



**By Samala Kriedemann**  
Social Worker  
Pretoria, Gauteng  
samala@mama-nurture.co.za

# SUPPORTING IN PREGNANCY BABY LOSS

**M**y work in bereavement came as a surprise to me. I feel that bereavement found me. I've always had a heart for people and chose to study to be a social worker so I could support, guide, and encourage others on their life journey.

After practicing as a social worker for a number of years, I became a mother to four beautiful children. It was through the birth of my last child that my path began taking an unexpected but beautiful turn. I chose to do my last birth very differently to my previous three hospital births. I decided on a midwife led birth and water birth with no pain medication. It was through this birth experience I discovered how empowering birth could be when well supported, and so I chose to then train as a birth

doula and support mothers during this beautiful time.

Shortly after my training, one of my very first clients had a stillbirth at 39 weeks! I was shocked and devastated and knew what I was feeling couldn't even come close to what this mommy was feeling. Due to my social work background, I knew immediately that this mommy was going to need support in the days, weeks, months and even years that lay ahead. I was shocked to find how little support there was available for couples that face pregnancy loss, stillbirth, termination for medical reasons and infancy death.

My response to this lack of support was to start a support group for mothers that had experienced these kinds of devastating losses. It was during these group sessions I heard these brave women's birth

stories. So much trauma was being added to their births as nursing staff followed outdated protocols and/or due to their own lack of training in trauma and baby loss, did what they thought was right for the mother and couple. In fact they left these mothers more traumatised and with many regrets. These mothers shared how they were denied seeing their babies, denied holding them, saying goodbye or related how their babies were treated as medical waste rather than acknowledged as the baby they'd longed for and had now lost. Doctors rushed these mothers who had just heard that their baby's heart had stopped beating or had received a fatal or life limiting diagnosis for their baby, into induced labours or terminations before the couple had time to process what was even happening. Many shared how after these births

