

Love for the Unknown

Written by Stephanie Libs, D.C.

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After dating for eight years, followed by 14 months of planning, my husband and I finally tied the knot. Then, about six weeks before the wedding, we conceived. So, we thought, what better time than our wedding to announce our pregnancy? Everyone we loved and cared about would be there, and we could surprise them all at once. Upon completion of all the speeches and our thank-yous, Dean and I asked our parents to join us at the front of the room. We had them close their eyes and hold out their hands. When they opened their eyes they were holding onesies with the words "I love my grandma" and "I love my grandpa," and we excitedly yelled out, "We're pregnant!" The room exploded with excitement, cheers, laughter, and tears. All four soon-to-be grandparents were overwhelmed with joy and couldn't stop hugging us and each other. We were bombarded with love and support. It was a moment we will never forget.

Two days later I started to experience mild cramping and light spotting. I was uncomfortable but thought nothing of it. I read that implantation can cause spotting or bleeding, so I thought it was normal. After a few hours, the cramping increased and I began to worry, even calling the ER triage nurses at my local hospital to make sure what I was experiencing was within normal ranges. According to them it was, and there was nothing to worry about.

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PATTERN INTERRUPT



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After dating for eight years, followed by six months of planning, my husband and I finally tied the knot. Then, about six weeks before the wedding, my husband and I decided what better time than our wedding to announce our pregnancy? Everyone we loved and cared about would be there, and we could surprise them all at once. Upon completion of all the open bars and our thank yous, Devin and I asked our parents to join us at the front of the room. We had them close their eyes and hold out their hands. When they opened their eyes they were holding marbles with the words "I love my grandma" and "I love my grandpa," and we excitedly yelled out, "We're pregnant!" The room erupted with excitement, cheers, laughter, and tears. All four women in the room squealed with joy and couldn't stop hugging us and each other. We were bombarded with love and support. It was a moment we will never forget.

Two days later I started to experience mild cramping and light spotting. I was understandably but thought nothing of it. I read that implantation can cause spotting or bleeding, so I thought it was normal. After a few hours, the cramping increased and I began to worry, even calling the ER triage nurses at my local hospital to make sure what I was experiencing was within normal ranges. According to them it was, and there was nothing to worry about.

That night it was difficult to sleep. The bleeding and cramping increased to the point that a normal period was likely causing my sleep. By the next morning the symptoms had increased, but I went to my office to see patients anyway. I had a full morning scheduled but between appointments I somehow managed to call my midwife, and, with a trembling voice, explained what was happening. I'll never forget the clear, soothing tone in her voice as she said "Stephanie, it sounds like you're having a miscarriage." Although how wise was I, it hit me harder than a freight train. Devin immediately surged through my veins. I asked her what to do, desperately seeking an answer. She gave me options, but knowing

that I trust my body, she knew I would prefer little to no medical intervention. So I went home to spend time with my new husband of three days and cried.

It was not exactly what we expected during our first few days of marriage. I cried harder than I've ever cried before. Then the physical pain started. That afternoon I felt my uterus go through rhythmic contractions that grew more and more painful. I was still in denial. It took me hours to call my family and admit to them that things weren't quite so perfect. After all, how could this happen to me? I'm a chiropractor. I'm healthy. I specialize in pregnancy! How can I lose my friends, my parents, and the birth community, who all listen to me talk about pregnancy and birth every day? I couldn't even keep a viable pregnancy. The midwife looked in. What did she mean? Photos of our wedding and our big announcement had been posted online, so even when the loss started, I was still receiving congratulatory messages.

I didn't leave my house for a week. I felt intense shame, but at the same time I felt compelled to be public about it. Like anything these days, it's not official until it's on Facebook. I wanted to get well wishes and condolences, but the feedback I received was completely unexpected. The number of women and some men who commented and sent me messages saying they had gone through the same thing was astounding. I realized I was not alone. This was the first step towards healing.

I began to read things and learned that approximately 25 percent of women will experience a miscarriage at some time in their life. Most of these miscarriages occur in the first trimester, which is usually the time when we keep our pregnancy a secret. Why is that? There is so much fear placed around birth. We, as a society, have given our power to the white coat, needles, procedures, and tests. We're not our own sense of connection to self. And with miscarriage affecting so many, it's become normal to hide our vulnerability during those precious first few weeks.

For me, I announced my pregnancy with everyone as soon as I found out. I'm glad I did, because it was the most exciting thing in my life. Telling everyone I was pregnant, then telling everyone that I miscarried, surprisingly facilitated an amazing amount of support. There were a few people who asked me why I was not in the first place, and, who didn't wait until it was too late to share the news. My answer was always, "Because I wanted to, that's why."

The fact that other people perceived their need to justify my actions was just further proof that this common event was still a culture subject that society preferred to keep a blind eye to. I'm so glad I was public about my loss, because it created a network that truly made me feel loved and supported by so many people. Studies show that pregnant women are more likely to seek support from other women who are like them, and who have been through a similar experience. Pregnancy is one of the main hormones that creates a

healthy uterine environment for a viable pregnancy. Could creating a tribe and talking about pregnancy help prevent loss during the first 12 weeks? How would we know, if we're not supposed to talk about it until we get through that "safe zone" of the first trimester?

For some expecting parents, the first weeks of pregnancy can be a sacred time and one that they might prefer to keep just between them, which is the reason we decided upon the next time around. My husband and I received again three months after our loss. A positive pregnancy test in February was the best Valentine's Day gift we could have ever received, and so that day we decided to share the news with only our family. I was nervous in the early 10 weeks. I didn't think my heart could take another loss, so I felt like I was constantly on edge. My husband knew the chances of a second miscarriage were lower. That didn't stop me from feeling fragile, however. Twelve weeks felt like 12 months, but we were getting there. I was so excited to finally announce that we were pregnant. It felt so good to share with others, it made me realize why I didn't tell people sooner. In October we met our beautiful baby girl, Adeline.

Each journey toward parenthood is unique and comes with its own set of challenges and celebrations. When women connect with each other, it's the strengthening that helps build confidence and trust in the process. We're not that same of connection with the fear that is instilled in us through the media, Hollywood, and even our own doctors. It takes me almost a year to write this article. I began with one or two bullet points shortly after our loss and I kept adding to them as new lessons unfolded. I believe that my miscarriage served a purpose for me. As difficult as it was, there was beauty in the pain, and the experience allowed me to connect more deeply to myself and the next pregnancy.

I'm still learning every day, and I hope my story can help facilitate healing for others. I still wonder what that child could have been. During those short six weeks, I learned that he was a boy. I often wonder what he would have looked like, how his birth would have been, and what he would have grown up to be. But maybe he inspired me to say hello, and show me that getting pregnant was possible. And maybe he was teaching me how precious life can be, and not to waste my three pregnancy for granted. Whatever it was, I'm grateful for the lessons.

Thank you, babe, for you have taught me great things—mostly to love and connect deeply I hope we meet again. 🌱



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Resonance

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