



23 Things I Wish Someone Told Me about Pregnancy after Loss*

When I first got pregnant after my loss, I found very few resources for pregnant after loss parents. These are 23 things I wish someone had told me about pregnancy after loss.

1. That trying to conceive after a loss is heartbreaking.

It's different this time around. You got pregnant in the past, but you aren't sure if you will get pregnant again. Also, it's no longer "fun" when you are trying. It's work. Sex seems like means to an end and it's hard to enjoy because in your head you're thinking, "Will this time be it?" Then you have to wait two weeks to even see if you are or you aren't. And if you aren't pregnant, well, grief comes back in full force. You feel defeated and like you failed. The worst part is you then wait another two weeks to try again and start the whole torturous cycle over again.

2. The excitement of getting a positive pregnancy test may turn to indifference.

It might sound strange, but when the pee stick had two lines instead of one, I didn't jump up and down for joy. I actually stared at it in disbelief. First, I didn't believe that I actually was pregnant again. Second, when I did let the realization that I was pregnant again sink in, it was as if fear decided to barge through the door. Anxiety swells up and all I could think of is "Do I really have to do this again?" and "Can I really do this again?"

3. You might consistently check for blood on your panties.

It might sound strange, but having to go pee is a terrifying experience. Every time you pull down your pants you mentally prepare yourself to see spots of blood in your panties. There is no way around this. It just is.

4. Morning sickness becomes your best friend.

The minute my stomach started to settle during the first trimester was the moment my anxiety would ramp up as I thought to myself, "Something is wrong. Why don't I feel nauseous anymore?" Immediately thinking my baby must have died. When the waves of queasiness returned my heart would feel a sense of relief.

5. Others might want you to be "OK" now that you are pregnant again, but this is far from the case.

Just because you are pregnant again doesn't mean that you have forgotten or gotten over the loss of your other child. It just does not work that way. Don't let others' expectations impact how you feel about your pregnancy and the child that died. It's okay to not be okay. Actually, it's probably normal.

6. It will drive you crazy sometimes not being able to feel the baby move in the first trimester of your pregnancy after loss.

From the day when you find out you are first pregnant to the time you begin to know when you are expected to feel the baby move will drive you nuts! You want to feel the baby move so badly to know everything is okay, but you realize that you just are not at that point in your pregnancy yet. You tell yourself that this is normal, but you still hate that you don't have the reassurance of feeling baby moving yet to know if baby is okay.

7. But you might worry about the day you are able to feel the baby move in the second trimester.

Even though you wanted for so long to feel baby move, you somehow dread the day that you can consistently notice kicks and jabs because that means that movement could one day stop and that is a scary thought.

8. Obsessing about the baby's movement is normal during pregnancy after loss.

Well, maybe it's not normal. I really don't know, but it's defiantly OK in my book. I needed to feel baby move at least a certain number of times within a certain amount of minutes in order to be reassured baby was okay for today. Towards the end of pregnancy, the only thing that kept me sane was feeling the baby move. In those moments I could somewhat believe that everything was okay.

9. Anxiety around doctor's appointments happens.

Going to the doctor can be reassuring but it can also be scary because the doctor is often the one who delivers bad news. It's normal to get anxious about appointments, even women who have not experienced a loss, experience anxiety during appointments during pregnancy.

10. Seeing other women pregnant will still cause you to rage with jealousy.

There, I said it. You see, there is just something that happens where even though you are pregnant again you still ache inside when you see another pregnant woman who has never experienced a loss. You just somehow can't be happy for her because you are jealous of her innocence, of her joy. Yes, you have joy, but it's the bittersweet kind and part of you hates that and wishes it was different. It's okay to be jealous. It really only makes sense, don't you think?

11. It will feel like no one understands even if they have been through a pregnancy after loss before.

Each day a new feeling comes and goes. Every minute your emotional world is changing, evolving, or should I say erupting from within. One minute you are cautiously optimistic, you just felt the baby move, all is well...umm, wait, no, you feel a cramp. Ugh! You think, "Could this be pre-term labor?" and now you are back to being scared. So naturally, it's hard for you to feel as if others can relate because really our inner emotional turmoil is each our own and sometimes, we just might not be on the same page as others, even if they have been down this road before.

12. The nurse's or midwife's line will become your lifeline.

My best friend during my pregnancy after loss was my OB nurse. Her name is Jessi and I honestly believe I would not have made it through pregnancy after loss without her. I called her at least three times a week and she never judged, never complained, and always welcomed my calls. I should probably call her boss and tell them that she deserves a raise.

13. You will probably go to the hospital or doctor's office 10 times more than you really need to and that is OK.

I think I went 20 times to the emergency room during the 37 weeks I was pregnant. Now that might be excessive as I am a diagnosed worrywart, but for good cause in this case. My doctors always told me they would rather have me come in and address my concern than sit at home and worry. Besides, it's better to go in and have nothing wrong than to not go in and look back and say I wish I did.

14. It will be difficult to concentrate during your pregnancy after loss.

With the normal physical and emotional changes of pregnancy combined with the added stress and worry that a pregnancy after loss brings, it's amazing that you remembered to brush your teeth this morning. Just remember it's normal to be distracted during pregnancy and specifically a pregnancy after loss.

15. Bonding with this baby may be challenging, but worth it.

It's scary to create a relationship with the bean growing inside of you. Your past experience says, "Hey, don't get too attached. Remember what happened last time." And it's normal to want to protect yourself from getting hurt again. However, whenever I noticed myself doing this, I always told myself, "It's going to hurt no matter what. It won't hurt any less if I'm not connected to this baby, actually, it might hurt more because I didn't take the time to enjoy baby while they were here."

16. The fear doesn't always go away as you get closer to birth.

The closer you get to the day of your previous loss or to the day of delivery the scarier things might seem to get. You thought it would be the other way around because you are almost there. But it all just seems so unpredictable and scary now.

17. You might experience PTSD.

If your loss happened during pregnancy, then going through another pregnancy can be traumatic. For me, it was like reliving my trauma every minute of every day. I could not escape it. And, the closer I got to the delivery day the more my anxiety and triggers of my past trauma intensified. What helped me was working with a therapist and practicing loving kindness and compassion towards myself.

18. The days move s l o w e r .

No, for real. Time seems to stand still when you are traveling through pregnancy after loss. Moments seem like minutes and minutes seem like months at times. You just so badly want baby to be here safe and sound that you wish you could press the fast-forward button on your life. And you want to be able to do this so bad that it's almost like you accidentally hit "pause" on all the hard stuff.

19. Grief doesn't go away.

It's ever-present as you think back on the pregnancy with your last baby. Comparing trimesters, anniversaries, and milestones. It all seems surreal. You think about how this baby will be a little brother or sister to the baby or child that you lost and with that thought sorrow will flood your soul once again. It's in the happiest moments that you find the greatest grief now.

20. But there will be joy!

I know it might be hard to believe, but there can be joy during pregnancy after loss too. You have to fight for it! Wrestle with fear and yell at it, "NO, YOU WON'T WIN!" Letting it know that it will not take this pregnancy from you too. But after that daily battle has subsided, you really might find a moment of excitement and happiness role into your mind as you secretly realize that yes, this could actually happen and most of all you deserve it too. So go out and buy that cute baby onesie that says, "I love my mama" or "Daddy's little girl."

21. Thinking about birth can be scary.

Thinking about birth, getting close to the date, waiting to go into labor naturally or preparing for your c-section. All of it might be scary to think about. Create a plan to help it be the day that you want it to be and maybe give you a sense of control. Hopefully, it turns out to be a healing experience and, most importantly, the day that you get to meet your screaming, breathing baby.

22. You deserve this!

You have been through so much. Much more than most moms I know. You carry a great pain on your heart, and you deserve to hold a great hope and joy in your arms again. You deserve this! You have courage, you have strength, and you do it with grace. I don't know anyone who deserves this more than you, mama.

23. Finally, holding your breathing baby in your arms is the most AMAZING experience.

I wish I never had to go through pregnancy after loss. Losing a child is the worst thing I believe that could ever happen to someone. But if I have to go through the worry, anxiety, and fear of a pregnancy after a loss in order to hold my child, then yeah, I would do it again in a heartbeat. It was worth it for her.

* Adopted, with permission, from PregnancyAfterLossSupport.org



www.butterflykissesalliance.org
Email: ButterflyKissesAlliance@gmail.com

PO Box 907
St. Peters, MO 63376
Registered Charity: Pending