

## Book Reviews

**The Sound of Silence: Journeys Through Miscarriage**, edited by Irma Gold. (2011). Capalaba, Queensland: Mostly for Mothers, a division of Wombat Books, 165 pages, ISBN 978-921632-12-9.

No one enters a pregnancy thinking they will not have a baby at the end of nine months. But it is estimated that approximately 30% of families experience a loss, and regardless of the gestation of the unborn baby, such a loss is a painful experience for parents. This book is a well written account of mothers who experience the loss of a baby in the early weeks of pregnancy; commonly called a “miscarriage” by society. What these beautiful stories convey is not a miscarriage but loving stories of babies that are a deep part of these mothers being yet seldom acknowledged by the rest of the world.

The stories author Irma Gold has collected here accurately reflect what this reviewer hears in my work facilitating loss groups. The lack of understanding from family and friends (“You were only nine weeks pregnant!”), the parents who need to hide from others their feelings of grief and longing for this baby, the wish to know if it was a boy or girl, and the struggle to find someone to talk to about the baby they still hold in their hearts are all familiar and important themes. The vivid descriptions of the days and hours of the pregnancy coming up to the miscarriage speak to the embodied memories the mothers carry for years, and also in one story, a sibling’s account who was alive at the time of her mother’s loss.

There are many pearls within this book; the intuitive knowing and connection with their tiny unborn baby that the pregnancy would not stay, the power of their motherhood to search out answers as to why they were miscarrying, finding the right doctor, the unfairness and pain of seeing healthy babies everywhere, and the innocent question from others “Do you have children?” Also addressed are the reactions of fathers, some unable to share their grief and the truth that miscarriage does not just happen to the mother.

Included within the stories are the fears that surface in the pregnancy that follows, another area not understood by many,

including the professional communities that are supposed to support pregnant women. In their stories, the mothers share their mistrust of their bodies to carry a baby safely to term, the sadness that this is not the deceased baby, and their confusion about risking to love a new baby. One story goes as far as addressing a prenatal and perinatal theme that discusses the impact of these feelings on the personality of the child that followed.

Gold's book further validates the connection of the unborn child and mother in the earliest weeks of gestation and speaks to the ongoing relationship that follows as women describe the day their child would have been born. This book is recommended for anyone who has experienced a miscarriage, but more importantly, for anyone working with childbearing families and others in society who have not experienced a miscarriage. No one can read this book and not gain a deeper understanding the impact an early pregnancy loss can have. It is seldom "just a miscarriage."

Moving into motherhood is a profound transformation for a woman. "The Sound of Silence" takes the reader through what can often be the shadow parts of this journey in a deeply moving and honest way. We all can benefit from the wisdom and experience of the stories captured and shared here. This book is a very good addition to the library of anyone drawn to the field of prenatal and perinatal psychology.

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**Safe in the Arms of Love: Deepening the Essential Bond with Your Baby** by Lisa Rafel, Gary Malkin, & David Surrenda, PhD. (2011). Stockbridge, MA: Wise Parenting Press. 78 pp & CD. ISBN: 978-0-615-35994-6

This book and compact disc set was created by three authors and composers well known in the world of birth psychology. Songstress, Lisa Rafel is the founder of Resonant Sounds, LLC, which supports the connection between new parents and babies through intentional music. Emmy award winning composer, producer, and performer, Gary Malkin, is dedicated to creating musical resources and events that

inspire the heart and encourages societal and individual healing. David Surrenda, PhD, is a clinical psychologist with a vast background that includes holistic health education at the college level, working with hospitals and national health systems, and now as CEO of the renowned yoga and holistic learning retreat, Kripalu. Rafel and Malkin worked together to create a cd of music especially to assist parents and babies in the neonatal intensive care unit with bonding. The pair created songs with lyrics that bring the messages of *welcoming, safety, rest, healing, timelessness, peace, quiet, family, ancient wisdom, heart energy, connection, light, spirit, preciousness, and strength*. The music was intentionally composed with specific tones, rhythms, beats, and vocals that sound research has shown to promote healing, stress reduction, nervous system regulation, and growth. When one listens to this music, even one time around, the melodies and lyrics linger for hours afterwards. They seem to magically whisper through one's very membranes!

The book is primarily a companion to the cd. The cd can stand alone, but its power is reinforced greatly by the book which is a highly accessible and parent friendly mix of personal anecdotes by the author's own parenting experiences and helpful information based on research in birth psychology and music healing realms. Both Malkin and Rafel were parents of NICU babies. These authors bring true heartfelt experiential wisdom to this valuable resource for families and hospital staff. Surrenda is featured throughout the book in specialized areas noted as "Dr. David says:" bringing in key points for parents to note such as the relationship/ communication connection, the prenatal impact of music, steps to creating heartfelt connection, and an explanation of "positive intention music." The layout of the book is beautifully orchestrated highlighting Surrenda's contributions amidst short chapters that are easy for new parents to read and re-read as needed. Wonderful photographs and graphics are sprinkled throughout the book illustrating the points with clarity and a blessed simplicity that weary worn parents can look to as reminders of what the words in the book convey.

The book has a lovely forward from Dr. Christine Northrup that explains the process of bonding and how this imprints a child's sense of safety in the world. There is also a message from Marshall and Phyllis Klaus, the champions of bonding research and kangaroo care. They contribute further comments about bonding and the need for newborns to have help with nervous system regulation. Chapters cover the sense of fetal and newborn listening, bonding, music as medicine for the heart, bonding exercises, parent testimonial stories, themes for

readers to remember, and sections from each author about their own parenting journeys. The lyrics are printed in the book to assist parents in anchoring their message and helping them to begin to sing to their babies.

The merits of this cd/book set and contributions to the field of pre and perinatal psychology are many. Co-creator, Rafel, reported at a recent conference on Spirituality and Motherhood in April, 2012, New York City, that the work is being researched in several studies. The effects of the music are being studied in hospital NICU settings. Parents and babies are hearing the music and being monitored on changes in the vitals of the baby and the nervous system as they listen to the music. Additionally, a study is being done in which just parents are listening to the music via headphones, while with their baby. This study will show how the parent's nervous systems change, and then look at how this effects the baby. The work is a solid example of how music is medicine and will add greatly to the fields of sound healing and music therapy.

The field of pre and perinatal psychology and health benefits from this work as it can be used to not only educate and support parents and babies, but also NICU hospital staff. Nurses and doctors who are introduced to the music will benefit from its healing qualities and also see its overall effects on the little ones they are caring for. Imagine a NICU surgery procedure with this music played in the background during the event. The power of this is that all humans present can move into a level of heart resonance and nervous system regulation to help support the baby. Strong medicine indeed! We can only hope that the results of the research studies being done allow for this music and book to be part of all mother/baby friendly hospitals reaching out to families and medical personnel with its subtle yet profound gifts that reach all levels of the brain, nervous system, and heart.

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