

Rising from the ashes - Reclaiming life, power, and purpose

Dianne Wright

I am 1 in 4
I am the face of baby loss
My eyelids are weighted with grief
I am a collection of shattered pieces that have somehow become a mosaic.

I often read articles offering perspectives on perinatal loss. Lovely articles with breathless titles. A stillbirth.

I read these articles with appreciation, knowing these people are writing as guardians of the silent, sacred space where our experience resides.

I begin reading, holding my breath for the moment I can say

“yes,
that’s it,
speak my truth.”

Inevitably, I put the article down with a woeful sigh. I know it’s only a baby loss mama who can speak this truth. The layers of perinatal loss look a little like baklava, a sticky, gooey, messy phyllo pastry. Layer, upon layer, upon layer.

Healing felt like a potential for losses a little less catastrophic. This loss? That’s the business of suffering, for as long as there is breath in my lungs. Suffering. I’ve walked the fringe, the fine line where life and death become one skinny, blurry line.

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The journey from fracture to fulfillment seems to hold more questions than answers.

Do I deserve to be here? Is this my fault? How could I fail the one thing I was responsible for? How can I be in a world without my child?

My body betrayed me, the image in the mirror reflects a woman I now hate. She...I... didn't keep you safe.

My body made milk no baby would drink and my wounded uterus wept for months and months like a flowing river of confusion. What sort of insanity is this? (Amy Winehouse has a phrase that feels much more fitting, I'll leave that discovery to you – Thank you 3rd line Me & Mr. Jones)

I don't remember the day I realized that I could be the crazy lady with the dead baby, the woman no one would challenge.

My card always won, we all agreed, I suffered the most.

My husband, a wounded father lost his wife, or at least the wife he knew, in the violent moment we heard "I'm sorry, there is no cardiac activity"

It was also on this day I saw fear, real, avoidant style fear.

I saw fear in the faces of people who had no idea what to say or do,

So, they left.

People who decided to walk away completely or those who would wait until it felt like yesterday was far enough away that it might just be forgotten.

Birthdays? Christmas?

What about the little ones who've lost their anticipated baby brother? Where did their celebrations go? Where did their mother go? I don't know, it was all a painful blur.

How could God, the Universe ... hate me this much?

This "journey" is where I found my layers of wounded spirituality, loss of Self, obliterated body image, shattered heartand this mind, a mind that seemed to go places I never thought possible ... "*Oh, the places you'll go*" suddenly read so different in the story of my life.

It would seem loss and healing is an evolutionary process. The destructive forces of trauma that reveal a barren emotional landscape, the place where life has no color, where pain washes over you like molten lava. This was the descent that would lead me to myself.

Many times I would ask, what does it mean to be a mother? If the Divine mother is the essence of a higher representation of maternal consciousness, can we then connect with the higher representation of the Divine child?

Are we meant to live life caught in the tattered, torn pages of our story of loss?

How do we find purpose in this, what could it possibly mean, and if it does exist, what would one have to say for it to ever be acceptable to me?

I ask why, as though there is an answer I would receive with understanding and acceptance.

How do we reclaim life when life has so betrayed?

How do we find power within when we feel the weeping, oozing sense of powerlessness in goodbyes that came before hello?

Burned into the core of our being is the memory of cool flesh, skin so pale, yet darkened with the marks of a fate undeniable.

Death has resided within her. She has given birth to death.

We see therapists and clinicians who try to find pretty words to reframe our truth.

There is no error in cognition, we don't need to change our thoughts. We need *you* to hold our truth.

Within her, is the rawness of rage she can barely contain.
She is wild with grief.
Her soul screams for answers no one can provide.

What does she do? Does she listen to the call to lay down and never again get back up? Does she attempt to breathe with lungs that feel utterly collapsed? Will her eyes even see past the thick glaze of disbelief?

As a society, at least in Western society, we tend to look at perinatal loss through a scientific lens. What happened? Why did it happen? How do we

stop it from happening? We call coroners, medical examiners, and doctors. We do surveys, research and autopsies. We look for cause and prevention.

Though I'll never discourage pursuit of the "how and why," and more importantly defend the "never again." I can't help but wonder how healing would be facilitated if we also looked through an experiential lens.

What can I do with this? What am I called to do with the depth of my experience? If there is a legacy of meaning my son's life might offer, what would it be? And, how would I see it?

If we're lucky, we contemplate meaning and purpose, even luckier if we have cause to live a meaningful, purposeful life. This propelled me to find the purpose of my son's life and what his death would mean for me.

I decided his life would be represented by healing. I would take my experience and help others find what healing might look like for them, a gentle space between where we can breathe without agony or the betrayal of joy, the space between, where breath is weightless and free.

I would become a psychotherapist.

What we need are practitioners who don't need to feel better in our presence. Practitioners who can be with us until we are ready to come out. Practitioners who can feed the fires of our alchemical pot until that precise moment where the lead of our heavy bones becomes the gold in our veins.

It was through birth that I, like many others, was bought to my knees, descending into a hell like no other I've known and it is through birth that we will heal.

This birth, is the birth of She.

This place where the scent of birth floating the air is fleshy, warm, wet and alive.

This place where She.

Rising from the ashes.

Becomes.

Magic.