



Pregnancy after Loss

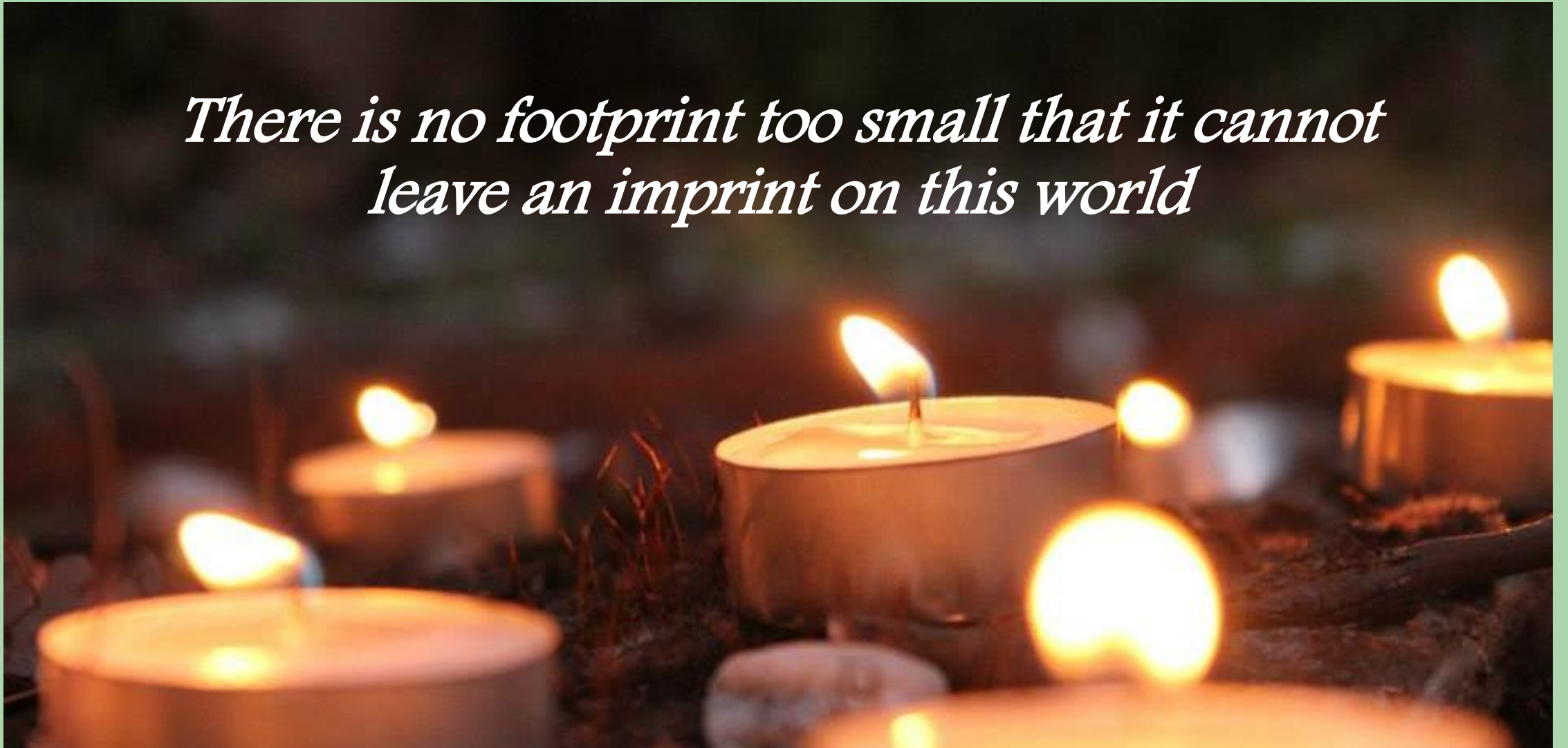
It's a long nine months with no guarantees



#ausperinatallossprofessionalsnetwork

@Robyn_McKinnon

*There is no footprint too small that it cannot
leave an imprint on this world*



What do we know.....



Baby Adam McKinnon - 17 weeks gestation

Each year in Australia, there are approximately 103,000 miscarriages
(abs.gov.au, 2017, Herbert, Lucke & Dobson, 2009)

1 in 4 women will experience a pregnancy loss.

The rate of stillbirth in Australia is 7.4 per 1000 births, which equals approximately 2,200 families each year. (Stillbirth CRE Australia, 2019)

To be or not to be pregnant again, that is the question...



- 66% women pregnant in first 12 months
(Wojcieszek AM, Boyle FM, Belizán JM, et al. 2018)
- 5 times increase of risk of stillbirth in a subsequent pregnancy if had a previous stillbirth (Lamont K, Scott NW, Jones GT, et al. 2015 & Malacova E, Regan A, Nassar N, et al, 2018)
- $9 + 3 = 12$

Emotional challenges in pregnancy after loss



- In addition to normal grief and worry, increased risk of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, with anxiety being the most pronounced.

(Heazell, 2016)

- Mothers often do not trust their own instincts, their bodies or their care givers
- May experience challenges with attachment to baby during pregnancy or postnatally
- Heightened emotions or detached emotions

TABLE 1.3 Developmental cycles of parenting during subsequent pregnancy

<i>Phases of Cycles</i>	<i>Smooth Conception</i>	<i>Break-up Blastocyte – 12 Weeks</i>	<i>Sorting Out 12–24 Weeks</i>	<i>Inwardizing 24–32 Weeks</i>	<i>Expansion 32 Weeks Labor/Birth</i>	<i>“Neurotic” Fitting Together PP–4 Weeks</i>
Subsequent pregnancy	<p>“Should we get pregnant? What if something happens?”</p> <p>“I feel empty. I need a baby!”</p> <p>“We have to get pregnant right away.”</p> <p>“I’m a failure.... I won’t ever have a baby.”</p> <p>“My body kills babies.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement can turn to panic and fear. • “Im going to lose this baby too” • Aware of every ache & pain while trying not to think about being pregnant • Continually checking for bleeding • Fear of moving her body • Need to hear heartbeat or see baby on scan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe I really am pregnant • Fear of losing this baby too. Is this baby OK? • Mother’s movements can be frozen, unable to deep breath or touch abdomen. • Fetal movement both reassuring yet not—is it too much or not enough? • Sorting out this is not the deceased baby causing loyalty to the deceased baby to surface • Conflict in attaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to rush through this time. • If well supported it can be a time of reduced anxiety—if the baby is born now parents know he/she can survive in NICU • Baby’s movements begin to be more predictable so a good time to help separate the personalities of the babies • Narrow life, turn more inward • Increased anxiety can cause contractions, especially around time of previous loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be the first time they reach out for help as reality of the pregnancy is “full front.” • “I really am going to have a baby!” • Anxiety can rise; “Get the baby out while he/she is still alive!” • Have to face labor • Often increased grief over the deceased baby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New layer of grief can surface; see what they missed in the death of their other baby and the deceased baby is still not here • Grief is still there and can be more intense, surprising to many • Normal postpartum issues can be alarming • Breast feeding can be more difficult; they have to keep this baby alive • Fear this baby will die too can cause parents to be afraid to sleep • Trust in the world again takes a long time
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can feel the same or be asynchronous because of past loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear to touch partner • May not want to talk about the baby • Fearful every time the phone rings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued fear of loss • Ambivalent about attachment • May seem unsupportive, not wanting to think about pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May withdraw feel even more left out • Struggle to know what to do with feelings in order to protect their partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often first encounter if/when they come to birth class • May be first time they get in touch with their grief as reality of previous loss becomes real 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be very optimist during the pregnancy and fall apart after the baby is born alive • Same fears that this baby might die too • Can take a long time to trust again

So... how do we best support families experiencing a pregnancy after loss?



- LISTEN & EMPOWER!
- Consistent & timely psychosocial care
 - Flexible & additional appointments
 - Care teams with same provider
- Acknowledgement of baby who has died
 - Compassionate care
 - Give space & permission for grief
 - Whole family – not just the mum!
- Know the difference between grief & PND
 - Putting our own oxygen masks on too!

A useful resource for families

Free and available to download at
www.perinatallossprofessionals.com.au



Australian Perinatal Loss
PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

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COUNSELLING & COACHING SERVICES

PREGNANCY AFTER LOSS

<h3>IN YOUR TIME</h3> <p>Deciding when is the right time to try to have a baby after you have experienced a baby die is a really individual decision. There is no timeline for grief, but finding a place in the journey when you individually and as a couple feel able to start that journey again together is important. Of course, this might also be determined by medical advice.</p>	<h3>3 + 9 = 1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY</h3> <p>Sometimes, you might find yourself pregnant in the first few months after your baby has died. This can sometimes mean as you head towards the due date of your new baby, you might also find yourself heading towards the milestone of the 1st anniversary of your babies death, bringing a mix of emotions. This can be a bittersweet time for some.</p>
<h3>MANAGING OTHERS EXPECTATIONS ON HOW YOU "SHOULD FEEL"</h3> <p>You must be so excited.... is often just one of the comments people hear, but what if you feel a mix of emotions about this new baby? It is okay if you find yourself experiencing other emotions too, and sometimes we need to educate those around us about this and what you need to hear from them that would help you feel more safe and supported.</p>	<h3>NEW PREGNANCY NEW RULES</h3> <p>One of the hardest parts of a new pregnancy is trying to not compare and worry that the same thing will happen again which is easy said than done, whilst balancing the knowledge that you may not feel truly safe until baby is finally earthside. Finding a mantra or saying that can guide you through this pregnancy such as 'new pregnancy new rules' can help to acknowledge the new path you are on.</p>
<h3>CREATE SPACE FOR GRIEF</h3> <p>Be gentle with yourself. It often feels like your heart is torn between two. The love you feel for the baby you never met but forever hold in your heart and dreams, and for the one you so dearly hold your breathe for, hoping this time you will get to bring home at the end of 9 months alive. You might find unexpected emotions and grief throughout this journey. If you can, allow yourself to be present with them.</p>	<h3>FIND A GOOD SUPPORT TEAM</h3> <p>After pregnancy loss, finding trust in one's body, one's instincts, and sometimes in other people including caregivers is not something that comes easy at all, and understandably, this can add a sense of anxiety to a new pregnancy. Finding a good team of support around you throughout your pregnancy to medically and emotionally support you can be vital to guide you through the journey.</p>
<h3>INTRODUCING YOUR BABIES</h3> <p>For some parents, having a way to "introduce" or connect their babies to each other may be an important part of the journey. How each person does this might look different. For some it can be acknowledging their new baby as a "rainbow" baby, or a present or item of clothing or toy passed on from the baby who has died to their sibling, that is later then shared as part of the story to help them know of their older sibling who they never met.</p>	<h3>PARENTING AFTER LOSS</h3> <p>Sometimes after you have held your breathe for possibly what felt like a whole eternity, the sheer relief of baby being alive and home for some may bring another wave of grief. Along, with a mix of hormones and tiredness, there may be an array of emotions that come up as you wrestle with adjusting to a newborn and begin experiencing milestones that perhaps you didn't get the opportunity to do before with your other child. Remember to breathe, and acknowledge what a journey you have been on and it is okay to feel this way.</p>

If you are experiencing a pregnancy after a loss and would like some additional support to guide you through, we can offer you face to face and telehealth counselling appointments.

Please call us on (03) 6701 5227 or robyn@rmcounselling.com.au to make an appointment

A useful resource for health professionals

Open to all disciplines including students who have an interest in supporting families who have experienced perinatal loss.





Miracles do happen...



Australian Perinatal Loss PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

www.perinatallossprofessionals.com.au

BY
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CONSULTANCY
& COUNSELLING SERVICES

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