



Honouring Your Loss

A Gentle Companion for the Early Days



www.embracingthejourney.ca

Table of Contents

Welcome	03
Chapter I: Grounding & Gentle Support	04
Chapter II: Journal Prompts for Gentle Reflection	06
Chapter III: Where Support Can Begin	07
Chapter IV: Final Thoughts	09

WELCOME

Hello, I'm your Full Spectrum Doula, Kat Thompson.

Dear you,

If you've come across this guide, it's likely because you or someone you love has experienced pregnancy or infant loss. I want to start by saying: I am so sorry.

Your experience matters, your grief is valid, and your baby's presence – no matter how brief – is real.

There is no "right way" to grieve. Whether you feel shock, rage, numbness, or deep sorrow, your feelings are not broken – they're human.



This companion was created as a soft place to land. You won't find instructions here.

Just a few gentle ideas and reminders that you are not alone – and that support is here when you're ready.



- Kat Thompson

CHAPTER I

Grounding & Gentle Support

Ways to Cope, Grieve, and Support – In Your Own Way

Grief is personal. There's no checklist for healing, but there are small things that may help you feel less alone. This section offers gentle suggestions based on your role in the loss experience.

For the Birthing Parent (the person who physically experienced the loss)

You might try:

- **Breath connection:** Place your hand where you last felt your baby. Take a deep breath and simply say, "You were here. You mattered."
- **Let your body rest:** Your body has been through something profound. Allow space to nap, bleed, cry, or not cry at all.
- **Ritual:** Write a letter to your baby. Light a candle each week. Create a playlist. Ritual doesn't have to be spiritual – it can be anything meaningful or comforting.

You don't need to move on. You only need to move through – in your own time.

For the Partner

You might try:

- **Be present, not perfect:** You don't have to fix their pain. Your steady presence – a hand to hold, a meal made, a gentle "I'm here" – is everything.
- **Process your own grief:** It's okay to feel your own sadness, fear, or even confusion. You may be grieving a different part of the same story.
- **Ritual:** Share a memory or a hope you had for this child. Write their name in a journal. Offer your partner space to talk (or not talk) each day.

Grief doesn't always look the same – even within the same relationship. You're allowed to feel everything.

CHAPTER I

Grounding & Gentle Support

For Friends or Loved Ones

You might try:

- **Reach out with presence, not pressure:** “I’m thinking of you. No need to reply.” is a beautiful start.
- **Avoid clichés:** “Everything happens for a reason” or “At least you can try again” can hurt more than help. Stick to: “I’m so sorry. I’m here.”
- **Ritual:** Send flowers with no expectations. Light a candle the week of their due date or loss anniversary. Add the baby’s name to your calendar.

You may not have the perfect words – that’s okay. Your presence, love, and remembering are enough.

What is Ritual?

Ritual doesn’t have to be religious or “woo.” It’s simply an action you return to with intention – something that gives grief a shape.

Some examples:

- Naming the baby
- Writing a letter or poem
- Lighting a candle on the same day each week
- Creating a small memory box or garden
- Saying a prayer or affirmation
- Wearing a piece of jewelry

Ritual gives us something to hold onto when words aren’t enough. Choose what feels right – or none at all.

CHAPTER II

Journal Prompts for Gentle Reflection

Your Story, Your Words

There's no wrong way to grieve – and there's no wrong way to write. You can write in full sentences, point-form, or even draw. Come back to these when you feel ready, and skip any that don't feel right.

If You're Not Sure Where to Start:

- What do I want to say to the baby I lost?
- What would I say to myself if I were my own best friend?
- What am I carrying that feels too heavy today?

Honouring the Experience:

- What did I hope for in this pregnancy or journey?
- What was the moment I first felt connected to this baby or experience?
- What do I wish more people understood about this kind of loss?

Exploring the Grief:

- What has surprised me about my grief?
- What do I miss – even if it wasn't long ago?
- What am I afraid to feel? What would help me feel safe enough to feel it?

Rebuilding & Remembering:

- What brings me a small sense of peace, even if only for a moment?
- How can I honour this loss in a way that feels meaningful to me?
- If I could speak to my future self, what would I want them to know?

A Note About Journal Writing:

- You don't have to do this alone – your reflections are powerful, but sometimes grief needs a witness. You can bring them to your support session, or share them with someone you trust.
- If journaling brings up difficult emotions, pause. Breathe. Return later – or not at all.

CHAPTER III

Where Support Can Begin

You don't have to grieve alone – and you don't have to have the right words to reach out. Support can start with a whisper, a tear, or just showing up.

If You're the One Experiencing Loss:

- It's okay to feel numb, angry, heartbroken, or nothing at all. However you're feeling – you're allowed.
- Talking to a friend, partner, therapist, or doula can be a safe way to process. You don't have to share everything. You don't even need to know what to say – just that you're ready to not carry it alone.

If You're a Partner Supporting Someone in Loss:

- Your grief matters too. You might be holding space for your loved one while carrying your own heartbreak silently.
- Ask how you can support – sometimes it's listening, sometimes it's doing the dishes, sometimes it's holding them while they cry.
- You can also reach out for your own support, even if your role was more observer than participant in the loss.

If You're a Friend or Family Member:

- Simply saying “I'm here. I don't know what to say, but I love you.” can mean everything.
- Avoid advice or platitudes. Just be present.
- Offering help without putting pressure (e.g., “I'm bringing dinner. Just leave a cooler out.”) shows you care without adding burden.

What I Offer as a Loss Doula

Whether your loss was recent or long ago, acknowledged by others or held privately, I offer:

- 1:1 grief support sessions (virtual or in-person)
- Ritual creation and memorial planning (gentle, culturally sensitive, and family-friendly)
- Support for navigating medical systems, returning to work, or TTC after loss
- Sibling and partner grief resources
- Practical support like meal prep, body recovery guidance, and emotional check-ins

I provide a nonjudgmental, affirming space to hold grief however it arrives – quiet, loud, or messy. You are welcome here.

CHAPTER III

Where Support Can Begin

Books & Resources

Support Organizations:

- Pregnancy & Infant Loss Centre
- Return to Zero: Hope
- Empty Cradle
- Loss Doula Support Directory (Doula Canada)

For Grieving Siblings (Picture Books):

- **Something Happened** by Cathy Blanford (ages 3–7)
- **We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But We Had an Angel Instead** by Pat Schwiebert (ages 2–6)
- **The Invisible String** by Patrice Karst (ages 4+; also good for adults)
- **Always My Twin** by Valerie Samuels (for surviving multiples)

For Parents & Adults

- **You're Still a Mother** by Rebekah Hargraves – a faith-based reflection on grief and healing.

- **Nursery of Heaven: Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Loss in the Lives of the Saints and Today's Parents** by Angela Burrin & Patrick O'Hearn – comforting for those with Catholic/Christian beliefs.
- **Before I Let Go** by Marieke Nijkamp – a fictional YA book that explores grief, identity, and the layers of loss.
- **Through, Not Around: Stories of Infertility and Pregnancy Loss** edited by Allison McDonald Ace & Emily Dorle – diverse real-life Canadian experiences.
- **Unspoken: Stories of Pregnancy Loss** by Maia Sutherland & Jessica Hiemstra – a collection of honest and raw personal narratives.

CHAPTER III

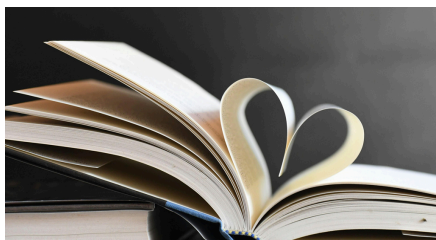
Where Support Can Begin

- **Still: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Motherhood** by Emma Hansen – written by a Canadian mother and model who experienced the stillbirth of her son.
- **Spiritual Resilience: Healing Practices for Grief and Loss** by Dr. Nia Nunn (Black & Indigenous perspectives on loss and healing) – this isn't solely about perinatal loss but includes relevant chapters.

Note: Indigenous communities often hold loss within the context of ancestral connection, ceremony, and land. If you're seeking culturally rooted support, I'd be honoured to help you find it.

Podcasts That Hold Space for Grief

- **The Empty Cradle** – gentle conversations around miscarriage and infant loss, including emotional and spiritual care.
- **Still A Part of Us** – real parents share their stillbirth stories with care and vulnerability.
- **The Birth Hour: Pregnancy & Infant Loss Series** – occasional episodes focused on miscarriage, TFMR, and stillbirth.
- **Sisters in Loss** – amplifies Black voices navigating infertility, loss, and maternal health trauma.
- **Going There with Jen Pastiloff** – not always specific to loss, but features powerful episodes on grief and resilience.



CHAPTER IV

Final Thoughts

Grief doesn't follow a timeline.

It doesn't come with instructions or expectations – and no two people, families, or bodies experience loss in the same way.

Whether your loss was recent or years ago, whether it was your first or one of many, whether you felt sadness, confusion, relief, rage, or all of it at once – your experience is valid. You do not need permission to grieve, to feel numb, or to still be processing what this loss means to you.

Loss can ripple outward: into our relationships, our identities, our bodies, and our futures. And yet, healing can also ripple outward – through ritual, reflection, community, and gentle self-compassion.

If you've made it this far in this guide, I want you to know:



- ✨ **You're not alone.**
- ✨ **You don't have to grieve in silence.**
- ✨ **You deserve support that sees the whole of you.**

Whether you need a compassionate presence to talk to, want help honouring your baby in meaningful ways, or simply need someone who will sit in the hard moments without trying to fix them – I'm here.

Please reach out when you're ready. I will meet you where you are.

- Kat Thompson