

My boyfriend and I first started trying for a baby 12 years ago. After a year or so of nothing happening we were referred to the hospital and were prescribed with fertility drugs to help kick start our attempts.

We were delighted after the 2nd cycle of drugs to be pregnant.

Within days of our positive pregnancy test we were utterly desperate when I started to miscarry - there were no words to describe how we felt when the loss of our baby was confirmed and the next few months were a real period of grief.

Friends and family at the time were sympathetic and reassuring and we were overjoyed to be pregnant again within 6 months.

At around 8 weeks I again miscarried and this became the pattern of our lives over the next ten years.

All in all we lost 14 babies, our final attempt culminating in an ectopic pregnancy with emergency surgery where I almost lost my life.

At this point we finally decided to stop our journey to have a baby.

Countless investigations, referrals, tests, and treatments failed to find any reasons why we couldn't hold onto our babies and the only treatment I was given to help mend my broken mind and heart was Prozac.

Our losses became a source of discomfort for the majority of our friends and family. They moved from the 'at least you know you can get pregnant' and 'so and so lost there baby and now they have three' to just ignoring the situation or feeling dreadfully embarrassed when they had to tell us that they were pregnant or they were doing fun things with their family.

We started to not tell people when we became pregnant or had another loss as it was too difficult to have the conversation and feel their awkwardness. It wasn't that they didn't love us or feel for us it was that there was nothing they could say or do that would make it better.

I first heard of Saying Goodbye through our local paper advertising a upcoming service.

I remember reading the article and for a few days I thought of nothing else.

I had buried my losses deep within my heart and had tried to shut out my emotions so that I could function in my normal life.

The idea of having special time to remember and honour my children was a real revelation but I was worried that if I went I would open a wound I wouldn't be able to close.

At this stage in our lives we had started the adoption process and had been provisionally linked to a 6 month old. I was torn between recognising my longed for birth children and not wanting to restart the grieving process.

I still wasn't sure on the day of the service but something inside told me I should and I I nervously went and found a seat.

I can honestly say that I will never regret my decision.

The Saying Goodbye service gave me the time and space to formally recognise all of my babies and the experience of being with people who just knew how it felt was a real strength. The loss of a baby by miscarriage is never formally recognised by ceremony - no funeral service is held, no date is noted, no names are recorded. As I stood with other parents and proudly rang the bell for

my 14 babies I felt unbearable sadness but also a great privilege in being able to properly celebrate their existence.

For the first time ever I felt my tears of grief, loss and love were allowed, shared and understood.

Later as I made my way back to the car park I saw another couple that had been sitting a few aisles over from me. We both got to the ticket machine at the same time and with no words we hugged each other. It was such a powerful moment that will stay with me for ever - a shared understanding

I'm writing this now as my 1 year old daughter sleeps upstairs.

Life has moved on as it does, and its really good.

Saying Goodbye has really helped that process. I was able to properly recognise my children, and whilst they will never be forgotten or missed, move on in my life with the knowledge that I'm not alone and that there are others who truly understand.

Thanks Helen