

How do you find hope again when the unexplainable has robbed you of your joy and eventually your hope?

I was overjoyed when I learned I was pregnant. At 23 I felt old enough and more than ready to welcome home my own little baby. This was 2009. I would go for my monthly check-ups at the Central Hospital where I also got some good advice. On 26 October I returned for my 6-month check-up. I felt tired and out of breath. When the nurses looked at me they remarked, "Lady, the way you are looking says the baby may be in danger." They were on point. The check-up revealed the baby's heartbeat was too low. That evening they operated on me but still could not determine the cause of the slow

was born and they celebrated with me. I was waved farewell with the advice to be watchful over my little one.

How lovely it was to be released from hospital and go home with my baby. I felt like a mom. I took care of Michael as best as I could and we were happy. Nursing him was a delight. Sore nipples and sleepless nights were nothing to complain about. Did I not wait long enough for

Like the previous time I went back to work as if nothing had happened. The strain must have been obvious, for my colleagues became worried and made an appointment for me with a psychologist. There was no connection between me and this guy who just listened and offered no direction. So I quit going. My colleagues didn't stop there because the next time a psychologist reached out to

me, who told me, "I heard your story. The same thing happened to me." This persuaded me to give psychologists another chance.

This time around the sessions were meaningful but more than anything, her story of having lost her baby and then becoming a mother



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LOSING MY BABIES

heartbeat. Two days later, on 28 October 2009 my baby died. I was 23 and took it as it came. I didn't follow up to insist on answers from the doctors. I conveniently blocked it out.

When I fell pregnant again in 2012 I paid more attention. This time around I had medical aid and saw a private doctor. The issue of the baby's heartbeat being slow was again a concern. I had to eat specific foods and went for weekly check-ups. After a while it became bi-weekly. At 6 months I found myself again where I did in 2009. The doctors drew blood and tested it for all sorts of things. Doctors recommended I see other doctors too and they were even assisted by a doctor from South Africa. They didn't quite figure out what the problem was but when I had gone full term my son

this miracle boy? I loved watching his little face, bathing him and creaming the perfect little body with the small toes and fingers. A real little human being. My own to love and adore.

Then came the fateful Saturday, 28 October when he would not stop crying. I took him to the hospital on the Sunday. The nurses were unhelpful. But the doctor on duty gave me more hope than I had ever had. He suggested the problem lay with the valves of the baby's heart. His recommendation sounded like a real plan unlike the pacemaker the other doctor suggested although she did admit the baby was still too young. So finally we had a concrete plan. But while we were still talking about this new hope, my baby passed away – exactly three years and a day after his sister.

encouraged me. After losing my baby the first time they said it wouldn't happen again. But it did and that was devastating – although I can only admit that in retrospect. Today I not only have hope because of Miriam's story, but I also realise those experiences are in the past and I am now in a different time and therefore I should hope again.

I am also comforted by the months of September, which is Infant Mortality Awareness month and October, which is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness month that includes sudden and unexpected infant deaths (SUIDs) caused by amongst others infections, genetic disorders and heart problems. These awareness raising months tell me I am not alone. ♀