacías. Todavía teníamos que cuidar a nuestro hijo de 8 años también.

En algún momento puse mi dolor en una caja, me apagué y volví al trabajo. Caminaba vacío pero estaba tratando de mantener las cosas juntas.

**¿Cómo afligen juntos?**

Lloramos juntos. Nos sentamos en silencio y el vacío. Hablamos de lo que pasamos. Lloramos juntos abiertamente. A veces, como familia, mi hijo, mi esposa y yo nos sentábamos juntos y simplemente llorábamos. Algunos días todo lo que podíamos hacer era asegurarnos de comer.

**¿Cómo afligen separados?**

Bueno, como dice el refrán, los hombres son de Marte y las mujeres son de Venus. Nos dimos cuenta de que lamentamos de manera muy diferente. Mi esposa buscó ayuda en grupos de apoyo sobre la computadora y se acercó a una mujer que era prima de una mujer con la que trabajaba que tuvo un bebe sin vida el año anterior.

Pudo hablar con ella para buscar la validación de sus sentimientos y que ella era normal en lo que estaba sintiendo. Todo esto sucedió antes de que tuviéramos M.E.N.D. en nuestra área.

Yo lo embotelle. No quería molestar más a mi esposa hablando de lo que estaba sintiendo. Luego, un día, unos tres meses después, me preguntó qué estaba pensando o si me importaba o si sentía dolor. Le dije que sí, pero que no quería agobiarla con mis sentimientos, ya que parecía estar "mejor". Ella ahora estaba tres meses por delante en su aflicción, y me di cuenta de que yo lo puse en espera y fue lo que sentí en el primer día. Hablamos mucho y nos dimos cuenta de que la había estado apoyando y descuidándome a mí mismo. Aprendimos que la comunicación es primordial y que debemos dejarnos llorar cómo y cuándo lo necesitamos.

Una cosa que nos ayudó fue cuando se nos ocurrió una palabra clave. Si estaba teniendo un día de dolor difícil, o simplemente estaba triste y necesitaba espacio o tiempo para hablar, diría que estaba teniendo un "día de Sofía". Cuando llegaba a casa, ella solo me daba un poco de espacio. Otros días yo podría estar teniendo un buen día y ella no. Ella me hacía saber cuando me enviaba mensajes de texto o hablaba que estaba teniendo un día de Sophia. Fue muy útil para ambos encontrar una manera de expresar nuestro dolor y darle uno al otro lo que necesitábamos ese día.

También fue útil para cada uno de nosotros tener a alguien afuera con quien hablar, de modo que no siempre fuéramos una carga para el otro ya que ambos estábamos en dolor. Ya sea con familiares o amigos, o asistiendo a un grupo de apoyo, tener a otros en quienes apoyarnos nos ayuda a poder sentir dolor separado.

**Los hombres luchan no solo con la pérdida de su hijo, sino también con ver a sus esposas afligidas e incapaces de arreglar la situación. ¿Qué efecto tuvo en usted el dolor de su esposa?**

Me sentí impotente. Cargó a nuestra niña, sintió su patada y todas las cosas que experimentan las madres. Luego tuve que tener una cesárea, y no pude hacer nada para quitarle el dolor. Físico y emocional. Estaba tan entumecido, solo estaba allí y no sabía cómo solucionarlo.

Perdí un futuro con mi chica. No tendría un primer día de jardín de infantes, enseñarle a andar en bicicleta, ser un padre sobreprotector con su primer novio ni acompañarla por el pasillo.

Me sentí perdido y estaba tratando de mantenerlo unido. Todo esto estaba en el interior. Afuera, la gente sabía que estaba triste, pero estaba manteniendo unida a la familia, limpiando, pagando las cuentas, cuidando a mi esposa e hijo.

**¿Qué harías diferente?**

Debería haber hablado más con mi esposa, haber sido más abierto emocionalmente. Mirando hacia atrás, tomarnos más tiempo libre del trabajo habría sido útil para ambos. Básicamente, estar más presente, pero estaba insensible.

### ¿Cómo cambió su relación después de la pérdida?

Con estas experiencias traumáticas, pueden irse de dos maneras. Desmoronarse, lo cual es común, o acercarse. Gracias al Señor, nos hizo más cercanos y creo que hizo que nuestro matrimonio fuera mucho más fuerte. Aprendimos a apoyarnos más en tiempos de lucha y nuestra comunicación mejoró.

### En Hombres de M.E.N.D., ¿Qué ven con que los papás luchan más?

Tener a alguien con quien hablar que lo entienda. Tienen a su cónyuge o familia, pero tener a alguien que realmente entienda este tipo de dolor hace una gran diferencia. Alguien que entienda perder el sueño del hijo o hija que estaba deseando tener. Los eventos futuros que no sucederán ahora. Cómo ayudar a su cónyuge no solo físicamente, sino emocionalmente también. Y a veces necesitamos ayudarlos a darse cuenta de que al obtener algo de apoyo ellos mismos, están ayudando a su cónyuge.

### ¿Qué consejo le darías a otros hombres que están en situaciones similares?

Llorar - está bien llorar. Hable sobre sus sentimientos, está bien abrirse y compartir sus sentimientos. Cuando lleguen las vacaciones, haz lo que puedas, no lo que se espera. Las cosas se van a ver diferentes. Tendrás una nueva normalidad. Si se necesitan unos meses o unos años para lograrlo. Esta bien. Este viaje en el que estamos no tiene un horario.

Su bebé tiene un legado y su breve vida tendrá un impacto en la suya para siempre.

Es difícil entender esto cuando estás en las trincheras del dolor, pero, a lo largo de los años, a medida que ayudamos a los papás a superar su dolor, comenzarán a ver cuán lejos han llegado y cómo su bebé los ayudó de alguna manera. Por ejemplo, Sophia, a lo largo de su breve vida, me dio la fuerza para hablar sobre mis sentimientos, sobre mi viaje, para poder ayudar a los demás.

## In Loving Memory

### **Edith Adanna**

Gift given anonymously

### **Baby Apa**

Miscarried 2017

### **Claire Apa**

Stillborn May 8, 2018

Placental Insufficiency

Parents: Charla and Garrett Apa

Gift given anonymously

### **Allijah Boriski**

Given by Susan Jacobs

### **Baby Bravenec I**

Miscarried December 2005

### **Baby Bravenec II**

Miscarried October 2010

### **Baby Bravenec III**

Miscarried January 2011

Given by

Parents Renae and Victor Bravenec and sister Ellen

### **Annalise Coda**

Mommy: Hannah Coda

Given by Darcy Meyer

### **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

Given by

Parents: Rob and Cheryl Davis and siblings Annalise and Owen

### **Grace Kathryn Dell**

Stillborn March 17, 2008

PPROM

### **Rose Dell**

Miscarried January 3, 2014

Parents: Peter and Rachel Dell

Siblings: Zeke, Kye, Izaiah, Zeffy and Tirzah

### **Hawken James Eastman**

March 13, 2019

Unknown cause

Given by parents Kady and Scott Eastman

### **Hadley William James Elliott**

November 4, 2022

Parents: Raychel and Kyle Elliott

Gifts given by Alvin and Lynnette Payne

Tammy and Barry Massey

Anonymous

Kelly and Timothy Cutshaw

### **3 Angel Babies Flanders**

Given by Cole Flanders

### **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

### **Logan Daniel Johnson**

Given by Kari Conner

### **Ethan Alexander Kozar**

March 29 – April 2, 2020

SIDS

Parents: Katelynn and Ryan Kozar

Little sister: Elizabeth

Given by grandparents Jane and Dan Lucas

### **Zachary James Law**

Adeno Virus

October 1-17, 2017

Given by parents Irwin and Carrie and sisters Scarlett and Lydia

### **Jonathan Daniel Mitchell**

Stillborn June 24, 1995

Cord accident

### **Baby Mitchell**

Miscarried December 2001

Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell

Given by grandmother Marnie Mitchell

### **Douglas James Poirier**

February 8, 1986 – April 3, 2010

Given by

Grandparents Georgia and Dick Loy

### **Owen Matthew Ray**

April 7, 2014

Parents: Amy and Derek Ray

Given by Donna and Mauri Rawlings

### **Mollie Caroline Walker**

May 28, 2020

Parents: Meredith and Damian Walker

Siblings: Marin and Dominick

Gift given anonymously

### **Van Lee Williamson**

August 1, 2020

Given by Anonymous

### **Elliot Joseph Wood**

Given by Halee Wood

### **Gifts of Support:**

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO

Gwen George

Central States Industrial

The Village Real Estate Advised Fund

of The Community Foundation

of Middle Tennessee

# M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES

## NW Washington

Thank you to all who joined us at MOD Pizza for our fundraising event! It was great to see you all! We hope you will join us for our next event. More details to come via Facebook and email!



*Katherine*

M.E.N.D.-NW Washington continues to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at The Oak Table Cafe in Silverdale at 6:30 PM. (Restaurant is closed during our support group time.)

## Tulsa, Oklahoma

As we look ahead to the spring please add the annual M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k on your calendar for May 7-14. If anyone is interested in walking together, watch for more info on our Facebook group and email. As always, we meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM.



*Cat*

## MidMichigan

M.E.N.D.–MidMichigan is looking forward to participating in the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k in May. We will be meeting at the Railtrail to walk as a group and would love to have as many friends and family honor and support our members. Keep an eye on the Facebook group for more details.



*Karen*

## National Online Support

M.E.N.D. National Online Support Group has sadly welcomed new families to our online chapter these past months. We find comfort in hearing others' stories and learn new ways to cope with the death of our babies in talking with each other. Jenae and I are here for you the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month via Zoom or by email anytime. May the Lord help you keep this Scripture close to your heart:



O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me. Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings! Psalms 61:1-4 NLT

*Mallory*

## Southwest Missouri

M.E.N.D. – SW Missouri was blessed to be recognized as a Difference Maker organization by two of our local radio stations, The Wind and KWFC. The interview was shared on both stations three times a day throughout the month of February, and on their websites. We were so blessed by this opportunity to share with our community about M.E.N.D.



We look forward to participating in the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k. We'd love to have friends and family support our SW Missouri Chapter through this fundraiser. Watch our Facebook group for details for a group walk. Even if you are unable to join our group walk, we'd love to have you support our SW Missouri chapter and represent your baby as we are "Taking Steps for Those Who Never Did."

*Jennifer*

## East Valley, Arizona

M.E.N.D.–East Valley Arizona had a great fundraiser to kick off the year, hosted by Backyard Taco. We continue to meet monthly and look forward to a few more fundraisers in the near future!



*Danielle*

## Chicagoland

M.E.N.D. – Chicagoland is experiencing a few changes. We held our last support group in Schaumburg, and all who were there felt it was bittersweet to leave the room that has provided so much comfort and care. The location for the monthly chapter support groups will be moving to the western suburbs in Villa Park or Lombard. As we transition in locations, our chapter is also transitioning in leaders, as I serve as Interim Chapter Director and continue to support moms and families dealing with infant loss in the Chicagoland area. More details regarding these transitions will be announced soon.

The M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k is happening soon in May. Please watch for details as we plan to walk together as a chapter. The Virtual Walk is open to any family members, friends and people who support you. The walk is a great way to remember and honor our babies gone too soon.

*Becky*



## Columbus, Ohio

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another." John 13:34 NLT

Love is our foundation! We meet monthly to share our experiences, show love to one another and receive community support. There is help and healing available on your journey. Join our support group and private Facebook group...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*

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at 8:00 PM CST. I look forward to seeing you. If you cannot make it, yet need someone to speak with, feel free to email me at matt@mend.org.



*Matt*

## "Fathers Grieving" continued from page 3

**Men struggle with not only the loss of their child, but watching their wives grieving and unable to fix the situation. What effect did it have on you as your wife grieved?**

I felt helpless. She carried our baby girl, felt her kick, and all the things mothers experience. Then had to deliver her via c-section, and I was helpless to take away her pain. Physically and emotionally. I was so numb, I was just there, and didn't know how to fix it.

I lost a future with my girl. I would have no first day of kindergarten, teaching her to ride a bike, being an overprotective dad with her first boyfriend, walking her down the aisle.

I felt lost and was trying to hold it together. This was all on the inside. On the outside, people knew I was sad, but was holding it together for the family, cleaning, paying bills, taking care of my wife and son.

### What would you do differently?

I should have talked more with my wife, been more open where I was at emotionally. Looking back, taking more time off from work would have been helpful to us both. Basically, be more present, but I was numb.

### How did your relationship change after loss?

With these traumatic experiences, they can go one of two ways. Fall apart, which is common, or come closer together. Thank the Lord, it made us closer, and I believe it made our marriage so much stronger. We learned to lean on each other more in times of struggle, and our communication improved.

## Greater Houston Area

M.E.N.D.-Greater Houston Area will be having a planning committee meeting for the 2023 Walk to Remember and the Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. If you are interested in volunteering please email nikisha@mend.org.



Don't forget to get your family and friends together for the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k in May. We look forward to seeing all the groups and pictures.

*Nikisha*

## In Men of M.E.N.D., what do you see daddies struggle with the most?

Having someone to talk to that gets it. They have their spouse or family, but having someone who truly understands this kind of grief makes a big difference. Someone who understands losing the dream of the son or daughter he was looking forward to having. The future events that won't happen now. How to help their spouse not just physically, but emotionally. And sometimes we need to help them realize that by getting some support themselves, they are helping their spouse.

## What advice would you give other guys who are in similar situations?

Cry - it's okay to cry. Talk about your feelings, it's okay to open up and share your feelings. When holidays come, do what you can, not what is expected. Things are just going to look different. You will have a new normal. If it takes a few months or a few years to achieve it. That's okay. This journey we are on doesn't have a timetable.

Your baby has a legacy, and their brief life will have an impact on yours forever.

It's hard to see that when you're in the trenches of grief, but, over the years, as we help daddies through their grief, they will begin to see how far they've come and how their baby helped them in some way. For example, Sophia, through her brief life, gave me the strength to talk about my feelings, about my journey, so I can help others.

## 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](http://www.mend.org). For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the magazine, contact us at:

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

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



## M.E.N.D. Leadership

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM

Daddies group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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

Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday at 6:30 PM  
The Oak Table Cafe'  
3290 NW Mt. Vintage Way  
Silverdale, Washington 98383  
Interim Chapter Director:  
Katherine Sandoval  
katherines@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

## M.E.N.D.–SW Missouri

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.–Tulsa, Oklahoma

Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7:00 PM  
5401 S Harvard Ave  
Tulsa, OK 74135  
Chapter Director: Cat Markham  
cat@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

## M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area

Kingwood Area, Texas:  
Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.–MidMichigan

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday, at 7:00 PM  
Ashman Plaza  
713 Ashman Street  
Midland, Michigan 48640  
Chapter Director: Karen Kilbourn  
karen@mend.org, (989) 577-5755

## M.E.N.D.–East Valley, Arizona

Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

## M.E.N.D.–Chicagoland, Illinois

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday at 7:00 PM  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
202 E Schaumburg Road  
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194  
Interim Chapter Director: Becky Luedtke  
becky@mend.org, (630) 267-9134

## Coming Soon!

## M.E.N.D.–Greater Houston Area

satellite in the Richmond area  
Contact Emily Diamond at  
emily@mend.org for more information

## Subsequent pregnancy group

meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday  
from 7:30 - 8:30 PM via Zoom.  
Please visit [www.mend.org](http://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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday at 8:00 PM (CST)  
to join, contact,  
Chapter Director: Matt McGhee  
Matt@mend.org  
Facebook Group:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/MENofMEND](http://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>. Bricks purchased by August 1, 2023, will be installed prior to the Walk to Remember in October 2023.



M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death  
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