

Women's Health

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Breaking the silence and lifting the stigma



By Hayley Wilds, MA, LPC, CGP

Pregnancy loss is a painful and lonely experience that is unfortunately fairly common in the U.S. According to recent data from the March of Dimes, anywhere between 10-30% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage (approximately 1 in 4). But despite its prevalence, many who experience pregnancy loss feel alone in their struggle.

Though things are slowly shifting, silence and stigma still surround the subject of pregnancy and infant loss in our culture. Many loss parents get the feeling they should keep their pain to themselves.

When you are grieving, these societal messages are hard to ignore. The lack of funeral rituals, minimal bereavement time, and political tension around pregnancy are just a few examples. Stigma around medically necessary procedures and termination for medical reasons can also intensify the pain you already feel at losing a wanted pregnancy.

These messages can leave you feeling unseen in your loss experience. They imply a veiled push to just move on, take it as it comes, and ignore your own pain. Deal with enough of these judgments,

platitudes, and dismissive responses, and you learn to keep your pain to yourself. And as a result, what should be a natural grieving process becomes a complicated experience that leaves you feeling stuck and alone.

That's why things like Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, now in its 36th year this October, are so crucial for lifting the stigma and breaking the silence. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month not only helps raise awareness about the complex nature of pregnancy loss, but it offers loss parents a special opportunity to share their stories, get much needed support, and remember their babies.

In my work with pregnancy loss survivors, I have witnessed the healing power of validation and a safe space for self-expression. As a loss mom myself, I know firsthand the pain of losing a baby, and so working with other loss parents is

a mission that's close to my heart.

To further that mission, I recently offered a free online workshop "Expressing the Unseen: Using Art to Heal After Pregnancy Loss" in honor of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. Portions of the workshop, as well as information on future online workshops can be accessed here: <https://hayleywilds.com/pregnancyloss-workshop>. Informed by my experience as an art therapist and loss mom, this workshop demonstrates how artmaking can help you process your loss and begin to heal.



For more information on resources available for those who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss, visit www.hayleywilds.com and check out my latest book, **Creative Healing for Pregnancy Loss**, available on Amazon. **Hayley Wilds** is an art therapist, certified grief professional, and loss mom. She is the owner and lead clinician at the **Center for Creative Counseling** where she specializes in therapy for moms, pregnancy loss, and grief work.