



PAYING IT FORWARD HEALS

I am sharing my story because my goal is to enable my loss to help ease another person's pain. If this article helps even one person get through their loss – it was all worth it.

I remember when it happened.

I was looking for someone to hold on to; someone who had been through it, to hold me and understand my pain. No one in my family had ever experienced this before. I figured that some journeys were meant to be traveled alone. This journey was a dark one.

Initially, I had no idea that women experience this often. I looked to friends and family for support, but

nothing seemed to help.

Miscarriage. The whole concept was unfamiliar.

“At least it was early on...”

“Thank G-d you know that you can become pregnant...”

Although they would attempt to ease my pain, inevitably they would say things that hurt me. I recall scouring the internet for inspiration; for someone who had experienced

a similar ordeal so that I could gain strength. I came up empty-handed, and that led to feelings of loneliness.

We had sat anxiously, waiting in the doctor's office for the ultrasound to begin.

Silence.

“Uhh...Is everything ok?” we asked.

Silence for what felt like an eternity. I was exploding inside from the suspense.



I reflected on the fact that my pregnancy had been unusual. I hadn't been nauseous. I had actually felt fine. Many of my friends reported having very easy pregnancies, and I was so excited as I mistakenly thought that I too was capable of having a smooth, sickness-free nine months. I realized now that the reason I had felt fine was because something was not fine.

Shock, disbelief, denial, anger and sadness took over in quick succession.

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"....I don't see a heartbeat," the doctor slowly responded.

My heart stopped.

More silence.

Then tears flooded my face. I could feel the pain in my chest. It was rising into my throat, and I was having trouble breathing. "Bring it back! Bring it back!" I desperately thought to myself.

Maybe this was a mistake, maybe it was too early. I actually waited a few weeks to make sure. Yet, at a later appointment it was confirmed.

With a cracking voice, the doctor said, "No... I'm sorry but it's just not going to happen. You're just not going to get a baby out of this one."

My head started to spin as the following thoughts ran through my mind over and over: How could my body have betrayed me? I took sterling care of myself: I exercised; I ate healthily; I got rest. I never drank coffee or alcohol! What did I do wrong? I began to wonder if it was the non-organic shampoo and body wash I used. I was desperate for an explanation.

The pain of the D and C was terrible. The doctors worried about the excessive bleeding, only to be trumped by my excessive sadness. The physical recovery was hard, but the emotional recovery was even harder.

For many weeks I had trouble hiding my true feelings of pain in public. I would hold back tears at friends' Shabbos tables, at the supermarket, and at work; only to let them free flow out at night as my pillow was my trusted and drenched tear-catcher.

My husband and family members were as supportive as possible. But they could not take away my pain and feel it for me.

There was *nothing* I had done wrong.

It was a fluke. That was it. This just happens.

There were a few things that got me through this difficult time period. The first was the words of the doctor. "You wouldn't have wanted whatever this pregnancy was." These words stung at the time, but later brought me comfort.

Comments such as, "I love you and I'm sorry," or "I don't know what to say, but I am here for you," comforted me.

Other things that gave me strength were small gestures from friends and family. They brought over hot drinks and talked, or gave small gifts with a card or note. One of the most impactful gestures was the following poem that my brother's wife sent me, which was published in an A TIME manuscript.

Footprints in the Sand

By Mary Stevenson

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with the L-rd,

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand;

One belonging to me, and one to Hashem.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.



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I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,

Especially at the very lowest and saddest times,

There was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the L-rd about it.

"Hashem, you said once I decided to follow You,

You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,

There was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you.

Never, ever, during your trials and tests.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Just like the person in this poem, I felt as though I was traveling a dark journey by myself. Although we are never truly alone, there is something positive about having to travel a path no one you know has traveled. You have an opportunity to pave the way for the next person, and subsequently their road can be smoother. This heals.

A close friend of mine, who knew that I had a miscarriage, confided in me when she was experiencing the same thing. I printed the poem and brought it to her doorstep with flowers. I sent her dinner. Paying it forward helped me, as I recalled and cried about my memories during the entire car ride to her house. It helped me heal, and stitch up my pain. I gave to her, but in reality, she gave to me.

I don't know why this happened, and I am not sure I ever will, but the lesson I learned was that paying it forward heals. ■

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“To change a person's life, start with the most ordinary ingredients. You can start with what you've got.”