

## **Supporting the Mother After Me**

*The moment you find out you're expecting you begin to feel excitement. As the months continue your connection with your unborn child grows deeper. From morning sickness to no energy, the bond with your child grows as you can feel the movements. Thoughts of the future and anxiously preparing for the arrival consume you by then you have formed unconditional love with your unborn child.*

*Most of you are waiting for the happy ending when the mother gives birth to a healthy baby, but that's not my story. I'm the story that people don't hear about. I'm the story that people are sad to talk about. This is my story, the one that needs to be heard. The day my life changed forever.*

*On January 7, 2009, I woke up to pain in my stomach, at 23 weeks I felt like something wasn't right. The pain became worse suddenly, my son was being delivered still inside the amniotic sac, without me even pushing. All I could do was lay on the floor, turn the sac and watch my son moving, begging the dispatcher to send help or tell me how to save my son. I'll never forget her voice, my hero, she was so calm and helped me as I was screaming in horror, pain, desperation and fear. My partner tried to open the sac with scissors and tweezers but was unsuccessful.*

*I heard footsteps and looked toward the door. It was a police officer. He proceeded to assure me that they would try their best to save my son. The paramedics that arrived had little experience as they just looked down at me screaming to help me open the sac so my son would continue to breathe, but I was told that doing that would risk my own life. I remember being put on a stretcher my son still attached to me. I could see the snow falling from the ambulance window, tears were falling, my heart was heavy, it was the scariest moment of my life and all I could do was pray. As I was trying to catch my breath suddenly my son stopped his, stopped moving. He was no longer alive, and I knew it. Pain, guilt, and heartache consumed me immediately. I knew what was going on but couldn't process it. Arriving at the hospital and seeing the faces of doctors, nurses and my mother I could see the pain that they were all enduring for me. I'll never forget holding my precious son Jonaiel, the pain was unbearable, but the love was deeper.*

*Leaving the hospital I was given information about grief groups which I attended but it was a struggle dealing with my own pain and having to hear someone else's grief was intolerable. Counselors had a waiting list for months but I needed support immediately. My body was going through the same experiences as any mother that had delivered but the emptiness of*

*not having my child is something you can't prepare for. Honestly for hours, days, months and even years after this, life was a blur, I lived with a broken heart, but my passion to support those after me began growing within me. Because of this journey I became Certified in Gerontology, Grief Facilitator and became a Chaplain.*

*I graduated with my Associate degree in Human Services, and now offer grief support in my community and on a Facebook page called Grief Means Love. I am currently enrolled in an End of life Doula course. I'm challenging all the physicians in the Southcoast area to give me the chance to facilitate during or after birth loss. Studies have shown that through tragic losses a mother experiences physical grief, PTSD, depression and at times need to be put on antidepressants. The divorce rate is higher. No mother is prepared to leave the hospital without their child.*

*I believe giving the parents the option of having someone experienced and educated to support them could be crucial for the way they handle the loss going forward. We need to end the stigma of grief by addressing it. A Grieving Mother lives with pain with every breath, I have learned this alone. My mission is to support that mother screaming in horror, pain and desperation by allowing her to vocalize her feelings and emotions in a therapeutic and healthy way. I want to offer my services at no cost because my support is needed now, giving this support is essential for the process of healing. Please give me the chance to comfort those in need.*

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