



# Parley

Parents And Relatives  
Listening and Empathising  
with You

## Yvonne's Story

I was 17 weeks pregnant when I got a phonecall from my doctor. He told me that one of my blood test results had come back abnormal. He said it was probably nothing to worry about, as I hadn't been sure of my dates, so the results probably meant that I was further on than we thought. He arranged for me to have a scan the next day. I wasn't duly worried, as the doctor had seemed quite calm.

The next day I set off for the hospital with my Fiancé, Peter, excited about seeing our baby for the first time. I thought all would be well and we'd be told that I was more pregnant than we thought! I sat in the waiting room surrounded by other women at different stages of their own pregnancies and still I felt calm and totally relaxed with the situation.

When it was our turn I lay on the bed and let the probe scan over my (little) bump. We saw hands and feet and a little tiny heart pumping away and I couldn't help but smile. Then the words "I'm sorry" hit me like a bullet. "Your baby has anencephaly". I didn't understand, what did that mean? Was our baby going to be disabled? Physically? Mentally? I must have looked totally confused as I was told what it meant. My baby, my precious unborn child, would not live. The brain had not developed properly which meant no chance of life. I screamed "NO" and Peter just looked lost. I don't remember what happened next, but I remember being in an office and being offered tea! How very British, as if tea was going to make it all better. I wasn't offered a picture of the scan and I was in such a state I didn't think to ask, but now how I wish I had. We went home to try and get our heads around what had just happened, our world had just totally collapsed.

I went to see my doctor the next day and he told us of our options. We were informed that "most people" terminate, but I just couldn't do that. Not only is it against my religion (I am Roman Catholic), but who was I to decide when my baby should die? No, I was determined to leave it all up to God. If He wanted to take my baby away from me, then He could do it in his own time. I wasn't going to give my baby to Him just because that's what "most people" do

My doctor and midwife were very supportive of our decision, as were our friends and family. It may not have been what they would have done, but no one ever tried to change our minds. Even if they had tried, nothing was going to stop me keeping my baby alive for as long as I could.

The next few months went by so fast and so full of mixed emotions. Some days I felt just like any other pregnant woman, but then I'd walk past a baby shop and it would hit me, my baby was going to die. I wouldn't be pushing my little one around the shops, I wouldn't be watching all those milestones like first tooth, first word, first steps. I cried a lot and Peter just seemed so angry at it all, he even punched a solid stone wall and left a dent (and had a very sore hand!).

My due date of 22<sup>nd</sup> August came and went, now I knew my time with my baby was slipping away. My consultant at the hospital didn't want to induce me. Not for any medical reasons, but because he felt that since I was the one keeping my little one alive, he didn't have any right to take that away from me. I thought that was the most amazing gift that anyone could have given me. It truly was up to God to take my baby.

My waters broke at 1:00am on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Peter quickly phoned our friend who was to take us to the hospital (we had had a car accident a few weeks before and our car was wrecked, but that's another story!). Fortunately he was still at the hotel where we all worked which was only five minutes away from our house.

We got to the hospital at 1:45 am and I was examined and found to be 2cm dilated. The baby wriggled and gave me one almighty kick, then was still. That was to be the last time I felt any movement.

Ceilidh Marie Holland was born at 2:44pm that afternoon, she did not cry. She had died during labour. The room was full of mixed emotions.

I was so happy to hold my baby after all this time, but I was sad at the same time, as I'd never see her grow. I had a third degree tear (the worst you can get!) so I had to have a general anaesthetic to get that all sorted out! I remember coming round and seeing my parents in the room and Peter holding our daughter. We were then taken up to the Ashfield Suite, which was like a home from home, especially for parents like us, or for those who had seriously ill babies. It had a normal double bed in it and a separate lounge area with a TV. The only give away that we were in a hospital was the bathroom (very clinical) and the doors. We stayed there until the Tuesday and visitors came and went, but for the most part it was just the three of us. It was a chance to say goodbye to our precious baby daughter in our own time. When it was time to leave I couldn't hand her over to the nurse and I could see that the situation was upsetting her aswell, but how could I hand my daughter over? In the end my dad took Ceilidh from me, gave her a kiss and handed her to the nurse. I left with empty arms and a broken heart.

Ceilidh was buried on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September beside a little baby called Jack, who had died in the December before. I felt that at least she had a friend beside her who she could play with. Little things like that made the funeral bearable.

Peter and I got married seven months later, I placed my bouquet on Ceilidh's grave. We also found out a few days before that I was pregnant again. My doctor had put me on 5mg of folic acid three months before, which reduced the chances of the same thing happening again. I had a very anxious nine months, no matter how much reassurance I was given. But Elijah Mae came screaming into the world at 2:19pm on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1996 perfectly healthy. Again I had mixed emotions, I shouldn't have been holding this baby, I should have had a toddler at my feet. But I know that Ceilidh is watching down on her family, which now includes Rheiya (born 25<sup>th</sup> January 1998), Lucas (born 20<sup>th</sup> October 2000) and Jaidyn (born 18<sup>th</sup> July 2006). I will never forget my precious angel.