



GRIEF SUPPORT AFTER MISCARRIAGE,
STILLBIRTH AND INFANT DEATH

UNITE Notes

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You Are Not Forgotten

You are not forgotten little one
Nor will you ever be
For as long as life and memory last
We will remember thee

We miss you now, our hearts are sore,
As time goes by, we miss you more
Your loving smile, your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place

Jackie Bergels
In loving memory of Matthew Joseph Bergels
Unite Notes, Fall 1989



Professionally Speaking...

by Denise M. Paul MA, CT, CPCC

Finding *Grace* in Death

Over the last 20 years, I've spoken to hundreds of parents who were mourning the death of their baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, and early infant death. It is a privilege to be on this grief journey with so many bereaved parents. I believe that parents are the experts in their own grief, and I feel fortunate to learn from them.

Recently, while facilitating a virtual Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group for UNITE, Inc. (for parents who are pregnant again, following a loss), a mother said something to the group that stopped me in my tracks. She said, "There was grace in Maggie's death." I was astonished and puzzled to hear that she found grace in her full-term baby girl's death! How could that be? I never imagined that someone could find grace in the tragic loss of her firstborn baby. I loved that she used the word "grace" instead of saying that there was a "silver lining" in her death. Grace is such a beautiful virtue.

"Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues."

John Stott

It is important to note that this conversation happened 4 years after her baby's death, so she had 4 years to process her thoughts and allow her pain to soften. While this mother certainly recognized that her daughter's death was traumatic and tragic, she proudly stated that her birth is what made her a mother. She had the opportunity to experience the profound love that a mother has for her child. She further stated that she got to carry her baby, deliver her, bathe her, dress her, and name her. She acknowledged what a blessing it was to introduce her baby to family members in the hospital, and she found comfort in having a funeral for her. She also found grace in the absence of what could have been. Maggie died peacefully and did not suffer.

Maggie's mom also shared that the grace extended beyond Maggie's death. She found grace in learning what she was capable of enduring, as the profound pain of sorrow consumed her. She felt a strength that she didn't know she had. She believes that Maggie's death has made her a better mother to her son, who was born two years later. There was grace in the deepened relationships that she found with family members and friends who came together to collectively grieve and share in rituals of remembrance. While she did briefly question her faith, she stated that her spirituality deepened. This loving mother talked about these blessings as "gifts" that would not be possible if not for Maggie's death..... and that is where she has found grace.

This mom recognizes that there are far more difficult circumstances surrounding the death of many babies. In some cases, parents have several miscarriages and lose hope of ever having a baby. In other cases, parents are faced with life limiting anomalies in which they must make difficult choices. Some babies are born alive and suffer short, painful lives. It's very difficult to expect parents to find grace in these circumstances, but it is possible.

After processing what this mom shared, I began to open my eyes to grace in everyday things. I've acknowledged so many graces that I now see in my own life, and I've pointed out graces that I see for others. For example, I recently spoke to a dad who suddenly lost his 17 year-old son. He was grateful that he was able to donate his son's organs and tissues to help save others. That was where he found grace in his son's death. As we focused our conversation on the topic of grace, he identified other graces that seemed to comfort him. His son was surrounded by his friends when he died, he did not suffer, his death could not have been prevented. These were all blessings that he now labels as "graces."

Grace can be found in almost every sorrow or disappointment that we experience. I'd like to give you an example of a way that I found grace in an ordinary day in my life. Recently, an airline delayed a flight when my husband and I were traveling to California to celebrate our anniversary. The delay caused us to miss our first night in a very expensive resort in Napa, which we were very much looking forward to. We had to spend the night in an inexpensive airport hotel until the next morning when we could resume our journey. Although we lost a lot of money and we were very disappointed, I found grace in the fact that we were together, we were able to get a hotel room so that we could sleep, and that we still had 4 nights to enjoy at the resort. I even found grace in the fact that we had the financial means to fly to California and stay at a fabulous resort. It was in finding grace that made the disappointment bearable, and it allowed me to discover gratitude.

Life will be full of little disappointments and sometimes major tragedies. My hope is that you will be able to find grace in every day of your life.

"Grace surrounds us like the soft, comforting, refreshing rain. Let gratitude help you find the power of that grace and see all your experiences in life as blessings."

Ardath Rodale



Ten Weeks Gestation

I pause to cherish this moment.

Today I saw your heart beat and your feet kick as your body curled and uncurled.

The doctor tried to measure you and you didn't cooperate.

Then he was finally able to do so.

He called you "my baby", as we watched your acrobatics on the ultrasound screen.

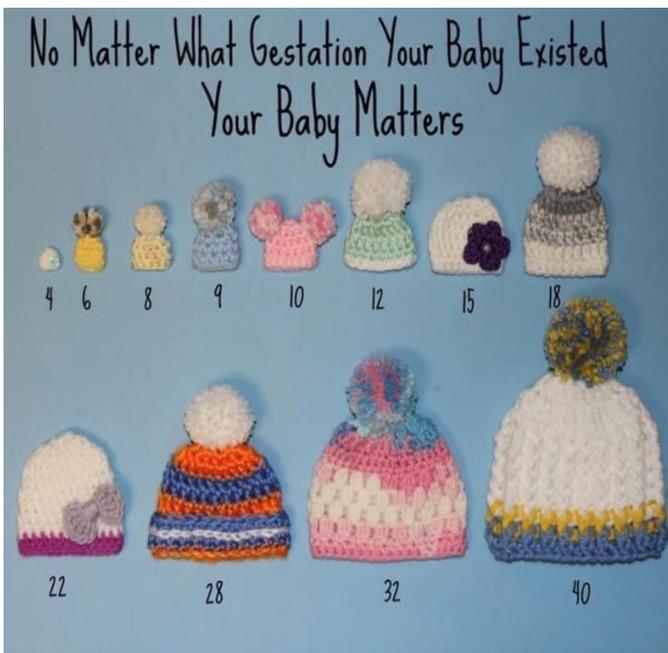
I pray you feel how proud I am to be your mother.

I pray you feel all the love we have for you already and not the fear in my heart.

I'm thankful each hour that my body gets to cradle you and pray my arms will cradle you for years.

You see, even though you're only an inch long, you are my child.

Kris Ingle
UNITE Notes, Winter 1986/87 Supplement



Because.....

Because I cannot hold you in my arms
I will envelope you in my heart.
Because I cannot hear your song,
I will whisper your love into the world.
Because I cannot gaze into your eyes,
I will tender your vision of compassion
Where it's most needed.
In every moment without you,
I will do all I can to grace others with
The beauty in your wake.

Joanne Cacciatore



Dialogue from "Chesapeake Shores"

Sarah: I know he told you

Meg: I am so sorry

Sarah: I didn't want him to tell anyone. I'm fine.

Meg: That's what I said, too. I had my miscarriage after Jess. I lost a baby just like you. I just wanted to put it out of my mind. But you need to grieve at your own pace....and you can't let anyone rush you through your grief. I won't say it goes away. But that sharpness, it dulls. The experience changed me. As much as the road to get there is one that I don't wish on anyone, there really is a silver lining in truly learning your own strength. Sarah, you are one of the strongest people I've ever met.

The Mourner's Bill of Rights

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

1. **You have the right to experience your own unique grief.** No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.
2. **You have the right to talk about your grief.** Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want about your grief.
3. **You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.** Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.
4. **You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.** Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.
5. **You have the right to experience grief "attacks."** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but it is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.
6. **You have the right to make use of ritual.** The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More important, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you that rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.
7. **You have the right to embrace your spirituality.** If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.
8. **You have the right to search for meaning.** You may find yourself asking, "Why did she or he die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them. **You have the right to treasure your memories.** Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.
9. **You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.** Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

Approach-Avoidance

I love her and hurt so badly from her death...

But I do so much want to try again.

I don't know if I have the strength to go through another pregnancy...

But a new pregnancy is one way to have another baby.

I don't know if I could stand the hurt if my next baby didn't live...

But even though nothing is guaranteed. I feel I need to have hope.

Just trying to decide whether to try again makes me anxious.

At times it seems that my ambivalence is the only thing I'm sure of.

Janis Keyser

UNITE Notes, Winter 1986/87 supplement

Time Passes, Things Change

Time passes, things change.

The leaves outside your window were green, the birds would sing.

The leaves outside screamed with their brilliance in bold colors and hues as their metamorphosis unfolded.

Pay attention, we're here.

And today I look. There are no leaves, only bare branches. And there is rain.

How bleak. How raw. How exposed. How vulnerable. How sad.

Then a sparrow sings on your windowsill, bringing me to awareness and life. All's not over.

Time passes, things change.

Susan S. Ashbaker

November 5, 1992

UNITE Notes, Fall 1994



Amazon Smiles

Everyone,

UNITE could really use your help this year.

When ordering online from Amazon, please choose UNITE, Inc. as the organization you would like to support.

UNITE will get a percentage back from what each person spends on Amazon Smiles. You have to use the link below.

Go to smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2362403 and AmazonSmile donates to Unite Inc.

Copy this URL into your browser ---www.smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2362403
Then Shop....it's that easy!

Please also share with family and friends!

Thank you,
Barbara Bond-Moury
UNITE Board Chair



FALL 2021/WINTER 2022 Donations

We Are So Grateful for Donations Given Throughout the Year

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John Ryan
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Amanda Whetsel
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Lynn Pearson
Carol Sherfin
Nicolette Pizzi

Butterfly Memorial Wall

Robin Moore – In Memory of Emma and Lily – Merry Christmas 2021 XOXO

Grants

The Nash Foundation



UNITE offers a number of services to grieving parents and their caregivers including the following:

Peer to Peer Grief Support Groups

- * Literature
- * Educational Programs
- * Training Workshops
- * Group Development Assistance

Without Your Most Generous Donations, UNITE Would Not Be Able To Continue These Services

News

Mailing Address and Phone Number

Please note our new mailing address:
P.O. Box 298, Oxford, PA 19363

Phone Number

Please note our new phone number:
484-758-0002

Safe Arrivals

We would love to hear about your safe arrival so we all can celebrate in your joy. So we can put it in the newsletter, please send information on your new bundle of joy to administrator@unitegriefsupport.org.

Home Page Info

www.unitegriefsupport.org

Virtual Butterflies: The donation cost for placing one of these virtual items on the page is \$25 and will be in memory of your baby. You may donate through PayPal by clicking on the Buy Now icon. Note: On the PayPal page, where it states, "Instructions to the Merchant," type in your baby's name, etc.

Newsletter Submissions

Please send your original poetry, short stories, articles, and letters to *UNITE Notes*. The beautiful writings that we receive from UNITE's bereaved parents are what make our newsletter so special. If you have written poems, articles, etc. that you would like to share with other parents, please send them soon. Note that the newsletter is now being uploaded to the UNITE website which allows all who are

searching for comfort and support due to the loss of their child(ren) to see your written story.

Acknowledgments

If anyone has not received an acknowledgment for their donation, please contact the administrator@unitegriefsupport.org, or call the UNITE line at 484-758-0002. Please leave your name, phone number, and the best time to return your call.

AmazonSmile Foundation

The Foundation runs a program in which Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to charitable organizations. To shop go to smile.amazon.com from your web browser on your computer or mobile device and choose UNITE, Inc. Products will be marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. You may also go to our web page: www.unitegriefsupport.org and click on the icon/banner, which will bring you to smile.amazon.com. You should bookmark this page so that you go directly to your Amazon Account and start shopping. Purchase of digital content, such as Kindle e-books or MP3's, is not included.

Fundraisers Wanted

We are looking for some fresh ideas in fund raising! Do you have an idea to share? We'd love to hear about it. Please contact UNITE at administrator@unitegriefsupport.org.

Support Groups

**UNITE in-person support group meetings are suspended until further notice
Please call 484-758-0002 if you would like to attend a UNITE Virtual Support Group**

For information about the group nearest you, please contact UNITE, Inc. at 484-758-0002 (leave a message), write to UNITE Inc. at P.O. Box 298, Oxford, PA 19363, or email administrator@unitegriefsupport.org. **All UNITE Virtual Support Groups are by Invitation only.** New members must contact the group coordinator before attending their first meeting. UNITE, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, marital status, religious belief, race, sexual orientation or economic status.

Pennsylvania

UNITE, Holy Redeemer Hospital
Huntingdon Valley, PA
Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Facilitators:
Denise Paul
Liz Steward

UNITE, Lankenau Hospital
Wynnewood, PA
Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
Facilitator:
Paris Margaritis

UNITE, Paoli
Paoli Pointe Medical Center, next to hospital
Meets 2nd Monday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Facilitators:
Sue McAndrew
Gerri Donaher

UNITE, Pennsylvania Hospital
Philadelphia, PA
Meets 1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Facilitators:
Michelle Ferrant
Kelly Colby

UNITE, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center
Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Facilitators:
Kelly Zapata
Vicki Kroesche

UNITE, Riddle Memorial Hospital
Media, PA
Meets 1st Thursday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Facilitators:
Regina Fazio
Sheila McCabe

New Jersey

UNITE, Penn Medicine Princeton Health
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Contact: Debbie Miller, RN
Facilitator:
Bernadette Flynn-Kelton BSN, RN

UNITE, Virtua at Voorhees
Barry D. Brown Health Education Center
Meets 1st and 3rd Monday 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Facilitator:
Ann Coyle, RN

Subsequent Pregnancy Groups

UNITE, Virtua at Voorhees
Barry D. Brown Health Education Center
Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 - 8:30 PM
Facilitator:
Ann Coyle, RN

UNITE, Virtual Support Group
Virtually on Zoom by invitation
Meets 1st Monday, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Facilitator:
Denise Paul

Father's Group "Grieving Dads"

Virtually on Zoom by invitation
Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Facilitators:
Simon Hindle
Matthew Sklar

UNITE Notes Staff

Editor: Theresa Fisher

Administrator: Barbara Bond-Moury

Submissions: We welcome your original poetry and articles. Your contributions are important to UNITE's work of reaching out to bereaved parents. We reserve the right to edit and select from submissions. Please send all submissions to:

UNITE Inc.

P.O. Box 298

Oxford, PA 19363

484-758-0002

or email administrator@unitegriefsupport.org

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