

# Snake of Secrets

Category: Showing Vulnerability

written by Jan Jahner | September 12, 2019

I did not know to ask for a bereavement day to mourn a baby I hadn't told anyone existed. Since they did not know, how could I ask for comfort, acknowledgement of loss, special handling in the weeks following the miscarriage? Everyone at work felt mean and cruel and quick.

My husband hadn't been particularly happy about the baby; we were just digging out from the first two, so I was pretending to be put out. How do you grieve what you said you didn't want when every ounce of you was thrilled, and no one knew of your rock-skipping, wing-flapping happy?

I was taught you play it safe and say nothing till you've felt the first kick or started to show, beyond family and your best friend. The bleeding started while harvesting tomatoes, so it was August and the window shades were down to keep out the heat. I was to stay in bed and hope the bleeding stopped and care for the kids and have supper ready and wait. So much still, daytime darkness, odd to lay in bed at two in the afternoon.

The last place I wanted to be in the last hours of our life together was the ER, the last person to touch me the nurse they called "Rambo." I worked on the medical floor, just a part-time evening shift ward clerk then, a turtle drawn into her shell, unable to concentrate on translating the chicken scratches of orders into the Cardex and unable to tell anyone why.

I recall feeling defective, shamed by my body, shamed by the brain that couldn't concentrate, shamed that some version of my agony in the ER would slither it's way around the units in the silent snake of secrets. But worse, that somehow, "not wanting it" might be known.

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