

Beyond Postpartum Depression After Miscarriage and Child Loss: The Healing



Last year I publicly went through the most common yet least reported type of postpartum depression ([Part 1](#) and [2](#) here) – the type based on true tragedy, unrelated to a chemical imbalance, the kind of depression that has, as its source, actual loss, and grief.

Having gone through many miscarriages, and faced with the almost absolute lack of compassion in the believing community, I and many others were forced to stomp down and swallow that pain, to face it alone, to endure shaming because of the unresolved and therefore unending grief. The end result was catastrophic – unresolved grief, anger, bitterness, shame, jealousy – you name it. I lived it day by day for over sixteen years until the day came when God said, “No more, this is going to get dealt with now.” Just like that, He stripped away all of my protective mechanisms and the full onslaught of the pain was raw and inescapable. It was horrific and outside of my control – I was literally insane with grief and anger at times. It got worse before it got better – but now it is finally better. I saw the first hard evidence of healing two weeks ago when a friend asked me if I minded if she named her baby after me. My response was, “You’re pregnant?”

What shocked me was that my surprise was only a surprise, that there was no resentment or anger or jealousy involved – I didn’t hurt inside, at all. I didn’t even feel numb about it. I didn’t have to fake a congratulation. As I sat there, I found myself able to feel pleased for her – even though she

already has a house full of youngsters. But, I thought – she is naming the baby after me – maybe it's just my ego. (My ego is sizable, so it was a legitimate consideration)

This morning another friend with children announced her pregnancy to me as well (see her beautiful ultrasound above). No, they aren't naming the baby after me. LOL. And much to my surprise, I had the same exact response – I actually am happy for them. Her pregnancy did not arouse even the slightest pain within me, no twinge of jealousy. That's huge. I actually even got a little weepy for them, which is even more than I felt for my first friend.

I can't even begin to tell you how terrible it is to hate other people's good news, their blessings, and to have no power over those feelings. It is terrible to want to be happy for them, to know you should be and to feel ashamed that you don't, yet to have the pain flood in and destroy all feelings of warmth and compassion.

Since May of 2000, I have not been happy for anyone who was pregnant – unless they were like me and knew nothing but infertility and loss – and now, all of a sudden, because God forced me to deal with the pain I really can rejoice with those who rejoice and not simply weep with those who weep. It was a strange dichotomy – certainly not wishing infertility, miscarriage or child loss onto anyone and yet being full of pain and rage if people were not so afflicted! Such is the nature of unresolved pain, of not being given permission to mourn by those around me.

You need to know that I didn't choose to have this happen – I had so many protective barriers built up to shield myself from the constant pain that I was no longer able to choose how to deal with it. I was in crisis mode – I always tried not to think about it, and I always tried not to allow it to control my actions. All I was ever able to accomplish was not allowing it to hurt other people – and that took a lot of self-control.

There is truly no “snapping out of” grief – it has a mind of its own and takes as long as it takes. There is no shame in it. In Bible times, grieving was very scripted – people were expected to weep and wail and be externally nonsensical with grief. It would be very strange indeed not to mourn deeply. Because it was expected, and accepted, people were usually able to move through their grief and anger and get on with their lives, with the notable exception of Jacob at the loss of Joseph. Death happened in the ancient world, it was expected and acknowledged as a society – it wasn’t expected to be pushed aside or experienced alone.

It is strange that today we feel differently, though we credit ourselves with greater compassion and pride ourselves with being more in touch with our feelings. Perhaps the trouble is that we are in touch with our own feelings but have lost sight of everyone else’s feelings. We don’t want to be bothered with them; we don’t want to sit shiva with mourners for a week and cry with them. We are moving too fast; we want them to get beyond their grief so that we won’t be burdened by the obligation to mourn alongside them. We want to be entertained, not bored with someone else’s personal tragedy. If we don’t feel the same feelings, we really don’t much want to pretend like we do.

What I went through was a big wake-up call for me about the importance of grieving as a community, of having it be okay to treat grief like the insane thing that it truly is. Acknowledging death and loss as decidedly unnatural – well, maybe that is part of our mourning over what we lost in the garden. Humans weren’t originally equipped for death, and we probably still aren’t. That it still happens, that we are not yet what we were created to be, I guess it should cause a greater disconnect than it does.

Maybe every death really is supposed to be greeted with the cry, “This was never supposed to happen!” And in that case, anger and mourning both seem both natural and healthy.