

Quotes

Holding Space for Pregnancy Loss

with Amy Wright Glenn,
founder of the Institute for the Study of Birth, Breath, and Death

“The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.”

~ Herbert Spencer

“One-caring receives the other, for the interval of caring, completely and nonselectively.” ~ Nel Noddings

“I picture pregnancy loss as a primordial river rushing through me; it carries forces so big, they eclipse my imagination. It runs through my femoral artery and vena cava, through my spleen, my brain, and the chambers of my heart. At first, this force is strong like rapids, flooding everything. With time it slows, but it never goes away. It rearranges my cells like stones in a riverbed. It never stops running, even after I can no longer see or feel it.” ~ Angela Garbes

“The belief that must be maintained is the belief that a woman can recover and work through pregnancy loss—not that she will, or even want to, get pregnant again.”

~Kristin Swansen, RN, PhD

“Women were made for birth and life and death. In the moment of miscarriage, birth and life and death come through us.”

~Kristin Swansen, RN, PhD

“Emotions like grief, fear and despair are as much a part of the human condition as love, awe and joy. They are our natural and inevitable responses to existence, so long as loss, vulnerability and violence come with the territory of being human. These are the dark emotions, but by dark, I don't mean that they are bad, unwholesome or pathological. I mean that as

a culture we have kept these emotions in the dark—shameful, secret and unseen.”

~Miriam Greenspan, PhD

“We cannot step inside their shoes and feel what they are feeling, but we can become curious, enter into their story and honor their need to grieve as they choose.”

~Jane Heustis RN and Marcia Jenkins, RN

“I want to be asked about Abraham. I may cry and it is okay. I might not cry. It brings joy to my heart to remember him. I imagine him being 5 years old and wonder what he would be like.”

-- Jennifer, “Stillbirth: Your Stories”

“We didn’t talk about how we would feel if we had a home birth and then the baby died. Who would?”

~Elizabeth Heineman, Ghostbelly

“First the parents have to say hello.”

~Elizabeth Heineman, Ghostbelly

Death rituals emphasize liminality more than other rites of passage this is because death is the most powerful and mysterious of the changes of state that punctuate the human life cycle.

~Rituals of Death

Resource List

“Holding Space: On Loving, Dying, and Letting Go,” Amy Wright Glenn
(available this fall)

“Companioning at a Time of Perinatal Loss: A Guide for Nurses, Physicians, Social Workers, Chaplains, and Other Bedside Companions,” Jane Heustis, RN & Marcia Jenkins, RN

“Counseling Skills for Companioning the Mourner: The Fundamentals of Effective Grief Counseling,” Alan D. Wolfelt Ph.D.

“Ghostbelly,” Elizabeth Heinman

“Healing through the Dark Emotions – The wisdom of grief, fear, and despair,” Miriam Greenspan

“Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education,” Nel Noddings

“In a Different Voice,” Carol Gilligan

“It’s not ‘Just’ a Heavy Period,” Elizabeth Petrucelli

“Opening Up -- The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions,” James W. Pennebaker

“The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom,” Jonathan Haidt, Ph.D

“Man’s Search for Meaning,” Viktor E. Frankle

“From Sun to Sun: A Hospice Nurse Reflects on the Art of Dying,” Nina Angela McKissock, RN

“Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death,” Irvin D. Yalom

“How to Expect when You’re Not Expecting: Stories of Pregnancy, Parenthood, and Loss” edited by Jessica Hiemstra and Lisa Martin-Demoor

“Motherhood Lost: A Feminist Account of Pregnancy Loss in America,” Linda L. Layne

“Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual,” Tom F. Driver