

Medical Professionals

September 2018, Volume 24, Issue 9

The First Lesson

By Mani

I have written and deleted this article at least twenty times.

When Janis asked me to write something for *Glow in the Woods*, I said yes immediately. It is an honor to be allowed into this space, and one I don't take lightly. I hope that as you read, you know that I realize my words are pale and weak. Please forgive me. They are all that I have.

If I tried to make a list of all the reasons I decided to become a midwife, it would stretch for miles. Each reason I could come up with would only lead to more reasons. To condense them into something less time consuming to read, I'll boil it down to the broad specifics. It's simple. I love pregnancy. I love birth. I love women. I love babies. I wanted to provide care that was both comprehensive and kind. I was called.

In the beginning, the lessons seemed simple. First, I learned to chart. I learned how to take a woman's blood pressure and pulse. I dipped urine, checked for swelling, measured fundal heights, and took fetal heart tones. Moving forward, I learned to palpate a baby's position within their mother's womb with my hands, how to distinguish heads from bottoms, anterior from posterior, and how to estimate fetal weight. I drew blood and sent in lab specimens. I studied, and when I was done with that, I studied some more.

About a year into my apprenticeship, just as I was gaining confidence and feeling sure of myself, I started participating in the care of a new client, Janis. I didn't know it then, but the real lessons were about to begin.

Continued on page 6

CONTACT INFORMATION REQUEST

Brief Encounters needs your help! Please consider sharing the contact information of your doctors, nurses, etc. at the following link:
<http://bit.ly/2MFD8Gs>

The board will use this information to connect and ensure they are aware of meetings and resources provided by Brief Encounters.

In this issue...

"The First Lesson," by Mani, page 1
The Teeny Tears Mission, page 3
Our Children Remembered and Love Gifts, pages 4 & 5
"To The Nurses Who Brought Me Back Into Life", By Rachel, page 6
MISS Foundation Compassionate Bereavement Care® Certification, page 6
Meeting schedule, page 7

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

Upcoming Events

HAYDEN'S HELPING HANDS

8TH ANNUAL HANDS ON HOPE BENEFIT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2017

6:30 pm – 10:30 PM

Uptown Billiards Club, Portland, Oregon

Details at HaydensHelpingHands.com

Hayden's Helping Hands is a 501(c)3 non-profit foundation dedicated to financially assist parents with the medical expenses after the birth of a stillborn baby. It will forever be our goal to stand by families who were not able to welcome home a child due to a stillbirth.

NORA MADELYN FUND

4TH ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE WALK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2017

Registration at 1 pm, Walk at 2 pm

Providence Newberg Medical Center, Newberg

All are welcome. The 1.6-mile route is stroller and wheelchair accessible. No dogs, please.

There is no fee to participate in the walk. Donations to the Nora Madelyn Fund are gratefully appreciated to help continue our outreach and community support programs, including this walk as well as the annual Remembrance Ceremony and butterfly release in July.

Register at noramadelyn.org. All participants must register and acknowledge the waiver. Register by 9/15 to receive a walk t-shirt.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS REMEMBRANCE WALK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2017

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

Remember and honor our children with a 2-mile neighborhood walk to visit the Portland Wishing Tree. Children and infants welcome. Coffee and donuts before as we gather for the walk. Suggested donation of \$20.00 per family. All proceeds go directly to Brief Encounters.

LIGHTS OF LOVE

INTERNATIONAL WAVE OF LIGHT

MORRISON BRIDGE LIGHTING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2017

GATHER AT 6:45

CANDLE LIGHTING AT 7:00 PM

Join us at the Eastbank Esplanade (just north of Fire Station #21 located at 5 SE Madison St, Portland) for a candlelight vigil to remember our babies and view Morrison Bridge illuminated in pink and blue for PAIL Remembrance Day. Bridge lighting organized by *Lights of Love International Wave of Light*

From the editor...

Compassionate care during Charlie's time in the NICU made all the difference for me as an about-to-be-bereaved mother. Kindness and love shown by medical staff were precious gifts. Our doctors and nurses encouraged us to talk to her, to bathe and dress her and to hold her as long as we could and wanted. At the very end, a nurse, who today I can't remember her name exactly, but I recall her kind face and energy, offered me my one and only opportunity to change my little girl's diaper. It was a moment of normalcy amidst pure agony. That nurse gave me a gift in that moment. A memory of a simple act of motherhood that I am so very grateful for.

Shannon Stemm Patel
mother of Charlie and her big sis



Upcoming newsletter topics...

October

EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Early pregnancy loss is so often misunderstood by those that haven't been forced to bear it. Please consider sharing your experience with us.

November

HOLIDAYS

It's one of those times that seem completely impossible. How do you celebrate the holidays with an empty space in your home and heart? Please share how you have "survived" the holidays after a loss to encourage those parents who will be experiencing their first year without their baby.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome and encourage submissions to the newsletter. Submissions may be published anonymously if requested. Sharing your story can provide healing and comfort for you – and other parents. The editor reserves the right to edit and select from the materials submitted. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Brief Encounters, but those of the individual authors. Please send titled articles and submissions to: newsletter@briefencounters.org

Newsletter printing provided by AnchorPointe

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*We miss them all the time because we
love them all the time.*

-An Unexpected Family Outing

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: www.briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Facebook: [private/closed groups Brief Encounters](https://www.facebook.com/private/closed/groups/Brief-Encounters-Pregnancy-and-Infant-Loss-Support-and-Brief-Encounters-Parenting-After-Loss)

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss

Established in 1992 by a group of parents, Brief Encounters is a non-profit, non-sectarian support group for parents whose babies have died before, during, or after birth. At informal, mutually supportive meetings, bereaved parents and their families share their stories, discuss issues that arise from pregnancy and infant loss, and remember their children. Through talking or just listening, we learn what grief is --- and how, through understanding and caring, we heal.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AND STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair: Rachel Murfitt

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HOSPITAL LIAISONS

Raina Dey, Fawn Harris, Cheryl Miller, Rachel Murfitt, Shannon Stemm Patel

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Monica Thompson (Spanish interpreter)

BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are conducted monthly each third Monday at Sunnyside Community House, 3520 SE Yamhill, Portland. Those interested in volunteering are welcome to attend. Please email inquiries to RachelM@briefencounters.org.

LOVE GIFTS

Love Gift submission form available on page 5. For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 10th of the prior month.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR REMOVAL FROM MAILING LIST

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED: INCLUSIONS OR CHANGES

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at megan.k.wright@comcast.net. For children to be remembered in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive your request by the 10th of the prior month.

SAFE ARRIVALS

Please send Safe Arrivals to newsletter@briefencounters.org.

The First Lesson

Continued from page 1

One of the things I most love and value about midwifery care is the amount of time we spend with our clients during the prenatal period, and the relationships that are forged during those precious hours. As the months ticked by, and Janis grew round and ripe, I was not just becoming acquainted with her vital signs and the contours of her belly, I was becoming acquainted with a whole woman. I was growing to love her, and growing to love her baby boy who kicked and squirmed under my hands at each visit.

The midwife/client relationship, when healthy, is like all other healthy relationships, in that it is symbiotic. Midwives do not simply care for their clients, providing support and information, they receive, as well. As we teach our clients, they are teaching us. One thing I have found to be consistently true in every area of my life, is that the best teachers are often the ones who are willing to take you to places you didn't want to go.

There is no training in the world that will prepare you for the moment when everything changes. There is no course of study, simulated scenario, or book that can prepare your mind and heart for the time when a pregnancy that has been textbook perfect ends with a dead baby. The only teachers who can convey the necessary lessons in this arena are the mothers and babies themselves.

The primal part of a person, that part which does not give a damn what you do for a living and what your responsibilities entail, will insist that you feel this pain, that you grieve the loss of this baby, that your heart shreds under the steely blades of a grieving mother's keening. The primal Self is wise. It understands this need, and if we don't honor its call, it will do everything in its power to force the issue. To disconnect from this part of ourselves is to become something less. Less than human, less than loving, less than empathic. A lesser care provider.

Meanwhile, though not living, there is still a baby. There is still a birth to attend, and still a client and her family who need you. They deserve full attention. Every ounce of love and compassion that you have must go to them. There will never be anything more important than serving this family during this time, and doing it with your whole heart. While you can't let go of the primal, grieving Self, you must keep it in check, and find appropriate outlets for it. It is a balancing act, because families who have had a baby die deserve to have a care provider who shows emotion. They deserve to know that their baby mattered. On the other hand, it is not about you, and you cannot make it about you. This is solely about the family you are serving. This is their baby, their experience, their pain.

It has been over a year and a half since I attended the birth of Janis's beautiful son, Ferdinand. I had the privilege of knowing her son with an intimacy that not many people did, listening to his heartbeat and feeling him kick, during his living months inside of her, watching his birth, and then holding him close to say hello and goodbye. I am so very humbled and honored by both of them for granting me this gift.

Since then, I have continued to walk with Janis. Not as a teacher, not as a student, just as a woman walking with another woman. Sometimes I feel as though I am stumbling along the path, tripping over roots and rocks in the dark, but I am grateful for every step. I know I am lucky to be walking with her, regardless of the terrain. Last month, Janis once again honored me by inviting me into her birthing space. I was present as a doula and friend to help welcome her youngest daughter, Lyra Phoenix.

It just so happened that the end of my time as a student midwife closely coincided with Lyra's birth. The first lesson is now complete. The first lesson is that we know so much less than we delude ourselves into believing we know about birth, and life, and death, and we must never stop seeking, must never believe ourselves to have all of the answers. If I am to take anything from this lesson, let it be that I remain open and receptive, humble, and in servitude to mothers and babies. The first lesson is a lesson of love.

Originally posted on GlowInTheWoods.com

The Teeny Tears Mission

Teeny Tears is a service organization that provides tiny flannel diapers and mini-blankets at no charge to hospitals, funeral homes, and bereavement support organizations, for families that have suffered the loss of a preemie or micropreemie child through stillbirth or NICU loss. Many of these angel babies are far too small for even the very tiniest commercial diapers.

Grieving parents often feel very lost, alone, and confused. Every special effort to honor their loss goes a long way. Teeny Tears gifts, made with love, tell parents that someone understands that their child existed, that they are special, loved, real, and that they matter. The love that goes into these gifts tells a grieving parent that someone understands that their loss is tremendous. Because a "person's a person, no matter how small".

The need for Teeny Tears clothing is vast and endless. Gone are the days when angel babies must be left with naked bums because there is nothing suitable. No longer must nurses try to fashion a "diaper" out of cotton balls and tape. These little diapers offer dignity and modesty to the tiniest angel babies. Teeny Tears diapers are soft against delicate skin and can be used to enhance photographic memories as well as offer dignity and modesty for the tiniest angels. For babies too small to wear these diapers, mini-blankets with hats are the perfect clothing for their itty bitty bodies.

Individuals are invited to participate by donating fabric, cutting Teeny Tears approved patterns, or by sewing along in the comfort of their home.

Teeny Tears items are always donated at no charge for any and all hospitals and funeral homes in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

If you would like to request items for a hospital or funeral home where you work or if you are a bereavement service organization, you can request items at TeenyTears.org.

Although some in our community volunteer for Teeny Tears, the organization is not affiliated with Brief Encounters.

Love Gifts

Donations to Brief Encounters help us to maintain our outreach to bereaved families through this newsletter, support groups, and other resources. Often Love Gifts are given by a family in memory of a child who has died. Others may wish to give a general donation, or give thanks for their own living children. We acknowledge gifts here without reference to amount given.

Brief Encounters is a non-profit 501©3 organization; therefore, no gift is too small. Each donation goes a long way toward printing brochures, maintaining the Brief Encounters website, providing monthly meetings, performing outreach to healthcare providers, mailing this newsletter, and many other ways we seek to care for bereaved parents.

This month, we thank the following donors for their generosity and love:

Ongoing Gift: The internet service for the Brief Encounters Web site is provided by the Wedin Ohana out of love for **Marina Alyssa Wedin**, beloved daughter and sister.

Love Gift Donation Form

Enclosed is a donation of: \$
In memory of:

Message to be included in the newsletter with your
donation acknowledgement:

Birth date: Death date:

Donated by:

Please consider your employer's matching gift program when submitting a donation. To receive a receipt, please provide your return address:

I wish for my gift to remain anonymous.

Name(s) of Parents:

Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors or omissions by sending your Love Gift message with this form. Please **do not** send your message separately to the editor or database manager. Thank you!

Send form and payment to: 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, OR 97212

Checks can be made payable to Brief Encounters.

For credit card payments, please provide the following:

Name as it appears on card:

Credit/Debit # ____ - ____ - ____ - ____ Exp date __ - __ CVC# ____

Please note: For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a particular newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 15th of the prior month (example: June 15th for July issue).

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS is a non-sectarian, non-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt under
Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3), Federal ID #45-4822283.

To The Nurses Who Brought Me Back Into Life

By Rachel

Thank you for saving me. Your skills and your knowledge saved me from following my daughter into death, but it was your compassion that guided me back towards life. The humanity you demonstrated is what brought me back into life; you made it possible to think about living after death.

For this, I owe you my love and deepest gratitude.

Thank you to the nurses who always made sure my husband had enough pillows when he had to stay in my hospital room. And thank you to the nurses who let him sneak popsicles from the freezer. You recognized that this was an experience for him and that he also needed your care.

Thank you to the nurse who came with me when they rushed me to the ICU from Labor & Delivery. Thank you for being my advocate when I couldn't speak up because I was too busy fighting for my life. I'm not sure I would have lived to see my daughter if you hadn't been there.

Thank you to the nurse who taught me how to fill my bra with ice packs when I needed to suppress my milk after my daughter was stillborn. I also want to thank you for holding me as I wept at the burden I could not release. Your embrace did nothing to lighten the heaviness in my breasts, but you brought a glimmer of light into my very dark world.

Thank you to the nurse in the ICU who came in to clean me up after my daughter died. Thank you for taking the time to help me wash my face and brush my hair. I can still sense how it felt to have you smooth my hair back into a ponytail, it was a touch that wasn't a poke or a prod. It was a gesture.

Thank you to the nurse who crouched by my bedside and asked me about Dorothy. Thank you for knowing how important it was for her to be real even though she was gone. I will never forget the way you leaned in, just like we were friends, and asked: "Do you want to tell me about her?"

Thank you to the nurse who dressed my baby and took her picture. Thank you for making sure her hat didn't cover her eyes and that her hands were positioned so gracefully. That picture means the world to us.

Thank you to the nurses who took the time to read my chart before shift change. I want to thank you for learning our names and learning the name of our daughter before you walked into my room. It meant so much to hear our names spoken together. It made us feel like a family.

Thank you to the nurse who slipped quietly into my room on my first night without Dorothy so that you could hold my hand. Thank you for whispering to me your story about your own child who was born still. Thank you for being the first person to lead me out of the isolation one feels after losing a child. You were too good to be true that night. I'm still not convinced I didn't dream you up just so I could make it through that first lonely night.

Finally, I want to thank the nurses who saw me through my pregnancy with Dorothy's little sister. Even after Frances came into the world, you never forgot that someone came

before her. You knew that the birth of Frances did not make me a first-time mother. It made me a mother of two.

Gratefully,

The One You Brought Back

Originally posted on StillStanding.com

Rachel Whalen is a mother, wife, and Kindergarten teacher from Barre, Vermont. Her life's work is to keep the memory of her daughter, Dorothy, alive through words both spoken and written. Rachel shares her family's journey through loss and all that has come after on her blog: An Unexpected Family Outing.

Compassionate Bereavement Care® Certification - The Art of Grief Counseling Informed by Science

*"Recently, I had an accident and broke my arm (I am fine, just frustrated as I learn ambidexterity!). While in excruciating pain, I realized this truth: A broken arm needs good support to heal. The broken bone cannot heal without good support and time. We cannot rush the broken bone to heal. Now, replace 'broken arm' with 'broken heart.' A broken heart needs good support to heal. The broken heart cannot heal without good support and time. We cannot rush the broken heart to heal. Be someone's compassionate cast. Study to become a certified Compassionate Bereavement Care Provider." Joanne Cacciatore, PhD,
MISS Foundation Founder*

Are you a mental health provider, social worker, psychologist, nurse, physician, spiritual leader/counselor, school counselor, or other licensed professional who wishes to learn how to truly help those suffering from the traumatic death of a loved one? Do you work with bereaved parents or grieving family members after suicide, homicide, accidents, or other losses?

You can help in your community. The MISS Foundation, an international nonprofit group which aids parents whose children die, and the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Family Trust receive calls and emails from around the world every day looking for competent clinicians who can help guide them through the dark abyss of traumatic grief. Unfortunately, there are few clinicians who specialize in this very unique and painful type of loss. Our foundations are partnering to bring this important, timely intensive four-day training in traumatic grief to providers around the world. It's a rare opportunity to become a Certified Provider in Compassionate Bereavement Care (R), a mindfulness-based non-medicalized approach to traumatic grief, with trainings held in stunning Sedona, Arizona (30 CEUs offered). The next Compassionate Bereavement Care Training and Certification Program for providers will be held September 20-23rd, 2018 at Los Abrigados Resort in Sedona AZ. For more information or to apply, please visit www.missfoundation.org.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS MEETINGS

Our support group meetings are a safe place to talk about your child, your loss, and your grief. You are welcome to share, or just listen. A facilitator guides the meetings.

For more information or directions, please call 503-699-8006.

PARENTS OF INFANT LOSS & PREGNANCY LOSS, INCLUDING EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

September 10, October 8

Contact: Rachel Murfitt (RachelM@briefencounters.org)

This group also meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm

September 25, October 23

Contact: Daniele (DanieleR@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF PREGNANCY INTERRUPTION DUE TO MEDICAL REASONS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you. Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00pm

Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00pm

September 27, October 25

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF SUBSEQUENT PREGNANCIES, ADOPTIONS, & PARENTS TRYING TO CONCEIVE

Babies welcome. Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00pm

September 24, October 22

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

All meetings held at The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

RESOURCES

Brief Encounters Online

WEBSITE

The Brief Encounters website www.briefencounters.org is a great resource, including past newsletter issues, upcoming events and announcements, helpful links, numerous resources, support meeting information, etc.

TWITTER

@briefencount (twitter.com/briefencount) is the Twitter handle to follow for news and helpful links and information about pregnancy loss, infant death, and grief resources.

FACEBOOK

Brief Encounters Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and *Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss* are the names of our private/closed Facebook mutual support groups. Because they are private, each group requires approval to join, and posts are hidden from anyone who is not a group member.

Please remember to take the usual precautions to protect yourself when using any social media outlets, keeping in mind that online communication is never completely private or secure. And remember that everyone who posts or reads will be in different places in their grief, so let's all be mindful and considerate. You can find articles about online safety with a quick online search. Be safe.

Counselor Referrals

Not all counselors are familiar with the issues that parents face after the death of their baby or during infertility treatment. If you feel like you would like to talk with a counselor, listed below are individuals who have been recommended to us by parents in the BE community.:

- ♥ Gaby Donnell, LCSW, Inner NE Portland
503-287-2295 www.mootherootscounseling.com
- ♥ Teni Davoudian, Ph.D., OHSU
503-418-4500 www.ohsu.edu
- ♥ Britta Dinsmore, PhD, SW Portland
503-913-4791 www.brittadinsmore.com
- ♥ Adria Goodness, CNW, PMHNP, SE Portland
503-224-3438 www.adriagoodness.com
- ♥ Rachel Starck, LPC, North Portland
503.929.2773 www.thethrivingmama.com
- ♥ Laurie Cox, LCSW, NE Portland
503-819-6354 mootherootscounseling.com/laurie-cox
- ♥ Lauren Marie Barthelemy, LPC, SE Portland
412-715-2391
- ♥ Debbie Bensching, MSW, LCSW, SW Portland
503-944-5032 DebbieBensching.com

- ♥ Tina Lilly, MS, Inner SE Portland
503-380-0424 www.foryouaremadeofstars.com
- ♥ Ava M. Stone, Ph.D., PC, SE Portland
503-279-8160 www.pacificcenter.org
- ♥ Tara May, PhD, Vancouver
360-904-1008 www.taramay.com
- ♥ Nalini Kuruppu MSW, LCSW, North Portland
503-753-9157
- ♥ Kari Maljai, LPC, SE Portland
503.936.7658 www.pnwbh.com
- ♥ Brooke Noli, MFT, Inner NE Portland
971-645-1180 portlandbirthcounseling.com
- ♥ Brynna Sibilla, LCSW, Inner NE
503-280-1101 www.psychotherapyportland.com
- ♥ Jennifer Singleton, PhD, PC, Downtown,
503-242-1558
- ♥ Lynne Phillips-Werbel, LCSW, Beaverton
503-690-9119 www.wildwoodpsych.com
- ♥ The Dougy Center (for bereaved siblings)
503-775-5683 www.dougy.org

Editor's note: We would appreciate receiving suggestions, changes, or corrections to any of these resource listings; please send them to the editor at newsletter@briefencounters.org

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

2116 NE 18th Ave.
Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount
Find us on Facebook

Nonprofit
Organization
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 546
Portland, OR

**Return Service
Requested**

Postmaster: Dated material, please do not delay

*Medical
Professionals*

Change of Address or Removal from Mailing List

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

Email Opt In

Brief Encounters is considering options for electronic delivery of our newsletter in 2019. If you prefer to have your newsletter delivered via email, please send your name, mailing, and email addresses with the subject "Email Opt In" to emailopt-in@briefencounters.org.

Opting in to the email newsletter will cease delivery of the paper version but continue inclusion of babies' names in Our Children Remembered.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

PARENTS OF INFANT LOSS & PREGNANCY LOSS, INCLUDING EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

September 10, October 8

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September 25, October 23

See page 7 for a detailed schedule

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