



SAYING
GOODBYE
ZOË CLARK-COATES



A personal story of baby loss and 90 days
of support to walk you through grief

SAYING GOODBYE Published by David C Cook, 4050 Lee Vance Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80918, U.S.A.

Integrity Music Ltd., a division of David C Cook, Eastbourne, East Sussex
BN23 6NT, United Kingdom

The graphic circle C logo is a registered trademark of David C Cook.
All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this
book may be reproduced or used in any form without written permission from
the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-4347-1226-4

© 2017 Zoë Clark-Coates

The right of Zoë Clark-Coates to be identified as the Author of the Work has
been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents
Act 1988.

The Cook Team: Ian Matthews, Jennie Pollock, Jo Stockdale

Cover Design: Mark Prentice, beatroot.media

Cover image: Adobe stock

Typesetting by Zaccmedia

Printed in the United Kingdom

First Edition 2017

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Contents

Foreword

7

Introduction

9

Zoë's Story

10

Daily Support

62



Foreword

Over 250,000 babies are going to die in the UK this year and thirty-eight million globally. I was horrified when I heard that. All that pain. ‘Someone’s got to do something!’ I thought, mouth full of biscuit, ‘Petition someone! The government or someone! The UN? The World Health Organization? Can these numbers be reduced? Are those mothers getting any care or support?’

Zoë Clark-Coates knows only too well the pain of baby loss, having gone through this tragedy five times, but rather than just becoming a statistic and sitting back in a mush of self-pity and eating her own weight in biscuits as I did after baby loss, she has become a vocal campaigner for change. As the founder and CEO of The Mariposa Trust (also known as ‘Saying Goodbye’, the name of its principal division), which in just four years has become a leading international support charity, she has been instrumental in elevating the issue of baby loss onto a national platform, and revolutionising baby loss support. As a trained counsellor, writer, broadcaster and business and charity CEO, she leads a team of over 240 people who provide support that reaches over fifty thousand people each week globally.



She has two young girls, the first born after three losses, and the second born after a further two losses, so she's really ridden that childbearing rollercoaster and knows the jubilation, but also the loss, fear and grief that too often come along too. Her personal experience makes her the most empathetic of companions as she understands the effect baby loss can have on people mentally, emotionally and physically. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

In this book, Zoë has opened up about her story of pain, loss and hope, and provides a ninety-day plan, including words of support, and practical advice to help you through the months following a bereavement. Each day has words of encouragement, hope, peace and comfort as well as hands-on tips for getting through the darkest of days, and finding hope.

I believe that this book is a must-have for anyone who suffers baby loss, for anyone who has been through baby loss in the past, or for those wishing to gain a greater insight into the trauma of loss. You'll find here some of the powerful truths that you or those you love need to hear, and help to dispel the untruths surrounding baby loss, which often cloud this taboo subject. For many people, this will not just be a gift, this will be a lifeline.

Sally Phillips.

May 2017



Introduction

First and foremost, this book is for those who have lost a baby. It is for those who want to feel understood, and for those who are looking for their feelings to be validated. Sadly, we live in a time where we are encouraged to put all our feelings in a box and then only to open this box at set times, but life just isn't like that.

Life can be hard. It can be wonderful. And it can be traumatising. I hope this book encourages you to be real about your story, and gives you time and space to reflect and heal.

This book is also for family members, friends and health professionals who want to gain a true insight into losing a baby. If you have not experienced it first-hand, you will not be able to relate to all you read here, but it should allow you to glimpse this painful world, and to be compassionate to those who have had to live in it.



Zoë's Story

Where do I even start when writing a story like this? This question has been a constant niggle for the past few weeks. In theory, it should be simple to write down my experiences, but in practice, it is hard. I am afraid I cannot write eloquently. I am nervous of digging back into past traumas, even though I know I have processed and dealt with them all. I am also scared of being utterly vulnerable, of laying it all out in one book. For a private person that is a big ask, and I am extremely private. But I know that if this book helps just one person, it will be worth it. So here goes.

Let's start at the very beginning (yes, I know that sounds like *The Sound of Music* ... sorry about that, there are far fewer hills and dance sequences in the pages that follow).

Andy and I were thirty-two when we decided we would like to have children. We had always planned to have children, but it was never something that consumed us. We felt complete as a couple.

I don't remember what flicked that switch, when we went from being okay with the idea of having children 'one day', to passionately wanting them immediately, but there was a change, and it happened in us both simultaneously. One thing that had definitely delayed the decision was that one of my closest friends had lost multiple children through miscarriage and stillbirth. This



had left a scar on me. I didn't feel I could handle that type of loss or depth of grief. But once we made the decision to try for a baby the fear left me. My sister had never lost a child, so why would I, when we were from the same family?

Within months I realised I was pregnant. I was so excited, and even though I was nervous of the changes ahead, I was overjoyed.

And then the bleeding started. I knew I was losing the baby. I believed early miscarriage would be just like a normal period, maybe a bit heavier, but it wasn't. It was agony. For six days, I was in horrendous pain and the blood loss was huge. Emotionally, I could not handle it. I found it hard to say 'I am miscarrying', so I dealt with the physical symptoms and shoved all other emotions into a box.

We told no one about our baby. We hardly discussed anything even between ourselves. I preferred to stay in a state of denial: it felt much easier than having to face the pain.

We named this baby Cobi.

The months that followed went slow. The irony was not lost on me that you spend your adult life not wanting to get pregnant and trying to avoid it, and as soon as you want a child you realise how hard it is to actually conceive. You constantly hear about this teenager and that lady over the road who has found themselves pregnant, and it being the worst thing in the world for them, and you think 'What? How is it possible that so many can create a child they don't even want, and yet here we are desperately trying, and it's not happening?'

I felt lied to by every biology teacher I have ever had, every film I had seen where two people decide to have a child and it happens



on the first night they try. Making a baby is not like that. It is like the most complex science experiment ever ... plus a gazillion other things needing to be in place at that exact moment. One massive star to be hovering in the east, the moon being a perfect crescent, and the sun radiating at 91 degrees, and just to be on the safe side drink the fresh milk from a goat born in the west... Well, maybe that's an exaggeration, but that's what it feels like. Many things have to happen for that egg to be fertilised, and many more for that egg to then implant and start growing. Studying the complexity of creating a child amazes me. It truly is a miracle when a baby is conceived.

But then ...

It happened ...

I weed on that ever-knowing stick, and two lines appeared.

(Can I just add here that it seems somewhat too personal to say I weed on a stick? Does urinated sound better? No, I simply can't have the word urinated in my book—we need to stick with wee—but we all wee, right? Maybe not on sticks, but it is a normal human function!)

I was pregnant.

This time it felt different. I was scared of losing this baby, but I also felt it was protected. The early weeks are so challenging in pregnancy as there is nothing you can do to make sure things are fine. Scans can help a little, but until your baby has a heartbeat, no one can reassure you that all is well, so you are left feeling helpless. All you can do is take your pregnancy vitamins and eat well. I did both, and started searching for a doctor.

Both excited and nervous, we went to meet the obstetrician I had found. He was lovely and we felt we would be in safe hands.



He asked me if I would like a scan whilst I was there and we leapt at the chance to see our baby. This was to be my first ever scan so I was not too sure of what to expect but the sonographer (a lovely Australian) swiftly applied the gel to my stomach and the scan commenced. She asked if we were sure our dates were correct, which made my stomach flip, but we said yes, and she agreed with us.

She said she could see I had previously had a bleed, which had been retained in the womb. If I started to bleed following the scan, I shouldn't worry as it would just be this blood being evacuated. She asked us if we would like to hear the baby's heartbeat. The sound filled the room. We both shed a tear or two. It was such a beautiful moment seeing our child on that screen and hearing their heart pounding away.

A few hours later, at home, I went to the loo and noticed some spotting. I wanted to vomit from fear but Andy calmed me down, reminding we had been warned this could happen and that I should not worry if it did. The bleeding was just random spotting and, after a few days, it stopped.

As Christmas was approaching, we decided not to tell anyone we were pregnant and started to plan a big surprise for the whole family. No one would ever guess we would keep something like this from them. They had all stopped asking us if we would have children, once we had been married for over ten years, so we knew this would be completely unexpected.

We planned a treasure hunt on Christmas Eve for all the family. Each would be given separate clues, and would end up in a different place where they would discover one of the many positive pregnancy test sticks I had. (When you're struggling to conceive,



it can be hard to believe the evidence of just one test. I had at least five positives.) We were both so excited and wondered how everyone would react.

I then caught the dreaded flu. I started with a fever and sore throat and before long was bed-ridden. I hardly moved for five days and decided my first outing would just be a quick visit to the shop.

I am known for having a bladder made of steel and can go for over ten hours without needing to use the loo, but within days of discovering I was pregnant, I was spending a lot of time popping to the loo. It was no surprise then that mid-shop I had to find a staff member and beg them to let me use their facilities. There I discovered I was bleeding.

I wanted to pass out. Sweat was pouring off me, and I felt so nauseous I could hardly move. Andy and I walked out of the shop and climbed into the car.

We called the hospital who told us we should find a more local clinic to scan me, as travelling is not advised when bleeding in pregnancy. Andy started phoning private clinics, as we knew the NHS would not be able to offer me an instant scan.

After a handful of phone calls, Andy found a small clinic whose obstetrician would happily see me if we could get there within the hour.

On arrival, we were greeted by a friendly woman, and given many forms to fill in. As we sat and waited, all we could think was, 'Is our baby okay?'

My name was called and we were led into a large office. Gel was applied to my tummy, the screen was switched on and the monitor turned towards us. Instantly we could see our baby was



fine. The heartbeat was strong and our little treasure was waving away.

I sobbed with relief. The doctor said he could not see why I was bleeding, but that it was more common to bleed in pregnancy than not to, which did reassure us somewhat.

As a precaution, I chose to rest until the bleeding stopped, only getting up to help at a Christmas event we had planned with the neighbours on the Saturday night.

So around 5pm, I got out of bed. As I moved, I felt the bleeding increase. I started to weep uncontrollably. I screamed to God and begged Him to save my child. I felt truly terrified and out of control. I knew in my heart my baby had just died. How? Mother's instinct? God telling me? I do not know, but I knew her heart had just stopped. I wailed, I begged and I implored God to start her heart and save her.

Neither Andy nor I knew what to do next. Our event was waiting to start, we could see around thirty people lingering at the rear of our house, and many more would soon be there. Andy told some friends of ours, Nick and Georgina, what was happening and asked them to take the reins. They were marvellous, agreed to take over and shared with Andy how they had gone through a similar experience when pregnant with their second son. They also offered to talk with me. They advised us to go to A&E and to phone ahead to warn them we were coming.

I anticipated a chaotic A&E as it was a Saturday night, but all was calm, too early in the evening for all the drink-fuelled accidents. I told the receptionist why we were there—I don't know why I expected empathy but I did. I was petrified, and I wanted them



to appreciate that. I wanted them to see a mum to be, desperately trying to save her child. But I was just told to take a seat and wait to be called.

Eventually my name was called and I was led to a cubicle. The young nurse assigned to look after me seemed nice but confused as to what to do next. Once she had taken a urine sample to test, she announced, 'Great. You're still pregnant!'

Silence descended. She then asked, 'Can I ask why you are so upset? Is it because this is an IVF baby, so you have paid a lot for it?'

I couldn't speak, and felt utterly ridiculous. Clearly I was crying more than she thought I should, for a baby that had no value because we had not paid for her.

Eventually I managed to say, 'No, this baby was conceived naturally!'

'Oh, okay,' she said.

She said no scans would be available until the following Friday so all I could do was go home and wait, rest and presume all was fine.

We headed home.

Our world was very different now. I had a spark of hope that maybe this bleed was insignificant but the overriding feeling was that my baby had died. I woke on the Sunday morning feeling tired and petrified. My night had been filled with nightmares, replays of the day before.

We wanted to get a scan at another clinic as there was no way I was waiting until the Friday for answers, but they were all closed on Sundays. We left countless messages on voicemails asking for a call



back as soon as they opened. The day dragged as I flitted between hope and hopelessness.

One minute I felt our baby was fine and it was just fear convincing me she had died. The next, I was overwhelmed with terror. We felt utterly helpless.

On Monday morning, a local clinic offered a scan if we could get there within the next couple of hours. I knew I could not carry on any longer without telling my parents and my sister. Our big surprise seemed unlikely now, and I needed the support only a mum and a sister can give.

I called my parents, one of the hardest calls I have ever made. It was beyond awful to say I was pregnant, but that I thought the baby had died.

I sobbed. My parents sobbed. They said they would come. Then I called Hayley, my sister. We wept, and she tried to reassure me. Then we left for the clinic, and drove in silence, as tears rolled down my face. The clinic was warm and welcoming, and a midwife performed the scan. She seemed quiet, but kind.

To our surprise the images were played onto a massive TV screen. There our baby was, in all her beauty. But she was so still. The midwife activated the sound on the scanner to listen to her heart. You could hear a pin drop in the silence.

‘Why can’t I hear her heart beating?’

The midwife looked at me and said, ‘Zoë, I am so sorry. Your baby has died.’

If I thought I was free-falling before, now I felt I had been pushed off the side of the earth.



Daily Support

When I was first asked to write a book, I considered what sort of book I needed when going through loss.

I had needed two things: personal stories I could relate to, and something I could pick up daily to give me support. It was obvious this was the book I should write.

It is always hard to know how much information to share when you tell your story, how much information is too much? If you do not share enough it is pointless, as it will help no one. It is with this in mind I have shared my story and I hope by pouring out my heart on these pages, you have been helped.

The next part of the book is the daily support section. It was hard to decide how many days I should include. Thirty days was definitely not enough. Sixty would have been acceptable, but ninety felt just right. You may want to read multiple days in one sitting, you may want to read the whole lot in one go, or you may prefer to read it as I wrote it, which is one page for each day. I want you to feel I am walking with you as your heart starts to heal, and I would love for you to see this book and me as a friend.

My hope and my wish for you is that you will soon start to see the sun rising again, and colour will refill your life.

Much love,
Zoë x



Day 1

Nothing can prepare you for the shock when you hear the news that your baby has died. It feels like one second you are in a brightly lit garden, flowers blooming, sun shining, and the next moment a trap door opens beneath you and you are plunged into darkness. One minute you are thinking of baby names and planning your future, the next you feel like you have no future at all, as the world seems bleak and hopeless.

I think to truly understand the pain you have to have experienced it too. It is pretty impossible to describe and definitely impossible to imagine. And this is exactly why you cannot prepare for losing a baby. Whatever stats are thrown at you, however much you are told 'Don't get too excited until you pass twelve weeks just in case', when you discover you are pregnant, dreams are instantly born, and when they are snatched from you, hearts shatter.

TASK FOR THE DAY:

Sit, reflect and allow yourself to cry.

There is healing in the weeping.



Some days—in fact,
on a lot of days—you may
doubt you can survive this
pain, this grief that’s
drowning you.
Let me reassure you,
you can survive
and you will survive.

Zoë Clark-Coates



Day 2

Did you know every child a woman carries actually changes their DNA? Science has now shown that cells of every child remain in the mother's body, whether the baby died in the womb, or was born healthy and well. I find this so comforting and I hope you do too.

When you lose a baby you can feel empty, and even beginning to accept your child has gone forever is agonising. To know part of them remains within you (or your partner) can be such a gift as you can make their legacy live on.

TASK FOR THE DAY:

If you never saw your child—imagine what your child would have looked like.

If you did see your child—imagine what they would have looked like as they grew older.

Your baby may have not lived for long but they were a person, a cherished person, and one of the terribly hard things to accept is that you will never get to see their face mature. Imagining what they would have looked like and putting a face to the grief can help you move forward.



Your child that never saw
life outside of the womb
has now changed the
core of you.

Your DNA will simply
never be the same.

Zoë Clark-Coates





Day 3

Do not panic if you run out of tears. Sometimes you may become emotionally barren. You may have cried endlessly, you may have screamed, shouted, and asked ‘why?’ countless times but then, all of a sudden, nothing! You feel numb, frozen and wonder what has happened.

Does this mean I do not care anymore? Does this mean I have had a breakdown? Does this mean my baby does not matter? All these are common questions and the answer to each is highly likely to be no. As humans, we have a limit to the capacity we can cope with. Our brains can only process so much trauma, and that is why we can have periods of just feeling numb and cut off from reality. Do not fight it and do not worry, just keep talking about your loss and eventually you will find yourself peeling off another layer of the grief onion.

TASK FOR THE DAY:

Find two pieces of music you really like and listen to them both.

During each piece of music do not think of anything, just breathe deeply.



Often I ran out of tears.
I sat there numb.
Is there a word that
explains this state of
being? 'Broken' is the
only word I can find.

Zoë Clark-Coates





Day 4

Be patient. If you are anything like me, patience is not something that comes naturally to you, and even if you are blessed with this gift of being able to sit and wait, grief can be the ultimate test of it.

Grieving is a long process. For some it is a journey of a lifetime, for others the rawest part of grief may be processed in a matter of weeks or months, but no one has an ability to skip the process or speed it up, all one can do is face it a day at a time.

I certainly got frustrated on many occasions, and I actually remember saying ‘I am bored of crying’, ‘I am fed up of feeling an emotional wreck’, and I hankered for the time when I felt happy and at peace. However, I want to assure you if you stick with it, if you allow yourself to move through the stepping stones of grief, you will find yourself on the other side of that river, or at least in a boat in which you can safely sail.

TASK FOR THE DAY:

Find a poem or write a poem that best sums up your experience of grief.



**GRIEVING FOR SOMEONE IS
THE ULTIMATE ACT OF LOVE,
AND IT IS CERTAINLY NOT AN ACT
WE CAN CHOOSE TO SKIP BY.**

Zoë Clark-Coates