

Dear Saying Goodbye

I wanted to write this to share how much the Saying Goodbye team has helped me find peace, meaning and comfort. I would like to share a small piece of my long journey to show just a little of what Saying Goodbye has done for me. This is to everyone who has raised money, supported my fundraising, given time and especially to Zoe and Andy for their bravery, determination and hard work.

Maternity unit 2010 "I'm sorry I can't find a heartbeat" My husband couldn't look at me and my mum, shocked, burst out crying. I was going to be tough. I was....fine. That was until I reached the car park. My knees gave way and the air in my lungs was gone. I gasped for breath, but nothing. Clinging to my husband, I collapsed onto the concrete. My ears rang with hollow, empty wails and it was only later that I realised the noise had come from me.

The following few months lasted years. Every second felt like an hour. My head seemed full and my ears had muffled the words of the midwife, but I'd somehow chosen 'the natural way'. Many hospital appointments followed, each leaving me more shocked and hurt than the last. I arrived at one appointment, tear stained face, to be happily greeted with the words "how far along are you? About 22 weeks i'd say" the words hit me like a baseball bat across my chest. Another appointment I sat for over 2 hours, in a waiting room, with heavily pregnant women surrounding me, listening to them complain about their size or their baby not arriving on the due date. The air was suffocating, as I hid my tears behind my hand.

Finally to my horror I had to have a D&C. 16 hours after having to stop eating and drinking, in preparation for my surgery and as a student doctor put a needle, that she described as being too big, in the back of my hand, the dehydration took control and I lost consciousness.

I'd chosen 'the natural way' and ended with surgery 2 months later. I'd not been given any warning of the physical pain i'd be in, I wasn't warned how much blood I'd lose, clots and tissue, I wasn't told about the nightmares that I'd have about putting this 'tissue' down the toilet, I wasn't warned about the guilt. I wasn't told about the other stuff either, being fat, feeling pregnant, my hair breaking and ripping out, terrible skin, no energy, no confidence, the feeling of failure and self hatred.

I felt like I was going crazy. Anger, tears, no sleep, utter rage, exhaustion, deep depression. I knew people didn't speak of such things, but I wanted everyone to know my baby existed!! I posted a poem on Facebook, an attempt at doing what felt right. Instantly my friend count dropped. Some of the support I received was lovely. My mum changed my blood stained bedsheets everyday, she made me food and rubbed my back. My auntie sent me a perfect card saying how sorry she was and that time was a great healer. Then there were the messages saying "it was for the best", "these things happen for a reason", "it must have happened because you were so stressed", "there must have been something wrong with IT!" A friend even compared IT with an aborted pregnancy.

I was sure that I was the only person in the UK that this had happened to. All my friends had babies. I was the only failure.

Eventually I found some real life 'miscarriage stories', books online. As soon as they arrived I devoured them. I carried them everywhere. If I sat in a cafe or pub, the books would be sat next to me. Proof I wasn't alone. Carrying these books around showed the world that I'd once had a baby. She was a baby, not just a 'product of conception'

I've had 4 miscarriages. They all happened in early pregnancy and all before Saying Goodbye was established. Before Saying Goodbye there was NO support. When I begged my doctor for help, support groups or counselling I got sent on a stress and anger management course.

Saying Goodbye has literally changed everything! I attended my first cathedral service in 2013. The cathedral was beautiful, but also huge, breathtaking, glorious, powerful and deeply meaningful. The choir sent shivers through me. I couldn't believe they were singing for my babies. I wept as I lit a candle. Nobody stared or told me to get over it. Nobody looked uncomfortable at my sopping wet face. I was handed the bell and rang it four times, while the chimes of other bells rang in the background, each signifying an important life and love. It was undoubtedly the most powerful and moving experience of my life.

The support goes on. Every time I scroll through social media there are words from Saying Goodbye. EVERYDAY!!! It's ok for me to look at them and smile, feel proud, shed a tear or weep. Saying Goodbye is there for me every single day.

So far I have leapt from a plane (I'm scared of climbing ladders!) and have walked 100km in 24 1/2 hours to raise money. These massive achievements have opened conversations with friends about miscarriage. People have shared their experiences with me and I've been honoured to listen. When I jumped from the plane I'd given friends the opportunity to have a heart and a letter written on my arm, as a small gesture of remembrance for their lost babies. I didn't think anyone would do it, but my arm was full of hearts and my heart was full of pride.

My experiences with doctors and nurses throughout my journey has been cold. But Saying Goodbye is changing that! Education, improvements, support, guidance. Some doctors are wonderful I'm sure, but in many areas changes must be made and Saying Goodbye are doing just that!

I'm 33, divorced and have no living children. The thought of never having the chance to be a mum kills me, but Saying Goodbye has taught me that i'm already a mum. I know, if I'm lucky enough to try and conceive again my Saying Goodbye family will be there for me every step of the way and for that and everything this charity has done I will be eternally grateful and in awe.

With love, hope and pride from Katy xxxx