

# Reproductive Loss Can Cause Grief

By Elaine Allen-Emrich Staff Writer Feb 23, 2019

NORTH PORT — When treating someone for addiction or helping them out of homelessness, many don't think to ask questions like has the person experienced any type of reproductive loss in their past.

While it would seem there's no correlation, California author Michaelene Fredenburg says the impact of reproductive loss can be deep rooted for some and greatly impact life choices.

Speaking at the recent local Homeless2Home meeting, Fredenburg said everyone in the room was probably close to someone who experienced reproductive loss. The room was full.

“About 1 million women suffer a miscarriage every year and another 1 million have an abortion,” she said. “One in 80 woman have a stillbirth, and one in six couples suffer from infertility issues.”

Because experiences with reproductive loss is unique to each person, no one copes or heals in the same way or specific time frame.

“Some who experienced this type of loss can feel disenfranchised,” Fredenburg said. “Because culturally we don't talk about grief much after a miscarriage, stillbirth or abortion, a person feels they aren't given permission to grieve. It's not the same as losing an older child.”

In California, Fredenburg, teaches reproductive loss sensitivity/training for law enforcement and other social services agencies that do intake and counseling for struggling addicts and others in need. She works with human trafficking victims' groups for women who were forced to have multiple reproductive losses. Fredenburg also does one-hour webinars on unresolved loss and grieving.

“For a long time, the screeners and intake specialists didn’t want to talk about reproductive loss with a client because they thought it would cause more pain, so they do nothing at all,” she said. “But sometimes doing nothing further hurts the person. Over 50 percent of women who have a miscarriage feel guilty because they think they contributed to the death of the child. A quarter of the women feel ashamed and don’t want to speak about it.”

Fredenburg says in general women take about two years to deal with reproductive losses. Then the male in the relationship begins to feel the reality of the lost.

“Sometimes the male will take on the role of comforting the woman after the loss,” she said. “Then as the woman begins to heal and feel better, the male realizes he’s not needed in the same way to comfort her. The male can then feel hopeless or helpless. They want a list of things to do from their partner to keep them busy. Because, again people do not give permission to themselves to grieve. No one is there to tell them that it’s very normal to feel this way after a loss and, they are not alone.”

Fredenburg met a woman who had a couple reproductive losses. Then she had children. However, they were taken away by the state. The woman tried to get sober and then had another baby. Ultimately Fredenburg adopted that child. The woman had another child which was removed by the state.

“We were going to adopt the sibling, but we knew there are so many couples wanting to adopt an infant that we didn’t,” she said. “Imagine the impact of the loss this mother experienced over her lifetime. It’s so complicated.”

Fredenburg some suffering from reproductive loss have avoid issues, don’t cope well, and say there’s a lack of support to address the issue.

“There are some who view the loss as seeing their hopes and dreams of that child gone,” she said. “Some feel they need to hold on to that guilt as a way to honor that person because they don’t know of any other way to cope.”

Risk factors of not dealing with grief include troubled relationships, isolation and detachment from others. However, Fredenburg said those who understand can offer resources for the person to get help.

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