

the body knows

Miscarriage support beyond 'moving on' social norms

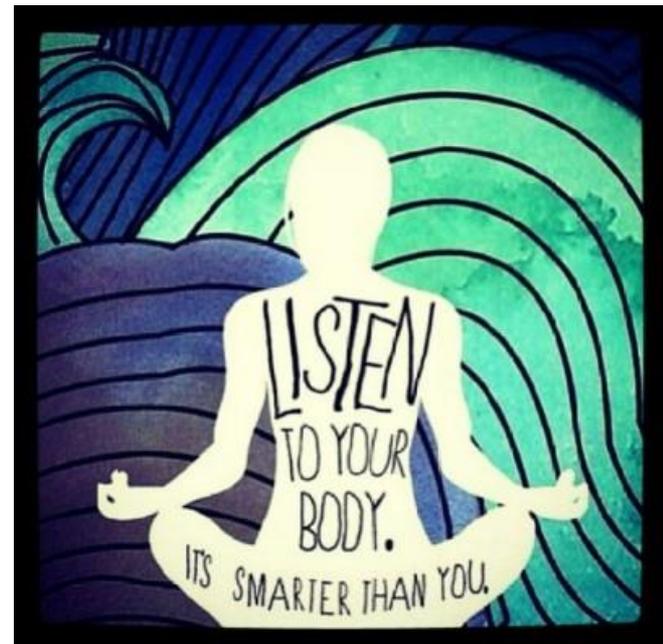
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nurse/midwife, educator

SANDS Conference

3-5 November 2017

a little life, not a little loss



acknowledgement of our stories

selah- breathe- pause- be

“Weaving”

Definition

Social norms

Effects

The body knows

-somatic memory

My story

Shame

?Gender differences

What helps?



definition: miscarriage baby loss

- Before 20 weeks pregnant
- Less than 400 g
- Not born alive
- 1 in 4 women

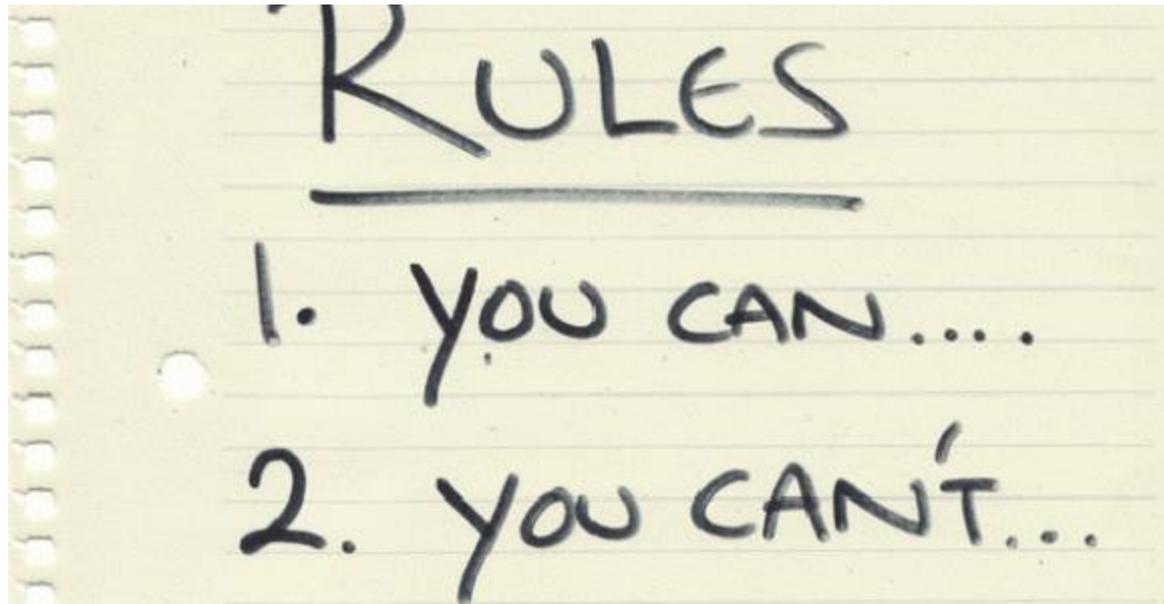


In excess of 10,000 die as a result of an early loss prior to 20 weeks gestation www.sands.org.nz

social norms-

- Control what can be spoken about and who can speak

SOCIAL
NORMS



social norms: the power of words

- I'm having a baby- but if miscarried 'it was only'
 - Embryo / Tissue
 - Fetus
 - Abortion
 - Product of conception
- Mis-carriage... implies fault



If it was called 'early stillbirth'- would I have more permission to grieve and gain support?

social norms- but you already have a child... so why are you upset?

- How can we grieve a baby when everyone says you should be grateful instead?
- Grief and Gratefulness- we feel we have to choose
- “At Least...”



social norms: move on- how to grieve when miscarriage can mean

- No body
- No birth weight
- No set day/ time of birth
- No birth /death certificate
- No proven gender –how to name?
- No formal burial/cremation requirements
- No birth story going forward

“This all tends to signify that a baby never existed, even though a miscarriage is often life-changing”.

www.miscarriagesupport.org.nz/grief/



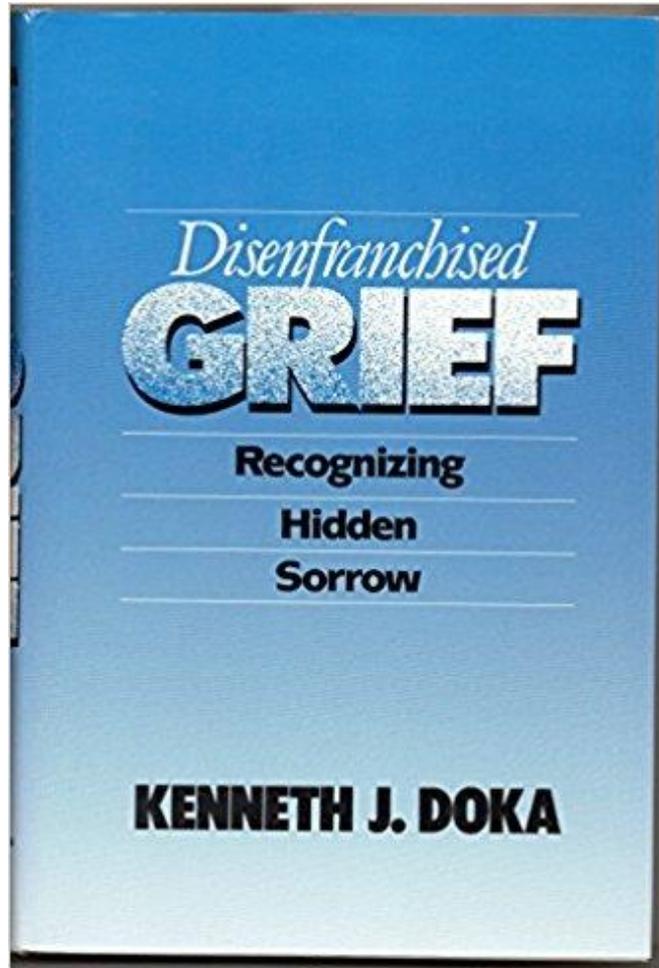
social norms: a taboo subject

*Miscarriage is often regarded as an insignificant event, so is seldom acknowledged or discussed and often treated as a taboo subject. (...) **This only adds to the shock and misery when things do go wrong – whatever they may be. No miscarriage should be taken lightly, by our-selves or the community.***

*It is a sad commentary on any society and its ignorance that when we miscarry, **instead of receiving sympathy and support, we can be made to feel that losing our baby is somehow our own fault. Recurrent miscarriers even more so.***

<https://www.miscarriagesupport.org.nz/grief/>

disenfranchised grief: ken doka (1989)



Loss that is not, or can not be

- Publically mourned
- Openly acknowledged
- Socially supported
- GUILT/SHAME- its wrong to grieve, I'M WRONG

the subsequent feelings can remain unresolved

BUT the body knows ... my story

- Rebecca Grace

Dec 2000



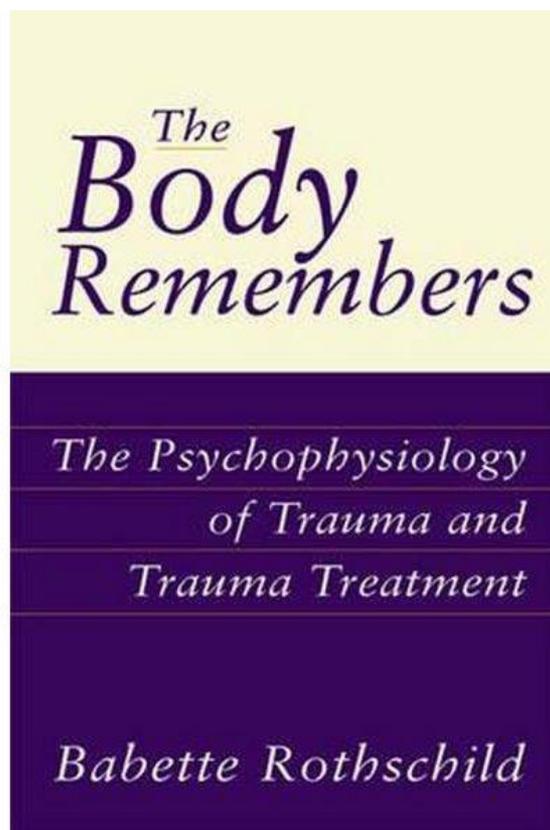
- Aaron Samuel

July 2001



How compassion and kindness helped

TRUSTING what the body 'knows'



- Pregnancy and baby loss experienced at cellular level
- 'Buried' knowledge can become triggers
- Trust our SENSORY KNOWING as much, or more, than our cognitive processing
- Let our MIND and the BODY talk to each other

Shame... and its antidote

- Out of all our core emotions, shame is the one hardest to name and discharge in our body- because it is about hiding
- Shame dissipates under special circumstances

**“the non-judgmental,
accepting
contact of another
human being”**

P 62 Rothschild, The Body Knows



INTUITIVE GRIEF

- Waves of emotion
- More feeling than thinking
- Focused on exploring and expressing feelings and emotions
- “I need to talk”



INSTRUMENTAL GRIEF

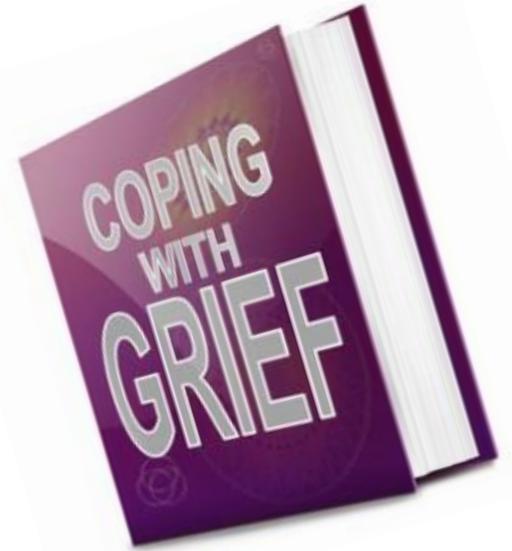
- Physical or cognitive
- More thinking than feeling
- Focused on doing and actively responding to grief
- “I need to do something”



Gender differences? Doka & Martin 2010

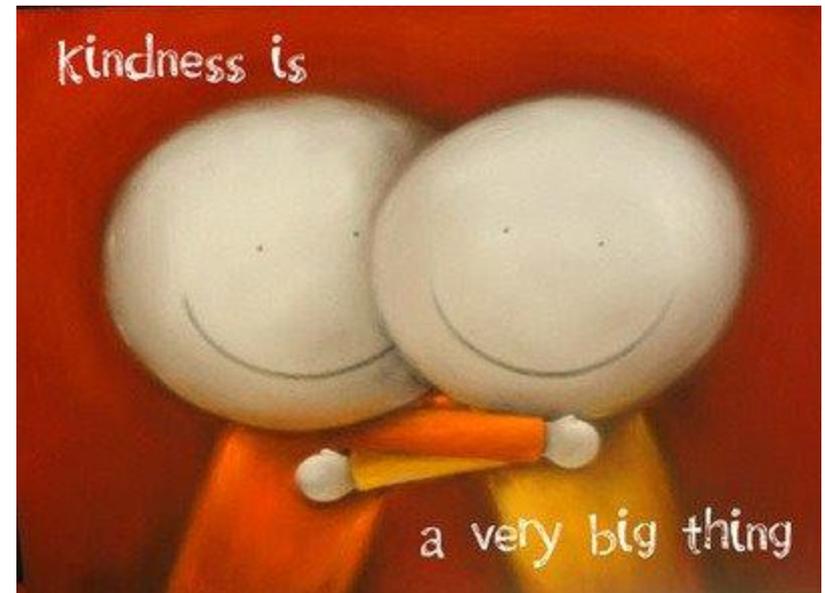
it can all add up

- Guilt
- Shame
- Silence
- Avoidance- emotional shut down
- Depression / Anxiety
- Traumatic Grief leading to PTS/D
- Unresolved
- Ongoing, especially if recurrent miscarriage



professional responsibility

- **Acknowledge** the loss of a baby
- **Mind** how we speak
- **Compassion and Kindness**
- **SANDS 3 steps**
- **What would be the best way to support you right now?**



helping myself?

- Breathe
- Acceptance- self, others, difference
- Understanding- I'm still a Mum
- Not assuming- miscarriage has its own challenges of how we remember
- Self compassion
- SLOW DOWN- let my body 'talk'
- Supports- people, places, things
- Creative Memories
- Counselling
- Permission to Heal

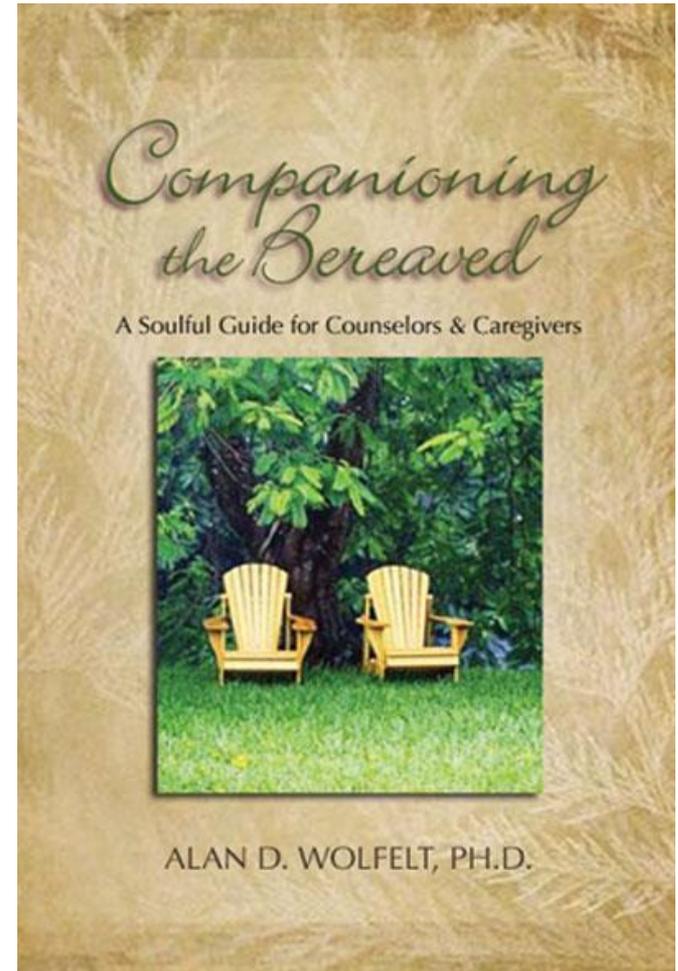


helping others? companioning

- Curiosity
- Learning
- Alongside
- Stillness
- Listening heart
- Spirit
- Bearing witness
- Present in pain
- Respecting disorder

Alan Wolfelt, 2005

<https://www.centerforloss.com/>



questions?

