

A vintage, weathered teddy bear with a red bow tie. The bear is made of a light-colored material, possibly wood or stone, with a mottled, aged texture. It has dark, round eyes and a black nose. The bow tie is a vibrant red color. The bear is sitting upright, and the background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and brown leaves.

STILL MEMORIES

A cluster of light pink and yellow roses. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some showing more yellow and others more pink. They are surrounded by dark green leaves. The background is a dark, out-of-focus garden setting.

Wendy Webb

STILL MEMORIES

Grieving for a Stillborn

In memory of ANDREW

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REMOVALS AND DELIVERIES

The pregnancy was nearly 8 months; I kept counting the dates, the markers that all would be well, passing the key time: 12 weeks, 20 weeks, the scans, the first movements, half way, 24 weeks, 28 weeks, 32 weeks, and the home straight. The nearer the goal, the more likely the baby would survive, even if born early. Willing Freda to make it, nearly there.

Not really thinking anything could go wrong at this stage. More worried about when the baby would arrive, would the house move and uncertainty mean that baby arrived early. Joking with Ed about the removals men have to deal with deliveries, and stop off at the N&N. Thinking maybe the baby would be early, and not late this time, because of all the stresses. Wanting everything to be ready first. Joking that it would be when I relaxed after the house move; wanting to get the unpacking finished so I could concentrate on the nursery and the hospital bag. Not wanting to put it off any longer.

The next weekend was my deadline for having the bag packed ready. Wondering if the sister-in-law would be in the country on time, or what we would do with David if the baby arrived early. Feeling “not yet, I’m not ready yet, I need more time”. Getting very uncomfortable and fed up with the aches and pains, the difficulty sleeping and turning over in bed.

We had the 36 week appointment at the hospital a week early, because of the Bank Holiday. It was worrying because protein was found in the urine, had to repeat for further testing. Was it an infection, or pre-eclampsia, but they didn’t think that was likely and results were only mildly positive. The blood pressure was really high, and the second test with the doctor was even higher (but the doctor was young, busy, with his bleeper going).

The nurse quizzed me, obviously concerned in case it was pre-eclampsia, but that is more to be expected with a first pregnancy, not a later one. Sent off for blood tests, and very worried, but they just said the midwife would test again two days later which was a home visit. Relaxed after we left the hospital, and Ed went back to work; just assumed we were worrying unnecessarily.

The midwife came on the Wednesday, the home visit, talking about procedures for the hospital, etc. The urine test was negative. The blood pressure was still high. Warned to rest or I might end up in hospital. Took it seriously, told Ed I had to rest.

The next day, Thursday, I was home with David, just having a quiet pottering around day. In the afternoon took the pushchair out to the Post Office, the hill was rather steep. Ed had to stay very late at work, so I tried to relax and follow a gentle routine, getting David to bed in good time, and hoping Ed wouldn't be too late home.

He phoned at 6.30pm to say he had no idea what time he would finish, let alone be heading home. I got David in bed for 7pm. Then as I moved to put him in his cot he started to hit me, as he does when he is not amused that it is bedtime. I put him in his cot straight away because suddenly I just wanted to burst into tears. I couldn't understand why I was so upset, just because of that, and didn't want to cry in front of David. I forced myself to stay calm and just got out of the room.

I went to our room, then headed for the loo before I went downstairs. I suddenly felt a squirt of warm liquid forwards, which seemed strange, because urine only dribbled out nowadays with the pregnancy weight. I looked in the loo and it was bright red. I had to get downstairs to the telephone and just concentrated on staying calm. I didn't think what else to do, or getting pads or anything, it was just too unexpected. I

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sat down on the stairs and phoned Ed at work, and spoke pretty abruptly to the lady who answered. I needed Ed on the phone straight away. I just told him to come home NOW, I had started bleeding, it was urgent. I was trying to keep calm, but I wanted him to get the message that it was urgent.

I then phoned the emergency midwife number and tried to give a specific message, but underline it was urgent. I sat down to wait for Ed to come home. When I stood up the blood spurted out, and it stopped when I sat down and leaned back. Ed got home and then the midwife phoned and said to go straight to the maternity unit, they would have sent an ambulance if Ed had not been there. I was trying to tell Ed what to take with us in the car, he had already been getting things together in case of a hospital stay.

We phoned the childminder to be on standby for David, and Ed packed his bag and got my hospital notes and bag. I told him to get David and things in the car and then I would head over there. I was worried about standing up, because of the bleeding. And I was getting nervous that we needed to get to the hospital as soon as possible. I walked very tentatively to the car, and had a towel with me in case of the bleeding continuing.

In the car we were thinking of the possibilities, and I thought that either it would mean staying in hospital for bedrest, or that the baby would have to be delivered early. I didn't know whether I would miss the Pitman RSA spreadsheet exam, or just the revision the next day. It didn't seem overly important at that stage. But I didn't think it would be more serious than that, it never occurred to me that the baby would die. I just knew that bleeding in pregnancy was serious, and trying to act as quickly as possible so that everything would be all right. I knew it must be the placenta, but then it came away a bit in other cases, and it could reattach and the baby be all right.

It felt strange driving straight into the emergency car parking maternity area, and then trying to ask the door porters where to go, when they had no idea that it was an emergency. They obviously thought we were being a bit abrupt with them, and I thought I ought to have a wheelchair so I could sit down, but it was easier to just head for the lift to get up to maternity as quickly as possible.

David was in his stretchsuit, all ready for bed, with Daddy carrying him. I was still in my slippers, and my maternity stripey shorts were wet with the blood and just managed to add a towel. When we got upstairs we tried to say we had phoned, trying to let them know it was an emergency. Then the midwife emerged quickly and knew our midwife had phoned through to them. We went straight into a delivery suite, with Ed carrying David and the hospital bag, and the midwife began checking for the foetal heartbeat with the ear horn. She thought she could hear one, but faintly.

The midwife had checked only the day before, and heartbeat and movements were fine. They began setting up drips, checking pulse and blood pressure, and I was thinking, hurry up and check that the baby's OK, I wanted them to be faster. I was thinking they needed to know if the baby was all right, and if not they could get on with a Caesarean if they had to. It seemed to take them so long setting things up with me, and asking me how much blood it was. I didn't see how I could state a quantity, how could I, it seemed a lot to me. Replacing pads, and bleeding when I stood up. Trying to get out of the clothes and into a nightie. I didn't want to be vertical, because that's when I was bleeding. They were ordering the scan and a lady doctor came in to check.

Ed asked if it was the right time to leave, to take David over to the childminder, and the midwife said yes. She was only down the road. I had tried to keep calm and still smile at David, and wave him Bye Bye. But I wanted Ed to be back very quickly. I

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don't know how many of them were in the room, it was nearing the change of shift, and they had the monitoring and setting up to do, and several checks for the foetal heart.

They were listening with the horn and said they couldn't hear anything, then the first midwife said she thought she had heard one to begin with but was now unsure. The lady doctor had the scan wheeled in and set up and then there was the image of the baby on the screen. It was very hard to identify which parts, but I was straining to see the baby on the screen. She began to say "no foetal heartbeat", she said it more than once, and no movement. I could see on screen what was meant to be the heart chambers, and they didn't move, but how could I tell that was the heart. I was asking Are you sure, and it was being repeated, with the other people gathered round.

Ed came through the door at that point and I could see him standing in the doorway and I was thinking Why doesn't he come nearer, I wanted him to come to the bedside. I told him they were saying "no foetal heartbeat - you know what that means, don't you?". I suppose the doctor was saying I'm sorry, and underlining the facts (no movement, no heartbeat). I was thinking "So this is it. So this is happening to us". I thought we had already had our share of suffering after the miscarriage; I didn't think that we could have to face this too. It seemed the sort of thing that happened to other people, but not that it would happen to us.

In that moment I was registering "So we have to go through this too. It's us that this is happening to. This is what WE have to face." The doctor was registering my disbelief, because my mind was still saying to hurry up, and to get the baby out, so that the baby would be all right. It never occurred to me that we were too late, that we couldn't do anything. The doctor was saying they could get someone else to do the scan as well, so I said Yes please. It felt a bit stupid waiting for the second scan, it was perfectly obvious that if there was no

foetal heartbeat then no-one would be able to find it. I was trying to make it not sound as if I was blaming the doctor, just that we wanted to be absolutely sure.

But I knew in the instant I looked at the ceiling and thought “So this is it - it’s happening to us”, and in telling Ed. Ed said it was perfectly obvious when he came into the room and saw all the glum faces gathered around the monitor.

I felt so sorry that Ed had to go through all this. That I couldn’t give him a healthy live baby. That we would have to go through the delivery and everything, all for nothing. That we would have all the pain to go through and still not have a baby at the end of it. I wished I could have spared him all this. I kept fairly calm and logical, and thinking of questions, and finding out the procedures, and what would happen next. I wanted lots of facts.

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NO FOETAL HEARTBEAT

There seemed to be lots of people coming and going, doctors, midwives, lots of information to take in, the anaesthetist explaining types of pain relief. Getting the bedding sorted out, and tidied up with pads and the bleeding. I tried to get up off the bed to use the bedpan, but when I stood up I almost fainted. I could feel it about to happen, and I was trying to stay calm and conscious, but I was so worried inside.

Trying to get the message across, that I felt faint, that I felt sick, that I needed to get horizontal again. It felt so horrible, and the sickness as I recovered, and wanting to throw up. It happened several times at different stages, when I tried to get upright, so they had to keep the bed down so I was lying back more. It was really difficult to use the bedpan lying down, and even harder to produce anything.

It is difficult to remember what happened in what order, although it is very vivid in my mind. Just like for David, having to labour through the night, but this time knowing it was too late. In my mind I kept telling Andrew "You have to come out, I'm so sorry, but you cannot stay now, otherwise you will make Mummy ill". I was so worried by the high blood pressure, the fainting, the nausea, the pain later on, the testing that continued at regular intervals, the tests for blood pressure, pulse.

The saline drip was so painful when it was inserted, and it hurt when I moved my hand, but if I kept it still the dripping kept stopping and the bag wasn't emptying. It wore me down after a while. There were so many blood tests, and they had difficulty finding my veins, they kept trying and then searching around with the needle. Eventually I felt like a pin cushion. It reached the stage where it was difficult to cope with any more.

The anaesthetist explained the types of pain relief available, but it seemed sensible to choose the epidural, because they said it would bring the blood pressure down, the anaesthetist certainly thought it was the best option. I didn't want to experience the pain, I thought why should I face the pain when I am delivering a dead baby, there is no point in suffering. I just had to get on with it, and deliver the baby. But I couldn't stand for it to be too painful. There was no baby to consider, not like in a normal delivery.

I was very aware that there was no foetal monitor, no machines checking contractions and foetal heartbeats, and recording, like there was for David. I suppose I thought they would just do a Caesarean, so I was a little surprised when they spoke about inducing labour. I knew it was meant to be better having a normal labour, but I didn't really think before about having to go through the entire labour when you knew the baby was dead. It didn't really occur to me.

I was so aware of having to face a full labour, and not wanting the pain. I was also worried about the blood pressure, and feared for my life. I kept thinking, Please let me be all right, for David's sake, for Ed's sake. I didn't want them having to face losing me as well as the baby. It was very real, and I was very concerned about not being around for them, I was thinking they needed me, I had to stay. Some of the time I was afraid of the thought of the induction not working, and needing a Caesarean, I could almost feel the knife, I didn't want my tummy to be cut open, it was a very vivid thought.

I was so nervous of the epidural being inserted, in a way I don't think I was last time round. I could feel the needle being inserted, and when the anaesthetist said it would feel like pushing, it felt so like pain, I was trying not to react, but it felt so painful to me. I was terrified to move in case he went in too far. It was hard work getting into the curled up position, with the baby like a dead weight, so it was hard to move.

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At some stage Ed had the telephone brought into the delivery room, I cannot remember whether it was the Thursday night, or early Friday morning, I think he phoned his Mum & Dad the night before, and the childminder had to be phoned because she was looking after David overnight. Ed rushed a message to a family friend in the morning, but the coin was running out. We didn't come prepared with coins for the telephone, we weren't expecting to be in the hospital so soon. In the morning Ed left a message on the minister's answerphone, and she phoned back to arrange to come to the hospital.

Ed helped to get everything arranged and in reach, including the CD Player, and water by me. The midwife suggested when would be a good time for him to head home, and suggested he returned with some baby clothes to dress the baby in. I had said so forcefully that I wanted to see and hold the baby, whatever. That we wanted photos, that I had already had a miscarriage and read books on the subject. I wanted to get the message across, so that we would have time with the baby, so that we would do everything right.

The midwives heard what we said, and they gave information and got us thinking about issues as they arose. They told us about the hospital arranging the funeral, they explained procedures, they said we could see the hospital chaplain, and anything else they could do, and they gave us a folder of leaflets from SANDS. I kept it on the bedside table until I could face reading them. Around midnight on Thursday, Ed went home to fetch the baby clothes and the camera, and a change of clothes for me. Some things were in the hospital bag, but I had come just with the clothes I stood up in, and Ed had to take them home for washing. I cannot imagine ever wanting to wear the stripey shorts again.

It seemed such a long time that Ed was away, the midwife began to get concerned for him, and asked if he would be all

right. I said he could take care of himself, he would be fine, but it was such a long time. It was 2.30am when he returned, and showed me the bag of baby clothes he had selected. All the baby clothes were bagged by size, but nothing was unpacked ready in the Nursery.

It had really got to Ed, having to go through the baby clothes, he had cried when he went through them. It was so upsetting looking through them. He cried in the delivery room several times, and it really cut me up. You don't normally hear a grown man cry, ever really, and it was so unbearable. I wished I could have made things different, so that he wouldn't have to go through this. I tried to reach out to him, but I felt so restricted on the bed, I could hardly move, I couldn't get up or anything.

Around 8am on the Friday, the minister came in to visit us. It was strange having people visit us whilst still in the labour ward, and before the baby was even delivered. All happening between the monitoring, and the midwife coming and going, and trying to straighten up the bedclothes. When the epidural began to take effect it made me shake and shudder, and it was not controllable. I don't think that happened with the epidural for David.

At one point I went so cold and shaky, and needed blankets to warm me up, I'm not sure if that was after the birth. The minister looked very serious and concerned, it was better than any words she might have said. I wanted a funeral, and I wanted a Christening. It was so hard, because she was saying Baptism was for the living, and I was thinking that we couldn't help it if he was dead, we wanted him to have the same and not less, just because he didn't make it. I didn't know whether that was just an evangelical approach or whether it was standard in the Anglican Church.

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But it upset Ed so much, he just wanted the very best to be done for the baby, to give him a decent send-off. I couldn't bear for Ed to be upset any more, so I didn't want to pursue the subject, if we could just get a Blessing Service. I said it didn't make any difference to God anyway, whichever service it was. I said Well they wouldn't let us get married in church either, but we still got a full service, with everything except the legal bit of signing the register anyway.

It didn't make any difference to Andrew, so it didn't seem worth the pain of pursuing it. Anyway, I said some of the Baptism words with Andrew anyway, with the sign of the cross, it wasn't so important what the church was saying. I just didn't want Ed to be hurt anymore by stupid theology and words. We would still have a Blessing Service. The minister was very aware that she was hurting us, and she was trying so hard not to.

The Assistant Hospital Chaplain came in to chat at some point, and said they would help any way they could, so I said How. I didn't want it to be more words, with nothing concrete. But he explained about the hospital arranging the funeral, and how you could choose the local minister to be involved. He also mentioned the Chapel facilities, special service, and Book of Remembrance. He said he would be willing to help with the service, if we wanted him to, and that we could bleep him anytime we wanted. It was good that he spelled it all out. He arranged for the Service of Blessing later in the day, and to contact our curate, to arrange the time.

A family friend was on duty that morning, a Paediatrician at the N&N. But when they said we knew one of the doctors, I couldn't think what they meant. But Ed went out to speak to him. I didn't want to see yet more people, after so much coming and going, with drips attached, and still not delivered.

We had several changes of midwife. The shift was changed at 11pm, which is when Nina finished. Others introduced

themselves, saying they would probably see me later; Linda was just going off duty and would be back in the morning. I couldn't think that I would still be around whenever that was. Time rather stands still in a delivery room.

Angela was on duty through the night, trying to get the induction going, and doing all the testing and top up of the epidural before she went off duty at 7am. Then Linda was on duty from 7am to 1pm, but she was with us until well after 3pm, because 1.08pm was when Andrew was delivered. Then Trudi was around for the cleaning up afterwards, and getting me ready for the ward.

I was in the delivery room from about 8pm Thursday until 5pm Friday, and most of that time I was lying on the delivery bed with an epidural in place, it was such a long time, and so hard to get moving later.

It took all night and all morning for labour to get going. Ed rested on a put-up bed in the room, maybe for 3 hours, I probably only slept for half an hour, with regular testing through the night. Ed put on the Greensleeves CD and that was playing and repeating through the night, it was very strange, peaceful but distant and not with it. It will be impossible to hear it playing in future without remembering.

Labour began to hot up late morning, and the contractions began to get painful again, although it was not very long since the last top up of the epidural. I began to tell the midwife it was getting painful, and that I needed some more. She was busy writing up her notes, which she had not had time to do earlier. I really didn't want it to be painful, I did not want a painful labour and delivery, it seemed too much to bear. The pain was very low down, and a catheter was inserted to ease off the urine, which seemed to be slowing things down. Even the catheter felt painful.

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Then it felt very painful, just how the books describe it when the baby's head is descending. It had taken a long time for the baby to get into the right position, it was a shoulder presentation earlier on. I was trying to get the message across to the midwife where it was painful, so she would realise the baby was descending, and I wanted more pain relief before delivery. I couldn't face a painful delivery. She thought maybe things were getting moving then, she hoped so.

Then she decided to give me the gas and air, because the epidural was only working patchily. It was such a relief to breathe in the entonox, to feel the pain disappear, to be able to choose when I needed some more. I had reached my limit of pain and prodding about, I felt like a pin cushion, and I was so relieved, the gas & air felt wonderful. I could hear tingling bells in my head and ears, it was almost knocking me out, but it was such a relief to have it to hand.

The midwife had rolled me over onto my side again, to stop there being too much pressure in one position. It had been so difficult to roll over, I could hardly move, I hardly had the use of my legs. But once I was on my side there was no way I was going to roll back again. The midwife asked if I wanted to turn onto my back to deliver, but I was staying put, having got on my side I couldn't bear to move again.

It seemed to help to be able to dig into the bed a little, with the gas mask by me. The midwife was telling me to push when I wanted to, she was leaving me to decide. It felt so different with David, because I couldn't feel when to push. But I could feel the contractions, I knew when to push, and I really felt the urge to bear down. I was able to follow my body instincts this time, it felt so positive. I could feel the baby descending and how far down he was, and my body knew what it had to do.

It was very quick once it got going. The notes said the labour was 1½ hours, but that meant the last stage when everything began to happen. It was good to have Ed there at that stage. Since I was on my side the leg had to be kept in the air to deliver the baby. I never thought that looked a very comfortable way to deliver a baby, from the videos, but it seemed to help me to push so much better. Ed had to keep my leg up, so it kept him busy and totally involved. There was something positive in that. He said the delivery was “just like on television”, the gory videos we had seen of the birth, and he was certainly at the action end this time.

Last time, with David, he was holding my hand and leaving the experts to the assisted delivery. It helped to know he was there. I could see when Andrew was born, I saw his head coming out and his mouth open, I could see when I was pushing the rest of him out. I think the midwife had said his arm was up around his head, and I remember her telling me to pant at one stage. I think the delivery of the placenta was very quick after that. The midwife said that behind the placenta was a large blood clot. I think that was causing some of the problems during the delivery and with the pain and the fainting.

I watched the midwife cleaning him up and checking him over. I heard them say it was a boy, then I asked Ed, Is it a boy then? Just to make sure. And Ed said, Andrew Edward, and we used the name we had already chosen for him. I suppose earlier in the pregnancy I had thought more of the baby as a boy, because I was used to boys, and I thought that was the best choice of name. But later on I thought maybe it was a girl, because of the speed of the heartbeat and because the midwife had said this was a smaller baby, and because the movements and position of the baby had been so different. I didn't think it could be because the baby was just smaller.

The midwife said the placenta was small, and she wasn't sure if the baby was on the small side. It was only after weighing

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him that she said he was small. But David was a large baby, and I wasn't expecting to have small babies. But I wasn't sure what weight to expect a month early. The midwife checked him over and he looked perfect. She said she couldn't find anything wrong with him. He looked perfect, he was a proper little baby with all his faculties. The hospital notes said the placenta was small and deformed, as well as mentioning placental abruption. The hospital death certificate recorded pre eclampsia and placental abruption as the cause of death.

The midwife wrapped Andrew in a cloth and then put him in my arms to hold. Just as we had asked her to before the birth. I could hear her speaking, saying we loved this baby. It sounded like a loudspeaker, I could hear the words, and I was just looking at my baby wrapped up in the cloth, just staring at him, seeing what he looked like, seeing him at last after all these months, all the months of wondering what he would be like, and who he would look like. I was just a mother looking at her new-born baby and cuddling him. Ed was there, he was beside me.

I stroked his hair, he had a lot of dark hair, which was darker at the back, and maybe a gingery glint nearer the front. I am not sure whether he would have stayed dark. He looked so different to David. He had such long fingers, and I stretched them out, they were so perfect. His feet were strange and very bony, very long feet, and bony knees. I suppose it was because he hadn't had time to put fat on, so he was more noticeably bony than if he had stayed to term. His heels were very bony, and I thought that must have been what I felt sticking out through my tummy button so often, so bony but rounded in shape.

He had lines under his eyes, and I wondered whether that was because he was early, or whether all new-borns were like that, or whether he had that feature from his Daddy. There was a crease down the middle of the eyelid. The midwife checked

his eyes, but I didn't see them. I wished I could have seen his eyes, it is one of the first things you notice with a new-born, wanting them to look at you, and waiting for the first smile, and the first cry.

I had been thinking that I would never experience any of these, I would not really know what Andrew was like, there was no time to get to know him, to see him develop, to see his personality and expressions develop. Mainly I just cuddled him, and stroked his head, and looked intently at him, trying to remember and register his features, not wanting to forget what he looked like. A high forehead, and a flattened nose, like a boxer's, I thought. And cauliflower ears.

A real little boy, not pretty, just ours. I got Ed to take photos of us, but I felt so awful asking him, because it was so hard for him. He was really upset and sobbed. The midwife was very sensitive, and very good. She cleaned Andrew up and then dressed him in the outfit we had brought for him. It was a white lacy dress with long ribbons, very pretty, only the sort you could put a new-born in, with embroidered motifs. I had got it, brand new, from a toy and baby clothes sale, ready for the new baby. It was bought especially, so I wanted Andrew to wear it.

It was the best we had, and he would have been swamped in the Christening Dress. The little white satin shoes that David had worn for his Christening were far too big for him to wear, so we put him in tiny socks, and the bonnet and booties were put next to him in the cot, the see through hospital cots, just like David was in when he was born.

The midwife gave us time alone together as a family. We talked and cried and looked at the baby. I asked Ed if he had seen Andrew, because I only really saw him when he was dressed up in his outfit, and wrapped in a blanket. I just heard the midwife say it was a boy, but I was just taking her word for

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it. So Ed showed me the rest of him, it just confirmed we had another little boy, and I could see his cord stump had been clamped just the same as David's was. It was good to see him, so complete, with all his limbs and faculties, so perfect, even though he was tiny.

CHOOSING EVERYTHING, EXCEPT LIFE

Overwhelmingly, the birth was a positive experience. It was part of being a mother, to give birth, and it felt so positive and so good, like an achievement. It was such a relief when it was all finished, because it had been such hard work, and so painful, so much monitoring and being jabbed with needles, and so worried that I would get through it all. David was born covered with meconium, and Andrew was born covered with blood, though most of it was probably mixed with the amniotic fluid.

The midwives were so sensitive and caring, and they listened to what we requested. I was so glad that after the miscarriage I had read so much on the subject, so I knew what I wanted, I had already had time to think about it, and know it was important to see and hold the baby and to have time and photographs. The midwife took pictures with the instant camera, and the cot was wheeled near to the window, so Andrew was in the direct sunlight.

It was a brilliantly clear and sunny day, in the private room that evening I just stared out at the view and the clear sky, and recognising all the local streets, and even able to see the childminder's house. It was reassuring to see the house where David had been all night and all day, it was a link with the outside world.

Ed took more pictures, and later on when I was just about mobile, and managed to move to sit in a chair. Ed photographed me holding the baby, wearing the white dress. It was just the same as a little later in the day, when he had his Blessing Service, and I held him. Ed had been shocked by how light the baby was, when he picked him up from the cot. I was sitting down with him, so I didn't register that.

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I didn't feel any rapport with the lady doctor who did the first scan; I didn't really feel part of the conversation. But it was such a sudden shock, I was not expecting them to find the baby dead, I didn't know until that moment it was too late. All the midwives were excellent. The hospital had a very good procedure, including arranging the funeral. The hospital chaplain explained it all, and said the service had to be at the cemetery Chapel, but we could have someone our church to take the service.

He explained about the Baby Garden in Earlham Cemetery, and that it would be a separate plot, so we would be able to have a stone later on. I very much wanted there to be a burial, not a cremation; Ed doesn't feel strongly about that one way or the other. I was only concerned if it was not a separate grave with a marker. It was such a relief to know they were doing everything properly, and they said what certificates we would need when, to register the stillbirth. The chaplain explained about the Book of Remembrance, and the annual service in the hospital Chapel.

They seemed to have thought of everything. The midwife produced a card, which included the photo of Andrew, and she also took his footprint and handprint (trying not to get ink on the dress), and snipping off a lock of hair to include, with details of his birth and his weight. It was very special to be given that. She put one ankle band onto Andrew, just like for any new-born, and gave the other one for me to keep.

They also had a proper photographer in the hospital, so they arranged for a professional photo of Andrew, and said that would be available when we returned to the hospital for the postnatal visit. The consultant came into the room just to acknowledge her presence, and that we would meet her at the 6-week check; it was good that she came in and introduced herself. Another doctor came in to OK everything and to note what blood tests, etc. should be taken.

They several times mentioned the choice of a post mortem, and acknowledged that we needed time to discuss it between ourselves. We then told the doctor that we had decided not to have it, because it seemed so clear cut when they had already described the problems with the placenta, and it seemed so straightforward. If there had been more doubts about the cause of death then we would have been happy to find out the reason, but we thought we could live with a little uncertainty, since it seemed pretty certain what the cause was.

We didn't want Andrew being prodded around anymore, just to bury him. They would do the tests on the placenta, and the blood tests, and that seemed sufficient. I think we made the right decision, under the circumstances, since they could write down a clear cause of death for the Registrar, and pursuing it further was not necessary. They can probably already do a fair number of tests with the placenta, and they cannot clearly answer the Why question in about 50% of cases anyway.

Part of me still wonders whether Andrew was all right after all, whether there was anything physical that we don't know about. But then he looked so perfect, and there was nothing obvious. And we wanted him anyway, we would have coped whatever we had got. We would sooner have had Andrew than for him to be taken away like this. I don't know what testing we would want in future if we had a future pregnancy.

We didn't want an amnio this time round, very definitely, after our previous experience with David. But then, I wonder why on the detailed scan they didn't pick up that something was wrong with the placenta this time. I suppose now they know to look in future, and we know the sort of questions to ask, it is just another of the imponderables.

We were definitely given choices, and time to assimilate the information. It felt very strange being given information from

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SANDS, and talking about arranging funerals and autopsies, before we had even delivered the baby, but it did mean that we had time to take it in more. By the end of the day we felt inundated with information, and it was hard to think straight. But at least we weren't rushed into any decisions, and we had time to take it in before we had to decide anything.

They did not ask for answers straight away, and that was good. I felt very much in control, and I was looking for information and facts and what would happen when. I tried to keep myself together, because I could see how difficult it was for the midwives and everyone else, who were only doing their job, and how awful that they had to be in this position. I was also very aware of Ed's reactions, and I so much didn't want to hurt him anymore, and I wanted to comfort him.

I thought we could probably take it all as a couple, but I was aware it could put a big strain on our relationship, because it was just so major, and how much we would have to work together and support each other. Maybe I wished I could have just cried like Ed, and not been so in control and so much in logical mode, but I was thinking that this was the way I was last time around with the miscarriage, and this was how I reacted when my mother died, it just seemed to be the way I handled things.

I thought I would cry more later, but then I thought that last time round as well. I don't really feel I have cried much, not considering the situation, and not directly crying for losing Andrew. I hesitated to read the SANDS leaflets, but gradually I began to read them when I felt able, and then tears were streaming down my face, because it brought it home that it was really happening, and the things that had to be arranged when the baby was not even born then.

Eventually everything was being cleared up in the delivery room, ready for me to move down to Wroxham Ward. There

seemed to be a completely open choice about staying or going home. I am glad I didn't go home straight away. I thought Ed would get a bit more sleep back home without me to be concerned about as well. It also meant I would not be looking after David overnight. But it was good that they were flexible, they said Andrew could stay with me in the ward as long as I wanted.

I never thought that he would be able to stay with me in the room all night, just like when I had David, and he was next to me in the see through cot, and the hours of being awake and just staring, realising I had given birth. It was good to be given that extra time, it would have been so impossible to comprehend if I had just headed home the same day, with no baby to take home. I am glad I had the extra time with Andrew, though I didn't pick him up any more. But it helped me to register, just seeing him there, and tucking him in for the night, arranging the blankets.

On the Friday at 5pm the curate from church and the assistant hospital chaplain arrived to take the Blessing Service. It was held in the delivery room, and that seemed appropriate. I had just been cleaned up and got ready for the ward, and just managed to move over to the chair. It had been so difficult to get up off the bed and head for the ensuite to shower and dress. It seemed in slow motion it was so difficult to achieve, I had to take it so slowly.

I asked Ed to pass the baby over for me to hold during the service. Mike seemed to hesitate and suggest he stayed in the cot, but John didn't say anything negative. So Ed passed me the baby. It just felt so right to hold him as we prayed, and went through the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23, and the words for a stillbirth. It was part of giving Andrew into God's hands, but it was special to be able to hold him, to cradle him, because he was our baby and we had just delivered him. I am

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glad I held him then, because after that I just saw him in the cot, but I didn't pick him up again.

When we went down to Wroxham Ward, I was wheeled down in the bed and holding Andrew. It was just the same as when David was delivered. I remember so well being the proud mother, feeling like the queen passing by and waving. This time I just protected Andrew from anyone who might pass by. I held him, and kept the covers round him. Not to protect them, just to protect Andrew from any stares.

When I got down to the ward, Ed had just arrived back with David. He was in Daddy's arms and sucking his thumb. He beamed when he saw Mummy, because he had been at the childminder's all night and all day, and I hadn't seen him since Thursday evening. Now Ed was bringing him to show Mummy before taking him home Friday night for supper and bed. In the room Ed put David on my lap, so Andrew was on one side and David was on the other.

It made David seem even bigger, such a big boy now, and not a baby any longer. He enjoyed running around the room and posting keys, and having some of the chocolates that Ed had brought for me.

I could hear in the next room a baby crying through the night. I was very conscious of it, but then I was glad because that one was OK. But I was glad my baby was with me in the room, it would have been so impossible if he had been taken away instead.

I did sleep some of the time, I was just worn out after the birth, and just very distant. My brain would not go into gear, so everything seemed in slow motion. After Ed left, I could hardly register that David had actually been in to see me, until I saw the key on the floor where he had been playing with it. My brain was very disjointed for days, it was so hard to take

anything in, it was like I was watching a TV screen and watching everything from a distance. My brain registered what was happening, but it was as if I was being an observer and not really involved.

In the morning I took more photos of Andrew, and tidied and cleaned him up a little, and put on the bonnet that I had knitted and that David had worn before. Then I asked the nurse to take him away, I had been with him for long enough. I couldn't face eating any breakfast until after he had gone. But they left him in another room, in case I wanted to see him again, or in case Ed wanted to see him. I didn't want Ed arriving to collect me, with David, and for Andrew to still be in the room. I didn't want him to be upset anymore.

The midwife put through a phone call on the Friday night from Ed's parents, but she was so concerned whether I would want to speak to them, they didn't seem to know the baby had died. I was confused, because Ed had phoned them the night before, and we thought he had made it clear enough.

But I wanted to speak to them anyway. They had assumed there might still be some hope, and then they had heard nothing more for 24 hours, so I explained to them. They tried to phone home, but Ed had on the answerphone, and was on his way back with David. He spoke to them later on, and arranged for them to come over on the Sunday. I told his Mum it would help if she could stay to help out with David.

Ed came with David to collect me at 10am on the Saturday morning. It seemed to take me all of that time to get through the hospital routine, they were checking my blood pressure and pulse and taking yet more blood away for testing. I felt really bruised after so many injections. They had to go through the usual discharge procedure, including mentioning contraception. I felt very strange leaving the hospital.

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Ed had brought me a change of clothes, but I was still leaving the building with slippers on my feet. Angela, the midwife during the night, had dropped in to see me that morning, when she was coming back on duty. She was so caring, and she looked at Andrew and said how sweet he was. It was really good that she expressed caring and that she wanted to see the baby.

When we left the hospital, Ed was carrying David and the bags too. I felt like a woman who had just delivered, as I had, being treated with kit gloves. But I felt awkward, I had nothing to hold; I should have been leaving with a baby, but I had nothing to carry, it felt odd, and I was trying not to be noticed as we left the hospital.

When Ed came into the ward he had bought a cuddly toy rabbit, one for Andrew and one for David, identical except for colour. I was so pleased, Daddy bought a present for both his sons. I chose the darker one for Andrew, to be left with him in the hospital, etc, in case it got stained. Then we gave David the other, who took a momentary interest before he decided other things were more important! The cuddly toy stayed with Andrew, and he was buried with it.

As we left the hospital I saw a man entering with his children. The little girl had a posy, it was so obviously for Mummy. It really upset me, and it was so unexpected. But that Mummy was being brought flowers, she obviously had a baby that was alive. One thing I noticed in the ward, I had no flowers.

The room next door was full of flowers. And I remembered the flowers I had when David was born. It was good after we got home when people brought or sent flowers. Flowers are so important at a birth.

HOME WITHOUT THE BABY

It was strange going home in the car with Ed and David. I remembered what it was like bringing David home from the hospital, suddenly being in the outside world and being vulnerable with a new-born, wanting to protect them. We drove the same route down Newmarket Street, but this time I sat in the front with Ed, David was in his car seat, and there was no new-born baby. It was so different.

When we got home, having only lived there for a week I wondered whether the house would still be familiar to me. But it was, it felt like home. My brain was not in gear, but I knew where to go, the shape of the rooms. It was odd that it was all so new, but already it felt familiar, and we had only been moved in for one week when this all happened. I wondered if the neighbours had noticed anything, with the comings and goings. I cannot remember what happened which day, everything was a blur.

I was fragile, I had just given birth, I had to take things slowly. I had to take the stairs very slowly. Ed had found my maroon maternity dress for me to wear, because it could adjust to any size. I did not have a large bulge anymore, but I did not have my energy back either. Just the same as after David's birth, to feel so weak. It was like I was underwater and very distant from everything that was happening. I remember the visitors and the phone calls over the next few days.

When people phoned I wanted to talk, I was perfectly happy to describe everything in great detail, I was stating facts, the words didn't really hold any meaning for me. I thought the baby must have died, because people kept asking me how I was and because I repeated the facts, but it didn't really register. After putting the phone down I could hardly register that I had just had a long conversation with someone. I kept asking Ed whether this had happened, or I had said that, but it

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was like a dream. It continued like this for some time, certainly until after the funeral.

Ed was off work for the whole week, and I was glad to have him around. He was being busy as ever, trying to finish the unpacking, the curtain tracks, the child proofing, all the new jobs that still needed doing because we had just moved house. I pottered and did what I could, but I really wasn't in gear. It was hard to keep track of David, I couldn't anticipate what he was going to do, I had slowed down too much. But Ed's parents came over on the Sunday, his Dad helped him unpack the books in the study, then his Mum stayed with us for the week, until after the funeral.

She helped with David and she did piles of ironing. I didn't leave the house most of the time and I was hardly on my own. I needed the space. David was still unsettled from the house move and now he was unsettled with all the trauma, and staying extra time with the childminder and Mummy not being around. He didn't sleep very well the first night back with Ed, and this continued for the next few days.

He was unsettled in the evenings, cuddly all day and waking early in the morning. He came into our bed quite a lot, so we got less sleep. We were in a daze from lack of sleep. In the mornings I woke very early, just mulling with thoughts going through my head, but not unconscious. It was very difficult to switch off. But I did get some sleep.

I had the card and two photos from the hospital, but I didn't dare put them up to begin with. It was hard to speak about Andrew to begin with, whilst Ed's parents were there. I wanted to talk about him, but it was so hard to raise the subject, after the initial responses. They were caring, but I don't think his Dad wanted to see the photo, and that cut me up. I tried not to react. Ed's Mum was really good later in the week, and very sensitive, it was just difficult initially. It was hard to

comprehend that I had just had a baby, let alone that he had died.

I wouldn't want to change the first day, or the first week, except that it felt so strange to be so full of information and facts, when I thought there should be feelings and tears. Slight things did trigger off crying, when I was caught off guard by something. Ed's Mum was being sensitive in giving us space, in trying to be helpful but not in the way, it was just the time to get to know her, when I wasn't sure of her approach. I decided to use the Baby Book to fill with photos and mementoes of Andrew.

It was identical to the one I had bought for David, and it seemed it could be adapted since I had already bought it for Andrew. They don't have special books for new-born babies who have died anyway. I decided to use the Birth Announcement cards anyway, after all, what else could you possibly use to announce a stillborn birth. It seemed the most appropriate, I just had to decide who to send them to, we couldn't write to everyone. We had just sent our change of address letters to everyone, and were going to wait then until a Christmas newsletter.

But I wanted to tell people, I wanted people to know. It was somehow to do with acknowledging that Andrew had been born, that he existed; I wanted people to know that we had him, that it was real, that they would know what we were facing. It seemed important to get on with it, and I couldn't think about inviting people to a funeral, but if they knew they could come if they chose to, or contact us anyway.

It was part of finishing things off, something that had to be done. I don't know if Ed understood that or not, but it was better than phoning people up. It was difficult enough when we were suddenly inundated with phone calls. Trying to inform people so the news would filter through to the rest,

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trying to avoid embarrassing contacts with people who had not heard the news. But we did get some of that anyway; you cannot tell everyone, and there will always be someone who has not heard.

I cannot remember when it first registered about the empty tummy. I certainly noticed very quickly how easy it was to turn over in bed, it was such a relief not to have a heavily weighted tummy, to have difficulty turning over. I did feel my tummy automatically, because I had spent the pregnancy doing so, feeling for the movements. I had spent long hours in the evenings being fascinated by every little move and the larger kicks, and the discomfort when he put his foot through my tummy button. It felt really odd to not have a solid bump there any longer.

I did think I could still feel movements; my head told me I would feel no movements now, there was no baby still inside me, but part of me was still thinking maybe there was still a baby in there, maybe my tummy wasn't really empty. It just became more obvious over the days, as my tummy was going down so well, it was perfectly obvious it was empty now. It is hard to grasp that it is empty after so many months when it has been so full, and watching the size of the bump. My body seemed to return to normal so quickly.

EMPTY ARMS

There were so many practical things to be done leading up to the funeral, even though the hospital was arranging everything. It felt like a big list of things to be achieved, I was just trying to get as far as the funeral. I was still in a logical factual mode. I did not feel with it or in gear, everything was in slow motion with the one goal. People phoned or sent cards. I talked a lot and described what had happened, but it was just stating facts.

After putting the phone down it was as if it had been a dream, not reality, I could hardly put two thoughts together, I could not keep my brain in gear. A few days later we went into town and collected the photos. We did not open them until we got home, but I was so aware of them, and wanting to see how they turned out. When I saw all the photos taken in the delivery room and the hospital ward, it brought it home to me. I realised that I had just had a baby, this was reality, suddenly there was proof that it had all happened, that I really had just had a baby.

All the photos were so like the ones we had taken of David, the same sorts of pictures, but the expressions on our faces were so different, so sad, so devastated. I was glad to have the photos, something real and tangible, some proof that it had all happened. It was so difficult to grasp. It was hard to register why people kept phoning up, why they kept asking how we were.

Some things jogged my memory and tears came to my eyes, but I didn't feel I was crying for what had happened, I was just fragile and hardly there. I was mostly in a daze the first week, and leading up to the funeral, and cocooned away from the outside world, a great sense of unreality. But this feeling continues mostly when I talk to people, it is just impossible to grasp, and also when I am tired and the brain is out of gear

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again. I cannot think straight, so I just sit and don't get round to doing anything, or whatever I am trying to do seems to take an age; it feels like I am achieving something when it is just simple everyday tasks that I should be able to do without thinking of.

I need to think carefully, to make myself do something, even to make a phone call or wash up. Lack of sleep and being tired out just increase the difficulty, but I feel I am in slow motion, when I should be back to normal. I have to keep reminding myself that I have just given birth, that I am only expecting to achieve because there is no baby around to prove the point that I have just delivered, that I need time to rest, to recover, to get back into a routine. I don't feel any right to these reactions, because there is no baby. It is so hard in public, because there is no baby in tow to prove to people that I am fragile, that I am not back to normal, that it will take time.

I keep wanting to visit Andrew's grave. It seems to work out twice a week, but it seems important to tidy up the flowers and check that everything's all right. Ed doesn't need to visit the grave, but I think if the baby were around I would be spending so much time every day just looking after him. He would take up so much of my time. I was expecting him to take up my time and energy. It was the role I was expecting to have.

I need to spend time and energy on him, if only visiting a grave, or thinking about what has happened, or reading the books about it, or arranging the Baby Book and mementoes, or sending cards about him. It seems to be part of the process, part of making it all real, to establish that it has happened, that it is real. It seems to be important, but then I feel like I am just letting time slip by and am not really achieving anything. I don't know what my role is, everything has changed so much recently, all the definitions have shifted, and I am in a new house and area, with no energy to put into getting involved in a new area. I can only reinforce what is

already established, it is hard to think straight for anything new.

It was so good to choose the readings and music for Andrew's funeral service; we were doing the best we could. It was all we could do for him, it was nothing, but it was everything we could do. We wanted to give him the best send-off we could. It was important to buy the flowers for the grave, to go through the service in advance with the Curate, to register the stillbirth. We had to collect the death certificate from the hospital and then return from the Registrar's with the burial certificate, so the hospital could make the funeral arrangements. Because of the Bank Holiday weekend, the dates were very tight, to ensure the burial on the following Thursday, a week after Andrew died, 6 days after he was born.

The Bereavement Officer at the hospital was very professional and sympathetic. We had difficulty finding the right part of the hospital, and trying to ask the nurses and door porters on the maternity side was so nerve racking. I felt very shaky being back in that building and I was trying not to panic. It was good when the hospital chaplain came to escort us to the right place. I could not remember the directions we had been given.

The lady Registrar had been very good and sympathetic. I was so glad to get the Stillbirth Certificate. It was proof that it had happened, that Andrew had been born. There was a legal status, he had a name, it had been acknowledged that he existed. That was important. After the miscarriage I was so aware that there was no name, no legal status, just no confirmation that I had been pregnant.

Yes, I felt that my reaction was abnormal, being so logical but disjointed, and not crying much. I thought I should feel more. I was very wakeful, my brain would not switch off, it was hard to sleep at night-time, or to do anything. It felt like being in a

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fog or under water most of the time. But it was in the back of my head that I wanted to finish the matinee dress that I had been making for Andrew. I spent most of the pregnancy knitting it, I was just wanting to finish it before he was born. Then it was no longer possible, and he couldn't wear it anyway.

I wanted to bury him in it, but there was not the time now to finish it. I decided I would finish it anyway, I was determined that it should be finished before his due date. It was so definitely made for the baby to wear. I thought that I would dress the doll up in it instead, the baby doll we had bought to give to David as a present from "Freda" when the baby was born. It was the nearest I could get to giving it to the baby. I had so little energy to knit, I was so tired in the evenings, being pregnant and looking after an energetic toddler, and all the stresses we had been through before the house move.

When I finished knitting the matinee dress, I dressed the doll in it, and then put on the white matinee jacket and booties that Grandma had made for the baby. The other set we had Andrew dressed in for the burial. There was something symbolic in having the doll nearby, like a reminder of Andrew. It was also part of not having a baby after the birth. I wished I did have something to cuddle. It was so good to have David around, he is such a cuddly boy, he loves hugs. It was so good to still have a little boy to hug. But I still wanted to cuddle a baby.

When the doll was ready it felt so good to cuddle and hold, even though it was not real. But it was about the right size, the small size was probably a similar size to Andrew, because he was so small. It was the nearest I could get to holding Andrew, to still having a baby to hold. I know it wasn't the same, but I still had to prove I wanted to hold the baby, I would have cuddled him and held him if I could. The doll was tucked up in the bed. But it was a bit of a shock for Ed, to suddenly

see the doll under the covers there. He said it was an Andrew size. Just a momentary reaction, but he said he understood anyway.

ROOM FOR THE BABY

We were moving house because we needed more space, we had years of young children ahead and needed to plan for that. The thought of David continuing to chuck his food around at mealtimes, wanting more kitchen space, and eating in a separate room, of not having toys and food scattered around the living room. The space for children to play in the garden, space for David to run around outside, whilst I sat recovering from the sleepless nights, with a baby to feed. All our planning and house move was geared to us being a family with two children.

All of the house hunting, and choosing the right house that had all the features for us to expand into, it was all based on considering our expanding family. Even putting the boat up for sale was thinking towards having two under fives being incompatible with the sailing we had managed so far, even with David. It was so obvious which room would be the Nursery; every house we had looked at, it was so obvious, this would be the Nursery, this would be David's room, this was the guest room, this would be the place to feed the family, to put all the toys. We had only moved into the house a week and a day before this happened.

There were still boxes to unpack, curtain tracks to put up, childproofing rooms, electricals, stair gates. There was a big list still to achieve. The hospital bag had been added to gradually before the move, but not yet organised. I had just that day finished the list of phone numbers to keep ready by the phone, ready to call the Midwife, to inform everyone. The boxes were more or less in the right rooms ready for final unpacking. I had sorted through all the toys and equipment, washing and arranging everything.

Checking we had everything together ready to unpack in the Nursery. The car seat was ready to be reused, the bouncy

cradle, the sun canopy for the pushchair. We had bought the double buggy from a church/baby group friend, which seemed ideal for the baby and for David. We had spent so long deciding what would be the best sort of pushchair with lie back for the baby. Most of the equipment had been stored away after David had outgrown it.

It was ready for the next baby, double value from all the new equipment we had bought ready for David. All the rattles and cuddly toys had been cleaned. We had bought the lampshade for the Nursery and a Borders pattern ready to finish off, and hang up the mobiles. It was on the list of things to do when the unpacking was finished. We decided which furniture would be for David's room and which for the Nursery. The rocking chair would be there for the night feeds. The blanket chest to put the Moses basket on, ready by the bedside in the early weeks before baby would move properly into the Nursery.

The equipment that had been removed from David's collection as outgrown, ready for when it would be needed again. The plans to move David into his big bed, with time before the baby arrived, so that the cot could be left ready in the Nursery. But David was still using the cot when Andrew was born, we had no time to action all our plans. David's big bed was still in pieces and with the mattress filling up the Nursery, with boxes of toys still to unpack. The clothes had been washed and stored in size by age group, as David had outgrown each lot. The first size was ready for unpacking into the drawers. I had wanted to begin unpacking them the next weekend. I was beginning to get nervous that we had not done the Nursery yet. I so much wanted to finish it, to hang up the mobiles, to unpack the clothes.

I knew it had not yet reached the top of our list of things to do, but the weekend ahead was the time to begin, because that would be a month before the birth, the right time to be prepared, in case the baby came early. It was also part of the

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preparation. I wasn't ready for a baby to arrive, I felt that it was too soon, I was willing for the baby to wait a bit longer, to wait until everything was ready. I was thinking this baby would be early, and not late as David had been. But I was willing him to stay inside a bit longer, Not yet, it's too soon, just a bit longer and there would be more chance, we would be ready by then.

But it was not so much whether the Nursery would be ready, but I didn't feel ready for the baby to be born yet, I was not ready psychologically, and I was not ready physically for the sleepless nights. We had so much stress and life had been so exhausting. I wanted time to relax and unwind, time before the baby arrived. But I had also spent the pregnancy counting the days, getting past all the deadlines, the key dates, thinking that if the baby got past this marker, and that marker, that all would be well, that the baby could survive, that he was big enough, that he had developed sufficiently, that even if there were special care, but at least he would stand a good chance.

It never occurred to me that he would pass all those markers and that it would still be too late, that we would not have a live baby, that getting beyond certain dates did not guarantee a healthy baby. I wanted the Nursery to be ready, so that I would feel ready for the baby to arrive, but it was not ready in time, and it was not needed anyway. The favourite item for the baby was the Moses Basket. We had bought that specially for Andrew. I used a carrycot for David, and I thought it would be really nice to use a Moses Basket, and lighter weight to carry around the house. It was brand new and unused.

Everything else would be reused from David. Apart from that, the white lacy dress was brand new, and Andrew wore that after he was born, and he was buried in it. There was the knitting from Grandma, which was so cute, white matinee jackets and booties, and the peach and yellow matinee dress that I had not finished making for him.

Ed put away my maternity magazines before I came home from hospital. But I said to leave everything else out in the Nursery. I didn't want to feel rushed to put things away, I wanted to sort things out in my own time. Little by little I began to sort through things, beginning with the hospital bag that we returned with. Some things I could put into general circulation. The clothes I put together ready to decide what to do with, and eventually I moved things towards the wardrobe instead of out on the sides ready.

The Moses Basket began to empty of bits and pieces, including rattles. Other things were put back in the toy box, waiting to be sorted through. I decided very early that the Nursery should become David's room, and Ed was happy with that. We had to allow time for David to settle again, after all the changes and upheavals he had been through, and then to set him up in the Nursery. I did not want the room to just become a guest room, I could not face other people using the room. But I thought it would begin to have good associations if it became David's room.

The Nursery was the nearest to our room, so we wanted to move David nearer to us, not the other end of the house. But it made the house seem very large, to suddenly only have two bedrooms in occupation, to have two spare rooms, it seemed very excessive. But we were expecting to fill up three rooms straight away, with only a tiny box room left over, to be used and developed over time. The room has very quickly become David's room, and we moved him straight into his big bed with the change in room.

The cot is now out in David's old room, waiting to be folded down and put away in the loft. The baby clothes are waiting to be checked through and packed away so that they can be put away in the loft too, and the toys checked and put away. There is something important in looking through everything

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first, before it is put away. It will not be got down or seen again unless there is another baby, and that would be such a long time away. I think it is important to go through them first, because they were all David's things, with associations with all his stages of development.

But they have also developed new associations, because they were all meant to be Andrew's, another summer baby, with all clothes for the same seasons and stages as David went through. Andrew was meant to wear all the clothes, to work his way through all the toys and equipment. Everything was thought about and discussed, including the plans for changing car seats at which stages for which child. The two year age gap between our children, the ideal timing for handing over toys and equipment without too large a gap between them.

But it had taken us 6 months to be pregnant with Andrew, and now there would be such a large age gap, even if there were any more babies. And how to face in future the stages of pregnancy and preparation, and unpacking and getting ready. It will be so difficult, and so many reminders. No stage of pregnancy will seem safe in future.

Part of me wishes the Nursery had been ready and finished, that it had been thoroughly ready for Andrew and set-up, so that I could go into the room afterwards and it was his Nursery, and to choose more slowly what to do with everything, or just to spend time getting used to the fact that Andrew would not be coming home there. Under the circumstances I think we have made the right decision about using the rooms, and with family staying over the time when Andrew was due to be born, I am glad that the room is now David's and used already.

BODY CHANGES

I was looking for all the changes as the pregnancy developed. I filled in David's diary of a pregnancy, and compared notes with everything that happened at each stage. Everything was so similar, except that we had been through it all before, it wasn't new and exciting, just the way we thought it should be. But we were still glad to see the changes, it was part of looking forward to the baby.

But it could not be the same as knowing the first time you were pregnant, or the first time feeling the baby move. We did not have the same excitement for David as the first pregnancy, and it was nerve racking until we were past the first 3 months. But we could see everything happening for this pregnancy as for David, and I felt the movements a lot earlier this time. Ed still felt the bump, and talked about needing to bake in the oven for longer, cook a bit more first. He felt the movements and talked to the bump.

We called this one "Freda", for Fred or Freda. David we had nicknamed Ernie, for Ernie or Ermintrude. The first one was just Daisy. We were working our way through the alphabet, but I've no idea why we started at D, and we didn't expect to get very far through the letters. And because of the Amniocentesis, we knew very early on that Ernie was a boy, so he was named David from that point.

With Freda we did not know until the birth whether we had a boy or a girl, so the nickname stayed in use throughout. Yes, we welcomed the physical changes, and watching the growing bump. I thought the bump was smaller than for David, but I assumed, well maybe it was a girl after all, or maybe baby was just lying lower down, whereas David had his bum under my tummy and kept kicking me in the ribs. The heartbeat was a different speed as well, so again we wondered if that meant a girl. But the midwife didn't take such things seriously, and we

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didn't mind which we had. Except Ed said he wanted "the matching set". I thought I was used to boys, and I didn't know what it would be like to bring up a girl.

I was still very sick in the early weeks, and to some extent a lot later in pregnancy. But I was not as regularly sick as I had been for David, and I just thought that I had worked it out better, eating at regular intervals, and avoiding certain foods. I hated the throwing up, I was so glad it happened less this time round. But I certainly felt very pregnant. Later on it seemed a lot to take, being so heavy, hard to sleep, lying in a daze with thoughts whizzing through my head, but not able to switch off. I had very vivid dreams for David as well, so I thought everything was normal, the way I always was for pregnancies.

But it began to seem so uncomfortable, turning over in bed at night, the weight of the baby as I lay on my side. It seemed very hard to take later on. We had so much to do, and so much stress, it just seemed yet one more thing to bear. It is now impossible to remember all the physical symptoms, but they were so real at the time, and so uncomfortable. I had slowed down so much, and going up hills I had slowed down. Such hard work when pushing a pushchair and picking up and looking after a toddler. So hard to bend forwards to change his nappy. So hard to walk along and carry him. It knocked my breath away if I carried him on my tummy.

It was hard to chase after David, when you are slowing down with a growing pregnancy. I was so fed up of the limitations by the end. It seems very hard to think of having to go through it yet again, because this baby died. We were only planning to have the two, I thought this would be the last pregnancy I would have to endure, I thought this baby would be the last chance at breastfeeding. We were not expecting the parenting years to be dragged out. So much time spread out, the trying to get pregnant, the long months carrying the baby, all for nothing. All the time it could take to get pregnant again, even

if it is possible, even if everything were straightforward. It does seem such a waste of all that time and effort and pain. I thought I would have all my babies before I was 40. I thought I would not have to go through any more months of pregnancy. Yet if I don't, it will be even worse because this baby has died, and that would mean no more.

I really hated wearing the same pregnancy clothes this time round. It was very late before I started wearing them again. With David I wanted to wear them straight away, to publicise that I was pregnant, to announce to the world. I didn't feel at all like that this time. I was glad to be pregnant and we wanted the baby, but I was more marking the dates until the baby was born.

Willing the baby to achieve all the markers and reach birth. I wanted another opportunity to look after a tiny baby, to go through all the stages again, to watch the baby grow and develop, to be reminded of all the stages that I had been through with David. I wanted to have another baby, to have another experience of babyhood, and breastfeeding, to hold a tiny baby again, to watch him grow.

I do resent having to go through all the pain and discomfort of pregnancy for nothing, and the thought of ever having to do it again. It seems far worse than having to go through birth again. The birth felt very positive, and I do not resent having to go through that. But the long months of pregnancy and sickness and discomfort, especially having to cope with those whilst you are exhausted looking after an older child.

The only positive would be the thought that David would in future be out of nappies, instead of two at once, and able to walk instead of using a double buggy. But I think all the permanent changes to my body were from carrying David, not Andrew. David was a big baby, and he was so overdue, and my tummy muscles were stretched so much. My body

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seemed to go back to normal so quickly after Andrew, almost too quickly. I did not even need to have stitches.

I was not looking forward to the milk coming in; I was expecting it, and almost it was a last contact with Andrew. I was glad that at least my body was admitting I had been pregnant and had a baby. But it was very painful to have such full breasts, with no relief, and the doctor not recommending an injection. I just had to ignore them, not drink too much, and not encourage the milk, and wait for it to go down. It took such a long time, certainly beyond the funeral, it was more like 5 days than 24-48 hours.

It was so difficult to pick up David and so painful when he bounced his head against my chest. The breasts were so explosive. But then I was sad when they went down. I wanted them to go down, but I was losing a last link with Andrew, it seemed so sad that they were so full and ready and they couldn't be used, there was no baby to feed.

It is so strange to have a body that has returned to normal, and there is no indication that so recently I was carrying a baby, I was heavily pregnant, I was expecting to have a baby to hold and look after. I was expecting the night feeds, the pottering around with a double buggy. Now there is not even a baby to hold. I am so glad there is still David to cuddle. But David is a big boy now, there is no tiny new-born to cuddle. I wish there was a baby I could cuddle.

I dressed the baby doll in the matinee dress I was making for Andrew, and the matinee jacket and booties that his Grandma made him. I need that to cuddle, because I have nothing else. But I do feel a bit idiotic, yet what else can I do. There are no other babies around that I could hold. And what mother would let me now. I saw babies around town today, and I was looking to see which were the tiny ones. I was desperate even to look at a new-born, let alone to hold one.

I just wanted to gaze and gaze at them, but you don't want to stare and upset the mother. My eyes were starved of looking at them. I do not know what it would be like to hold one. It is far worse to be away from them, and older babies are so different anyway, but I cannot have the opposite reaction where others are scared off even seeing new-borns. I do want to see them. And I wish I could hold them.

BABIES EVERYWHERE:

When we went to see the Bereavement Officer at the hospital, we mistakenly went back to the Maternity Unit, because we could not find the way to the right hospital entrance. Ed thought we should go back to Wroxham Ward and I felt so panicky when we got there, and it was difficult to find someone on duty to ask. We ended up by the Special Care unit and I was so aware of lots of babies in there, but Ed steered me to the other side. After we spoke to a nurse the Chaplain arranged to meet us and escort us to the right place. I was so relieved to leave that area, I was so aware which room I had stayed in, and where Andrew had been put in his cot.

The day we went into town, with Ed and his mum, we had ordered the flowers ready for the funeral. We collected the photos of Andrew, and then went into the department store for a coffee. I saw a baby sitting there, with the mother and grandma. I sat on the next table, I wanted to be within sight of them. The baby was older, maybe six months, and I thought how pretty the baby looked. It was such a nice scene, and I wanted to observe it. There were other babies or toddlers, but that was the youngest in the restaurant. I did not want to avoid the baby, but I was very conscious of it being there. Ed was cautious in case I got upset, but I was glad that there were babies around. Anyway, the baby was so much older and bigger than Andrew had been.

I was mostly conscious of the double buggies I saw round town. I had thought so carefully about which sort to buy, to transport both David and the baby, which would be the best to use around town or heading for the park. I deliberately did not look when I saw any coming towards me. Later on I did begin to look, to see how young the babies were inside them. I have certainly noticed pregnant women, but I think it would get to me more if they were more heavily pregnant. I have seen so many older babies around, but they do not bother me, there

seemed to be less tiny babies, and that is what I wanted to see.

Today (Andrew's due date) I was so conscious of all the babies, especially when I saw the carrycot style which were most likely to be tiny babies. I so much wanted to look at them, to see how small they were. I had to change David's nappy in Mothercare and there were several babies. I kept looking at one, it was the smallest I had seen since the birth, though still an older baby, with a dirty nappy. I just wanted to gaze and not stop looking.

Then later I was in the lift and they brought in a pram with a tiny baby inside, parked next to David's pushchair. I just wanted to look and look at the baby, it was the nearest to a new-born I had seen. With the hands up by the head, and fast asleep. Such a typical pose. It is like having been starved of images of new-borns, and I could not get enough of looking. I do not know how I would react if I ever got to hold a new-born, but although I am very conscious of seeing babies, or television images or magazine pictures, I do not actually want to avoid them. I seem to have the opposite reaction.

Friends sent us a card after Andrew died. Their daughter was stillborn. It was lovely of them to send us a card, since they have been through it themselves. But someone from the Coffee Group informed me that she was expecting very soon, in case I didn't know. We were very pleased, because we had not heard the news before, but I was glad to know before I spoke to her on the phone. It was so good that they had a safe second delivery, but although they had suggested we contact them, it does mean now that it will be some time. I think it is a shame, because it would be good to talk to them.

I do not think it would be too difficult to cope with, because they have a new-born. But I feel they think it is too much to expect, because they couldn't have coped with it too soon. I

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think it is the difference with already having a baby, instead of it being the firstborn. We have David to cuddle, it makes such a difference that we already have a healthy child. But I would still like to see new-borns, or be able to hold them. It is difficult for them, since they have the joy of this birth, I think we would just be a reminder to them of what they have already been through. I feel like sour grapes, just our mere presence.

Ed's friends have just sent us a light-hearted Welcome card for our new home, and announcing news of storks soon. We did not know of anyone expecting around the same time as Andrew was due, and now suddenly there are two contemporaries that we know about. You remember which babies are born the same time as your own children, and now we are faced with these reminders of Andrew. I don't know whether that will prove difficult over time.

I sent them the Andrew card that was written based around his funeral service, with a family photo of us. I do not know what they will think of that, but how else can we pass on the news, especially since we should be sending them Congratulations. It seems impossible to send them congratulations, we did for one friend, but that was after hearing of the birth.

But how can we congratulate someone before the birth, I know people always do that when they hear you are expecting, but it seems rather premature after our experience. And it had a rather bitter taste, to cope with congratulating them when they did not know of our loss, even though they could not have known about it. How could we say anything about their good news at the same time as informing them about Andrew. But we have so little contact with them already. We informed all our regular contacts very quickly after the birth, and others who we contact infrequently will just have to hear when we get round to it.

It is strange that there are still people who do not know, but how can we write to everyone, we have only just informed them all of our new address. Whatever can we write in our Christmas newsletter this year - so much has happened since last Christmas's news, when we informed people of Webb birthdays falling in June, and something about Septembers and storks. But not everyone understood our references, so perhaps there will be people who have no idea of anything that has been happening to us; it has been a difficult year on so many levels.

Because we had only moved house a week before Andrew died, we had no time to get involved in the new area. We have spent more time at our old church and midweek groups and contacts. If people have offered to help in their sympathy cards, I have begun to contact them. I do not know where to begin, when new contacts in the area will tend to be through the mother & toddler groups.

It is so difficult when people do not know us. In the church we do not know who is aware of what has happened. Our loss was announced in church, but how many are aware enough to put faces to names when we are so new. It is so difficult to make brand new contacts when I can hardly cope with social groups at all. It is so much easier with people I know already, at least they are aware what has happened.

But I do not know what I would class as the worst day, certainly not seeing babies in general. Probably more now, when it is beyond the initial words and reactions, and people stop phoning, writing, saying anything. I feel as if there is this void, and I cannot even mention Andrew by name, I cannot talk about what has happened, almost as if I am not allowed to grieve any longer, since it no longer the first few days. People may ask How are you. But mostly they just say You look well.

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Whatever can I say, when people begin by saying I look well. Am I meant to disillusion them. I feel like screaming, why don't you mention Andrew, why can't I speak about him, why have you forgotten him, he was real, he did exist, I don't want to talk about anything else. How can I answer futile questions about other subjects, when they do not even mention what is most on my mind so much of the time. I do not want to lose my train of thought, or be distracted.

SENSE OR NONSENSE

The first image for me was thinking and saying “Andrew has escaped from the sin and suffering of the world”. It’s OK for him, it is us that have to face the grief and the pain. There was something reassuring in that. Something about the image of innocents going straight to heaven, of not facing the pain and suffering in the world. Of them growing and becoming what God intended, of him protecting and nurturing them.

Just as the Chaplain spoke of the Bible verse talking about “In my Father’s house are many mansions”. I had never really found the image helpful before. But hearing it during Andrew’s funeral seemed to make perfect sense. His room (or mansion) was all ready for him, and we had our rooms too, there was plenty of room, everything was arranged, as part of God’s plan, it was OK. There was something positive in the image of Andrew being protected from the suffering of the world, that he was being brought out of him, that he did not have to suffer, even if we did.

I did not think in terms of him suffering inside the womb, I thought he must have died quickly. The midwife said he could not have died long, because he came out in such good condition. I thought then that he probably died the moment I registered. When I had put David down in his cot because he started to hit me, not wanting to go to bed. I could not understand then why I suddenly felt so emotional, why I almost burst into tears. I left the room rather than cry in front of him. Then I went to the toilet, and felt the sudden rush of warm liquid, when I began to bleed.

I thought afterwards, that must have been when Andrew died. It must have been quick, when the placenta came away. It was a sudden thing, there could be no warning. I wondered later why the placenta should have been small and deformed, and Andrew not have grown as well as he should have done.

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Why did it grow like that, the placenta for David was so big. I wondered whether the fibroid had inhibited it. On the scan they said the fibroid was at the top of the womb, and the placenta was attached at the top but behind it. I wondered afterwards whether it reduced the nourishment that could get through, prevented the healthy growth of it. I thought at the time of the scan that it was good that the placenta was at the top, there were no problems with a low down placenta.

Part of me has had a niggling worry, whether the baby really was all right, or whether anything was wrong with him. How much would show up from the tests on the placenta, and the blood tests, maybe nothing. Perhaps a post-mortem would have shown more, but we already thought that it would probably do nothing, that there could not always be a reason. It seemed enough reason to us, if the placenta came away suddenly, and it was small anyway, that nothing could have been done, it could not be explained, it just happened and they could not really give reasons.

But I worry about the 6-week check-up, I worry about what will be said then, whether we can have more children or the choice will be taken away from us, whether there is a real problem or not, whether there will be anything about me. Ed is far more optimistic, he would tend to think the best, unless he has reason to think otherwise. But I tend to expect the blacker side until I hear reassurances.

I wanted information and facts straight away. Just as I did after the miscarriage. I have been reading everything to hand. When I finish one book I want to move on to the next. I feel stupid that I am doing so, and wonder what people would think. But it seems to me that it is important to find out, to pursue all the knowledge I can. I am certainly not ready to stop searching. At one stage I will reach saturation point, but not at the moment. I feel we are waiting for the Consultant's

appointment, and it is a shame that it is after 8 weeks and not just 6 weeks. It is such a long time to wait.

I cannot move forward until this is no longer hanging over me. It is like I am waiting to hear a verdict on our life and future. It is good that we have one son around to love, and the marriage is good. But our plans as a family are now on hold, we do not know what the shape of our family will be, what we can aim for in the future. The baby things are now packed away in the loft, at last, I do not know whether they will come out again in the future, and over what timescale that would be, or whether they will need to be cleared away and sold at some point. It is all so unknown.

Part of me can accept the simple explanation of placental abruption, and that it is just one of those things. But part of me is thinking all the If Only's. Andrew was so near to being born. It could so easily have been different. He could have survived, lived. I could have watched him grow and develop. He could have been born alive, even if he had needed special care for a while, babies survived so much younger and smaller than he was. He looked so perfect when he was born, but he was dead. And it is too late.

I have thought so much about whether we could have got to the hospital any sooner, whether I should have phoned the Maternity Unit immediately, instead of Ed and then the out-of-hours phone number, and had the wait until they could contact the midwife. I wondered whether it would have been enough time. But Ed thought it was probably too late by then anyway, he is probably right. I have thought about all the stress we were under, the house move and packing and unpacking. I felt so wound up, I wondered whether resting properly, and taking the pregnancy seriously, would have helped and maybe then it would not have ended so suddenly.

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But I kept saying inside that I still wanted this baby, I would have loved him, I would have looked after him, we would have far rather had him than for him to die. We would have done our best for him, we wanted him to be part of our family. We would have done everything we could. He was still planned and loved and wanted. I could not think of anything early on in pregnancy that could have made the placenta grow small and deformed, unless it was just the fibroid.

That made me wonder whether there was something wrong with the baby too, if the placenta was not perfect. But I am worried by that thought, it is more worrying than if the baby was perfect and just a sudden tragedy. No reason sounds easier to take than that there should have been anything wrong with the baby, because then it would be so worrying for any future pregnancies. I thought about the testing we did not have this time round, we refused the Triple Blood Test and the risk then of an Amnio. It was so worrying with David when the blood tests came up high risk and we had to choose to have the Amniocentesis.

The hospital seemed to think we should go ahead with the tests, even though we said we would continue with the baby whatever. It was better than months of worry and uncertainty, after being told we were high risk. But we both decided not to have the tests this time round, there seemed little point just for the sake of information. I don't know what we would do next time round.

LITTLE HOPES ALONG THE WAY

I remember in the delivery room, staring at the ceiling, thinking So this happening to us, this is what we have to go through. I had seen the scan image and heard the words that there was no foetal heartbeat. It did not feel as if God was absent, he felt there, in the midst of the situation. I didn't feel abandoned, only that we had something huge to face and trying to think to do the right thing and get through it all.

I definitely wanted a Blessing, well a Christening really, but it was very important to have the service, for everything to be done properly. When we had the service in the delivery room, it felt like a handing over of Andrew to God. We were sitting around in a circle, and Ed reached over the cot and handed Andrew over to me. I was holding him in my arms, cradling him, and John Valentine was reading the words of the service, some special words for stillbirth, as well as Psalm 23 and we all said the Lord's Prayer.

It felt like a handing him over, giving him into God's hands. It felt very positive and accepting. It was very peaceful. I just stared at Andrew the whole time, I could not look up, I could not close my eyes, I just looked and looked at him. I was almost in tears, seeing the baby we had just given birth to, and had to hand him over with the Blessing, he could not stay. We could not hang on to him. It seemed very positive, very peaceful, very right. God seemed present.

I did not feel then, or later, that we should be blaming God for what had happened. It was just something that had happened, something impossible, something that we could not explain, but I did not even want to be angry or blame God. There seemed to be no point. No point to wishing for it to be otherwise, it was just too late, it had happened, there was nothing we could do to change it. It was just something we had to face and get through.

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From very early on it just seemed important that we should go through it together as a family, not to be pulled apart but to pull together. That it should bring us closer not split us up. That we had to think about David, and make sure he was still secure. Ed and I talked about it later on, that we seemed to be heading in the right direction and supporting each other; that we reacted in different ways at different times, and were not reacting at the same times, so we could help each other.

It seemed so important to plan and aim towards the funeral service. The Chaplain arranged everything for 1st June, the next Thursday, a week after Andrew had died, and 6 days after he was born. We discussed it with the Curate from church and we spent an evening looking through, trying to find songs and Bible readings. We spent hours trying to find the right ones, searching through hymns, because we could not remember the first line.

Ed wanted something to do himself, it was part of doing something for Andrew. I wanted to find the Bible verse that had been going through my head. I looked through all 65 chapters of Isaiah, with the theme of God being there, and in the womb, every few verses. But it was not the entire passage in a short reading. The Concordance led me to Psalm 139. Ed had found the ASB and looked through the funeral service. We saw there the prayers for a stillbirth, just as John had read out during the Blessing Service. It also referred to Psalm 139 for suitable readings.

The verses seemed to say it all, the nurturing in the womb, that God was there, the caring, the presence, the protection, and every day of life being written in a book. It seemed to speak so precisely of Andrew's life and the nurturing in the womb. It made it important, special, that Andrew was known, even though other people did not know him. It was the best

we could have chosen to sum up his life, to acknowledge he existed, he was real, that it did matter and was important.

It spoke of God's presence, even in the depths, that there was nowhere beyond the reach of God. It just spoke to the situation, that even in this God was still there. I had kept thinking that it was not God's fault that it had happened, he did not wish for the baby to die, but that he was weeping with us, as a parent he would feel the pain, he would be there with us, alongside us. When I went along to the first Coffee Group at Trinity, we had a guest speaker who was talking about her job as a nurse. She did not know me, she did not know the situation. But she chose a Bible reading to close with, and it was Psalm 139. I was calm and I listened to it.

It seemed to be appropriate to hear it, but I was very conscious it was Andrew's verses, read at his funeral service. Last Sunday, the day before Andrew's due date, we went along to the new church. The talk was for a Family Service, and spoke about different emotions and the way people might be feeling, happy or sad. No-one wrote down that they were sad or angry. Some were contented or happy or tired, but no-one admitted to the more difficult ones. There were a variety of hymns and songs and readings expressing each emotion.

One hymn was quite an unusual choice and it was based around the sad emotion. As the words began I just started to cry, and Ed comforted me. There was no way I could have stayed calm, the words were so appropriate, and it spoke of dust, but also of God. I could not even remember the words, but how could I not cry. It is far more likely in the worship, when there are meaningful songs, and like bringing the pain before God.

I thought it was a good thing, because I do not cry most of the time. I am more likely to cry with frustration and tiredness, but this was crying for Andrew, for the loss, and before God. That

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is important, but there has been little opportunity for that. Later in the service Ed was out of the room looking after David, and the lady did a reading that was meant to express a different emotion. But she had chosen Psalm 139 too. It is so unusual to hear that reading, but twice I had heard it so closely together. I felt that God was trying to get the message across.

It was so much Andrew's reading, it was the special reading for his funeral service, it spoke so appropriately for a stillbirth, and for God's presence in the depths and the furthest reaches of life. I thought God was underlining the words just for me, it was too precise for it to just have happened. God knew what that passage meant for us, the knitting together in mother's womb. It seemed that God was trying to get the message across, he remembered, he was there, he had not forgotten, and he knew where we were. It was a very weepy day.

When we had tried to plan the readings for the funeral service, we could not remember the music we had heard which seemed appropriate. I had heard it at a dedication service, and knew it was a modern hymn. "The King is among us". It speaks about each child being special, accepted and loved, a love gift from Jesus to his Father above. I knew it was about God and the parent child relationship, it was not really about a human relationship, but it seemed to express that Andrew was important, special, wanted, loved.

I went to bed that night, and we could not find the hymn. Before morning another hymn came into my head and just seemed so appropriate, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind". It seemed to express everything, the stresses and strains of life, that we were going through, that God was creator, and present, and that he brought peace. I sang that hymn for the rest of the week until the funeral. It was the hymn we all sang at the service, repetitive, peaceful, easy to follow.

But it seemed to be so positive, singing, it, mulling through the words. It was a reminder of Andrew, but it seemed important to sing it. I was almost happy through those early days, when I read those passages, helped to plan the service, and hummed the tunes, remembering the words. The Curate managed to find the song, so we arrived and left the service to the music of that song. It was something to remember later, just as we could never hear our Wedding songs without remembering them.

It was so good the way the arrangements were made for the funeral. The limousine came to our house to collect us. Ed and I sat in the back with David, dressed in his best suit, and little Andrew was in front of us, in the tiny white coffin. It seemed such a sad little picture, the family of four in the car, going on the only journey they would ever go together.

I vividly remembered the route; it was difficult on future journeys, because I would remember different parts of the route in the car, sitting there holding Ed's hand and cuddling David. It seemed right that Andrew should come to the house, to take us on this last and only trip. It was the home that was meant to be ready for him, that he should have come home to. Everything had been planned to include him in our new home.

We had gone a last time to the funeral director's, to make sure everything had been arranged properly. We had chosen the clothes Andrew should wear. Grandma's matinee coat and booties, that she had made specially for him. I had chosen rattles from David's collection, all of which were ready for baby to arrive. Two rattles had been given by friends, and the third said "My first Christmas", from his aunty, for David's first Christmas. Andrew would not have a first Christmas, which is why that one was chosen, and as something from David. The cuddly toy rabbit was included, the other one was given to David from Daddy.

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My Bible from Israel, with the olive wood cover, and a book marker with "Flowers of the Holy Land". I wanted them to be buried with Andrew. It felt important to give him a few mementoes, even if they could only be buried with him. It was all we could do for him, even though that was nothing, we could do nothing for him really. But I wanted God to give him the cuddles that we couldn't give him. I wanted him to pass on our love, to look after him, even though we couldn't. There was something positive in that thought.

When we reached the Chapel at Earlham Cemetery, they asked if Ed would carry the coffin, but it was too much for him. So we held hands and walked in behind the coffin. David was brought in his pushchair, with Grandma & Granddad to look after him. He was so good during the service, he was quiet and sucked his thumb, then Mummy cuddled him later on.

Everyone commented how good he had been. It was so good to have him there, to have a little boy to cuddle, at least he was still with us. There were lots of people there; I could not look to begin with, I was concentrating on finding our seat, but so aware that everyone was opposite us. There were lots from church. I was listening to the words, and I held Ed's hand, except for the hymn, when I had to concentrate on the words. I went very shaky, I was shaking and I couldn't stop. But I did not want to cry.

But it was good to see other people crying, it was part of sharing in it, it meant a lot to see people cry, it did bother them. We then drove along in the car to the Baby Section of the cemetery. I was so glad to see Rachel standing there, with her son, from baby group, she was the third in our group of seven to be expecting a second child. We stood by the grave and everyone else stood further back. David was in his pushchair, and I was glad to have him there.

I read the name plaque on the coffin whilst we were still in the car. Then when we got out they asked Ed if he would carry the coffin. I was so pleased that he did, Daddy carrying the baby. It seemed very important, that he was the one to perform the last duty we could for Andrew. He was carrying him to the burial place, it seemed so right. Ed was very shook up, it was hard to do, but it meant something.

The funeral directors asked if we wanted anything else at the end, and I asked about dropping on the earth, as I had seen for other funerals. It seemed symbolic, part of the burying, to be throwing on the earth. We talked to people afterwards, lots of faces, all people who had cared enough to come along. It meant a lot to see everyone who had come to support us. One of them was so upset I hardly recognised her. But I was so glad to see people from our little baby group, it seemed such a long way from those days as expectant mothers, planning our births and pain relief, and expecting nothing to go wrong, nothing worth than the pain and length of labour.

Ed and I returned later in the afternoon, with David, to photograph the grave and the trees, and the flowers. It was good to see it was filled in so quickly, to see the flowers from Mummy & Daddy, from Grandma & Granddad, from the office, and from the Coffee Group. Flowers are so important. It was good to see it finished, I'm so glad we returned. I have been back quite often since then, just to rearrange the flowers and remove the dead flowers and add water.

It was Andrew's due date on Monday, so I took a big bunch of red roses. I thought all the other flowers would be dead. I like to see flowers on a grave, to see that it is cared for and tidied up, not just left. It does not upset me to see the grave, it is a very peaceful spot, with the trees. But I feel the urge to go there anyway, some days it is just very important for me to go there. I thought I ought to be spending hours of each day looking after a new-born baby. Instead of that I can only

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briefly visit a grave. There is nothing I can do, but it means something to go along regularly, to not forget, just to acknowledge Andrew and to check that everything is in order. The red roses looked beautiful, it just seemed very important to go along on the date Andrew was due, exactly one month after he died and was born.

I think part of the comfort is to have people who weep with those who weep, and who are there and will listen. It is so difficult to think straight, to ask for the help you need, even to find the words to talk. Yet it is so hard when people are silent, it prevents me being able to talk about Andrew. He is in my thoughts so much, constantly within my sight. It is hard to see other things as important or worth giving any attention to. Comfort means having people around who are available, who do not deny what has happened, even by silence.

Silence seems like a denial. I need to be able to talk, and for other people to acknowledge Andrew existed. It is hard even to register what Ed feels, unless he spells it out. I am surprised when he describes situations in the office, where colleagues have had children or grandchildren, I did not know he was facing these situations and reacting below the surface, because he did not spell it out. It made me feel it didn't matter to anyone else, that the issue was at an end for everyone except me, and that I ought to be in the same place.

Being able to talk is so important. Having the opportunity to talk, something to do with acknowledging that Andrew has existed and that he is worth grieving. If people are silent it makes me feel I want to scream, as if Andrew is not worthy of grief, just because he did not live, and could not be born alive. To be able to raise the subject, and raise the subject again, to be able to talk until I do not feel I need to talk anymore. I do not feel I have said enough of all that needs to be said. It seems to be part of the process of coming to terms with what

has happened; it brings peace to bring it out into the open, to share it with people.

Eventually I want to be able to speak of Andrew, without it being an issue, without it being painful. To be able to speak of him as part of our family, as part of what has happened, so that it no longer matters whether other people understand or not. For it to be far enough away that it is no longer nerve racking what people may be thinking if you raise the subject, or how you may feel if you are suddenly reminded unexpectedly. Everyone has to tread so carefully at the moment. To be able to think forwards, but to see the pattern of what has happened without denying it.

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FRIENDS ALL AROUND

I did not know how else to tell people about Andrew's death, except sending the birth announcements anyway, and writing "In Memory" and "stillborn", and stating the medical cause on some of them. I wanted people to know what had happened. It is hard to think now that there are still so many people who do not know what has happened. They only know that we have just moved house, they may know nothing of what has happened since the New Year.

But I tried to inform the key people, apart from those that Ed had already phoned. It was so difficult for Ed to phone people up, it seemed a pressure on him. I wished the phone calls could be vetted, that I did not have to do too much of the telling. But at the same time I took the opportunity of each phone call to describe what had happened. It didn't really matter who it was, though relatives were more difficult. But it was so good to hear so many people phoning up and expressing concern. It was good to hear the concern in Jane's voice, when she left a message from Worthing, being so careful with her choice of words. That made the concern seem real.

Many people sent cards, or letters, and lots of flowers arrived. Some of the flowers I took to Andrew's grave. It meant a lot to see them all. I was waiting for the postman, wanting to see everything that arrived, who had responded, what they said. It meant most when they expressed emotion, or acknowledged this event as major, devastating. It meant a lot to see the people who came along to the funeral service, we felt so supported by church, seeing so many people there.

It was important to see people were upset or crying, it meant they registered what this meant, that we really did have a baby and that he really did die. "Sad" didn't seem a strong enough word, but whatever people wrote, it was so important that they

took it seriously enough to write anyway, even if they did not know what words to use. It was lovely to receive a rose plant from coffee group, in memory of Andrew. Ed planted it in our front garden, it is now about to bloom. It is good to have a permanent reminder, something positive, something planted especially.

It meant more when people were offering practical help, they were willing to go out of their way, or they suggested how they might be able to help. It meant more than the standard phrases. It meant more when unexpected people wrote, people who only heard indirectly but wrote anyway, those who were persistent and did not give up easily. It helped to receive practical help, with Ed's mum staying and helping with David. But it meant more when she was being sensitive enough to come along with us to the funeral parlour, and to think that Ed & I would probably need some time alone with Andrew.

But it also meant a lot that she went in to see him to. It is so different in that context, than when you see the baby just new-born. I was glad that she saw him though, it was the only chance she could have seen him. No-one else would have seen him. People being willing to see photos of Andrew was also important, part of acknowledging that he did exist. It seemed to be part of sharing the loss, for others to be willing to see the only mementoes we had of him, and to see what he looked like.

Of course, Ed offered the most meaningful support. He was there, and he expressed his love for me. I needed the reassurance and he still cuddled me, and told me he loved me. He made me feel wanted and loved. I felt suddenly vulnerable, because I was afraid what might be said by the consultant at the check-up; I worried, and still do, in case any of the tests came out badly, in case there was anything wrong with me, not the baby or just no reason. I was worried by the tests the doctor said would be carried out.

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I wanted to know if Ed still meant the “For better, for worse”. It somehow seemed that maybe it was a whole new ball game now, that maybe he had got a bad model. Back to the analogy of old vintage motor cars, and perhaps this model wasn’t much good after all. I don’t know why I felt I needed the reassurance; I certainly always thought Ed meant his vows seriously enough, whatever happened. But it almost seemed like it didn’t apply anymore. We were just like after the miscarriage again, a new intensity, love and caring, being wanted, it seemed so important to express our love and commitment to each other.

I had thought that this situation would be either a moving together or a pulling apart, that it was such a major thing to happen in any relationship. But we seem to have had more than our share, and we are still pulling together. It is a good relationship. Just as well, really. And now there is less of the immediacy of tragedy, as it is weeks and not days since Andrew died. Ed is getting on with life and he has done his crying. But he is being protective and caring, he is letting me be where I am at, and talk when I want to. It is difficult, because men seem to react so differently, but he is happy for me to be different, the only pressure comes from me, not him.

THE SILENCE OF OTHERS

I was angry when my sister was saying we should have told her sooner. When we had tried to think of her, and not spoil her holiday, she thought Dad should have passed on the news, even though we told him not to. It was hard work to try to work through the conversation, to try to be positive and choose the words carefully. But then she said some of the family conversation, that maybe I was overdoing it. That made me so angry, to hear first Dad say it, then my brother, and finally my sister.

I had tried so hard to underline that it was just something that happened, that there was no reason, that this just happened, they did not have any medical explanations for this. I felt the blame coming back at us, for moving house, for packing, for everything happening at the same time. We had tried so hard to get everything sorted out in good time before the baby was born. There were no relatives or friends nearby, we did not have help with packing and unpacking.

The house move was exhausting. The year itself was so exhausting and stressful, especially from January onwards when the house sale fell through, I was made redundant, Ed's area had 25% redundancies, though he came through that OK. We had so many major things to contend with, and an energetic toddler heading for the terrible 2's; and I was getting more and more pregnant. There did not seem to be a choice in everything we had to face, but still, that could not be said to cause placental abruption anyway. Ed underlined that everything had settled down after the house move.

The midwife had told me to rest, and I was taking things easily. I was not doing anything major on the day. I told my sister she made it sound like it was our fault, I was angry at the implications behind the words. She said she had not intended that, but it felt that I had given so much emotional energy to

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explain to each of my relatives in turn. I talked so much on the telephone, whenever anyone phoned up, I wanted to talk, to explain, to describe everything, I could not talk enough. But the relatives were the most difficult. Then my sister said our half-brother was there and wanted to speak to me too. It was too much, I could not take anymore conversations, I felt saturated and drained. I would not speak to him; we had no regular contact, I could not face being nice to someone else, making yet another effort.

My brother said afterwards how impressed they had been that we had considered my sister, in trying not to spoil her holiday. To be considering others at such a difficult time for ourselves. He said my half-brother was just being selfish, upset because I would not speak to him immediately. But there are limits to how much you can consider others. I wished I had someone to shield me from the flood of conversations. Yet most of the time it was positive, and it was good for the opportunity to talk. Being able to talk made it more real; it was so hard to grasp and comprehend what had happened.

It took so long to contact the minister of our new church. Yet she had been away, and when we managed to phone her and she realised what had happened, she did arrange to visit quickly. She announced it in the church that morning (Holy Trinity had announced it the first weekend and invited people to the funeral), and she told me afterwards how people had reacted. But we have not had other direct contacts with people when we went along to the church, no-one came up and said anything. We had some general welcoming, and it just makes it so awkward, because we do not know whether they realise what has happened, or they are just treating us generally as newcomers.

It hurts that there seems to be no befriending when we are so new to the area, and the death of Andrew now makes it so difficult to begin again to make friends, to talk to people

without being sensitive of where the conversation might lead. We are questioning our decision to move, and the timing. To suddenly be at a distance from all the support structures. We are keeping our old contacts, because that seems to be where any support will come from, and we need to be able to talk to people who know what has happened to us.

The past few days have been difficult, because I seemed to be following my own course of grieving, the way it seemed right for me. Reading the books, visiting the grave, developing the mementoes and filling in the baby book for Andrew. Crying when something got to me, being happy and contented some of the time, and thinking and mulling through everything a lot, and talking when there were opportunities. But then we had relatives staying, with children. It was meant to be help for us when the baby arrived, someone to look after David whilst I went into labour. It was a help for them, in their move back to Norwich, the temporary accommodation locally. But suddenly it was busy, noisy energetic children around, and lots of relatives descending for David's birthday party.

I had planned the party, as I had planned to celebrate Ed's birthday, and Father's Day, and making special cakes and buying presents. But it was hard to concentrate in a crowd of people all talking, I could not keep track of all the conversations. Some people did ask how I was, there was acknowledgement of what had happened just by that expression of concern. But the pace made it impossible to follow any conversation, or get beyond comments of looking well. I hated being told I was looking well, how could I then go on to say how I really felt. With casual comments asking how I was, there was no opportunity to really say. I could not understand how everyone could be so jolly, and no mention should be made of Andrew by name, when this was the first time some people saw me face to face.

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Eventually I felt like screaming, I wanted to shout aloud, to talk about Andrew, not to talk about other things. It was so hard to concentrate on other topics, they did not seem at all important. I found it hard over those few days to keep up with the new pace. I suddenly found I had to be a hostess, and I was not really expecting to be. I moved suddenly from feeling like an invalid to feeling like I had to fulfil such a different role. I could not think straight, and I wanted to just go away and not stay in the situation or have any demands made on my time. I felt in the middle of it I had lost the right to grieve, that I now had to be back to normal, and this was all the time I could allow myself for the death of a baby, since the baby had not lived.

But I went to the cemetery anyway, it seemed a relief to just say I was going, because it was en route home and I was going to put flowers on the grave. I had bought lots of red roses. It was time to change the flowers anyway, but it was also the day that Andrew was due to be born, I had always thought I would go to the grave on his due date. The children asked very matter of fact questions, and I did not mind answering them. What I could not face was the silence, the lack of opportunity to speak, to even mention the baby by name.

Yet it was important to place those flowers on the grave, and I was so glad that I had done so. If I could not remember the baby on the day he was due to be born, when else could I give him time. When the youngest had asked Where are we going, and her mother mentioned Andrew's grave, the response was Who's Andrew? I reacted immediately with, He's my son, and David's brother. It was important to me, to acknowledge him as my son, to acknowledge that David had a brother, that Andrew was part of our family. Later on the photo was noticed, and again the question, Who's that. When I said Andrew, the response was, Before they put the earth on him.

The mother sounded shocked, but it did not seem horrendous to me, just to hear such practical statements. It was just true. It was far worse to not be able to speak about him. After all, we had buried him, we had put the earth on him, and they were the only photos we could take of him, since Andrew was stillborn. What could be said that we have not already thought about for ourselves. We have done the thinking, other people may only have thought briefly, but we have had so many things to think about. Thinking and talking are important.

Because of this I have felt the pressure to be beyond this stage. As if my time for grieving has to be over. But Ed does not put this expectation on me. It is still so little time, yet every day is getting further away from when Andrew died and was born. I am nervous that the time is getting more distant, and yet it is still so near. Too soon to stop thinking about it most of the time. Today is just 5 weeks, and already it seems so much further away than 4 weeks seemed.

Yet it is so little time compared to one year. The books say one year, I do not expect it to take me less time than average. But I do not want to be one of these people who hangs onto this for years, who cannot bear to see or be in the room of small babies. I want to be able to speak of Andrew, to not shrink from doing so, for him to be part of our family, but for it not to tear me up inside. I want to come through this with healing, both as an individual and as a family. I feel less right to grieve sometimes, because I cannot grasp what level in the scheme of things this event should be at. How major is a stillbirth, compared with the death of a child you know, or compared with a miscarriage. Stillbirth seems so much worse than miscarriage, but that is still major when you are going through it.

Other things may be more horrendous, but it is hard to grasp that this child so nearly made it, had developed so far for so long. Other new-borns are born and survive, when they are

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born so much earlier than Andrew was, when they weigh so much less than he did. He was so complete and perfect, so far as we could tell, he could so easily have lived. He would have been alive until so near the time it became too late. It could have been so different. He looked so much like a normal baby. All the photos show that he was just a baby. Yet I cannot comprehend being so near to bringing up a new-born, yet so far. The house has so little indication now of a new-born, there are no baby things around. There is so much space, why do we have all these bedrooms. This is a new house, and it looks like it was never intended to have a new-born in it. It is geared up to David, but it is not geared up to a new-born. All the baby things are in the loft now.

I have lost some of my sense of direction now, and I feel it is perfectly understandable. At the beginning of the year I lost my role in the job, because I was made redundant. Everything was geared to the house move for so many months. But it was on the assumption that we would have a baby and a toddler, the space was chosen with that in mind. I had thought myself into the new area, and getting involved in local activities, but it was on the assumption that I would be trekking around with a double buggy and with a tiny baby to look after. I was expecting the sleepless nights. I was expecting to need to keep the childminder on for David, because I needed space after the birth.

I was expecting to have a very full role as a mother, exhausted looking after a baby and a toddler, and not having time or energy to think beyond this role for some time to come. Now I cannot decide where I should be heading, except I know that I am not in a position to make any real decisions at the moment. It raises too many questions about where I should be heading. I know I already have a role as a wife and a mother, but so many of my roles have disappeared so quickly.

STOP THE WORLD, I WANT TO GET OFF

The time in the hospital I felt so completely out of the world, that when I came home the news seemed strange and unfamiliar, as if I had been out for weeks or months. I did not know what was happening in the world. It was odd because I only had the one night in the hospital, plus the night leading up to delivery, but it seemed like an age had passed. Everything was very strange and unreal. When I got home the house was vaguely familiar, as if it was home and I had lived there for ages, but I hardly felt conscious, like it was painful to try and take in where I actually was.

It could not have felt stranger if I had been away round the world for 6 months and just got back, that strange familiar but miles away sensation. I hardly felt with it for the first week, leading up to the funeral. There seemed to be lots to do, but really there was nothing concrete to do. It was slow motion, and I felt like I was walking through a dream or under water. I could register what was happening, or the conversations I was having, but then I was confused and needed it confirming that I really had just said something or spoken to someone.

My brain felt disjointed, and the thoughts would not connect together. It was very difficult to keep pace with David. He became very cuddly, and wanted to be spoon fed, and wanted to be sure that Mummy was around. I was so glad to have him around, and to cuddle him. I hardly left the house the first week, and only with Ed or his Mum, to make the practical arrangements and to collect the Stillbirth Certificate from the Registrar. I could only walk slowly down the street and climbing stairs I had to take slowly. But I did not feel part of the outside world.

Ed had the whole week off, from being called home late on the Thursday, the birth on the Friday, the funeral the following Thursday. Then he was back in the office on Monday

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morning. We went to Trinity, our old church, that Sunday morning and I felt fine. I was still very together, and people came up to talk to us. I was still in information and descriptive mode. When Ed went back into the office the next morning, I was nervous. I was afraid of being left on my own to cope, and looking after David. I do not remember the day, but I felt pleased with myself for coping. It made me feel more positive about the rest of the week, because I had managed that first day on my own.

I had my own list of projects that I wanted to complete. It was important to me sending out the birth announcements, collecting the photos of Andrew, and filling in the Baby Book. I looked forward to the post, there were so many cards, and flowers, and phone calls. I had books that I wanted to read, to find out more facts. I determined to finish the matinee dress that I had been making for Andrew. I also finished David's Fireman Sam jumper, that had been delayed for months. I had my own agenda, and that was my priority, apart from being with David. I did not want to go out for some time.

It has been far more difficult lately. It is over 5 weeks now since Andrew died. When Ed's sister came to stay, and we also had David's birthday party, the pace I found hard to cope with. I felt very panicky and just wanted to get away. We have had sleepless nights, David had a streaming cold, and now has had an allergic reaction to the antibiotics. I have been jumping awake when he's cried out in his sleep. I have been far more restless at night. Earlier on I settled back into a sleeping pattern fairly quickly. But now I am worn out again.

I have been feeling that everyone else has moved on now, and do not feel a right to grieve. It has been hard on Ed, because he is trying to give me the space, but I do not feel the right to it anymore. I feel like I am messing everything up, when I should be getting on now, and beyond this stage. But I did not cry much to begin with, so I am reacting against the thought

that I should be moving on when it is too soon, and I have hardly begun yet.

I have been thinking ahead, but there is no point at the moment, I need to get back to the day by day pace. There is no point in thinking further or deciding anything. Everything will halt for the summer holidays, and I am still so new to the area, I cannot begin to get involved. It will take time to get involved, to get to know people, and I do not feel I can even begin with most groups after what has happened; I need some space first before I try. But it is hard to accept that there are no plans or structure for the foreseeable future.

I am very aware that the phone calls have stopped, the cards have stopped. Ed has his office routine, and a very responsible job. I need to feel I am achieving something, but they are such small goal posts at the moment. Just getting through the day in one piece, knitting a row or two, keeping up with the post and daily routines, and one or two pottering jobs to feel I am moving forwards and not backwards. I thought about City College courses, but the brochure will not be ready yet for the Autumn, and it is impossible to decide what I could aim for at the moment.

I do not know which direction I should take, so I dare not commit myself to anything much. I suppose until we get past the appointment with the consultant, we do not know what we can aim for in the future, whether it will involve any more children or if this is it. That will affect goals and timing. Whether I should be the typical housewife, or have something more to get involved with. How involved I could become at the church, evening classes, toddler groups with David. Even whether I can get enthusiastic to go swimming again, so that at least I am getting regular exercise.

My body is so weak at the moment, but the tiredness and upset do not help. If there were to be any more babies, I

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would need to be fighting fit again, and I would have to be so careful during any future pregnancy. Anything else I do would have to work around those criteria, so how can I decide anything. It is hard to just give myself a break, to accept that I do not need to achieve at the moment, just to be around for David and for Ed, and to regain some energy.

WHO'S TO BLAME ANYWAY?

I have felt more guilty for the stress I am putting Ed through, for the effect I have by still reacting and getting upset. Then I do feel guilty, like I am messing everything up, rocking the boat when I have everything and I am so afraid of sinking it.

I felt more guilty after the miscarriage than now, though. Placental abruption is just so sudden and inexplicable. They cannot give reasons, they cannot say what causes it. If it were caused because I had a medical condition, because of something that would be said by the consultant, then I feel guilty, that it is my body making this happen. Part of me thinks I caused it by being so stressed out for so long. I was saying for so long, what effect was it having on the baby, to be stressed out and under pressure for the entire pregnancy.

If I felt guilty it was before the baby died. I felt guilty then, but more wondering whether it was a good idea to be pregnant now when we were under so much stress, it seemed awful timing. Even though it was planned, but we were worn out to begin with, and so much has happened since then. We have been under pressure for the entire pregnancy. We have been trying to cope on our own, with one thing after another. Maybe something did have to give. I wonder why I bothered planning ahead, as I usually do, provisional plans for a Christening, an Open House, David's birthday party.

I was trying to be so organised whilst I had the chance, and it all fell apart. Maybe I'm guilty that I allowed myself to keep going at that pace, when I knew I wasn't up to it. I could not slow down when Ed moved at such a fast pace and could achieve so much. It is hard to allow myself to go more slowly, even if I know I need to. Yet Ed was encouraging me to rest, doing everything he could to help. But it just made me speed up more. I feel guilty for the late nights and the packing before

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the house move. There didn't seem to be a lot of choice really. Somehow we should have got in the outside help.

I feel more fragile and flattened and tired out than guilty. But then, I can hardly think straight at the moment. I need to rest and take a break from the emotions for a while. I would tend to blame myself and feel guilty about practically everything.

WHY US?

I was not in an antenatal group this time round, so I have had no other pregnant women to compare myself with. Only after Andrew's death have I discovered that some friends were expecting within a few days, and others a couple of months later. I do not seem to be in any groups, or friends or relatives, where there are tiny babies. I am glad to know of at least two contemporaries with Andrew, and maybe that is more important later on. I still remember that my godson was contemporary with a friend's baby niece that died, many years ago now. I felt guilty then that I was the one still with my godchild, when she had lost hers.

But it is good to have a marker over time. We saw one friend's baby on Sunday, at the baby graves. They lost their first baby, , so I was really glad when I heard that their second arrived safely. It was good to see her, so tiny, with her arms waving about as new-borns too. She was a lot bigger than Andrew. It is so hard to remember how small Andrew was, when we are used to picking up a lively toddler, who is such a big boy now, just past his second birthday.

I do not know whether I think it is fair or unfair that Andrew died, it doesn't seem to be relevant. It is just a fact, it happened, I thought to begin with that nothing could change that. It registered in the delivery room when I stared at the ceiling and I had just heard what they were saying during the scan, in the moment before Ed walked through the door. I just thought, This is it, so this is what we have to face. There didn't seem to be anything to argue about, anything to do except take it in, and realising what we had to face, what us as a family would have to cope with. Fairness seems irrelevant.

It is as if I am registering that God has allowed this, there is no point in arguing since it is too late and cannot change anything, and it has just been handed over as a finished

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product, to try to grasp, to cope with, recover, sink in, but not to change anything. Fairness is when you are fighting for your rights. Perhaps I am not sure if I have any rights, or can expect anything. It seemed too much to hope for, life seemed to have been going right for long enough, I did not think it could last much longer. I wondered why suddenly I seemed to have everything. Suffering seemed more familiar, like I knew how to handle that more.

I get more angry with frustration, but exploding only makes it even more frustrating, because people do not know what you are reacting to. I could almost scream with frustration sometimes, when I feel I am going round in circles, when I cannot do a simple task, like threading a needle or getting supper ready. I explode or want to cry, beyond whatever is the immediate minor niggle. Ed probably gets most of my anger and frustration. I try not to pass it on to David, because he cannot understand, and I don't want to upset him.

Anyway, David is very noisy if he gets upset, so it only makes things harder. Sometimes it is so hard to be calm with him, but I feel it is totally unjust to react to him, instead of being calm and patient, because he is just being his age.

Why did he have to die on me. But I have needed to have the doll around, because it is the only concrete reminder of Andrew apart from photos. It is dressed in baby clothes, that Andrew should have worn. But there is no Nursery and I thought no other signs in the house that this should have been welcoming a new-born baby. We packed everything away so quickly, because of our own deadlines, and now it seems less than a good idea. I had not realised the effect the doll was having on Ed, but at least we expressed some of our thoughts, some of the undercurrents. Ed has been very supportive, but I feel wretched if I am making his life difficult, and the upset is so exhausting. It is tiring physically and emotionally.

Sometimes I feel so angry I want to throw things, to wreck everything around me, to scream aloud. But I am too sensible to follow my immediate reactions. Sometimes I wish I weren't so sensible. It is just as well really, it could be dangerous if I reacted the way I feel sometimes. Sometimes I want to react so people realise to take it all seriously, to realise it is major, that we need the help. But I do not think it would help, at the end of the day I think we just have to get on with it and other people may or may not be helpful occasionally. It is OK on good days.

But I want to take up swimming and biking to use up some energy, and probably give me some of the energy I haven't got most of the time. I am trying to use the time positively, when I do have some space. I do feel better after writing the diary; the camcorder and knitting tend to make me feel better. Getting out and about usually makes me feel better. Having things to look forward to and plan make me feel better. I put so much energy into the future events I had: Ed's birthday, Father's Day, David's Birthday, then the sister-in-law coming to stay. I did not think beyond that date. I had it in my head that my sister-in-law was coming to stay to help out with David, because it was around the birth.

I had not registered that with no new baby arriving, and everything supposedly back to normal, she had to concentrate on her own moving and settling into the area, they were not staying to help us out. It is probably why it has caused me such a reaction; I had little projects to aim for leading up to that date, when they came to stay, and the date the baby was due. I did put flowers on the grave on the date Andrew was due. But he had been dead and buried for a month. I feel more blank than angry; I do not think I can really comprehend it. I cannot understand that I have had a baby that died. But in my head I know the facts, and look at the photos.

GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS

Some days are certainly better than others. I have been tired out, lack of sleep has accumulated, I feel drained and everything is an effort. It is hard to look after David when I feel like that. I feel better when I get out around town, when I get the washing done, or a bit of cleaning. When I feel I am achieving something. So often I feel I am going round in circles, and not really doing anything, I am just too tired to think straight. Then I feel very weepy and it is hard to cope with everything. I feel better when I have been able to talk.

The worst days are when I have nothing booked to do or go out, when I haven't got the energy to decide anything, when I am just trying to survive and fill in the time before Ed gets back from work. I do not feel the energy even to decide to go out. I used to be able to have fun days, take David to Pettitts or Yarmouth, but it takes energy. I cannot face being too far from home at the moment. Ed notices when I've had a good day, and I am bright and happy when he comes home.

Yesterday I had the music on loud and I was just crying. I was too tired to get on with tea. We had the SANDS service at the baby garden, which was fine, though I only knew one person to talk to briefly. But the entire day had felt like such an effort to keep on going. I just wanted to curl up and sleep for days. The emotions are exhausting, but with David going from one illness to another it has been very stressful anyway, plus the lack of sleep.

Saturday was a bad day. I had to take David to the doctor. He had a red rash that developed all over his body. I waited over half an hour in the surgery, it was fine to begin with, but then I began to feel so edgy and panicky. I got very upset, and it was an effort to try and keep David out of mischief for such a time.

The doctor was totally unsympathetic and it has since made me afraid to return to the doctor's, in case there is a repeat of this. I said I had just lost my baby, as a way of explaining my being upset, and he just quickly said it wasn't their fault. I felt really dismissed and clammed up at that point, to have made myself vulnerable in even saying the words, which was difficult, to then have a reaction like that. It spoiled the weekend and I was a soggy heap.

I feel I should be able to control the emotions, that I am making life hard for Ed when he is under enough pressure without me adding to it. I feel I am not able to give David the love and attention he needs, to be patient enough with him. He needs a Mummy who has the energy to play with him. He is very sweet when he plays at making the tea, he has just got a teddy bear's tea set, and he is very much into role play at the moment. He likes you to say More, and Finished and All gone.

GRIEF THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

I cannot register if Ed is grieving unless he tells me. I know he was very upset at the time, and I could not forget that, it cut me up. But a while later he said about different situations in the office, which got to him. Colleagues expecting, or becoming grandparents. He sounded very calm in coping with others reactions, and trying to make them more at ease and reassure them. I hadn't realised until he spelled it out. It's reassuring when he does, because otherwise I do feel that I am the only one grieving. I don't even know whether I am grieving, not really, not deeply, it depends on the definition.

But I don't really feel there are others out there, I do feel alone. Ed says he's done his grieving now. He says, I had a son called Andrew, and he died, and I will never know him. He's sad about it. I am not really sure I understand what he is saying. It sounds so matter-of-fact. He sounds caring, and he's giving me permission to grieve, but I think is that it, has he really finished grieving this soon, does he just mean the immediate reaction. What does sad mean, what does grief mean. Are men's feelings so different. Does he just mean on the surface. Ed's parents were very upset at the funeral. That was positive.

It meant something to see people upset and caring, for Andrew's death to have had an effect. I wanted it to matter to people, for it to mean something. How can they understand that we have lost a son, unless they grieve, unless they register. I do not register what people are thinking or feeling unless they spell it out. People have said they have been thinking of us, they did not know what to say, they did not phone because they did not know what to say, they sent a card because it was easier. But I do not know they were thinking of us, or cared, if they didn't say so. I needed people to spell it out. Even those who have, I almost wish they would say so again, because I need to hear it again now.

A few weeks have passed and I do not know who thinks what. It has been good those who have phoned, and phoned again, it has showed that they care. I have needed to see the cards and letters, to see it mattered to people. I was glad when they wrote more than "sad", when the words chosen have made it clear that they understood a little more. The tone of voice one friend used when she chose her words so carefully, leaving a message on the phone. The way another phoned, and then phoned again, and spent time talking. The way they asked for a photo of Andrew, and acknowledged him as part of our family. It has made such a difference, those from the baby group that have made the contact, phoned up, asked and asked again. And it meant so much to see those who came to the funeral. Those who had obviously been crying during the service, and still were.

Someone from Housegroup who came along, and could hardly say a word, he looked so choked up, that meant something. Our group tutor looked so upset, and later she said that it had reminded her of when she miscarried. It meant she understood the type of grief, but also that it was her own she was crying for. One friend looked really upset when I told her what had happened, she sat and listened and looked at the photos. Seeing people shocked and upset seems to make it more real, it seems to give permission to grieve.

I wish I were not so straight-faced, stating the facts, keeping calm, describing what happened. Yet it has been important for me to talk, and different things trigger off tears for me. It is hard to register that it is a different perspective for everyone else. I have watched it all happening, like being in a dream, or slow motion, step by step through each step. I have taken it all in, I have lots of vivid images in my mind, mental pictures of where I was for different scenes, the step-by-step of what happened. I have been through everything in my mind. I keep reviewing different bits, trying to find answers for small pieces

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of the jigsaw. Different things register at different times. Reading the books has made me think of things, and I pause to consider something that may not have registered before, or because it sounds so accurate.

It is comforting to think that others grieve. It makes Andrew more real. I was thinking if people grieve so little, what is the point with another pregnancy, if it means so little until they have met a healthy child and had a chance to get to know him themselves. But we did not have the chance to get to know Andrew, we could not make it happen, we could not change anything, it is as far as we could get. But he was with us for 8 months, it is not a short time. He should have been able to live, to be a part of our family. He was fully formed, he looked just like a baby, he was a baby.

Babies have survived that were smaller than him, earlier than him. He was nearly there, he could so easily have made it. But I have felt alone, it is less real, less significant to anyone else. Even if others do care, mostly they say so little that it makes me feel like they don't. I wonder if this is so after just 6 weeks, what will it be like when we should have been going on our first holiday as a family, what about the first Christmas, what about Mothers Day, and then the 1st Anniversary. They seem key dates to me. Will everyone have forgotten before then.

WHAT IS NORMAL ANYMORE?

It seems such a long time to wait. It is 6 weeks now, but we have another 2 weeks to wait to see the consultant. It has been a worrying time. Ed is very positive, but I tend to see the negative side. It seems a milestone to reach, to be got through, before we can look forward really. I think in retrospect that I wish the doctor had arranged a post natal check anyway, instead of just leaving it to the hospital consultant, the one you never normally see, just the name on your notes. After the last appointment at the doctor's for David, I feel abandoned by the local surgery now. I only saw the doctor and the midwife during the first week. It seems so little time.

We have just been for the post-natal check with the hospital consultant. She was very good. She had obviously learnt how to say things without being dismissive of the loss. She made you feel welcome, and that she had time for you, even though she had the queues for the clinic coming up. She asked how we wanted to go through things, with questions, or her talking. So we let her talk through everything and raised questions as they arose. All the hospital tests came up negative, all the blood tests were fine, the tests for conditions and organisms like toxoplasmosis.

So the diagnosis was very straightforward. They checked the placenta thoroughly. Although the placental abruption was the immediate cause of death, and that would be very fast once there was lack of oxygen. But it was obvious from the placenta that it had been suffering for some time, and so the baby was small. There had been lots of evidence of the placenta coming away at other times throughout the pregnancy, and just this was the last one to finish things off. It was pre-eclampsia (multi vascular disease) which, although it did not show up in the ante natal checks, had built up to a cumulative effect.

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The stresses may have helped to tip the balance, but no one thing had caused it to happen. It didn't happen with David, although it is more likely with a first pregnancy, but with a predisposition to develop blood pressure, combined with age, even though David was only 2 years before, it had now triggered in this pregnancy. The hospital test the few days before had shown protein in the urine, and the blood pressure had only been slightly up, not enough to cause concern.

There was no way of knowing it would happen suddenly, without warning. None of the earlier bleeds had been visible, there were no indicators to show there was an ongoing problem. The consultant asked which tests we had, and we gave our reasons for not having the triple blood test this time, and she helped us to conclude that positive testing in future was fine because it was trying to continue a pregnancy, but the tests for defects wouldn't be helpful, and just cause more stress, since this was negative testing, not something that could help.

The consultant asked if we wanted to think towards the future, she kept the choice completely open, but obviously this was one of the things we wanted to know about, to know what our chances were, and what recommendations were being made. Basically she said she would always recommend Go for it. We had already mentioned the age factor, and she said so long as we allowed two complete cycles, so that everything was back to normal, there was no reason to delay.

She said it would be very likely for pre-eclampsia to recur in a future pregnancy, extremely likely, since it happened with Andrew. She said go to the doctor's as normal for the signing in visit. She hoped to see us in her ante-natal clinic in future. She said forewarned is forearmed, and that there would be close monitoring throughout a future pregnancy.

She said there would be the detailed scan around 19-20 weeks, and from 24 weeks there would be at least a 4 week scan. Depending how things were progressing, it could be as often as weekly scans. She talked about the Doppler Scan, and about paying close attention to the development of the foetus, and also to the blood flow around the placenta. She said there were two types of tablets that could be used during pregnancy to control blood pressure, to help blood to keep on flowing in the placenta. She said about the difficulty of juggling what was best for the patient, family, home or hospital stay, etc.

But the possibility of being monitored in hospital, of having an elective Caesarean, of being monitored so if problems developed then an emergency Section could be performed. Of avoiding any stress factors e.g: in a job. I wanted to know what one could look out for, since I did not notice a change in foetal movements, or pain at the Abrupton (which would be common), or any other symptoms that could have been an indicator. Ed said we could always ask to see the Nurse at the surgery, or the midwife, if we wanted extra checks of blood pressure for reassurance; I also wondered about checking for foetal heartbeat if I wasn't sure about movements.

At least we know what questions to ask, and the consultant was trying to be reassuring that the doctors would expect that, and not to be hesitant to contact them. I think we would need to write lists of questions for the early appointments at the hospital and the surgery, then later on be very aware of resting, stress factors, movement, and contacting whoever they have recommended if we need reassurance and extra checks between appointments.

It was a very positive appointment. It wasn't a post-natal check as such, and the consultant said that should be arranged with the local doctor. It seems rather late in the day now, but I will go anyway.

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The consultant said it took 3 or 4 months for the womb to get back to normal. She said the fibroid had no influence at all, not relevant, and it obviously didn't stop me getting pregnant. She said exercises should help with the tummy muscle. We then went over to the delivery floor to see the person who had the professional photos that were taken of Andrew. I was so glad to have them, the quality was so much better than ours, it was so clear of the hair strands and shape of the head. I was glad to have them.

Generally, it felt so good, and such a relief, to hear that we had been given the go-ahead. It sounds like a future pregnancy could be rather difficult, with all the testing, etc, but at least we had not been told it was impossible or inadvisable. It was a relief that they did not find any medical conditions in me, or any other problems. After the appointment, it now seems sad that it was my body that was working against Andrew, together with so many stress factors for such a long time.

But at the end of the day, there was nothing specific that we did or didn't do to cause this, and we know to be very cautious in future. Ed mentioned about being wrapped in cotton wool. We talked afterwards about what that meant in practice, like not pursuing the career, or applying for jobs, or temping, since they were very stressful for me. A course, maybe, but making sure I don't overstretch myself.

That the goal would have to be having a baby, top priority, and just spending time with David, enjoying myself, and just coping with life in general. Nothing more major than that. I need to allow myself time to recover, and build up self-confidence again. It seems to have been knocked rather a lot this year, and there seems little point in rushing to get involved in the area. Having moved, we are not looking to move again, it is too costly and time-consuming, and nothing is happening on

the market. It just takes time to get established, so there is no point in rushing it, just taking the steps as I am able to.

I have phoned and made some enquiries, but a lot will have to wait until the Autumn Term now, and some playgroups would not take David before 2½ or even 3, and there are huge waiting lists for everything in this area. We cannot decide about childminding, except we will need to keep some on, to help us get through a future pregnancy, and in case I end up in hospital for any time. At least it restricts some of our options, which makes the rest a little clearer. If the only goal I need aim for now is getting back to being positive about life, and whatever will build up a little self-esteem and interest, without exhausting me, it is a manageable goal.

Top of the list has to be any future pregnancy, because the problem of blood pressure can only get worse, so we need to get on with our family if we are going to. I sort of said to Ed that if we went through a repeat of what we went through with Andrew, and giving birth, then we would really have to give up trying then. If we had an early miscarriage then maybe we could try again, depending how it affected us. But even with a later miscarriage it was like giving birth, so we would have to wait and see. We are willing to try again now, but if it is too traumatic, or demanding on our family with a high tech pregnancy, then we would have to give up trying if it didn't work out.

If we lost another baby, late or earlier, we still have Andrew's grave, whether there was a viable age or not. We talked about Christmas as a vague date to try, but now I don't feel like waiting at all, and I didn't want to celebrate my 40th birthday in the labour ward. Ed said we could relax until this birthday anyway, but it took us nearly 6 months to get pregnant with Andrew anyway. I said Daisy took us one month, David took 3 months, and Andrew took 6 months; I said it was doubling each time, so the next could take twice as long.

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Well, anyway, it could take us 6 months easily enough. But I said let's be relaxed about it in that we weren't specifically trying yet. That is different from actively preventing anything. Ed said we could enjoy our holiday. He still makes me feel I want his children. As if I hadn't been through enough to put me off the idea by now. We have already talked about naming another baby Peter - or Petra - meaning rock; the next one would need to be tough. It is better than G for Gertie. We chose D for Daisy, E for Ernie (David), F for Freda (Andrew), and now G... we don't know why we began at D.

Overall I feel more positive than I did before the break at Ed's Mum's. I spent 3 days away, without David, just resting. It was very hot, and hard to sleep, but it was good to be without any responsibilities for a while. At least I have begun thinking towards what positive steps I can take, and that I am allowed to enjoy myself, and go on trips when I feel up to it, and just relax and maybe do a summer school course. I can begin to build on the positives and have something to aim for, but the only big aim is if we can produce a healthy baby next time round, avoiding the stress. Some low-key courses or qualifications to keep the brain ticking over, but nothing too demanding or stressful. There seems to be something to aim for again.

SHOULD I BE FEELING BETTER?

I have tried to talk myself out of sadness, as if I didn't have a right to be, as if my loss were not as great as others, if their baby had lived first and not been stillborn. And feeling that I am the only one still with reactions. And because I cannot move forward in the same way that he can, and because I need to talk and talk again. I am now frustrated with the lack of continuity, I only seem to be able to have one-off conversations with people, none that are ongoing.

I am beginning to feel better (2½ months), there are more good days. Because of visitors, I have begun to go out more and to enjoy the Summer. It makes me feel better, and more positive. I have allowed myself the break; we decided to not think about issues before September, so that gives me permission to just relax and try to enjoy life and just live. If there is to be another pregnancy, then that will be stressful, and I don't know how much intervention or restrictions there will be. We decided that was my job, it was a task in itself to produce a baby, to avoid stress, it had to be the goal of the year, without any extra pressures.

So that is really permission to just be, to recover, to begin to feel better in myself, and enjoy the time whilst I am not pregnant. The swimming and biking have made me feel better, and given me more energy; I have set small goals, so now they are achievable. It means things are positive again, and whilst I still think about Andrew, and look at the photos, and visit the grave; yet there is still hope and something to aim for. It is hard to allow myself to just be, and not to produce. I am trying to learn to slow the pace down, and just take it as it comes.

If I am to keep the stress down in the next pregnancy, then I just have to let things happen, and be contented with being a wife and mother, and not pushing myself too far. Sometimes I

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can just think calmly, yes Andrew has died, and it is so sad that I could not look after him, that he could not stay. But life is still OK; I am so glad to have David, it is lovely to look after him and admire him, he has reached such an interesting phase, so cute, so amusing, really trying to communicate now, and imaginary play. I have moved the cot into the small bedroom. It is still assembled, and I have decided that this should be the Nursery if there is another baby. Now David has moved rooms, I think he can stay there for some time. I don't want the same room to be the Nursery next time round, if there is a next time.

The small room seems the perfect size, I can imagine it arranged with the furniture fitting in well. Bedroom 2 will just have to stay unused, unless it becomes the guest room in future. So, yes I am sad some of the time, but not all of the time. I am not trying to avoid the sadness, but the positives and the mini goals to aim for are helping. Some days I feel weepy, or something will get to me, but Ed has noticed I have more energy now, and am happier.

But my little projects still include the memory building for Andrew. The gravestone will be ready soon, I feel so much better now that is happening. I have thought about Christmas newsletters, and which mini prints to use, a family picture of us at Blickling Hall (it is so rare to get good family pictures), and one of the professional pictures of Andrew. I have thought about using the other for a 1st Anniversary card for Andrew. It seems to be a way of remembering. I have been thinking about enlargements and which pictures I want to be kept up long-term. I bought a tapestry that I have begun working on, which is to mark Andrew's birth. my sister-in-law is still making the one for David, I've no idea when that will be finished. Speaking with a friend has given me some ideas, maybe a special picture frame, or a decorative plate. She obviously felt the same way, one has so little to remember the baby by, so few memories, you need to do something.

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LISTING THE LOSSES

The joy of announcing the birth - SNATCHED AWAY
The flowers and gifts and congratulations - MISSED OUT
People admiring the new baby in your arms - PEOPLE DON'T
KNOW I'VE JUST HAD A BABY
Looking after a new-born again; cuddling, holding, admiring -
EMPTY ARMS
The first smile, sitting, crawling, walking - MISSED OUT
Breastfeeding - I WANTED TO
Seeing the baby's eyes, looking at me - NEVER KNOW
THEIR COLOUR
Beginning labour naturally - WHAT'S IT LIKE
Christening - ANGRY, NOT FAIR
First Christmas, 1st Birthday, Mothers Day - UPSETTING
Being able to talk about our second son - WANT TO TALK
Being a family with two children - WE ARE, BUT CANNOT
SAY SO
David having his "baby", being a big brother - WOULD HE BE
JEALOUS
The matinee clothes, the toys and equipment - KNITTING
FOR BABY
Getting the Nursery ready - UNFINISHED
The stress in the relationship; more tiredness, more pain -
SHARED TRAGEDY
A grandchild; relatives to acknowledge our children - HE'S
YOUR GRANDCHILD TOO
Completing our family, finishing with baby-making - MESSED
UP PLANS
Getting my body back, from pregnancies, doctors, testing, high
tech - ENJOY EVERYTHING WHILST I'VE GOT IT BACK;
FRUSTRATING
Andrew being part of the conversation - WANT TO SHOUT
For Andrew's name to be associated with pain and sadness,
not joy - SORRY
Enjoyment of the new home and area - DISILLUSIONED

Meeting people with a complete family, not being labelled by this tragedy before we even get to know people - DIFFICULT
The stress of future pregnancy - UNSURE, AWARE,
HESITANT BUT DESPERATE
A complete family - IMPOSSIBLE.

Yes, they are worthy of sadness. But a lot of the losses could be associated with any baby, any pregnancy. A future baby would fill in some of these, like being able to look after a newborn again. But the fear and uncertainty, the overshadowing of any future pregnancy, that cannot be removed. But nothing will change the situation, because it cannot change what has happened. Our family will never be complete, even if in the future we do look like a traditional family unit, that is the biggest sadness, because Andrew cannot come back and talking about him will always be difficult, either for us or other people.

We had always teased each other whether we would settle for 2 children or 3. Ed talked of the “matching pair”, and settling for two. Would we stop if we had two boys, or would we try again. I thought Ed would only try again if he didn’t have a son at all. We had chosen names, for a boy or a girl. Naomi Ruth for a girl (the same as when we were expecting David, and we chose a name for each). Andrew Edward for a boy (Andrew we seemed to like, and Edward after his Daddy, carrying on the family name). The nickname was Freda (or Fred).

David’s nickname was Ernie (or Ermintrude). Before that there was Daisy. We were following the alphabet, sort of. We stopped the breastfeeding after a year with David, so that the cycle would restart, and so that I wouldn’t be pregnant and still breastfeeding. We discussed when we should try again, probably since David was first born, trying to decide on the best timing to complete our family. Not too soon, but not putting it off too long. Daisy was conceived in a month, David took 3 months (our little Greek souvenir),

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Andrew took nearer 6 months, a lot longer than expected. Ed had just returned from a business trip, he had been away for my birthday. We had a belated birthday meal, and friends prepared a Greek meal for my actual birthday. We went to Blickling Hall, and photographed David who had just begun to walk so confidently, he was almost running, and so pleased with himself. Each month I had hoped for a pregnancy, wondering if I felt symptoms. Then with Andrew I felt again the metallic taste in the mouth, just like for David. I waited longer to do the test this time, just to be sure, not wanting to hope, or to take a test again and find it to be negative.

Ed brought David upstairs, he was just home from work, and I showed him the test, I didn't really say anything, just showed him the pink line. We were just really pleased. I kept the test around for so long, the confirmation of the pregnancy, just as I had done for David.

Such a stressful time at work, for so long, so much pressure. Deciding to sell the house, so we would have a garden, and a bigger kitchen, more room with the new baby on the way. We found a buyer and everything was progressing. Christmas seemed so hopeful, everything had just been settled, and we would be moving in good time before the birth. Then in January everything fell through. The buyer pulled out, I was made redundant, there were big redundancies in Ed's area, just everything seemed to be happening at once. We tried to find another buyer, we spent weeks looking at houses, talking through our options, and settling for part exchange.

The house move was not the area we had been thinking of, and it was our third deposit on a house, before we could go ahead. The move was in the middle of May, well beyond the date we would have wished. I was heavily pregnant, I was worried about the move, there seemed to be one thing after another. Joining a new health centre, a change of midwife.

Sometimes afterwards we wondered why we moved, away from the support networks, and just a week before losing the baby. But we were trying to get everything sorted out before the baby was born. We were just beginning to relax, the house was more-or-less sorted, it was time to begin thinking about the Nursery, the clothes and equipment. Everything was washed and ready. We bought a double buggy, second hand. It was about time to pack the hospital bag, and just a month to go before the due date.

The dreams were part of our relationship, part of the plans for the shape of our family. We now have to reconsider the future, trying again, the risks of a future pregnancy. David will be older if he has another sibling. The child-rearing years are lengthened, when we started them so late anyway. We did not have a chance to start them sooner. David was due 18 months after the wedding. We first conceived 4 months after the wedding, when we first started trying. We could not put off a family, because of our age group, so we started so early in our relationship.

We tried again, with David, straight away really, but it took 3 months anyway, and we thought that was OK, because it was a sensible length of time, even though it just happened that way. Anyway, it was nice to talk about returning with our “duty free “, our “little Greek souvenir” after our holiday in Corfu and touring Classical Greece. I wanted to breastfeed David for a reasonable length of time, and we began trying as soon as that was not needed.

But it took so much longer to conceive Andrew. Each month nothing happened, and the uncertainty when there was a delay, and maybe, maybe not. Everything seemed to be working out when we did get pregnant again. I was nervous in the first 3 months, but really I was nervous and counting the dates all the way through. I didn't really relax and think

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everything was safe now. I felt I did not have time to think about this baby, to plan, to just wait. I felt I was stressed out for the entire pregnancy, I couldn't just relax and enjoy it.

The dreams are there, but life is no longer simple. Other people plan their families and everything goes so according to plan, so easily it seems. I am glad that our relationship can take all the knocks we have received, we have not had it all easily. But we have been trying for most of the marriage, just to have a family, which seems so easy for other people. We are still trying to complete our family. Everything is delayed, wait before you try, then time to conceive, then miscarry, then when can you try again, then time to conceive, then be sensible and allow a long enough break between children, then try and so long to conceive, and to carry almost to term and lose the baby, to be back at square one with an entire pregnancy to have to face again.

And then there is the time to wait, when you can try again, and then how long will it take to conceive, and will this baby miscarry, and even if it continues, who knows whether there will be a baby at the end of it. We have talked about what we would do, depending on what happens. Maybe with a miscarriage we would try again. But if another baby dies, as with Andrew, we would have to admit defeat.

There has to be a limit to what we can stand. I am not sure what we would do with a late miscarriage. I suppose we don't really think about not conceiving again, but at least we have some sort of limits to what is feasible in our position. We cannot try for ever; next year I will be 40. But we are so glad to have David, and to watch him grow, and we seem to have a firm relationship. That is good.

PLEASE LISTEN

I have had several people that I have been able to talk to, in a once-off way. It was good to be able to talk about Andrew, and the delivery. It seemed very important to be able to express it all, to talk and talk again. One friend said how important that had been to her. If anyone phoned then I said so much, whoever it was really. It was an opportunity to talk. But I have been depressed by the lack of continuity, the lack of ongoing people to talk to. No doubt it will happen eventually, but it is taking time to surface and find who I can talk to. I find it hard to take the initiative, and to plan anything. But it is such a relief when I am able to talk, I feel so much better.

It was really good being able to talk with a friend last week. It was so good to be able to talk, I have needed people to talk to who understand. I want to hear what others say who have experienced it, not just tell my own story. I need to know what it has been like for others, to compare experiences. Yet so many friends I could phone, yet aware not all would be able to understand or listen, and would phone calls be helpful, rather than face to face. I have to be feeling strong to cope with some conversations, it is so easy for someone to say the wrong thing. I cannot educate the entire world, I need to protect myself from reactions that are upsetting.

And the world does not know where I am coming from, if they cannot see the shape of my family, I do not have to explain it to them. I have just managed to go to the local coffee group. I tried to join in the normal conversation, but since they were talking about birth and pregnancy, which these groups tend to, I was going to talk about Andrew. I have just been pregnant, the issues are still relevant to me, I cannot deny that I have had a baby, so I will talk where it is relevant. When they asked what happened, I did explain. It should make it easier than if I had just kept quiet, as an issue to be avoided.

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I suppose I am listening to myself now. I am taking action as I am able to. I don't know about accepting myself, I have never really found that easy. It depends whether it is a good or a bad day. But I am trying to move positively, and not avoid talking about Andrew, because that would be suffocating.

LIFE IS SO BUSY

Very busy. I concentrated on sending out the cards, lots of letter writing. On the PC making a card about Andrew. Ordering photographs, filling in Andrew's book, with all the cards and photos. I kept very busy, with tasks I felt I had to complete. But it was part of being able to think and mull through what had happened. It felt positive. I planned birthdays and made cakes. It gave me something to aim for. But I did get out rather than stay in the house. I delayed exploring the area, and it took longer to go further afield. I was nervous of being far from home, I did not feel up to coping on my own, I needed to be in a safe area.

But we have had visitors stay, and that helped me to go out and visit places; we have had a holiday week with local daytrips. I have continued reading, and am knitting for myself now. I am looking towards taking up an evening class in the Autumn. I am trying to take up things that are positive and make me feel good and are relaxing. I am allowing myself to enjoy myself, because any future pregnancy will have to be as unstressed as possible.

I am making the most of the time not being pregnant, and I am beginning to go swimming and cycling to build up my fitness. They make me feel better about myself and Ed has noticed that I am happier. It was so good to have the holiday week, so we could have the time together as a family again. To realise we are still so together, even after what we have been through. I find it hard to define mourning, but things are fine at the moment, and I think it is positive at the moment. I am not avoiding the issue, but I am letting things happen as they will.

NOTHING BUT FAILURE, IS IT?

Earlier on I felt very down. Yes, I did feel like a failure. I saw someone from the office the other day, and I was trying to hide so they wouldn't see me; I had to wave in the end. I felt so let down in the office, as if they had just dropped me. Even though redundancy was to the area, not just me, it felt like a rejection of what I did. As if I could not hold down a job. It has reinforced all those feelings, the lack of confidence in being able to do a job well. When Ed spoke about work, it reinforced the fact that he still had a job and I didn't. I felt the need to achieve something, to have some goals.

Seeing the baby group, they all talk about their jobs, and I don't know where to come in on the conversation, because I can only talk about going on outings, and knitting and making cakes. I also get fearful for the relationship, as if I cannot get anything right and afraid of what I might lose next. I still have vivid thoughts, worried in case anything happens to David.

I dream very vividly and then cannot remember what it was about. I only remember the emotions involved, and the underlying worry. But I feel that recently I have moved forwards, since having visitors I have been able to go out on daytrips, to travel further afield around Norfolk. I have allowed myself to enjoy myself, to visit places of interest and to take David out to fun activities.

We have been swimming, the park and paddling pool, energetic trips and climbing frames and big slides. Exhausting but fun. He never seems to tire out; I just come back worn out, but at least it is more active. Before I was just worn out without going out much, just from the sleepless nights. I don't think I am sleeping much better, but I have taken up swimming and biking, so it makes me feel better in myself, more full of life. I am knitting myself a complex pattern for a cardigan; then I will do Andrew's tapestry of his birthdate. I have made

several celebration cakes, and it seems to be very therapeutic and absorbing.

It gives me a sense of achievement. I entered a competition with a home designed Bonfire Night cake, and I have made Dad a Steam Roller cake for his birthday. I am still waiting for the brochures for Autumn evening classes. I have decided to contact on the interest courses, not the educational or career-development sort. Drawing, painting or writing will probably be the best for me. It is fun to be able to decide that, instead of having to concentrate on job achievement. Because of the talk with the consultant, I am beginning to focus on producing a baby as my goal of the year, and therefore keeping the stress levels low and being basically happy and getting on with life, and enjoying the time with David.

The exercise and activities are to move me in that direction, without work pressure. Photography and camcorder editing are also absorbing. I have ordered negatives from the professional photos of Andrew, and have considered which photos to have enlarged and to have on display. I have also thought about enlargements for around the house, of holidays and trips, and some of David. It is part of making the place feel like home.

The cot is now in the small bedroom; I think it would work very well as a Nursery in future, it is the right size. I have thought about the future of the different rooms, for guests, for children, for toys or for meals. There is plenty of scope. I have also tried to keep pace with more of the cleaning, tidying, ironing and washing. It makes me feel like I am in control and achieving something. I suppose I am trying to fill up the role of wife and mother. But I am generally feeling so much better in myself, so I think it has been successful.

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THE ONLY WAY THROUGH PAIN

The bleeding after the birth has continued on and off for nearly 3 months. Then on our boating weekend I passed some tissue. There was obviously still a piece of placenta left behind. I felt shaky with shock, and just wanted to sit down and do nothing. It was hard to look after David with Ed sailing the boat. We cut short our trip so I could see the doctor. At least she took it seriously and checked with the hospital and put me on antibiotics.

Just when I thought I had got back to my normal cycle, and that was part of the moving forward, and moving towards another pregnancy. I really wanted to be able to get on and become pregnant again, I did not want there to be any delays, especially since it took a long time to become pregnant last time. Psychologically I am telling myself Christmas, the date we were originally thinking we would try again, but really I want to get on as soon as possible. But I thought that here was yet another connection with Andrew. The tissue had been there when Andrew was, it was part of his support system. It was still there the other day, so red; when Andrew was not, and the thought of decay. It was a strange kind of link.

The gravestone should be ready this week. It was such a relief when we ordered it, like something was being put in order. But I have been on edge all week, and kept returning to the grave, hoping to find it installed. It has been so disappointing, almost desperate. I bought a stone teddy bear with his honeypot, and marked the grave with that and a pot plant. I don't know why I didn't do it sooner, it felt like a completion, like everything was in order now.

I wish I had put it there to begin with. It is a very clear marker for the grave, even though I only have a little photo frame to write Andrew's name in. When I bought the bear it almost begged to be bought, with such sad eyes and so cute. I feel

like the grave is in order now. It makes it easier to wait for the stone. But I want to see it finished, and see what it looks like. I don't know whether there will be room for the bear to stay then, or whether I will bring it home.

I don't know how to define pain. I don't feel I have been running, just trying to do what has felt right, to build up memories, to have memorials, to make it more concrete. It is hard to do so, but I have tried to speak whenever the subject has been appropriate. To not avoid mentioning relevant thoughts around the pregnancy and birth. Our thinking has been geared to the birth for so long, our plans were based around it, including the holiday we have booked in September, it was meant to be 3 months after the baby was born, just the same as when David was born. If we do not mention Andrew or the pregnancy then it is hard to talk about anything, I am just trying not to avoid mentioning the subject, whatever people think.

The nurse at the doctor's surgery made a mistake when she tested my glucose tolerance, she asked me how many weeks pregnant I was. So I just said my baby was stillborn; she was more embarrassed than I was. But I do not want to avoid talking about Andrew. I sent copies of Andrew's photo to the grandparents and godparents, it seemed fitting that they should be interested enough to have a picture. But I don't really feel people want to know, I think they just feel awkward and won't say anything. I don't want our son to not even be spoken of, he is still a son and a grandson and a godchild.

I have felt generally better in myself lately. I feel past the first stage. I do not just sit and mull through everything, going over time and again what happened. I can choose not to talk about it, or to forget why people are asking how I am. I still think about Andrew regularly, probably most every day. I see his photos, I have passing thoughts, and I just think it is so sad. Why couldn't I have looked after him.

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Why did it have to happen. He could have been OK, he could have been alive, if only there had been more warning. I feel it is so sad, so sad not to be able to know him, to bring him up. I think it is more the sort of phase that Ed was talking about, that it is sad, that we had a son called Andrew, and that we will never get to know him. But the activities and hobbies have made me more positive, and trying to put myself into a positive position for a future pregnancy has helped. There is still a goal to aim for and the parameters have been set.

ANGER DOESN'T BEGIN TO DESCRIBE IT...

I haven't really felt angry, hardly at all really. I suppose there just doesn't seem any point. It has been more important to work through the thoughts and the questions, the "what ifs" and "whys". But there does not seem any point arguing about it, since it will not change anything. I do wonder why God should put yet another disaster on us, as if we had not been through enough already. The risk of one more thing to cause bitterness.

Not so much that, just why have one more area of devastation and tragedy, that puts up yet another barrier between people. There are enough subjects that are hard to talk about, that make one the exception not the rule. Why have yet another subject where one has broken the mould, and that is a difficult subject to raise in conversation. Psalm 139 and "Dear Lord and Father" from the funeral service have still been positive. I have repeated them, and they seem comforting, a way to remember.

I wrote a letter "One from the heart". It was aimed at a particular magazine theme. But it felt positive to have achieved a letter to Andrew. To express what it was like, what has been lost, the verses from the funeral, and how suddenly and unexpectedly it happened.

ANOTHER BABY?

I am afraid people will assume that another baby will mean that everything is all right, as if they can just dismiss Andrew, as if he wasn't real, and wasn't a person. I find it hard to comprehend what eternity will mean, and to think of Andrew being in God's keeping. It is comforting to think that, but just impossible to understand what that could mean. We have talked about future children since the beginning, and now the doctor seems to have given a green light, because I have to stop the pill.

She said not to worry about dating things, if I get pregnant, because I would be referred to the hospital very quickly, and the dating scans are very accurate. Ed & I joke that we would recognise pregnancy symptoms, we are very familiar with what they are like with me. Any throwing up or near fainting spells, or metallic taste in the mouth. I assume it will take some time, and we cannot exactly aim for the right dates, but I don't want to get tense about whether or not it happens quickly.

I have started the folic acid. I think I would be very cautious on all the precautions recommended for a healthy pregnancy. I would probably be too cautious with food and drink and everything. I no longer feel reluctant to go through pregnancy symptoms again, rather I want to be pregnant, and to enjoy being pregnant, because of what it means. I didn't enjoy being pregnant with Andrew, and next time I just want to be glad for the experience, just whatever we can get. But it will seem like forever. There are not the distractions to make the time go quickly this time. And so much depends on a future pregnancy, it is more of a final decider of the shape of our family. There is only so much we can go through. It is more make or break with the next one.

We have decided that if there were a miscarriage, we might try again. But if there were a repeat of Andrew's death, then we

would admit defeat. That would be horrendously difficult to cope with, but with the age factor and the high risk pregnancy it would be the only sensible thing to do. We have to concentrate on the relationship and giving David a secure environment. But it would be good if he were not an only child. And I did want to go through the baby phase one more time. If we can have our traditional family of four, we will. But if not, we do not think it is worth destroying everything to keep on trying indefinitely. It gives us parameters, and also a goal. I cannot imagine how I could cope with losing another baby. But then, I think it would be harder to drag on indefinitely and not get pregnant again, it means there is no time limit to stop trying, and maybe that would be a lot harder.

I hope to carry another baby, and to feel the movements again. To follow the kicks more closely, to be more aware of the baby. I would be nervous of the scan, because that is how I heard that Andrew had died. But the frequency would mean I would get used to such testing. I feel I want to arrange the Nursery so early this time. I will try to be sensible and get past 3 months first. But I then want to start buying the little clothes, and decorating the Nursery, getting out the clothes, putting up the mobiles. I feel it is the last chance to enjoy such things, even if there is no baby at the end of it. And maybe it would give a focus for grief if we lost another one.

If we did not do it that way, then we would do nothing before the birth. I think it would be harder to dare to arrange the Nursery later in pregnancy, because we cannot trust later dates. I could be in hospital, we could have a repeat with no warning. The Nursery needs to be ready at a different timing to Andrew. We have now had two babies with due dates in June, I wonder whether a future baby would end up with a similar timing. But if it took us until Christmas, then the date would be nearer my birthday, instead of Ed's and David's. What an aim for my 40th Birthday.

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I hope I will have another baby. I hope he will be born alive. I hope to cuddle him/her, to see the eyes, to hear the cry. I hope the baby will be healthy and well. I hope all will be well, and he can join our family. I hope we see our children grow up. And I hope we live to see our grandchildren.

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

In October, 5 months after Andrew was born, I became pregnant again. I felt we had worked towards this, and followed the grieving and recovery process. I had kept myself busy and felt positive in aiming towards something again. Everything was geared towards trying again, and that this time things would work out differently. We had already considered the difficulties and interventions that were likely, and made space in our life to concentrate on having another baby. I thought some of the grieving process could only be completed if I delivered another baby, and that it must be so impossible for people who could not have another child, how could the grief end and life continue. I did not want to be destroyed by grief.

My goal was to produce another baby, to lower the stress, and recover physically and emotionally. I did three pregnancy tests before I was sure I was pregnant, and then I phoned Ed after the second test asking him to bring home another and some folic acid. He thought it was amusing that I wanted a blue test, not a pink test, blue for a boy and pink for a girl. But I felt a sense of relief when I knew I was pregnant again. It had only taken about 2 months, although the waiting for the cycle to re-establish itself had seemed to take for ever. I felt more positive than I had expected to.

We decided not to publicise too early and were waiting until Christmas when I would be nearing the 12 week marker. New Year's Eve would be 12 weeks, it felt as if there was hope for 1996, and something to aim for. The months of positive building seemed to be working for good and we now had a goal. The weeks and months ahead seemed planned in a moment, as we decided how cautious we needed to be with this pregnancy.

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I had some pregnancy symptoms and tried to be positive, remembering how one person in a book described every day as precious and to be welcomed, however long it lasted. I thought that would be such a good approach, a way of coping with the uncertainty. But I assumed I was worrying unnecessarily, and that this time it would be different. I knitted for the baby, but spent hours thinking how I would plan the funeral and dress the baby this time for the grave. It seemed a way of coping with the uncertainty of whether this baby would be born alive. I had incredibly vivid dreams, and assumed they were just related to pregnancy.

I dreamed about Andrew, very vivid and emotionally charged, but they seemed positive, to see my little boy happy and playing and alive, to be with him briefly. I did not have these dreams when Andrew first died, or I did not remember them. In one dream I was in the graveyard and I was standing with Ed by some garages.

Andrew was there, looking like the doll we have. His eyes were big blue and staring. Then tears streamed down his face, and I thought he must be alive, maybe he really was alive after all. We thought we should put him back in the Moses basket and check again tomorrow, just to make sure. It seemed so hopeful. In another dream, children were dancing and playing in the graveyard, among the trees. David was there, and so was Andrew, they were playing together. It seemed so joyful. But then I wondered what people would think, because I could see Andrew, and David could see him too.

Then I began to have vivid dreams about miscarrying and woke up terrified. One day I had a tiny brownish discharge, hardly worth noting, but it seemed to trigger off this reaction. Ed hugged me to calm me down, though I did not tell him why I was so upset. I thought I was overreacting and that I had no reason to worry. All seemed to be proceeding normally, and I

had the detailed registration with the doctor. We were awaiting the scan appointment with the hospital. A week before Christmas we told immediate family, I was so glad afterwards that we had already told them whilst the news was still positive. But we told so few others, we were waiting for a sensible time before publicising.

When the Christmas cards began arriving, with good wishes for 1996, it was so incongruous because people thought we might still be grieving for Andrew, if they thought at all, but they did not know about the pregnancy, or the miscarriage just before Christmas. Our hopes for 1996 were dashed to pieces, before the new year had even begun. We thought we had something to hope and plan for, that perhaps the New Year would be better. We had not been looking forward to Christmas anyway, and thought it would be a difficult time, but we thought at least there was some hope in the midst of it. During Christmas week I had a minor pink discharge, on the Monday and Tuesday. I told Ed, I rested, he left work early to collect David on the Monday, and we assumed things would settle down.

On Wednesday morning there was a brownish discharge and I was terrified. I was utterly terrified of miscarrying, I was willing the baby to stay. I phoned the Midwife emergency number, and she told me to get a doctor's home visit, and that it could settle down. I left a message for Ed at work, he was still travelling on the bus and I could not contact him. He had to turn round and come straight home again, so that he could look after David. I rested, I tried to calm down, and the doctor gave advice if we needed to call them again. A hospital scan was arranged for the next morning, in the Early Pregnancy Advisory Unit. It was strange sitting waiting, with others arriving with their children, and I did not want to tell them about Andrew or for them to realise that we were not a simple case.

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One woman was scanned and told she had lost the baby. When it was our turn, the young doctor was excellent, and pointed out the baby on the scan. They could not tell whether the baby was viable or not, because it was so tiny. He said I was 6 weeks not 10 weeks pregnant, but we knew our dates and the pregnancy test. He suggested that I had got pregnant two months in a row, and had lost the first without any symptoms. He booked a return appointment in a week's time, to see if the embryo had grown. We seemed remarkably positive, because there seemed to be a glimmer of hope, and we joked about Ed scoring twice in a month. I had expected to be told that the baby was dead and that I would need an ERPC, so it seemed like a reprieve, a reason to hope that things might settle down. I had to have a vaginal scan, and held Ed's hand because I was so nervous.

That evening we phoned the relatives. We had to cancel the family Christmas trip and I let Ed do the phoning. But maybe he sounded too positive to everyone, he made it sound like there was more hope than there was. I was already bleeding, following the doctor's visit on Wednesday, and this continued after the scan, but without any pain. On Thursday, Ed took David to the Childminder's and returned about 2.30 in the afternoon. I had been cramping for some time and resting, yet certain now that I would miscarry. As soon as Ed got back I miscarried, passing lots of blood, tissue and clots.

It seemed almost a relief after so much uncertainty and sheer terror. At least I knew what I had to face and I just had to get on with it. It wasn't painful at that time, and I assumed I would have an easy time of the miscarriage. I went to the doctor's that same afternoon, with the tissue for testing, but I assumed the worst was over. I forgot that the previous miscarriage had happened over several days, and was not prepared for the pain and volume of bleeding. For a week I passed huge clots, shocking in their size, and they left me shocked and shaky. It was 3 days before Christmas, and after passing one clot I

noticed that my face was pale and even my lips were white. When I got into the living room I almost blacked out, and Ed had to help me to lie down. We had a late night visit from the doctor after that, and a follow-up visit the next morning, but I managed to avoid going into hospital.

On Boxing Day we had relatives for a Christmas meal, and I found the day exhausting just being up and about, with the noise and activity. In the evening I began to have visual disturbances, with lights around the edge of my vision, like a migraine. Ed helped me upstairs and I almost blacked out. I was terrified by what was happening to my body, and I was afraid how fragile life was. The death of Andrew knocked out all the certainties and security of life, and now it was being repeated and it felt like nothing could ever be secure or trusted again. I was frightened for my own health and what the body could be put through.

I had played Christmas carols frequently leading up to Christmas, trying to ensure that I could cope with hearing them. But when I heard "Away in a Manger" I thought the line "no crying he makes" was horrible, because only a dead baby did not cry. On Christmas Eve we went to the Crib Service anyway. I had been dreading the idea, because we knew that they had a couple at the front of church with a small baby. I thought it would be too much a reminder of the baby we should have with us at Christmas. But I avoided looking and it was bearable, and beautiful to see the children with their Christingle candles.

But I cried my eyes out when they sang the first carol, it was too much to bear. The lady next to me spoke after the service, and said how sorry she had been to hear about Andrew. It was the first time she had mentioned it, and she must have thought I was crying about Andrew. I did not want to spoil anyone's Christmas by letting them know why I was really upset. We told the minister as we left the church, she was

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sympathetic, but she focussed so quickly on David. I wished people did not point so quickly to what we had got.

We were glad to have David, but it seemed to dismiss the suffering, and that others can complete their families so easily. She said, "Well, you were expecting it, weren't you". When I left I was really upset about that, because I did not expect to miscarry. I was afraid, even terrified of miscarrying, but I did not expect it. I thought I was overreacting, that it would be OK really.

We carried on with Christmas as normal, but we did not put up a tree, or extra decorations, and we did not decorate early. We did not feel celebratory, it did not feel like Christmas. But I videoed David opening his presents, and the snow that fell before Christmas, and on Boxing Day. But I also had to include references to Andrew, and to the miscarriage. I wanted a true record of Christmas, the happy and the sad; I would not pretend or dismiss Andrew or the miscarriage. But it was strange to be in the non-event of Christmas, when everyone is busy and assuming everyone else is enjoying themselves.

The card messages seemed very wry when I received a number after Christmas, all assuming that next year would be better for us. They did not know we were in the middle of trauma, or that our hopes and joy for the New Year had been shattered. When New Year's Eve arrived it seemed a terrible let-down, what should we be celebrating or looking forward to. It seemed the death of hope, with nothing to mark the future.

Someone wished us blessings in unexpected ways, and I thought it would have to be unexpected, because I could not think of any expected ways that could possibly work for good. On New Year's Day a friend came round and it was a tense time wondering how we could break the news when she did not know I was pregnant, trying to find a space when the

children were not too noisy. But Ed spoke when I wasn't in the room and I felt totally suffocated, as if my lifeline was being cut off.

When she came and said "There's nothing I can say" I felt like screaming, as if my cries should be silenced and never heard. I felt everyone wanted me to react well and be dismissed easily, and not raise the subject of miscarriage. I cried beyond anything I have ever cried before, with sobs and moans for breath, unable to silence myself any longer. There was only Ed to hear me, but I did not understand how he could take hearing me cry like that, beyond all reason. Yet I was fully aware of my reactions and thoughts. I was probably crying the way I did not cry when Andrew was born, the way I should have cried when he died.

I cannot think that Christmas will be a time to look forward to in future. Other people can only understand so much, and speak from their own perspective. Whatever we may say, people cannot understand what it is like when tragedy is repeated and the future and all hope is shattered.

The consultant is apparently very positive about our chances of delivering a healthy baby, she thinks we were just in the normal category of early miscarriages on this occasion. She may be right, but something beyond a miscarriage happened this time round. No stage in pregnancy can seem safe in future, we cannot even guarantee getting beyond the early stages of pregnancy, to enjoy feeling the baby's movements even if the baby does not live.

I am desperate to try again, but so aware of the stress of any pregnancy in future, and the way nothing in the future seems meaningful or possible or achievable. We no longer have a deadline beyond which suffering must end, it can drag on indefinitely until menopause or vasectomy closes the door permanently. The consultant is hopeful, the door is kept open

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tantalisingly, yet how much can one family suffer before calling a halt.

LIVING THE MEMORIES

The first letting go was in the Service of Blessing in the delivery room. I held Andrew as I heard the words of the stillbirth service, and it felt as if I was handing him over to God's hands. That felt positive. The funeral was the next letting go; everything was geared towards getting beyond those first few days. I was in a daze of unreality and none of it seemed to be happening. The burial was important, we had done what we could and Andrew was laid to rest.

But I was desperate to see the gravestone laid, and it seemed to be an age whilst we were waiting for it. I visited the grave so often, to make sure there were flowers. I felt there had to be something to mark the grave and I was restless and edgy until the stone was ready. It felt like a completion when it was finally in place. It was good to take flowers and to have a proper container for them, but I did not need them as a marker.

I bought a stone bear to mark the grave, and although it was only there briefly on its own, it seemed to express something that there was a definite marker for Andrew's grave. The eyes of the teddy were so black and sad, it seemed to beg to be bought from the shop, and none of the other bears would do. We now have a photo of the bear at home, and it is another link with the grave. There are other photos, of the grave, and of Andrew, and they are all part of building memories.

I ordered a plate with Andrew's photo on, which seems a more permanent reminder. David's birth tapestry was ready this week, it is rather beautiful, and now I must find the time to continue with Andrew's. I have not got beyond the name and date, but it is a task to be completed. I wanted Andrew to have the same reminders in the house as David has.

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Writing a letter, and various articles, even when they are not printed, has been very meaningful, it seems a good way to express the significance of the experience. We went to the SANDS memorial service in November, and the calligraphy book was ready, with a page entry for Andrew. Later we received a photo of that page, and that is a permanent marker with all the other lost babies, it acknowledges that Andrew was important. In a way, being able to carry another pregnancy has been a letting go of Andrew. But it is not the same as forgetting him.

He is no longer the last baby in my womb, or even the last loss. But he was our second son, he is known by name, and we have his photos and memories with us. The first anniversary will be another marker, and I don't know how I will feel on Mother's Day. It was very difficult after losing "Daisy", even though I was then carrying David. This time will be around the time we go on holiday, a time to rest and recover as a family.

We have David, but I am also mother to Andrew, so it will still be sad; and I will not be pregnant again on that date, and have lost the baby I would have been expecting. I will send reminder cards and photos on the first anniversary, although I don't think anyone will want to receive them, but it is the only way I know to make the date of special note.

ANNIVERSARY

I have returned to this writing nearly 18 years later. I did not continue my journal – life got busy. We remembered the anniversary – at least, Mum did. And Dad? Well, he was busy. It took awhile, but then we had our last-born son. There would always be the gap between our firstborn and youngest; a small, but significant gap. The place where Andrew should be.

A gap? Always? No, life has its fill of joys and sorrows. But Andrew will never be forgotten. I turned to writing, began to pour it all into poetry. I would say that this tragedy turned me to the pen; so if one wants a positive, that was it. My pen has been my memorial to Andrew.

Of course, there were other memorials over the years. A stone on the grave – Andrew's buried with all the other babies, in the Baby Cemetery, in the historic Earlham Cemetery. A beautiful and peaceful place.

Many mums place windmills, light catchers, anything bright, distracting attention. I placed a stone teddy bear. It was the right thing for us. Someone gave a rose named 'Peace'. It bloomed for years.

MEMORIES AND SORROW

Oh, who would wish to say joy out of sorrow? Not me. Life goes on, and that is very difficult in the early days. Who wants to live when their baby is dead? Eventually, life becomes worthwhile again.

So, no, I don't say the death was worthwhile. How could I? I'm a Mum. Every passing year reveals my loss in new ways. My youngest son was born very premature. I suffered the same pre-eclampsia. He's our little miracle; he survived. Yet he is always himself, never a replacement baby.

When I saw the back of his head in the incubator, from my wheelchair in the doorway, I knew he looked exactly like Andrew. He had the same dark hair. Sedated, to prevent him struggling against all the equipment, there seemed little difference between my boys. And there are photographs, and occasional glimpses, where the boy I see is Andrew. Family likeness. And, oh, how different to David!

LIVING WITH THE QUESTIONS:

Bringing home no baby means the support system doesn't always kick in quickly after the birth. Mums have so many people to talk to, to check their health and recovery. When there is no baby home, there is not the ongoing transfer from midwife to health visitor, to 6 week check-up.

The mother still has a body designed to feed her baby. Other children to consider. Baby clothes and equipment. Should they be put aside for the next child? Is it unbearable to have such reminders in the house. I still remember the baby doll, originally bought to teach my firstborn about a new baby in the family. It became the symbol for Andrew; it stayed with me for some time; a baby-sized doll. In my dream, the doll opened its eyes; they were vivid blue.

Because that is the one question I will always have. What colour were his eyes? Of course, all babies' eyes are blue, aren't they...?

I could end this book by saying 'Happily ever after', but you would know that's not true, wouldn't you? We 'completed our family', and brought up two boys. Most people move on; after all, they didn't have time to get to know Andrew. When I watched my youngest grow, I could see some of the things I had missed.

Because, reminders are everywhere. From the other mums that didn't want to mention their next pregnancy – they thought it would upset me. To the years of nursery and school; the questions you don't know how to answer. Is it betraying your baby, to exclude him from all the answers?

If you want to know, does it get better? Of course it gets better. We are infinitely human, with the capacity to recover from almost anything. Grief is a process; after awhile, a

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familiar process. The mind and body have their own way of working; and know what's needed. Going with the flow; not struggling harder than needed. Good days and bad days. Grief will be whatever it wants to be; there's enough of it to just manage the day and not to look for any more. Everyone grieves in their own way; it doesn't matter whether it involves the same as other people. Grieve your way.

EIGHTEEN YEARS

Soon there will be a big anniversary, the day my stillborn son would have been eighteen; a grown-up. It seems worth remembering. And yet, visiting the grave reduces over the months and years. Some visit, faithfully, the same every year. Any pattern is fine, because, the child is in the heart and not the grave. Yet, there's no denying the grave is significant.

I guess I would have remembered 18 years anyway. This year has seen a return to tidy-up the grave. Some 'new graves' have now vanished beneath the grass. Others have firmer memorials. Some graves encroach on others, are full of ornaments; regularly visited. I wonder if the most tended graves are those where the family did not have another child? Did not have any child? Did not have other children at home to look after? Who knows...

This year we returned to Earlham because our firstborn son was buried in the same graveyard. Not, this time, among the baby graves, but in the adult section. Our firstborn was just 19; had only just started at University. The path to independence!

So, yes, the graveyard becomes more significant than ever before. And Andrew's grave has been tidied-up and tended. The teddy bear needed a good clean. The vase had gone and needed replacing. The weeds had spread. The memorial stone is clearly visible again; flush against the earth. Andrew started me writing poetry.

I had no idea that my best poems would be written on the death of my firstborn. But that is not a part of this story...

And, no, I don't have a baby doll to open its eyes. Just a stone hound, and one of those Dalmatians with adorable eyes. Each grave is different. Andrew is no less remembered than he

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was; if anything, his brief time is marked more than it's ever been. There's a new permission to speak on the things no-one wants to talk about. Andrew's name has been much-mentioned lately.

But I don't want to be with my babies; even grown-up ones. I want to live; and face a brand new year.

29/12/12

Wendy Webb

TREASURED MEMORIES

If you would like to help other people, children and adults and their carers, on the autistic spectrum, then please visit this website, where pics of David are regularly updated. You may donate there to autistic charities:

<http://www.justgiving.com/Wendy-Webb>

Main Treasured Memories page for David

<http://www.justgiving.com/DavesAStar1>

Christmas fund-raiser for The National Autistic Society, in memory of David

MOBILE GIVING:

You can use a simple mobile text to give to Treasured Memories. Just text 70070 to DAVD99, or to DAVD98, add an amount, like £1. OK?

FOOTNOTE

DAVID WEBB (19) died tragically recently, having achieved his dream to go to University (Computer Science). He achieved much in his short life, including a clutch of GCSEs, ASDANs, and a BTEC(Triple Distinction) in Computer Games Design. David was buried on 9th November (died 17th October) and had a good send-off, and people travelled far. We have supported David's needs for 19 years, how can it all end! Now we want a star named after DAVE, so please

obooko.com

spread the word to family, friends, companies, and lets see how high we can shoot this star, for charity.