

Most companies fail women who experience pregnancy loss

Written by: [Anna Burgess Yang](#)

My first two pregnancies were the definition of normal. I ate all the right food, read the parenting books, and brought home healthy babies.

During a routine prenatal appointment in the middle of my third pregnancy, I heard the words no parent should ever have to hear – words that haunt me to this day: “I’m sorry, but there is no heartbeat.” My baby girl had died.



Many people don’t understand the physical aspects of losing a pregnancy during the second trimester. I was admitted to the hospital, and labor was induced. Twenty-six hours later, my daughter was born. My body went through much of the same process as a normal delivery... but I didn’t get to bring my baby home.

The U.S. lags behind other countries when it comes to parental leave. Twelve weeks of **unpaid** leave provided by the Family Medical Leave Act is not something that everyone can afford. Women often return to work before they’ve had a chance to truly recover from childbirth — let alone bond with their babies.

When I got home from the hospital after delivering a stillborn baby, I realized that I fell into an in-between category when it came to time off from work. My company offered paid parental leave, but I had no baby. Three days of bereavement leave was hardly enough time for my body to recover from delivery and my heart to recover from the devastating loss.

I was lucky. My boss let me take additional (paid) time off. It was three weeks before I felt ready to face the world again – or, at least, get through the day without crying.

I later joined a support group for parents who had experienced miscarriages, stillbirths, and neonatal deaths. Through this group, I heard the stories of women who were forced to return to work just days after their loss. Some women admitted that the distraction was needed and they didn’t mind returning. Others found that their employers lacked compassion and were unwilling to accommodate additional time off.

In November of 2021, media company TheSkimm [challenged employers to go public](#) with the details of their policies with its #ShowUsYourLeave campaign. I was heartened by the companies that specifically listed time off for pregnancy loss. But it’s still far from the norm.

Around 10-15% of pregnancies end in a miscarriage and about 1% end in a stillbirth, [according to the CDC](#). Yet, despite being a common occurrence, pregnancy loss is a taboo subject. It’s hard for women to talk about their losses among friends and family — let alone in a work environment.

I’ve become very vocal about this topic over the years. I’ve talked to my current employer about pregnancy loss and what support looks like. I’ve shared my experience on LinkedIn, hoping to raise awareness. And I celebrate every time I see a company implement a leave policy for pregnancy loss. It’s a start — but we have a long way to go to remove the stigma around pregnancy loss.

Let’s start with changing the narrative. I didn’t just “lose a pregnancy.” My child died. My dream for her life also died that day in the doctor’s office.

Let’s continue by pushing more companies to have formal policies for pregnancy loss. Women deserve time to heal, both physically and emotionally.

About the Author



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