

Common, sad, and true.

Sueyeun Juliette Lee
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A few weeks ago, I had a miscarriage. I learned afterwards that 20% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage and that as someone over the age of 35 I had a higher risk for one. Those statistics may normalize the experience but they don't cancel out the grief of losing a baby, even if it was the very beginning of a baby.

I found out I was pregnant in February and shared the news with my partner immediately. We were both stunned. I have wanted a child for many years and my partner always seemed open to the possibility some day, but with the reality before us, we were just wordless.

The way I lived my life suddenly seemed so poor. How could I bring a little one into this scenario? How could I afford the hospital costs? Having a healthy baby without any special circumstances on my insurance plan would probably cost me at least \$3,000, not to mention all the other costs. Who could help us with all the childcare when I had to go back to work? My family is thousands of miles away and all my friends are new. If something happened to me, who would look after me? I was anxious that my partner wouldn't be able to care for me and a baby if I got really ill or had something happen to me and needed a lot of support. Will I be okay? One of my dearest friends died in childbirth not long ago, and I worried about rare possibilities and accidents.

What I didn't worry about was the baby. I imagined a little girl with curly hair. I imagined a little boy with gray eyes.

I was tired and had bad aches and was happy when I wasn't worried.

My doctor asked me to schedule my first prenatal visit at about 8 weeks along. It seemed like a long time to wait for a first visit, but I made the appointment and I waited.

The night before our first check up I started to get anxious. What if there was something wrong with the baby? My partner told me not to worry until we had better information.

When we went in, we were nervous and excited. My partner sat with me for the exam and ultrasound. He held my hand. I looked into his face, his stormy eyes, and felt a nameless soft joy.

The technician couldn't find our baby at first. Was my pregnancy a false alarm?

When she did find the baby, she said, "Well, we should be hearing a heart beat but it's quiet."

It was quiet inside my body.

I looked up into my partner's face. I was still making sense of her words. He heard them and squeezed my hand and a tear formed in his eye. I looked at the ultrasound screen and saw a small white oval that was our baby and watched as the technician took different measurements and tried to register a heartbeat visually with other means and I realized our baby had stopped. It was seven weeks and four days in size and had stopped.

I knew I wanted a baby but I didn't understand how much until the baby stopped.

We were asked if we wanted a different technician to probe my body more and prove this outcome. After asking our doctor if she were very sure, I declined. We were given privacy. We fell apart and wept and clung to each other and wept. We were confused and exhausted and sad. We were told of the options, which were three. Wait for a natural miscarriage, which could take up to four weeks. Have a medical curettage, where a doctor digs into my body and removes the baby, or have a medical miscarriage, where I take pills and go home and my body ejects the baby.

I chose option three.

We went home and cried and my partner made love to me tenderly and I cried because it was the last and most closest the three of us would be together.

In 24 hours time, I was excited and nervous about my baby and then I was taking pills to eject my baby. I watched myself from far away. I felt things moving and tensing inside me and I was close to them and small. My partner was solicitous and fetched me snacks and kept me company and gave me quiet space to be in pain and uncomfortable.

My blood was black and thick and I didn't trust for many hours that the baby had passed, and then it did with a sharp special pain like a tug inside me and I saw it and knew I was only myself again and might only ever be myself again for as long as I live.

And when I cried afterwards it was an automatic reaction that didn't well up in me, it simply started like rain can suddenly start from a golden sky. And after these episodes of sudden crying and feeling the grief move through me without words, I was ok.

And now I am just me again. Maybe differently.

I wanted to share this because it happens so often, this great big possibility and future that wells up with intensity, and then just as suddenly falls to the ground or tugs loose with a jagged jab, and everything returns in some fashion to what you had before, but now it's only what you had before. And that only is the smallest devastation.

It may be common but it is also sad and true.