



Haven Herald



Letter from the Executive Director

Summer is the season when we can enjoy a slower pace and experience relaxing and fun times with family and friends. Haven slows down in the summer, but we do take time to organize our summer workshop and to plan for our fall programs. Many of our volunteers take time off in the summer for family trips and reunions. For me, summer always brings back childhood memories of family vacations and celebrations.

In this newsletter, we will explore the pain of a loss to a miscarriage and infant death. Many individuals and families struggle with the sorrow of these losses, as they wonder what might have been. Unfortunately, such losses are often suffered in silence.

Children move us forward in life. They are part of our hopes and dreams, and their arrival represents a time of joy and renewal. The truth is that things don't always work out as we plan. A miscarriage is a devastating loss of the beautiful life that you will never see or know. Loss of an infant is an overwhelming loss that can bring emptiness and guilt. In both cases, it is important to acknowledge how you feel and not to blame yourself. Getting support either with an individual counselor or a support group can be helpful. Talking to a friend or family member who is empathetic and caring can also help. It is always important to take the time to grieve your loss and find your own way to heal. Your baby will always be a part of your family, a life to be honored and remembered. As you move forward, keeping a place in your heart for the baby you lost may help bring comfort in knowing that even though the life was not long, it was still a life that mattered.

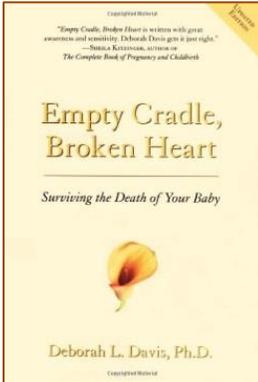
Jill Bellacicco



Empty Cradle, Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby

by Deborah L. Davis, Ph.D.

Reviewed by Mary Smith



In the preface to *Empty Cradle, Broken Heart*, author Deborah L. Davis states that her book attempts to cover many kinds of infant loss: loss “during pregnancy, during delivery, shortly after birth or during infancy.” She writes that “although the circumstances can vary widely, and babies die from many different causes, parents share in common a shattering grief. This book is for them.”

She wants these parents to know that they are not alone in their grief. Throughout the book, she quotes many mothers and fathers, who’ve lost babies, to offer insight to other grieving parents. She hopes parents can “gain reassurance that you are not crazy, you are not the only one who has felt betrayed or angry, you are not the only one to cradle pillows in your empty arms.”

Davis believes coping with the death of a baby is especially difficult because the length of time spent with the baby is so short and parents never really get to know their baby. They may have an “idealized fantasy” of the baby. She believes it may be “more difficult to let go of this “perfect” child who never moderated your dreams.”

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What Worked for Me

by Joanne Aukofer

My pregnancy began very normally. My husband and I were filled with all the hopes and dreams that parents have as they plan for a new baby. We were thrilled with the first ultrasound with its view of our baby and the sound of its beating heart. It was love at first sight. My first few months of pregnancy were blissful (minus the morning sickness).

My next scheduled check up with the doctor would change all that. After what seemed like a normal ultrasound viewing to us, the doctor slowly began to tell us what he saw: a cyst growing on the back of the baby's neck and possible heart problems. He believed this baby would most likely die, and his expert advice was an abortion. How do you go on after news like that? The baby was alive; we saw and heard the heartbeat. How do you get up and continue on each day knowing the baby you carry might die? With hope, we carried on. Abortion wasn't an option for us. But, as the doctor predicted, the baby did die. My family did not get to see her or hold her or even know that she was perfectly formed, despite being born too early.

I was unprepared for labor, delivery and a funeral all within days of each other. Again, how do you carry on after all that? What worked for me was a gradual process of acceptance and the comfort of a memorial service, a necklace with a small angel charm engraved with the birth date to keep her close to me, and faith that God would see me through the emptiness that followed.

Time, time, and more time, along with the realization that I do not have to get over it, have helped me become better at dealing with it. Giving myself permission to grieve from time to time, even eighteen years later, is okay. I still cry easily when remembering, but it's okay. I don't dwell on the pain of grief. I appreciate life all the more and try to remember grief is part of what makes us human. To grieve is to know you have loved.



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When an infant dies or is lost in miscarriage, parents will have few or no memories of the baby, and the lack of memories makes grieving more difficult.

Often parents feel tremendous responsibility for the death of their baby because babies are so vulnerable and helpless. She believes mothers may feel especially responsible and guilty about anything they may have done (or not done) during the pregnancy or delivery or in caring for their baby after its birth. The guilt can make grieving even more painful.

Friends and family may not fully understand the gravity of the loss of a baby, especially if they never saw the baby. This lack of understanding may make parents feel even more isolated in their grief.

However, as Davis writes: “A baby’s death is a devastating loss. It represents an end to all fantasies, hope and dreams of what might have been. Whether or not the pregnancy was planned, whether it ended in miscarriage, interruption or stillbirth, whether the baby lived one minute or one year, parents need to grieve.”

Her book aims to help parents grieve fully and to help them feel less isolated and alone.

Ways to Comfort a Grieving Parent

- Acknowledge the child’s death by telling the parent(s) of your sadness for them and by expressing love and support and trying to provide comfort.
- Allow the parent(s) to express feelings without imposing your views or feelings about what is appropriate behavior. Avoid telling the parent(s) you know just how they feel.
- Allow the parent(s) to cry—it is appropriate to cry with them.
- Visit and talk with the family about the child who died; ask to see pictures or memories the family may have. Refer to the child by name.
- Extend gestures of concern such as bringing flowers or writing a personal note expressing your feelings, letting the parent(s) know of your sadness for them.
- Attend the child’s funeral or memorial service.
- Offer to go with the parent(s) to the cemetery in the days and weeks after the funeral, or find other special ways to extend personal or sensitive gestures of concern.
- Make practical and specific suggestions, such as offering to stop by at a convenient time, bringing a meal, purchasing a comforting book, offering to take the other children for a special outing, or treating the parent(s) to something special.
- Respect the dynamics of each person’s grief. The often visible expressions of pain and confusion shown by the grieving parent(s) are normal. Grief is an ongoing and demanding process.
- Keep in mind that the parent(s) may not be able to ask for help or tell you what they need.



<http://www.cdc.gov/Wellness/docs/Grief-Of-Parents-Lifetime-Journey.pdf>



HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net



Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

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Annandale, Virginia 22003

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Summer Schedule

Six-week General Bereavement Support Group
Saturday, June 17 – July 29, 2017
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
no meeting on July 1st.

“Journey through Grief” Workshop
Saturday, August 12, 2017
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Call to register for the group and/or workshop.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Contact Information

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Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our
voicemail after hours