

## *A Story of Infertility.*

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There are many women and couples that struggle with infertility. According to the Centers for Disease Control, infertility is defined as not being able to get pregnant after one year of unprotected sexual intercourse. Infertility affects 13.8% of women aged 15-49.

Infertility is also the inability to carry a pregnancy to term, such as in cases of recurrent pregnancy loss. According to [RESOLVE: The National Infertility Awareness Association](#), one out of eight couples experience infertility. National Infertility Awareness Week was two weeks before Mother's Day.

As an organization that promotes perinatal health, the Georgia Perinatal Association is concerned with the issues of mothers and infants. Are we aware of the percentage of our patients who have had infertility problems before their current pregnancy? How does this affect these women if they become pregnant? Women who have dealt with infertility often have higher anxiety and depression, even if they do become pregnant. As healthcare providers, we should bring awareness to the possible infertility journeys of our patients.

There is a stigma surrounding miscarriage and infertility and many women do not share their stories openly. Here is one of their stories.



### ***A Story of Infertility***

I remember my mother telling me that she worked as a NICU night nurse when we were little. She would work night shifts and care for these little humans who were, at times, fighting for their lives. I know that my mother gave those tiny babies all the attention, love and care they required. I hope that her love and care was the reason they survived their premature beginning and were able to go home with their parents.

My mother's career path brought our family to Aiken, SC in 1989 all the way from Prestonsburg, KY. My mother moved us to South Carolina because she had the opportunity to teach nursing at the University of South Carolina-Aiken. Because she was an educator, she had summers off from teaching. She spent those summers taking my brother and me to the pool, matinee movies, and playing games with us. If either of us fell and scraped our knee, there she was, at the ready, with a band-aid and Neosporin. She awoke several nights to vomiting children and my mother never wavered in her care for us. She was compassionate and caring. She was our mother, but also a nurse.

When I became pregnant in August of 2021, I knew my mother would have all the right answers. With the aid of her childbirth simulator, she teaches medical staff about pregnancy, deliveries, and newborn baby health. I knew I could go to my mother with any of my pregnancy questions and she would be able to answer them, not only because she was my mother, but because of her nursing experience.



Over the Labor Day weekend, I experienced bleeding. I immediately called my mother and sent her a picture. She assured me that this could be normal but encouraged me to follow up with my OB-GYN. It was decided that I should keep my original ultrasound appointment for that Tuesday after Labor Day. The weekend dragged on, and my bleeding became worse. Monday, my mother called me and said she knew my anxiety was worsening and she took me to get a scan. She knew I could not wait another day to find out if my pregnancy was still viable. My mother knows me well.

We arrived for the ultrasound, and they could not find a heartbeat, but they could visualize the sac. This was the moment I knew I had lost my baby. While my partner and my mother both maintained vigil that there still was hope, I knew in my heart that my scheduled ultrasound Tuesday was not going to be a happy one. My baby had stopped growing at 6 weeks and 5 days. My OBGYN confirmed that I was miscarrying at my appointment. I moved forward with medication to cause the fetal tissue to release.

My mother held me while I cried and for the first time, she admitted she didn't know how to help me. I had no open wounds she could patch, I did not have a fever she could calm, I did not have any broken bones- only a broken heart. She never experienced a miscarriage and said she would never understand the feelings I was going through. It turns out in that moment, I did not need my mother, the nurse. I needed my mother, my mom, my support system.

I have since experienced another miscarriage, this time with a D&C so we could evaluate the fetal tissue for abnormalities. The results were Trisomy 16 which is incompatible with life. My mother was there to listen, to hold me if needed, to be there as only a mother can.

I continue to remain positive while on this path to becoming a mother. I gain strength and resolve from hearing other's stories. There are multiple scientific advances that are available now that were not an option for women in the past. If my mother has taught me anything, it is hope.

*"Some days there won't be a song in your heart. Sing anyway." — Emory Austin*



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