

## \*Andy's Story



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My wife told me she was expecting again around the turn of the year. I remember the main emotions being those you would expect; joy, happiness and excitement. This was also to be our second child so I also had apprehension given the memory of early weeks and months with a new born was fresh.

There was also a feeling of satisfaction as things were falling into place. We had tried hard to have our family, and whereas once it looked impossible, we were now going to have our second – everything was going to plan.

Imagining the future at this stage comes quickly. I contemplated the bond that our new child was going to have with our first. I am an only child, so was thrilled at the thought of the two of them having a close relationship and being there for each other for the rest of their lives. I thought about what schools they would go to, what careers they would have, and future Christmases and family events both in the near and far future.

I also thought about the small things; how we would need to decorate the room in the new house, the clothes we would have to buy and what could be recycled. I started trying out names for size in my head.

I couldn't wait to start telling people.

The pregnancy progressed as normal – registering with midwives, getting the red book, getting appointments in the diary. It was so much like the first time that I didn't think for one moment that anything would be different.

The best laid plans and all that; life can come at you fast.

Things went wrong so quickly the morning we went for the first 12-week scan. Everything was the same as before until the radiographer started to struggle to find the baby. My heart raced, I thought it must be usual and they will find the heartbeat any minute. Any minute.....

"A numbing gut punch"

Sadly, it quickly became clear that the baby hadn't continued to grow past about 8 or 9 weeks. It was a numbing gut punch; we had no warning whatsoever that anything was amiss to this point.

Numbing is the key word. I recall the room going cold even though I know there was no drop in temperature. Instead of receiving the expected sonogram of a tiny human and leaving happy, we were ushered into a room to the side of the maternity suite, given some leaflets

and left on our own for who knows how long. Could have been minutes, could have been hours. I don't think we spoke to each other.

The only conversation we had before we exited the maternity ward (walking past the happy expecting couples) was about how we wanted to deal with the next step. Let it progress naturally or medical intervention. How do you make that choice when all you came to do was get a scan of your future child?

We were then out the door and on with our lives like nothing had happened.

A couple of days later, my wife started to miscarry at home.

My emotions at this point were all over the place. I didn't know what to say or do. I felt a deep sadness which I now understand was grief. This was mixed with utter despair at the helplessness I experienced when my wife started miscarrying.

I felt utterly useless. I wanted to be there for her as much as I wanted to be a million miles away. The miscarriage was clearly painful and distressing. Almost a birth without the joy of life to make it worthwhile.

I couldn't share that physical pain, though it did hurt. The feeling of helplessness, being unable to do anything to help the person I love try and cope with the unbearable, was the lowest of points.

“No one really  
tells you what to  
do”

I also felt like I didn't deserve to be as upset as I was, because I didn't have to physically lose our baby from my body.

I couldn't help my wife. I couldn't do anything to get my baby back. The future I had imagined had disappeared.

I think our relationship did struggle a bit; how could it not have?

No one really tells you what to do. I found myself in tears when I was on my own, but making sure she didn't see.

Knowing that we had to talk about what happened was a bit of a mill stone for a while, but we had to wait until we were both ready. In a strange way we came out stronger, but it was a struggle. I can easily see why it does the opposite.

The other problem is that others don't know how to react to the news. We started to tell people what happened as a way of explaining our mood but also to try and get the salve of sympathy from friends and family.

“Society doesn’t know how to deal with miscarriage”

It wasn’t very successful. I remember getting incredibly cross with my best and oldest male friend, someone that I love and care about, who wasn’t as emotionally affected by this news as me. “Oh mate, that’s rough. I’m really sorry to hear that, how are you both doing” is a perfectly fine and caring reaction. However, it is also the same reaction you might give to someone whose

cat has been run over. It isn’t the reaction you give to people who have lost a baby and are grieving.

I have realised this was not his fault. Society doesn’t know how to deal with miscarriage, and men who tend to struggle more with talking about emotions with each other certainly don’t. It made me cross with that person for a while, though they didn’t know it, and it wasn’t their fault. It made me decide not to tell any of my other friends and to this day I haven’t spoken about it with any other friend. I still don’t know if that is the right or wrong approach.

Dealing with emotions this powerful is difficult. If I could have done something different, I would have started talking about this with someone sooner rather than later. My wife spoke with Acorn. I can’t underestimate or overstate how much this helped her. It helped me by extension as the positive effect this had on her as she was addressing it rubbed off on me by extension. It would probably have been better if I had done this as well.

I told one friend and close family, but stopped there as I was annoyed with the response I was getting. But it sits there inside and eats away at you – popping up to remind you when you least expect, and when it emerges it can be devastating.

“It sits there inside and eats away at you”

After one such time, I took some action. I set myself a goal of running a half marathon in a City dear to our hearts to raise money for Acorn. I did it in memory of the life that never got the chance, and it made me feel closer to them. I don’t know if it is closure as I’m not sure that is really possible, but it made a positive out of a negative and that is worth its weight in gold.

So I would say that sitting on the emotion doesn’t help. Talk when you feel ready, and as hard as it is, try to find something positive.

Miscarriage is easier to understand when you realise it is the same grief as losing a loved one. The difference is you mourn the possibility of life, rather than its passing. The only thing that can be said for the latter is that there is at least life to celebrate. It gets easier to bear

with the passing of time, especially if you can carve out a positive, but never forget the possibility; the spark that did exist.

“You mourn the possibility of life, rather than its passing”

*\*name changed to preserve anonymity*

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