

Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

There are two types of losses which, in my opinion, are often overlooked, not only by family and friends, but also by many professionals, including medical personnel and grief counsellors. Those two losses would be Vanishing Twin (VT) and Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction (MFPR). For reasons which can be understood, although debated, one can see why they might be marginalised (it's an early loss..., "you hadn't yet had time to bond with your child(ren)", "at least you still have one). However judging by the number of e-mails I receive with questions, disbelief, concerns and heartache, I think we, as a society need to take a hard and long look at how we are supporting (or seemingly not supporting) families experiencing such losses.

VT is a surprisingly common situation, certainly judging by how many questions I receive. Even as a young girl, I can remember a couple of my Mom's women friends saying something like, "It's the strangest thing. I've been bleeding but the doctor tells me I'm still pregnant." In hindsight and prior to ultrasound, bet some of these women experienced VT. Not knowing this might be their story, they would have continued on with their lives, thankful for their healthy baby.

In the messages I receive, parents are detailing their stories and desperately looking for hope regarding the empty sac and "over time will there be a baby in it?" Then there is the worry about the effect of VT on the health of the remaining embryo(s). Because ultrasounds are regularly performed as pregnant as 5-8 weeks, we learn very early that we are pregnant and with how many. Then to learn by 10-12 weeks the situation has changed dramatically is devastating to many families. Doctors, ultrasound technicians, grief counsellors, friends, family all need to realize that the loss of these much-wanted children is two-fold: First there is the loss of a baby and then there is the loss of unique parenting experience. Passing off an early loss as "at least you still have one" is not the way to comfort anyone and the confused and disappointed parents don't feel able to safely talk about their feelings.

MFPR is very complicated and in a 10-day period, I was contacted by six families facing reduction or who had it and were comfortable with their decision and one who deeply regretted the decision and felt pressured to reduce or lose the whole pregnancy. Here too, anyone coming in contact with families facing reduction need to be more in tune with the strain and stresses, no doubt for over a life time, of choosing to reduce. Yes, a reduction offers a better chance to survivors; yes a reduction improves the physical stress on the mother, and yes the brain tells us a reduction makes sense in so many instances. None of this can be repudiated, but (and here it comes) there is more. It isn't just the brain making this decision; the heart is very much involved too and will not be ignored. The heart is already in love with the babies within and wants desperately to believe that the pregnancy will continue to healthy 3, 4 or 5 infants. In some cases, it will and does and sometimes things don't work out so well for one, more or all of the babies. There is the emotional strain of the decision: Am I a killer of my baby(ies)? How will I ever tell the others? When do I tell them? Do I tell them? My babies are already bonded in utero; how will a reduction affect the survivors? All difficult questions and parents needed informed guidance in finding solutions which will work for them.

MFPR is not a topic that can be easily discussed with family or friends. The decision is usually made by the parents in conjunction with professionals and strangers whom are found on the internet (e.g. other families experiencing or looking at reduction, caring support people and organizations who guide them along the rocky path). Parents can feel very isolated, frightened and alone in making

a decision. If the discussion to reduce does include family members or friends, then it is no longer a "secret" and telling the kiddies of their origins takes on a new urgency so that parents have control over how and when the children are told.

There are no easy answers but one thing is easy, however, and that is that these grieving families need society's support, comfort, and understanding in a non-judgmental manner. They are mourning their losses and like any grieving individual, deserve a safe place to do so, with caring people all around them. It is the least we can do.

*Thinking of you,
Lynda*

The Untimeliness of Death

Death comes at you without much notice. You are hit by it's force that seems to have swallowed you up. With lives that are taken too soon, too young, unfinished; you shake your head; you rail at the injustice.

With those who have been with you for along time; you rail at the pain and tearing of their leaving your physical lives and all the changes this brings.

You might throw questions out like why? why me? why them? why now? It is your human response and your attempt to make sense of it and to put it into some sort of category that you can process. But no matter how old or young the person, it is all just so hard. There just is such an unnatural process around letting go of one you love.

In the end folks often have to let go of some of their unanswered questions and let them go and just be with the silence at the other end of the questions...as often there are no answers and if you don't let them go you will find yourself stuck there.

But for now...ask the questions. It is also a part of the process and of fully feeling it. When you are ready to let go of needing the answers, you will.

The shock that comes with surprise deaths brings another element of pain. It feels so wrong. It feels so horrible and suddenly the ground underneath you feels so uneven and even moving.

Those deaths that we expect bring their own kind of surprise when we find out that we cannot really fully prepare for such a human heartbreak.

Life as you know it has now changed. And this thing called death will either make you better or it will take you out.

And yet no matter what we say; no matter how it shakes out or what happened...it seem all wrong; backward somehow. This is the feeling that needs to be validated at the core of your being.

You are not finished being with them. They are not finished being with you. Their life feels cut short. And those who are left feel gyped out of their presence with them and also gyped in their living here on this earth.

For many life just feels over. And the huge reality is, life as you knew it has now drastically changed and most of us are not even remotely ready for what that means.

By Bev Swanson, reprinted with permission, January and February, 2008, Issue #35

Just as despair can come to one only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings. Elie Weisel

Being happy doesn't mean everything's perfect! It means you've decided to see beyond the imperfections! Author unknown

There is a crack in everything. That's where the light gets in. Leonard Cohen

Siblings of Angels.....



Olivia Maeva, was born in 2002 and Gavin Marshall in 2007, sister and brother to twins Jackson Colin and Cole Samuel whom were born at 26 weeks in 2001. They died at 11 days and 18 days from their extreme prematurity.

NOW ON LINE.....

Back issues of *Forever Angels*. If you would like to read some back issues of *Forever Angels*, please check them out at the Loss Support Network section of MBC's website at <http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org/english/ForeverAngels.php>.