

# UNDERSTANDING HER

## A Quick Start Guide

She might be your sister, your daughter, your friend. She is grieving. If she had experienced the death of a parent or spouse or child the pain would be understood.

Often, her pain isn't even acknowledged.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Protect her from painful words and situations.
- Help her find life & health through exercise, meditation, etc.
- Don't try to change her feelings or perspective.
- Don't offer simplistic advice or false reassurances.
- Say "Tell me more..." (and mean it.)
- Prefaces: "Do you want to talk about it?"
- If in doubt, ask her: "What would help?"
- Practical support: appointments, meals, cards.
- Help her pre-plan important dates/results.
- Be aware of her vulnerability being around/talking about children.
- Acknowledge her grief after losses.
- Consider all of the ways she can feel safe, loved, and supported.

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The ultrasound tech turned to us and quietly affirmed what we already knew:

The struggling, tiny heartbeat that had been blinking on her screen last week, was no longer there. That day, I came to grips with the news of what would be my fourth miscarriage. I scheduled another D&C for later in the week and tried to fight the feeling that I was becoming hollow inside – that this was finally the day I'd have nothing left to give.

My husband and I hoped a birthday gathering of friends and family at a restaurant later that evening would give us a short reprieve from our grief. We hadn't told them about this latest loss, but they knew what we'd already endured. On this night, as I was sinking into the delight of stories and jokes, I was stopped short by a surprise announcement from one of the couples. Lisa pulled from her purse what looked like a small greeting card. A shy grin spread across the face of her husband, Eric, and he put his arm around her shoulder.

A blurring, buzzing sound filled my ears as she opened the card to reveal a gray photo with a murky white image of a tiny, peanut-shaped being and I caught splashes of words like "April or May." I willed a smile to appear on my face and "congratulations" passed from my lips. Underneath the table, my knuckles turned white grasping my husband's knee. I gave thought to abruptly leaping from my seat and bursting through the restaurant to take off in our car.

But I also knew this wasn't a pivotal movie scene to act out and that I wasn't going to take the leap into becoming the "troubled, overly-sensitive, infertile woman" to this group. I simply sat through it, made some sort of conversation, and sang "Happy Birthday" with the rest of them. No one took me aside to ask if I was okay or if I needed to go to the ladies' room with her where I could collapse into an embrace. We drove home in silence.

—Laura, age 37