

JOEY MILLER, MSW, LCSW

REBIRTH

THE JOURNEY OF PREGNANCY AFTER A LOSS

Q & A with Joey Miller



Ms. Joey Miller, MSW, is a licensed clinical social worker with over 20 years of experience in women's reproductive health and medicine, loss and trauma, and women's mental health issues. She received her training and degrees from Northwestern University and Loyola University Chicago. She gained unparalleled experience in the areas of pregnancy and infant loss while serving as the Perinatal Loss Program Coordinator at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Her work in this area is now a primary focus of her clinical practice where she sees patients for urgent consultation and ongoing individual and couples therapy. She has also served as a faculty member at Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine.

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Q. What compelled you to write this book?

A. This book is a natural extension of my clinical work that spans two decades working with women who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy or the death of a baby. I wanted to reach beyond the limitations of my private practice in Chicago to provide experienced support and expert guidance to women who are currently suffering in silence, or who don't have anyone who can relate to their situation or grief.

Q. How did you become involved in this type of work?

A. I began my professional career working in the areas of emergency medicine and adult trauma. My work started with crisis intervention but quickly grew to include longer-term counseling to help patients and families adjust to—and eventually accept—profound, and often permanent loss(es). I was well-experienced in these critical areas when I was recruited as the first ever Perinatal Loss Program Coordinator at Prentice Women's Hospital of Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. There, patients captured my attention, my heart, and then my professional focus as I created a program that provided urgent consultation and extensive support to patients and their families following tragedies that occurred at the beginning end of the life cycle.

Q. What do you believe is the most common challenge faced by women who've experienced a reproductive loss?

A. In my experience, it's being seen and feeling understood, supported. The grief experience is highly individual, and despite ongoing efforts for improved education and increased sensitivity, society as a whole tends to misunderstand and minimize perinatal losses. Many believe there wasn't enough time for parents to truly form an attachment—something that couldn't be farther from the truth. In reality, many are attached from the moment they learn they are pregnant. Their grief is a reflection of the depth of that attachment, not the length of gestation or time they had with their baby. Unfortunately, the depth and duration of a bereaved individual's grief can outweigh and outlast the depth and duration of society's sympathies. Most bereaved women do find ways to learn to live with their loss. But, in order to do so, the loss needs to first be acknowledged and validated as real.

Continued on Next Page

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Q & A Continued

Q. When hearing about someone's loss, what the best way for us to express our sympathy and support?

A. Independent of the circumstances or type of loss, it's common to feel awkward and worry about saying the wrong thing. Saying "I'm sorry" is always appropriate. And it's better to admit you don't know what to say or how to say it but still express your care, than to say nothing. When you do say something, avoid suggestive and interpretive responses such as "You'll feel better in time," or "Don't worry—you'll have another baby." Pregnancy is not a promise and even if a woman does have another baby, no other child is a replacement for the one she just lost. And unless specifically asked, never bring up your own or someone else's loss experience. This is not about your or anyone else's experience—it's about giving your full attention to the person who is hurting and in front of you right now.

Q. The harsh reality of pregnancy and infant loss creates devastating tragedy for over 11 million women worldwide annually. What is the message of healing and hope?

A. Women's lives are forever changed by their losses. But I have seen, learned, and confirm day after day, that there is life after loss. As inconceivable as it may seem, the overwhelming majority of women (approximately 80%) will go on to conceive again. While this path is difficult, it is not impossible. In time, and with work, there are ways to integrate the past (never forgetting the baby or babies who came before), accept the present, and be open to the future by continuing, and eventually completing, the path to parenthood.



A compassionate and comprehensive guide to healing and conception after pregnancy and infant loss.

Of the millions of pregnancies conceived annually in the U.S. alone, one-third result in a loss, and of those born, 22,000 infants die within their first year. These numbers are staggering, and underscore the pervasiveness of this type of loss. This tragedy can extend beyond profound grief, creating extensive physical, emotional, and psychological hurdles for women when they consider another pregnancy—something the majority of bereaved women will pursue. Yet, there are very few guides to navigating such a complex journey.

In *Rebirth*, therapist and social worker Joey Miller counsels women and their families through the unimaginable pain of pregnancy and infant loss, and the journey to pregnancy afterward. She shares her knowledge, wisdom, and compassion to help women and their partners tackle the most difficult issues, including how to:

- Handle the emotional fallout and find support
- Talk to your physician, your family, and others
- Know when you're ready to try again
- Understand essential physical assessments and considerations
- Manage the unique challenges of each trimester

With concrete help for coping with the immediate aftermath of tragedy to managing lingering grief while trying to conceive, *Rebirth* addresses the inconceivable with empathy, personal accounts, practical guidance, and an encouraging message of healing and hope.



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