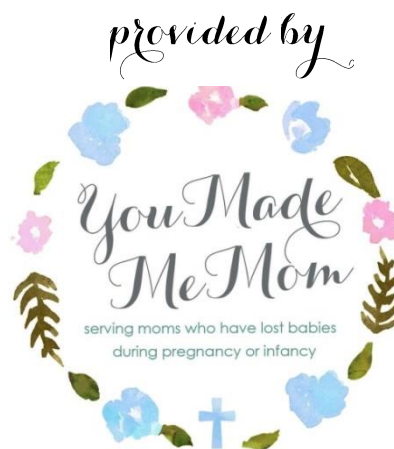

Known

a quick reference helpbook for those experiencing
the loss of a child during pregnancy or infancy



Amy Balentine

www.youmadememom.com

DEDICATION

To Simon and Thomas Balentine and all You Made Me Mom mothers and their babies.

Simon, you have defined a full life for me. I am thankful for the 36 weeks I had you in my womb, and for the one week outside of my womb when you were breathing, crying, being heard and living your days out in our home. Through your broken body, I have learned about God's perfection, and about what true surrender to Him looks like. You have taught me how to enter into broken places with others. This brokenness brings me closer to Christ. You have helped me learn that God doesn't want a filtered version of my thoughts or my prayers – he wants my raw and honest – the joyful, the thankful, the angry and the confused thoughts and prayers. Thank you for teaching me how to live in the moment and to be thankful for every simple blessing. You are a gift and I adore you. I long to dwell with you again in eternity where we will get to do a perfect life together forever.

Thomas, you have showed me how God's work is always complete. Though only 13 weeks gestation, the Lord said you were complete. Your body whole, delivered in a hospital room. The world tells me your birth is wrong, lacking the cries all delivery rooms deserve hear. Your delivery was scary and terribly sad, but as soon as I saw your magnificent body I was in awe. I long for eternity with you, to know you, and be with you. For there is more ahead of me than behind me when my hope is in eternity with Christ. Without your life, the You Made Me Mom support group would not exist.

And to You Made Me Mom support group mothers and your babies, you inspire and encourage me to walk into hospital rooms of shattered dreams and to hold the hand of a bereaved mother. Thank you for vulnerably sharing your stories every month with me in my home.

• • •

For our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is relentless with his love and unending grace. Thank you for entrusting me with all of my children, who are ultimately your children. You are so good, even when facing the death of my children. You never turn your back on me, even when I feel abandoned, I am not. You paid the price of abandonment on the cross when you cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You turn our tears into laughter – this is your promise. Thank you good and gracious Man of Sorrows for teaching us how to love, suffer well, mourn and rejoice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Types of Loss	4
The Sacred Hello	6
The Holy Goodbye	8
Mom's Body	10
Finding Hope	11
Emotional Health	14
Life-Limiting Diagnosis	15
For Dad	16
For Family & Friends	17
Support Resources	19
Thank You from the Author	21
Donations to You Made Me Mom	22



Momma, you are known and loved by God and your baby is known by you, created by God.

*Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You **know** me inside and out,
you **know** every bone in my body;
You **know** exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day in my mother's womb.*

Psalm 139 13-16 MSG

INTRODUCTION

What in the world am I supposed to do?

Dear Loved One,

I am so sorry you are anticipating the loss of your precious baby or have already heard the words, "I'm sorry there is no heartbeat." You are walking through the unthinkable.

This helpbook is designed to be a quick reference guide for parents and loved ones who are facing the loss of a baby during pregnancy or early infancy. It is for the mother who is either presently in labor, or will be in the coming days or weeks. The format is intended to be basic and simple in order to help you find the best delivery options and memory making tools, while you navigate through a fog of disbelief.

In the coming hours and days you will have a lot of decisions to make. As long as your body is not in harm's way, you have time to *slow down* and make decisions that are best for you and your baby. We often want to rush this time and get things over with. *I am here to tell you to stop, take a deep breath, and slow down.* It is important not to rush this time, as this time, though excruciatingly painful and absolutely not what you had planned, is sacred and deserves to be fulfilled in the way you prefer. At this moment, you are still pregnant and mothering your child.

My prayer is that this book blesses you and your baby by preparing you for the most sacred hello of your life, and that it assists you in creating memories. This is your time to know your baby and make memories with your baby, even if they have died before birth. This is your opportunity to mother this baby and enjoy him/her while he/she is here to the best of your ability. Allow the following pages to be a resource guide and a list of ideas you might want to do with your child. Every person honors and grieves differently. Some ideas in this book might speak to your heart while others are absolutely not for you. This is okay. Choose what works best for you, your child and your emotional needs. May this helpbook be an electronic fingertip reference that doesn't overwhelm you, but assists in preparing you for this experience. I am here to sit with you and say, this is terrible and unfair, but also remind you of Hope that is coming.

None of us have control over the fact that our baby is dying or has died. But we do have control over how we respond and handle our plans moving forward. I am praying that you not merely survive this loss, but that you truly thrive in the wake of this pain. I promise, it is possible.

This book is a reference guide and should not be considered as medical advice. Please discuss your plans with your health care provider. All links are credited to the original author.



*What matters in life is not what happens to you
but what you remember and how you remember it.*
Gabriel Garcia Marquez

TYPES OF LOSS

This reference book will focus on three broad types of loss. It will then give you ideas of things you can do to make the experience one that begins the healing process, even if that seems unthinkable at this moment.. Detailed information further explaining your particular loss as well as respectful photos of what your baby might look like will be found in the links below. Links and resources on this page are credited directly to their original creators.

Miscarriage

Your health care provider should give you a few options of delivery depending on the gestation of your baby. Loss labeled as miscarriage typically takes place prior to 22-24 weeks or so gestation. Below are a few options that you may be offered.

- o [Natural Delivery](#) - Miscarrying in your own home or hospital without any help from medicine.
- o [Induction through Medication](#) - The different types of medication vary but generally allow your uterus to dilate, to contract and to deliver your baby and placenta. Some medications are safe for home delivery while others are safest to use in a hospital.
- o [D&C](#) - A dilation and curettage is a surgical operation where a doctor assists in delivering your baby and can also assist in delivering any remains after a natural miscarriage.
- o [D&E](#) - A dilation and evacuation is a surgical operation where a doctor assists in delivering your baby.

With any of these options, you have the ability to receive your baby's remains to cremate or bury. It is important to ask your provider what the baby's remains might look like. You may want to prepare a pretty container, small jewelry, watch box, or shoe box to receive your baby. This may be lined with a soft blanket or piece of fabric and even decorated. It will give you an opportunity to serve and mother your baby. For a D&C or D&E, you can give this resting place container to your doctor to place your babies remains inside. This way, you are in control if you want to see your baby's remains in the comfort of your own home or never at all.

Your provider will also give you the option to release the remains to the hospital or surgical care center. You will know if this is the best option for your family and it is absolutely okay to choose this option. Again, just don't feel rushed into a decision.

If you deliver at home in a toilet, you have the option of flushing your baby or recovering your child's remains. Either option is okay. If you need help in recovering your baby's remains, click [here](#) for advice and miscarriage kit instructions. You have many of the "kit" items in your home, therefore, purchase of this kit is not always necessary, especially if you do not have time.

TYPES OF LOSS (continued)

Stillbirth or Unanticipated/Anticipated Infant Death

Your health care provider should give you a few options of delivery depending on the gestation of your baby. Loss labeled as stillbirth typically takes place around 22 weeks gestation to full term. Below are a few options that you may be offered.

- [Natural Delivery](#) - Allowing the body to naturally go into labor for an unmediated vaginal delivery in the hospital. Your healthcare provider might set limitations on how long they will allow your body to wait for labor. If your doctor is worried about infection they may suggest induction. You may also naturally go into labor and request an epidural.
- [Delivery by Induction with Medication](#) – Artificially inducing labor through various methods of medication including cervical ripening agents and Pitocin.
- [Birth by Cesarean](#) - A surgical operation used to deliver a child by cutting through the wall of a mother's abdomen. Cesarean is an option for families to consider when baby might not live long, potentially giving baby an easier labor and delivery. Cesarean is also used when emergency occurs and baby or mother's life is in jeopardy. Consider asking about Natural or [Gentle Cesarean](#) options as well as immediate skin-to-skin with baby and operating room photography options.

If you are planning a homebirth, please click [here](#) for further resources.

THE SACRED HELLO

Prior to Birth

If you have time to go home prior to birth, here are some ideas of things you can do to prepare for your precious one. If you do not have time, perhaps there is a family member or friend who could prepare some of these items while you are at the hospital or birth center. Anything you can do to help make this unexpected situation feel more normal, you should do. Remember, this is your baby and even though they have died or will die, you are their mother and always will be. You know your baby. You have been their safe place their entire life. Know you are still their safe place, even though they have died.

- Name your baby.
- Take maternity photos.
- Ask friends to host a [Prayer Shower](#) for you.
- Call a professional photographer to take photos of your baby after birth. [Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep](#) is an organization that provides free photos to families facing pregnancy and infant loss.
- Monogram a cardigan or sweater with your baby's name or initials on it. If there isn't time for this, choose something from your closet that you can wear during or after your baby's birth. This item becomes a forever item you can take home with you and wear to feel close to your precious one.
- Ask your obstetrician or midwife what labor and delivery might be like.
- Even though it might be hard to receive, ask your medical provider what your baby might look like, especially if your baby has passed in utero. A helpful website to see what your baby might look like is [Stillbirthday](#).
- It might seem unusual, because this moment feels far from a celebration, but consider purchasing a small cake. Write your baby's name on top and even consider singing happy *birthday* to your baby.
- Create a playlist or pick a Pandora station that will remind you of your baby.
- Select a special lotion that you can use on your baby. This scent will help remind you of him/her in the days and years to come following birth.
- Anything that you have prepared for your baby - monogrammed clothing, special blankets, the clothing you were going to bring your baby home in, etc. -take to the hospital and use. Those items were selected for your baby, so use those items.
- If you have a small bassinet that you were going to use at home, feel free to even bring this item with you to your birth facility.
- While this might be difficult, select your funeral home. Call and let them know you will be contacting them again after delivery. This could also be a great way for a family member or friend could help by making this call for you. It is a nearly impossible call to make so share the burden if someone is willing to make the call on your behalf.
- Prepare a bag for the hospital with all of the [typical suggested items](#). You may want to add photos of yourself or your baby's living siblings.
- Confirm the birthing facility is providing a private room away from crying babies. If you are moved after delivery, ask if you can hold your baby as you pass through the halls.
- For families who receive a life-limiting diagnosis while your baby is still in the womb, prepare a detailed birth plan for your child including several different outcomes (if your baby has died, if baby is breathing). If you are choosing life-saving heroic measures or extraordinary life-saving treatments, include the detailed plan you have created with your perinatologist and NICU team. If you are choosing comfort care, palliative care and/or hospice care, be specific about your requests in your birth plan including suctioning your baby at birth, oxygen at birth, and feeding plans. For detailed birth plans, scroll to the Life-Limiting Diagnosis page 15.

During Labor

- Remind the medical staff to call your baby by name.
- Ask for your baby to be cared for and treated with dignity and respect, even if their heart has already stopped beating.
- If their heart is still beating, decide if you want fetal heart monitoring on your baby as you labor. Some women choose not to use the monitoring as they believe knowing their baby died during labor can be discouraging to the labor process.
- Take photos and video as you labor and wait for baby to come.

After Birth

- Have your husband, partner or birth coach cut the cord.
- Place baby directly on mom for skin-to-skin time.
- Take plenty of time to hold your baby.
- Kiss your baby.
- Study your baby's sweet body.
- Take photos/videos – even if it feels uncomfortable or morbid now, you will likely want them later. You may choose to never look at them, but at least you will have the option.
- Sing to your baby.
- Read to your baby.
- Pray over your baby.
- Include any religious or spiritual beliefs you would bless your baby with if they were living. This could be a good time to call on the hospital chaplain to assist.
- Baptize or dedicate your baby to Jesus Christ. If you have a pastor or priest to call on, invite them into this ceremony.
- Invite family and friends who might want to meet your baby.
- Weigh and measure your baby.
- If possible, bathe your baby.
- Diaper your baby.
- Swaddle your baby. The hospital will supply you with receiving blankets if you have not brought your own. There is also a special swaddle designed for smaller babies called a [Bridget's Cradle](#). This cradle allows families to hold and pass around their baby without having to worry about harming baby's delicate skin.
- If possible, have your nurse ink/use paint your baby's handprints and footprints.
- Your nurse might have access to molding equipment so you can get your baby's hand/feet molds.
- If your baby has hair, cut several locks to save.
- Paint baby girl's toenails.
- Keep everything from the hospital; blankets, hat, wristbands, bassinet card, any clothing your baby wore or touched, soaps or lotions used if your baby had his/her first bath. These precious scents will remind you of your baby.
- Do not feel rushed. Ask staff to be patient with you and to offer you time to just be with your baby but also not abandon you.
- Your birth care facility might have access to preserving your baby's body so your time is less rushed. One item is called a [CuddleCot](#). It is a cooling system that slows down the body's decay and slows rigor mortis. Some hospitals transfer babies to cooling rooms or the morgue. This practice takes baby out of the mother's care for the cooling process. Some hospitals offer cooling blankets. No matter which practice your facility has in place, they should bring your baby to you in a warm blanket. Feel free to even ask them to do this. If you do not want your baby to ever leave your room, simply tell your provider this request.

THE HOLY GOODBYE

At some point, you will need to say goodbye. Either your time at the hospital will expire or you'll simply feel as ready as you possibly can be to say goodbye. Here are some things to keep in mind as you say goodbye to your baby.

- There will be a lot of paper work you have to fill out prior to your departure. There will be tough decisions to make about funeral home selection, burial or cremation, autopsy, and organ or body donation. A social worker, chaplain, nurse and/or funeral director will work closely with you to fill out this paperwork.
- Presently, all US states and many countries around the world allow babies to be taken to their home after they have died. This means parents leave the hospital with their baby's body to wake them in their home and have the funeral home come to their home rather than the hospital room. To some, they know for sure this is not for them. For others, they absolutely want that time in their home with their baby, or they want to bring their baby to the funeral home themselves. Some parents even host the baby's celebration of life/funeral in their home. You will work with the hospital to figure out the legal and best way to transport your baby. This might be a new practice to your hospital and you might receive push back. The hospital can and should assist with this process. Remember, this is your baby and this is your right. Do what is best for your family and do not worry what others might think.
- As you prepare your baby's body to give to the funeral home, lotion your baby with the scent you've chosen, dress them in their clothing you want them buried in or cremated in, swaddle them, place a stuffed animal or family photo in their swaddle with them.
- Explain exactly what your expectations are to the funeral home. If you want your baby cremated with their clothes on, ask if they can honor your request.
- Depending on your body's recovery post-delivery, some moms are able to leave the hospital fairly quickly after giving birth. Some moms want to leave at the same time they say goodbye to their baby. Some need to stay longer. Whatever your needs are, think about your body's recovery time and also the timing of giving your baby's body away will line up.
- If you have chosen to have the funeral staff come to the hospital to receive your baby, you can either have the director come to your room and get your baby, or you can walk your baby out to the funeral home's vehicle. Giving your baby's body away is one of the hardest things you will have to do in your life. Take your time, take deep breaths, and know you will survive this. Know you can always, and sometimes might be legally required, to come to the funeral home to view your baby's body. Some parents find comfort in seeing their baby one more time. You will know what's right for you.

THE HOLY GOODBYE (continued)

Celebration of Life/Funeral Planning

Health care providers will help you comply with state and country laws in order to care for your child's remains. For early miscarriage, some families allow the hospital to care for their child's remains, while others want to bury their baby on their own. Deciding between cremation and burial is a personal decision and one which your funeral home can explain the options for your baby depending on gestation, bone density and weight of your baby. Some cemeteries have areas where babies are buried in the same area, creating a sweet resting place among other little ones. Moms have reported meeting other bereaved mothers when visiting their child's grave, which can bring comfort through community with another mom who can relate to your grief.

Most funeral homes will prefer for you to purchase a casket through their company. However, some allow you to purchase one on your own. If time allows, [Heaven's Gain](#) is a resource for any gestation loss for caskets and urns.

Give yourself time to make decisions regarding plots at a cemetery and purchasing headstones. Headstones are an emotional process of designing, paying and then receiving them months after the death of your precious one – so simply go easy on yourself. [Angel Names Association](#) provides assistance for end of life expenses for stillbirth and infant death. Families must apply for assistance and be approved by their non-profit board.

If you attend a church or faith organization, lean on them for support, especially if you choose to have a memorial service for your baby. If you are not part of a church community, know that most churches or other community organizations would be honored to help you plan a service for your child. Start by setting up a meeting with a priest or pastor of a church in your area. You can label the service whatever you would like, funeral, memorial, homegoing, or celebration of life to name a few - whatever makes you most comfortable. The church leader should help you plan the service including readings, scripture, and hymns or songs. This service is a way to honor your child. If you are able, consider framing photos of your child, display precious items they used or touched and even decorate the church in colors that represent your child. Use your child's initials around the church, at the front of the sanctuary, in wreaths or flowers, and if appropriate, even decorate with a few balloons. If time allows, [create a slideshow](#) to share encouraging words from family and friends that have helped you through the loss of your child. Consider [creating a slideshow](#) of your child's photos.

Depending on your circumstances, you might prefer for people to avoid wearing black. If you would rather people wear a specific color that reminds or represents your baby, simply ask. If you would prefer for people to wear colors or anything but black, ask that too. If you do not state otherwise, people will assume black is most appropriate and maybe black speaks most to your aching heart.

Just because your baby died, doesn't mean they weren't born into your family and delivered and birthed by you, mom. If you feel led, send out a birth announcement and include your baby's life story. Some families like to combine a birth announcement and memorial service information. The [Balentine Family](#) shares an example of this type of announcement. You can also find an article and ideas for this at [Stillstanding](#).

MOM'S BODY

It is important for mom and family to remember that you have just given birth. No matter the gestation of your baby, your body has worked and labored to deliver your baby. Allow your body to recover both physically and emotionally. Under normal circumstances, this can be very challenging. If you have just lost your baby, these challenges can be magnified.

Around 20 weeks gestation, your body might respond with making milk for your baby. So many mothers express that this is surprising and that it adds pain to their already broken heart. You have the option to pump and donate your milk to a milk bank, a hospital NICU or a family in need. Some moms feel this milk donation is a part of their healing process, as it honors the memory of her baby as she serves other families. For others, they know for sure they would rather their milk dry up as the milk is a painful reminder. The right decision here is the one that fits you best. Consider calling a local lactation consultant to assist with donation or drying up. Your hospital can assist with finding a donation bank. Should you chose to dry up your milk, know that ice, cabbage leaves, rest and time help the most with the drying process. Some women find [this tea](#) to be helpful.

For further postpartum loss recovery suggestions, lactation ideas and free assistance, head to [Stillbirthday.com](#) and [Kellymom.com](#).

FINDING HOPE

What now? Where do you turn? Against your will, you have given this baby away. You are left here on this earth waiting and grieving with empty, aching arms. This world is completely broken and it is not fair that your child has been taken from you. The Lord promises to make all things new ([Revelation 21](#)), to wipe your every tear and to restore for us a home with no mourning in the New Heavens and New Earth. There is a way to walk through this grief and suffer well. But how do we do this?

No one understands your pain better than God. He willingly chose to give his son away. In the moments where we feel abandoned, [Psalm 39](#) reminds us that even when we *feel* forgotten, we are not. Christ was abandoned on the cross when He cried out to his Father, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" He was abandoned so we would never be. I repeat, NEVER. God wants our unfiltered, true, raw self – our prayers not scripted, but full of honest truth including anger, hurt, confusion, questioning and frustration. He knows our thoughts before we do anyway, he tells us in [Psalm 139](#). God reminds us in [Isaiah 55](#) that His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. Some things we won't comprehend this side of eternity. Christ tells us that if we plant our tears in the Lord ([Psalm 126](#)) we will reap a great harvest. In [Luke 6](#) Jesus tells us blessed are those who weep, for they shall have laughter. These verses along with several others in the Bible don't say we *might* have joy someday, but say we will. WILL have joy. It's a promise to us. It could take months or years or even a lifetime, but we are promised happiness. Take heart dear sister, you are able to do this through Christ.

God is good, even when our children die, He is still good. How can you say this, you ask? Because only goodness and Light come from our Lord. God takes zero delight in our suffering. He is not punishing you or me for anything we have ever done or will do. And now you say, well, what kind of good God allows my baby to die? It seems too simple, but the answer is because of The Fall (as in, man's original decision separate from God in [Genesis 3](#)) when sin entered the world. Because of The Fall, God only has so much tattered yarn to work with for each one of us until He [makes all things new](#). I often wondered why God had stopped knitting my son, Thomas, who was lost to miscarriage. A friend shared with me that it wasn't so much that God stopped knitting but that the tattered strand of yarn ended and His work complete.

The Lord doesn't promise to shield us from all tragedy but promises to shield and protect us as we walk *through* tragedy. God is in charge. We are in control over our response to the things He's in charge of. Physically get on your knees if you have to. Pray without ceasing – pray simple prayers. Focus on gratitude. Do your best to not compare yourself to others. Focus on what you have and not what you lack. For those who have been a Christian for years, this is a time of leaning into what you have practiced for some time. Reciting over and over to yourself, "I know You are good, but this isn't good, God.– Jesus, I don't want to be alone, for I know you are with me." The simplicity of just calling out Jesus' name can remind us to surrender this pain and confusion.

I'm familiar with the moments where we look out the windows of our home and life appears to be going on as usual for everyone else. We want to scream at the top of our lungs, "don't you know my baby died?" What do we do with this pain, these thoughts, this new reality – a story we wouldn't have ever chosen? Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, teaches us it is ok to suffer and mourn. He does not want us to try to avoid this suffering. But Christ does want us to invite him into our burdens and our pain. If we stay yoked to him, he will guide us through the hardest times. Although you can't see it now, God's good work and careful craftsmanship are all over your story. Someday you will connect some of the dots and even see He was with you, holding you, with his arm around you in the suffering – on the bathroom floor as you bled, in the hospital bed

as you delivered your dead baby, in bed with you as tears poured down your cheeks in the silent night, in the cemetery as you buried your baby, and on each birthday that will follow. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

If you are like many of us in the United States, we often hear the word "heaven" and think of angels, wings, white clouds and lots of harps. To me, this sounds like a long and boring eternity. The book [Heaven](#) by Randy Alcorn truly helped me understand eternity more. The New Heavens and New Earth and new city with Christ will be here on this beautifully renewed earth. This book is filled with scriptural references which offer hope and clarity on what The New Heavens and New Earth might be like. People will say things to you about your child getting "wings" or becoming an angel. While these statements are meant to give comfort, they aren't true. And I encourage you to seek truth in God's Word because you will find the most comfort there.

My prayer for you and me:

Lord, How is this my story? I had hopes and dreams for my baby and in a moment, my baby's future on earth was snatched away. I see other pregnant women and feel jealousy and sadness wishing I was still pregnant and was holding my baby. This experience of losing my baby will steal my innocence but cannot steal my Hope in You. I am told to guard my heart from others, but not from You, Christ. I welcome You into this pain. I am angry, hurt, feel forgotten, and question how I can ever trust again. Will you reveal to me how to walk this life without my baby in my arms? My mind knows Your truth and my heart is catching up daily. I know you haven't fully prepared me for losing my baby. If you would've prepared me, then why would I need You? I desperately need you, Lord. I will proclaim your goodness in everything, even when I deliver death. Give purpose to this suffering and use my life for Your Glory. You reign supreme. I long for your return, to settle the score, and for no more suffering. Amen.



*Time never heals wounds like God does.
-Ann Voskamp-*

FINDING HOPE (continued)

These sermons help us walk through pain and suffering.

- o [Praying Our Tears, Timothy Keller](#)
- o [Questions on Suffering, Timothy Keller](#)

These articles answer some questions about what the gospel and Jesus Christ has to do with miscarriage and child loss.

- o [The Baby Given to the Women Who Miscarry](#)
- o [The Fruit of Grief in Miscarriage](#)
- o [We Lost a Child but Gained Something Greater](#)

These podcasts feature interviews with moms who have lost children and offer the Hope of Christ.

- o [God Centered Mom Podcast: Amy Balentine of You Made Me Mom](#)
- o [Heart Lessons Podcast: Kelly Gerken of Sufficient Grace Ministries](#)
- o [Inspired to Action: Krista Black Gifford of Heart Made Whole book](#)
- o [Surviving Sarah Podcast: Sarah Rieke of Heart Lessons Podcast](#)
- o [Through the Lens Podcast: Child Loss Podcast](#)
- o [The Happy Hour Podcast: Tova Sido author of Borrowed Courage](#)

These books feature moms who have lost a child and who's strength to carry on is in Christ.

- o [I Will Carry You](#)
- o [Sufficient Grace](#)
- o [Hope for Today, Promises for Tomorrow](#)
- o [Empty Arms](#)
- o [Heart Made Whole](#)
- o [Grieving the Child I Never Knew](#)
- o [Rare Bird](#)
- o [I Will Love You Forever: A True Story about Finding Life, Hope & Healing While Caring for Hospice Babies](#)

If you would like to speak to someone about knowing Christ more, contact the counselors at [Focus on the Family](#). You can also contact [me](#).

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Seeking out counseling and outside help is always a good, helpful and healthy idea. Finding a counselor that shares your belief system is important. If you are a Christian and believe that your baby's soul is in eternity, then finding a Christian counselor helps fundamentally establish that you and your counselor are on the same page. If you and your counselor agree on where your child resides and that you will be reunited with him/her for all of eternity, then you will find healing through counseling. Christian counseling services can be found at [Focus on the Family](#).

Some women experience trauma when reentering a room or space in the clinic or hospital where your baby was delivered. It may be difficult to return to the space where you were told your baby's heart had stopped beating. For some, that space is your bathroom at home. For others that space is the hospital delivery room. If you delivered your baby at home, you have the ability to change the paint color or look of space, which might help with recovery. Deeming a space as a sacred space rather than a space that is full of tragic memories helps for others. There can also be great restoration in staying with your doctor and entering the spaces that brought destruction. You may be surprised how revisiting your delivery room in the hospital can bring healing as well. If your doctor's office or sonogram room brings back terrible memories, perhaps consider changing doctors.

There are several different types of therapy that might be good options for you to explore to find deeper healing, especially if you are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some include:

- o [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing \(EMDR\)](#)
- o [Inner Healing Prayer Counseling](#)
- o [Cognitive Behavior Therapy \(CBT\)](#)
- o [Hypnotherapy](#)
- o [Holy Yoga](#)

Life Line

If you are having feelings that you cannot or do not want to go on with your life:

- o Call the US National Suicide Prevention Hotline 24/7 support 800.273.8255.
- o Text "connect" to 74174.

LIFE-LIMITING DIAGNOSIS

If you are facing a life-limiting diagnosis and are not in labor yet, there are amazing resources you can use to help create birth plans and plans for your memoirs. Know that until your child's story is written, we do not know the plans for their life. Your child may die in the womb, die at birth or may live for a while, perhaps days, months or years breathing. Carrying your child until birth is a delicate dance between mourning and celebration. Know right now, your baby is with you. You are mothering him/her.

Your health care provider might have suggested that you terminate this child – that this might be easier or more merciful. Prior to doing this, I encourage you to connect with another mother or two who have faced a life-limiting diagnosis. Listen to her story. Hear her child's story. There are many organizations, listed below, that will connect you to willing families who will walk with you through this journey.

Receiving a second medical opinion is a great idea as well. If you have been told that your life (mom) is in jeopardy, the below care services would be able to support you through your decision making process. I am also willing to speak to you. Feel free to [contact](#) me directly.

The most important thing you need to understand is that you have many options for yourself and your baby. You can manage and handle this diagnosis and care for this baby with the proper support in place. Furthermore, you can experience growth and even joy through carrying your baby until birth. Leave no stone unturned – get all of the details about your baby and allow his/her story to be written.

Your baby is not a diagnosis. They are your baby. And you are their mother.

Life-Limiting diagnosis help and palliative care:

- [Sufficient Grace Ministries](#)
- [Be Not Afraid](#)
- [Perinatal Hospice](#)
- [Alexandra's House](#)

Organ Donation:

- [Purposeful Gift](#)
- [Life Share of Oklahoma](#)

Purchasing clothing for my son, [Simon](#), who was diagnosed with trisomy 13 in utero was one of the hardest things I did before his birth. I bought him one outfit to wear and one to be cremated in. I had both of them embroidered with his first and middle name with a cross. Below is a photo of the two I bought from Amazon which opened up in the front with ease so we don't have to pull them over his head.



FOR DADS

Dads, you have been chosen for this. You have been hand-selected and this is your opportunity to lead during a very difficult time. Lean into your instincts as a protector, a comforter and a provider. Be open-handed throughout every step of the way, accepting what this journey will teach you. It will be hard, but you will come out on the other side a refined person if you walk with God through this pain and suffering.

Here are the lessons I learned during our journey with our sons, Simon and Thomas, and also through talking to many other parents who have suffered losses of children for various reasons.

Be a broken rock.

When we learned of our son, [Simon's](#), diagnosis, one of the things I heard repeatedly from folks was, "Be a rock for Amy." Or "I'm sure you will be the rock your family needs you to be." Or some version of that. What is warm and comforting about a cold, hard, inanimate rock? Also, I didn't feel like a rock. I felt scared, powerless and weak. Amy needed to hear that I felt scared, powerless and weak, because she felt the same way. This bonded us together in ways we couldn't have achieved if I had acted like some cold, hard, inanimate rock!

When you allow yourself to break open, you might be amazed at the treasure you find. If you Google a [photo](#) of a geode, you'll see that it looks like nothing more than a cold, hard, basic rock on the outside. Not until you crack it open do you find its beauty, its story, and its value. So as hard as it might be, and as new as it might be, open yourself up. Be a broken rock. You'll be amazed at the treasure you will find and share with your spouse/partner and others.

Expect to grieve differently.

Your wife/ partner is going to grieve differently than you are. She has been wired and created in a way that makes this harder for her than it is for you. This is going to make her pain feel sharper and last longer than your pain. Don't rush her. Don't dismiss her lingering grief. Don't tell her it is "time to move on." When she sees other families and moms seemingly floating through life without the same problems as her, this may drive her into despair. Lean into this and ask her how this makes her feel. Remind her that this isn't your family's story, but God is doing something good. We can't see it, and we can't feel it. But we have to have hope.

Further reading and encouragement:

For further reading for dads, I invite you to read my words before, during and after the loss of our sons. It might help you to read the thoughts of someone who was wrestling with faith, grief, the words of others, how to support my wife, and so on. Also, I encourage you to write down your own thoughts and share them with your spouse/partner. Each title below is a link to my writings.

Our plans are not our own	On heaven
PB&J	On fear
Quick update during week 23	Update during week 35
Q&A part 1	On faith
Q&A part 2	What I'm thankful for today
Q&A part 3	Hold and take Simon home, dear Savior
Q&A part 4 (Amy) Q&A part 4 (Adam)	On inspiration
Grace in the depths	On change
Quick update during week 27	On hope

FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

There are many ways you can support your family member or friend who is suffering the loss of their baby. Please look at the rest of this helpbook, specifically on The Sacred Hello page, to step in and do more tangible things if the parents do not have the time to go home themselves.

Here is a list of ways you can help. There are links below that expand further upon helpful and not so helpful things.

- Be present. Pray in the waiting room. Pray outside the hospital. Just be around.
- If you are invited to hold the baby, remember this is a precious child and it should be considered an honor to you to hold this baby no matter if the child is alive or dead.
- Bring baby's clothing/blankets to the hospital for the family, buy a small birthday cake and simply place baby's name in the middle, bring mom and dad a special shirt or sweater from their closet that could be worn in photos with their baby, bring baby's bassinet, bring a vase of flowers for the delivery room with the baby's initial or name on vase, bring a beautifully scented lotion for baby to use after delivery. Know that every family is different. Some of the items you gather for them might be exactly what they need while others they might not be the right fit. Don't take it personally if they don't want to use something you brought, this isn't the time to be offended. It is better to have more items to choose from. Remember this time is not about you, but about memory making for the parents and their child, whom you love and are grieving with.
- There are endless material gifts you can give to a family. Personalizing any gift with the child's name or initials is particularly special. Some families have chosen a color or symbol for their child. Giving a gift with the subtle color or symbol can often be a sweet way for the parent to have something that gently represents their baby. For further gift ideas, see below resources page under gift ideas.
- The loss (or diagnosis) is just the beginning stage of loss. Grief continues for a lifetime. Let me repeat that, grief continues for a lifetime. Grief has no deadline when it should be over or when the family should move on. This is their child they are losing. Know another child, should the family have more children, will not replace this child either or fix their family. Continue to check in – I challenge you to do this for the first year or beyond. Perhaps use the date the baby died as a day to check in. Simple messages saying, "I'm thinking of you" are perfect. Avoid asking an open ended and loaded question like, "How are you?" Remember holidays (Mother's Day, Father's Day, baby's due date, parent's birthdays, Thanksgiving, and Christmas to point out a few) might be extra hard as the parents imagined their little one with them. Someone is forever missing in their home. Give them grace if they choose to skip a holiday, to do something different for a holiday or, if they simply would rather be alone. Also know that baby showers might be off limits for some time for this mom. They are not doing this to hurt anyone, but to protect themselves and even to protect you from the unexpected emotions and words that might come out of their mouth. They are grieving – grief is tricky and unpredictable. Give them grace. Give them space. But do not abandon them.
- Know we love to talk about our baby. So please say his or her name freely. Bringing up his/her name is not hurtful to us – trust me, our babies are always on our minds, so you are never bringing them up when we aren't thinking about them. Their names are music to our longing ears.
- Ask what it was like to hold their baby.
- Remember parents never want their baby to be forgotten.
- Grandparents grieve too. Grandparents not only lost their grandchild, but they are witnessing their child grieve and are powerless. Grief upon, grief.

FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS (continued)

- Do not put parameters on a mourning period. Every person grieves differently and most do so for their entire lives. Grief comes in waves and sometimes it's high tide while other times it's low.
- Meal deliveries are obvious and good way to support a family – perhaps consider sending easy breakfast and lunch items in addition to the expected dinner delivery. Make it easy on families by giving them all food containers they can keep or dispose of after use – include a note explaining they can keep everything. This is also a good time to deliver a toy or book to living siblings. Leaving meals or even coffee on the porch and texting them to let them know it is there gives the family privacy. Some families want others in their home while others feel like they are entertaining by having people in their home and have to answer questions. Even when families want lots of people around, at some point, the couple does need to be alone to grieve and process together. This will strengthen their bond in marriage and allow them to be listen to the quiet and focus on grief.
- Considering dropping gifts on their front porch. Music, flowers, and books are great, quick drops that allows families to know you are thinking of them and care for them.

For further detailed things to do, not do, say, and not to say head to Stillbirthday.com.

- Helpful Article: [How to mourn with parents of stillborn and miscarried babies.](#)
- Helpful Article: [How to love someone who is grieving a child.](#)
- Helpful Article: [How to talk to a friend who is suffering.](#)

Gift Ideas for the bereaved parent:

- [Lullaby of Hope](#)
- [Laurelbox](#)
- [10+ meaningful gifts for the bereaved parent](#) (article with links)
- [Hope Box](#)
- [Still Standing: Ten Gift Ideas](#) (article with links)
- [Etsy: Miscarriage gift ideas](#)
- [Etsy: Infant loss gift ideas](#)

RESOURCES

Resources can also be found at www.youadememom.com under resources.

Photography

[Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep](#)

Ideas on how to Celebrate your Baby's Life

[Vapor and Mist Blog](#)

[Simon Balentine's Celebration of Life Video Tribute](#)

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support

[Still Birthday](#)

[Still Standing](#)

[Babies Remembered](#)

[Share](#)

[Faces of Loss](#)

Life-Limiting Support, Palliative and Hospice Care

[Sufficient Grace Ministries](#)

[Be Not Afraid](#)

[Perinatal Hospice](#)

[Alexandra's House](#)

Bereavement Cradles and Cots

[Bridget's Cradles](#)

[CuddleCot](#)

[Caring Cradle](#)

Organ Donation

[Purposeful Gift](#)

[Life Share of Oklahoma](#)

Bereavement Care

[Lullaby of Hope](#)

[Hope Mommies](#)

[Molly Bears](#)

[Project Heal](#)

Birth Announcement and Death/Funeral Information Ideas

[Balentine Memoirs](#)

[Still Standing Magazine](#)

Funeral Assistance

[Heaven's Gain](#)

[Titan's Light](#)

[Angel Names Association](#)

Songs for Suffering

[Thy Will](#)

[Audrey's Song](#)

[Hug Him Once for Me](#)

[Held](#)

[Oceans](#)

[Garden](#)

[Relentless](#)

[Red Sea Road](#)

[Wonderfully Made](#)

Counseling

[Focus on the Family](#)

Hope in Christ

[Heaven](#) (book)
[Praying Our Tears, Timothy Keller](#) (sermon)
[Questions on Suffering, Timothy Keller](#) (sermon)
[Isaiah 55](#) (verse)
[Luke 6](#) (verse)
[Psalm 139](#) (verse)
[Psalm 39](#) (verse)
[Jeremiah 1](#) (verse)
[Job 1](#) (verse)
[Revelation 21](#) (verse)

Postpartum Body Care

[Stillbirthday](#)
[Kellymom](#)
[No More Milk Tea](#)
[Le Leche League](#)

Gift Ideas

[Lullaby of Hope](#)
[Laurelbox](#)
[10+ meaningful gifts for the bereaved parent](#) (article with links)
[Hope Box](#)
[Still Standing: Ten Gift Ideas](#) (article with links)
[Etsy: Miscarriage gift ideas](#)
[Etsy: Infant loss gift ideas](#)

Helpful Articles

[The Baby Given to the Women Who Miscarry](#)
[The Fruit of Grief in Miscarriage](#)
[We Lost a Child but Gained Something Greater](#)
[How to mourn with parents of stillborn and miscarried babies.](#)
[How to love someone who is grieving a child.](#)
[How to talk to a friend who is suffering.](#)

Helpful Podcasts

[God Centered Mom Podcast: Amy Balentine of You Made Me Mom](#)
[Heart Lessons Podcast: Kelly Gerken of Sufficient Grace Ministries](#)
[Inspired to Action: Krista Black Gifford of Heart Made Whole book](#)
[Surviving Sarah Podcast: Sarah Rieke of Heart Lessons Podcast](#)
[Through the Lens Podcast: Child Loss Podcast](#)
[The Happy Hour Podcast: Tova Sido author of Borrowed Courage](#)

Helpful Books

[Heaven](#)
[I Will Carry You](#)
[Sufficient Grace](#)
[Hope for Today, Promises for Tomorrow](#)
[Empty Arms](#)
[Heart Made Whole](#)
[Grieving the Child I Never Knew](#)
[Rare Bird](#)
[Lament for a Son](#) (especially for dads)
[Walking with God through Pain and Suffering](#)
[I Will Love You Forever: A True Story about Finding Life, Hope & Healing While Caring for Hospice Babies](#)

Pregnancy After Loss

[Pregnancy After Loss Support](#)

THANK YOU FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for inviting me into this sacred time with your baby. Know that I am praying over each person who encounters this helpbook. You are loved, known and not alone.

If this resource guide has been helpful to you or perhaps brought you closer to Jesus Christ, I would love to hear from you. Please write me and share your story.

Love,

Amy Balentine

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www.youmadememom.com

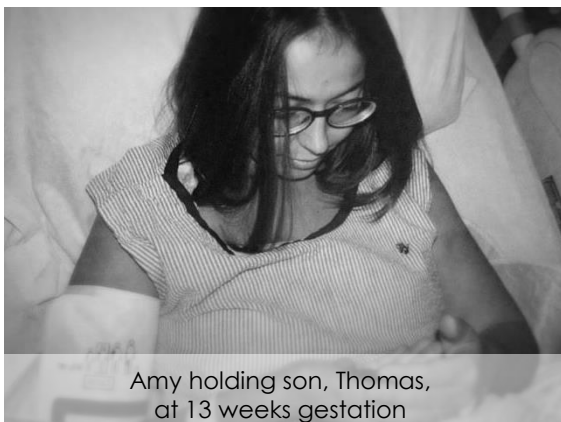
www.balentinememoirs.com



Amy, Founder & Mother/Baby Advocate
You Made Me Mom



Amy with her husband, Adam,
and sons Teddy and Simon in May 2014



Amy holding son, Thomas,
at 13 weeks gestation



Amy and Simon May 21, 2014

DONATIONS

The creator of this helpbook, [Amy Balentine](#), is the Founder and Mother/Baby Advocate of [You Made Me Mom](#), a support group for mothers who have lost babies during pregnancy or infancy. You Made Me Mom is a [501 \(c\)\(3\) non-profit organization](#) GuideStar recognized charity.

This resource guide is provided free of cost and was created to serve the bereaved family. If you feel compelled to donate to You Made Me Mom, please visit our [donation page](#) or [click here](#) to donate securely through PayPal or a credit card. Donations in the form of a check are accepted. [Contact us](#) directly to receive address information.

Donations to You Made Me Mom serve the bereaved family by:

- Providing printed materials to hospitals.
- Providing funding for [CuddleCots](#), which a cooling device for a baby who is stillborn or dies shortly after birth. Amy's family in conjunction with You Made Me Mom [donates at least one cot a year](#) to a hospital.
- Providing funding to organically expand You Made Me Mom support group ministry.
- Providing funding to open Kansas City's first bereavement suite inside of a hospital.
- Providing books, resources, and gifts to bereaved families.
- Providing basic operating costs for You Made Me Mom.

You can also support You Made Me Mom through your Amazon purchases, which costs you nothing. Simply choose You Made Me Mom as your charitable organization at [smile.amazon.com](#). Remember to always make your purchases through [smile.amazon.com](#) for proceeds to benefit You Made Me Mom.

