

Her heart after miscarriage

BY MICHELLE HEFFERNAN



Kate holds a sonogram photo of the child she never met. She and her husband heard the heartbeat at a routine ultrasound, witnessing a small pulsating heart on the viewing screen. She explored name books. She felt the changes in her body. However, Kate would not be a mother this time. She heard the frightening words from the ultrasound technician, "I'm sorry. There is no heartbeat." At that moment something shifted in her own heart.

Kate's experience is just one of many miscarriage stories. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) reports miscarriage as the most common type of pregnancy loss. It occurs spontaneously before the 20-week gestation period, after which time is stillbirth. It is also reported that 10-25% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage, leaving a great number of women to cope with a heartfelt, but largely unrecognized loss.

It was Kate's forthright honesty that inspired this article. Then, with a whim of a phone call came a great and unexpected synchronicity: Sierra Bender. Sierra is the founder of Sierra Fitness 4 Life and Yoga and leader of a popular Omega Institute workshop called The Goddess Boot Camp. These programs were created for women in all phases of life and circumstances, not miscarriage in particular. Sierra leads these women through various types of physical exertion, inspiring spiritual awareness in the process. This is all done in the outdoors, surrounded in the natural soothing energies of water and earth, Mother Earth that is.

Now, perhaps you are wondering how all this connects to miscarriage. Consider the simple idea of solving a physical loss with a physical solution. After all, it is an experience of the body which is processed in the mind and emotional heart. However, the link here is even stronger. Astonishingly, Sierra's life story revealed her own miscarriage.

Sierra experienced a miscarriage at age 32, following an undiagnosed ectopic pregnancy that nearly

resulted with her own death. Physically and emotionally devastated by the severity of her experience, Sierra turned her state of depression around. "You can become depressed by it or move through it. You can switch your mindset by changing your perception of the experience." Miscarriage actually became the catalyst for her programs developed to help women.

Real pain with no real answers is often the toughest facet of miscarriage. Countless articles list the expected emotions following miscarriage. These range from disbelief to sorrow, confusion, guilt, anger and anxiety. But, for as real as the sadness may feel women are often met with silence or little consolation for their loss because the child did not come to term. This is further complicated by a frequent lack of medical explanation for the loss. The ACOG confirms that conclusive medical explanations for miscarriage are most often unfound. This leaves many questions unanswered. For Kate, the pain of this loss was exhibited through fears of re-occurrence. She reluctantly confided how much it impacted later pregnancy. "It's like walking on eggshells, because the thought of it happening again is so sad."

Moving through it helps fertility. Sierra Bender speaks from experience. She instinctively found ways to channel the energy it takes to create anything, including children. "Fertility is not only giving birth to children," she adds. "Women need to find ways to nurture and care for themselves." Sierra teaches this by leading women through blends of yoga, hiking, fitness activities, meditation, conversation and laughter with the intention of facing fears and releasing anxiety. "I have known women who have gotten pregnant after The Goddess Workshop. They identify what's in their way and why they are not living as the beautiful and powerful women they truly are."

Don't blame yourself out of need for explanations. When medical answers cannot be found, women sometimes begin fearing that something they did caused the loss. Analyzing your every move or feeling your body let you down is not the answer. Sierra emphasizes, "It is not your fault when nature has taken its course." Instead she suggests that women focus on choice. There is a choice about how to handle this.

Give yourself permission to feel. Staying busy and distracting your conscious mind is self-sabotage. Find activities to release pent-up emotion and ones that help you stay in the moment. Once the doctor has approved physical activity, things like walking, running, hiking and swimming are good repetitive movement activities. Dance and yoga also focus the mind and help one tune into the body. Keep a journal close by as well. Physical movement has benefits, but releasing anxiety and fear to paper is deeply freeing.

Today Kate (due with a summer baby) is ponder-

ing what to do with that sonogram photo, realizing the depth of her fear and how much it has influenced her current pregnancy. Sierra Bender is thriving and inspiring women around the country. She knows a woman truthfully gives birth in many ways and vibrantly lives that truth. Sierra gave birth to her life's work eight years ago and has another expected due date in December—her first book. She can be contacted at www.sierra4bodyfit.com.

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