

Empty Arms:

*From Miscarriage to
Motivation*



Dr. Whitney Gillespie

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Acknowledgments

The loss of a child is one of the greatest heartaches anyone can face in life. I want to thank everyone who played a role in me finding peace and healing from this tragic situation. Angel will forever be in my heart and constantly on my mind. Writing this book was hard but therapeutic. Thank you again!

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my sweet Angel! You will always be in my heart and on my mind even if you are not in my arms. Mommy misses you so much. Your departure has motivated me to appreciate and live life to the fullest. I love you! Rest easy until we meet again!

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May 21, 2015

At exactly 1:45pm I felt a sudden urge to go to the bathroom. While taking care of someone else's child at work, I was about to experience a great loss. I got up off the bean bag as I lay next to a sleeping child and proceeded to get coverage for me to go to the bathroom. Immediately as I shut the door blood was everywhere. Two days before my 27th birthday you would be taken from me.

As I stand there with your blood all around me, I am in shock. Fear takes over me. Disbelief becomes unreal. I try to clean your blood up and return to my normal. What is my "normal" at this point? A colleague rushes to my aid. After seeing the inevitable, she tries to console me. I immediately focus on my children in the classroom. I didn't want to move because that would mean I would have to face the facts. I would have to acknowledge that while taking care of someone else's child mine would leave me forever.

As I am escorted down the hall, I realize that you are gone. As I am sitting in

the principal's office waiting on an ambulance my blood pressure rises and I become light headed. I realized that was too much blood loss for you to still be here. I try to contact my parents to tell them to meet me at the hospital. I stutter because I realize you are gone. As the ambulance workers ask me questions I realize that I no longer will experience pregnancy and you apart of me. As I lay on the stretcher tears stream down my face and I realize I will never hold you. I realize I will never kiss your face. I realize that ten weeks and five days will be all we would share. I realize that while taking care of other children my first and only child would leave me so soon.

As they take me to ultrasound appointment and I see your lifeless body on the screen, the tears stream down my face. I realize it was over. I realized when the tech wouldn't say a word but looked sad you were gone. When the doctor came in to confirm the worst and I saw my family break down into tears I knew. I knew that Angel Gillespie has officially departed this life on May 21, 2015 1:45pm. I knew! Even writing this now I break down into tears. I know I will never kiss your face. I will never

smell you. I will never see if you have the same personality and facial features. I will never know what your body pressed against my heart will feel like. I knew! May 21st was supposed to be me preparing for a birthday as a mommy. At that moment I realized you were gone and officially released from my body.

More Bad News!

More Bad News! Can I catch a break? Nope! I would then be told that I lost a lot of blood from the miscarriage of Angel. I would be instructed to come to the hospital every week and take all sorts of medications. I would then go back and forth to the hospital eight times. I would be in excruciating pain only to find out that it was more serious than expected. Five fibroid tumors and one large cyst. I would lose you on May 21, 2015 and have laparoscopic myomectomy surgery on July 28, 2015 to remove the tumors and cyst. I would then get the doctor's permission to return to work on August 28, 2015. I

would return to work August 31, 2015 and kids come back in September 2015. I would have to return to the same classroom I lost you in. I would have to change children in the same bathroom your blood was shed. I would have to see the walls I held on to as I tried to grasp what had just happened.

I would have to look at the faces of those who sympathized with me. I would have to hear people whisper and wonder if I was capable of working with children after losing one of my own. I would then have to deal with people not inviting me to baby showers in fear I would damper the mood. It seemed like I went through more hell after losing Angel then I did while pregnant. I would then have to deal with people wanting me to move on and give up my baby items. They felt I would stay stuck in the moment if I held on to these items. It was at this moment that I would see just how insensitive people could be.

Everyone Has an Opinion

Everyone has an opinion! Little Ms. Perfect Whitney got knocked up and lost a baby. She is not a role model because she didn't do it the right way with a husband first. What can she say when she was having unprotected sex? I thought she said she had morals and values? What happened to her career plans? MMM where is the father? Who is the father? What will she do now?

People make me sick! I realized how much I didn't need certain people in my life after I lost Angel. People will say what they want. I never put myself on a pedestal and tried to be anything I wasn't. I lived by the motto "what you see is what you get". I always wanted to motivate people to be better. However, when I lost Angel I couldn't motivate myself to get out the bed.

From the time I found out I was pregnant I had people wanting me to abort my child. I was told that I could have more and I was ruining my life by keeping this

pregnancy. I was told that timing was everything. I was told the reason I lost my child was because God was punishing me for not being married. I could go on and on about the foolishness I heard.

*I had two jobs, a place, a car, a job and was ready to face whatever when I got pregnant. No, the circumstances were not ideal being that I would not have the support from the father. No, I was not in a relationship that would lead to marriage. No, I was not surrounded by **ALL** supportive family and friends. No, I wasn't entirely happy but I was determined to be the best mother. I was determined to do whatever I had to do to bring a healthy baby into the world. I attended my doctor appointments. I was in school to better myself once again. I was working out at a gym. I was doing what I thought I needed to do. However, for many opinionated people that just wasn't enough.*

I would later find out that family members got together to bash me and my unfortunate situation. I would later find out former friends would be so opinionated on what I should do with my life. I would realize that I would gain support from

unlikely allies. I would see how strong I truly was. I would also learn that my filter on my mouth would be forever broken.

I shared my story with family and friends on Facebook. Since everyone had an opinion and their version spreading, I wanted my side heard. More importantly, it was a cry for help. I wasn't suicidal. However, I had given up on life. I had an ounce of faith left and was ready to throw it all away. The one thing I wanted more than anything in life was to be a mother. I had achieved many goals but this was the ultimate. However, that dream was cut short just ten weeks and five days.

I want to personally thank those who reached out to me. Thank you to those who shared your stories. Thank you to those who sent me texts, calls, and messages. I was at my lowest and your love gave me hope. To hear stories of how you went through a miscarriage and now hold your child in your arms meant the world to me. In the midst of my sadness you gave me hope. In the midst of my frustration you gave me something to believe in. I want to thank you. If you had not reached out to me when you

*did I am a hundred percent certain I
would not be here today.*

*Despite the hateful opinions I had a lot
of amazing support. I refuse to dedicate this
chapter to all of the insensitive people.
Instead I will say thank you to everyone.
Whatever role you played made me stronger
and I'm grateful.*

Self-Talk: Past, Present & Future

*The past is that I was pregnant and
went through a miscarriage at ten weeks
and five days. The present is that I am using
the loss of Angel to motivate me to give
back to others and get involved with the
community. The present is that I have
published a book and workbook geared
toward helping marriages. I have heard
from many that it gave life to their
marriage. So, through Angel's loss life came
to others.*

Presently I was able to speak life to other women who lost their babies. I was able to revamp my non-profit organization to incorporate a Pregnant Teen Women & Child Learning Center to open in 2017. I presently am working on a home for children who age-out of foster care from 18 to 22 years-old.

Presently I have two published books, one published workbook and three new books to be released before the end of 2016. Presently, I am in a better head space. I am not truly over nor will I ever forget Angel. I hold Angel in my heart and use him or her as motivation to get up each morning with purpose.

Presently, I still break down and cry at the thought of Angel. May 21st is still a hard day for me. December 18th would have been Angel's birthday. No I am not completely over the loss nor do I want to be.

Presently, I still want to hold babies and speak life into them. I still want to smell a baby and see them smile. I get joy seeing my godson and other babies. I get a little jealous to see the relationship my father has with my niece. I wonder how it would be for

her to play with my child. I look at her and she has our strong features. I can't help but wonder if my child would look the same. I wonder!

I presently want another child. I presently am getting my mind, money and life right where it needs to be to have another child.

I presently want to be happy. I presently wonder if Angel is proud of me. I presently wonder if all of this is even worth it. I presently wonder what the future holds and if I will experience motherhood again one day.

I presently occupy my time being the best me I can be. I presently wake up each day planning to live life to the fullest and be happy. I presently thank God for the experience to even carry Angel as long as I did.

The future looks bright. I have goals and dreams I would like to accomplish. Angel was definitely not planned. With that being said, I am not so stuck to my goals and dreams that I miss out on whatever life may

bring. The future looks bright and I am ready for whatever comes my way.

Lesson & Blessing in Disguise

I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. When Angel departed this life I wasn't so sure. I really felt like maybe I was being punished. I didn't know who to blame or what to say.

Now that I have had time to process it, I have learned a few things. First, I have learned that Angel was a lesson sent to me. With Angel's arrival I immediately jumped into prep mode. I took on a second job and started really taking life seriously. I realized when I lost Angel that I had to have the same diligence. I had to still take life seriously. I had to still care about what I ate and how I lived my life. I had to still treat each day as a valuable one.

Angel was definitely a lesson because I learned that people change. I vowed that I

would be financially independent and so good on my own that if people walked away it wouldn't phase me. I learned to prepare for the unexpected. I learned that there weren't that many resources out there for pregnant women who made a certain amount. I learned that I had to really search and rely on myself because the system you paid into was flawed. I lived in a nice neighborhood, drove a SUV and made decent living only to be told I didn't qualify for any services.

I was like wow! So I pay taxes and all this money for someone else to benefit and me be denied. Side note: social services and services in general should be for everyone. Working people who pay for these services should be top on the list then comes those who depend on my check to survive.

It was weird having to figure out how much maternity leave I would need. I had to learn how much it would cost for a child. I had to research daycares because not working was definitely not an option. I wanted to be hands on and looked into many options to give my child the best. Angel was definitely a lesson.

Angel was definitely a blessing. Around 4 weeks I found out I was pregnant.

Around 9 weeks I learned about the first fibroid tumor. At ten weeks and five days Angel passed away. Around that time, I discovered about the total five fibroid tumors and large cyst. I have heard from multiple sources that the fibroids and cyst caused Angel's death. I have also heard that Angel's life and the hormones caused the fibroids to grow. I have decided to look at it as a blessing. Angel helped me discover that I had those fibroids and cyst.

I was able to have the surgery done and I am alive today because of it. With Angel's existence I saw who my true family and friends were. I saw just how people truly viewed me and secret comments. I thank Angel for coming into my life because I am who I am today. No, the journey hasn't been easy. Yes, I still have my moments where I cry. However, Angel was truly a blessing and a lesson.

Acknowledge The Pain

Acknowledge The Pain! Denial was my best friend. I had to eventually acknowledge the pain. Everyone wanted me to move on and my job required me to bounce back by a certain date.

I went from one event to another without a chance to break down and cry. I felt that if I cried I would never stop. I felt that I didn't deserve to cry and maybe what others were saying about the "right way" was true. Maybe if I was married God would have let my baby lived. Maybe if...

I had my mind going in circles. One thing about me is that I know I can be my worst critic. I know that I overanalyze too much. Losing Angel did not help.

To acknowledge the pain was to admit the obvious. I was 27 years-old

with empty womb and empty arms. I was another woman who experienced a miscarriage. I watched as women popped kids out like skittles and I sat alone with no child. I watched as many parents showed up to drop off and pick up their children at my job while I stood there childless.

To acknowledge the pain was to acknowledge the anger. I was mad that I lost my child while taking care of someone else's child. I was mad that the doctor decided to play God and not tell me that I had those tumors and cyst. I was mad that the hospital sent me home with a dead child in my womb talking about the baby can pass on its own. I was mad that I had to go off for the hospital to actually perform the D & C to remove my dead child. I was mad that they didn't tell me that I lost too much blood during the D & C until after I tried to schedule the laparoscopic surgery.

I was mad that I had a \$80,000 bill for a baby I would never hold. Like seriously since when do they charge

you separate for surgery and anesthesia? So you are going to cut me open without drugs? So you are really going to charge me for the extra doctors in the room that I didn't ask for? You really are going to charge me a la carte?

So you seriously are going to charge me for extra hospital stay when you told me you couldn't let me go home? You told me that you needed to bring on a specialist familiar with my situation. So why am I being charged for what you decided?

I was mad at the fact that everyone was popping out babies around the time Angel would have been born. I would turn on the TV and even celebrities were having babies. I was mad. I was pissed. I was angry. I was beyond words.

To acknowledge the pain was to acknowledge that I was not going to ever hold or see my child. I was never going to hear Angel call me "Mommy" or run towards me. To acknowledge the pain meant I had to face the facts

of reality. I just wasn't ready but I am now.

Returning Back to "Normal"

How do you return back to "normal"? What is considered "normal"? I had gone into shock and just did what was expected of me. I went to work and attended community functions. I felt like I was physically there but gone mentally.

It wasn't until I was sitting in church around the time Angel would be born and saw a mother with a baby who had to be days old. This was a beautiful chocolate baby girl with a head full of hair. The mother held her in her arms a row in front of me. I immediately got up and ran to the bathroom.

I broke down and couldn't breathe. Obviously my plan to return to "normal" didn't work. I realized that at that point I was just existing. I had no one to really talk to. I felt like people got tired of hearing me talk about Angel and seeing me look sad.

I would put on my game face in public but break down when I was alone. My pillow would be soaked with tears that I would have to flip it over just to sleep on it.

When they tell you to return back to "normal" after a loss it is easier said than done. It is easy to tell someone to just forget about it and move on with their normal routine. However, when you experience pain that seems like an impossible request.

I felt so alone but if you saw me in the streets you would never know it. I got up, dressed and showed up. I only would break down when something caused a trigger and thought of the pain.

When someone experiences lost the last thing they need is you dismissing their feelings. They don't need a therapist. They don't need you to tell them how to move forward. They don't need a life coach.

What I needed was someone to wrap their arms around me. I needed someone to let me cry on their shoulder. I needed someone to let me vent. I needed someone to not judge me and pry for extra details. I needed someone to hear me and not run with the information I shared in confidence. I needed a lot back then but felt so alone.

What was so crazy was me being speechless. For someone with a degree in communication and counseling you would think words would come to me. I could not communicate what I needed let alone the pain I felt. Almost a year and half later I am just finding my voice.

When I lost Angel the last thing I wanted to do was return to the "normal". My baby existed and

pregnancy was real. Although my womb was empty I was and would always be a mother. Returning to the "normal" was not an option because it meant I would have to move on. Moving on to me felt like I was ignoring and forgetting Angel. When someone experiences a loss it is important that people filter what they say.

Your heart could be in the right place but tone and delivery may cause severe damage. Returning to the "normal" for someone who has experienced a miscarriage is easier said than done.

Baby Fever

Baby Fever is so real. I really want another baby. I get excited when I see a pregnant woman or a baby. I love to hear a baby laugh. I love to see a baby smile. I love to see baby clothes. I love to watch Baby Story television

*show. I love to watch babies interact.
I love everything about babies.*

*I even updated my nonprofit to
add more baby features. I love babies! I
have crazy baby fever.*

*However, with having baby
fever I have gained better insight. I
realized that Angel was not planned
so I was just doing what I needed to
survive. I was getting everything done
at the last minute to prepare for his or
her arrival. I hadn't really thought
about a baby that soon.*

*I have realized that this time
around I want to be prepared. I saw
friends who had babies go through a
lot. I saw how much money they spent
and time they took off from work. I
realized that a child was more of an
investment that I expected.*

*This time around I am all in. I
am preparing myself mentally,
financially, emotionally and
spiritually to have another baby. The
baby fever is real but this time
timing is everything. I want so bad to*

experience motherhood again. However, this time the goal is to be more prepared. This time around my health comes first. This time around my goal is to take it easy and enjoy life to the fullest. Baby fever is real but timing is everything.

Finding the Motivation

Finding the motivation is no easy task. With Angel's passing you eventually have to move on. I had to find the motivation to get up and to be around people. I really didn't want to return to work. I didn't want to go into the bathroom where I lost Angel. I didn't want to see the classroom or even bean bag area. I felt such a huge loss.

When I lost Angel it was close to the end of the year. I had all summer to think about everything. I was in and out of the hospital. I found the

motivation to move forward by looking at the bigger picture. I had no answers as to why things happened the way they did. Instead of asking a million questions I realized moving forward was the only answer.

I found the motivation through reading the cards, text messages and hearing voicemail messages that everyone left. I found the motivation when I continued to wake up each morning. I found the motivation when I went to work and saw the faces of my babies.

I had to use every small victory as a motivation to move forward. Motivation came from the babies, from the inspirational words of others, nonprofit organization's activities, unlikely allies and lots of self-talk.

Finding motivation in the face of adversity was my saving grace. Taking my mind off of what was to focus on what could be was therapeutic.

Share Your Story

When life hits you have to share your story. Others find peace when you share your story. They get to see that they were not alone in their pain. When you see someone who went through and survived you get a peace.

You feel a sense of calmness. Everything looks brighter when you know someone else survived what you are going through.

When I loss Angel and posted my sadness on Facebook the support was real. Others shared their story with me and I found peace. People came out and told me to stay strong. To hear that others suffered a loss but were able to conceive gave me hope. I was able to move forward when I heard others speak.

Sharing your story gives hopes to others. Sharing your story helps other find motivation to move forward. Sharing your story is therapeutic.

This book gives the emotions and background details on the miscarriage of Angel Gillespie. Angel was the first and only child, at the time, of Dr. Whitney Gillespie. Angel's passing was the motivation for Dr. Gillespie writing books and latest projects.



Dr. Whitney Gillespie has earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a PreNursing concentration, Bachelor of Marriage Therapy, Master of Youth Ministry, Doctor of Communication and Counseling, Career Studies Certificate in PreNursing. She has her own 501c3 called WNG Dream Again Project which is geared towards baby prep and family life services in the Richmond VA and surrounding areas. She is a youth advocate and special education preschool educator for Richmond Public Schools.

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 sometimes love is for a *moment*
sometimes love is for a *lifetime*
sometimes a

