

Hello and thank you for considering attending a Virtual Empty Cradle Group, We have many, and dates are always kept current on our website under EVENTS at emptycradle.org. We have our meetings via Zoom and they are for loss parents only and the meeting ID and times are on our website, but you email support@emptycradle.org for the password.

For people thinking about possibly attending a Virtual group with a train of preventive thoughts racing in your mind here are some common questions with answers:

How do I know what group is for me? Our first group of each month meets on the first Wednesday and is for anyone who has experienced a pregnancy loss at any time during pregnancy or after pregnancy (such as infant loss). There are 3 others listed on our website and those are more specific. One is for loss prior to 20 weeks gestation, and another is for loss after 20 weeks and infant death. We have a group that is focused on getting or being pregnant after a loss (The Road Ahead), and you should come to that once you have experienced another one of our groups.

Do I need to register? No, but you will need to request the password by contacting support@emptycradle.org.

What would I say? Most share their story or a version depending on where they are in their emotions of the day. When you come to a group repeatedly, you will find that your story evolves along with your feelings, as you learn from hearing others' the subtle art of getting through it. You pick up pieces that relate to your experience and the experiences of emotion that come with pregnancy losses, and in turn, you leave little breadcrumbs for others just by showing up and listening or sharing something in a way that speaks to someone.

What will people think of me? We all have a bit of ego that was not shredded by our loss entirely, and we generally care about this even if we are unaware. Virtual Group is a zero-judgment zone; everyone shows up looking for common ground-generally, dazed and confused from their loss. It is a SAD space where emotions are welcome, and you do not have to apologize for crying or being angry. Your group leaders think YAY, someone got out of their way and decided to take the great leap of attending. All of our leaders were group attendees at one point in time. The moon landing was less impressive than a person who takes a step into the group to make sense of their new world. We spend so much time comparing ourselves to others and their lives and being concerned with all THAT. Group is just you in a sea of people ever so like you trying to figure out how to manage all of this.

What if someone says something I don't like or did not expect to hear? Leaders run the group and redirect or correct something that is not aligned with our rules. You could hear a story that makes you internally feel that yours was worse or not as worse and that is just a part of being human. We do not judge each other, we share and listen

and measure against our own experience. Part of the reason that a person does not come to group right away is because they are afraid of hearing other people's stories because they could remind them of or reactivate pain that they have currently under "control". Staying away from the group also does not let you benefit from sharing your story and talking about your baby. Those things really help. Often, a person will not come as they think that group is a space where they are there to help others and thinking about having to try and uplift someone else while you are flat on the ground is unreasonable. Often you yourself are someone who is either a therapist, or a teacher or in some way surrounded by or caring for other people's children and you go into help mode as it's part of your makeup. Here, you can just listen. And by listening you honor that person and their path, nothing else is needed. Perhaps when it is your time to share you will be able to say how much the words someone else said are what you are feeling.

You could hear a story different from yours, with more layers and events that seem frightening, and that path may not have been the same, but in group you are all without a baby you wanted (even if they were a surprise and it took you time to be happy about it). Pregnancy loss can be physically bloody, traumatic, and messy. People share as much as they think is needed; these events are part of their story and experience. In the group, there is a lot of what we would call in the outer world TMI, but in a group, everyone shares their horror story respectfully.

You may not want to hear more stories about things that did not happen to you but now that you heard it, what if that happened next time? We remind you that perhaps it won't. There is a softness in the group where you can hear someone's voice (unlike Facebook, where you cannot often interpret emotional nuances).

What is not welcome? You may have other children at home, and you are allowed to share that you do have a living child or children as part of your story. However, if you have other living children, we expect that during the group, from the moment you arrive to the end, your children will not be seen on camera (even on blur) or heard when your microphone is on.

How should I look? Dress? Do I need to put on makeup? ONLY IF YOU WANT TO. Clothes, yes, makeup optional. BYOT (bring your tissues) and a little notebook if you like.

What if I cry buckets and am a hot mess? Bring it. GROUP is the safest place on earth for that typical scene. Come as you are, weeping. No one cares, and you had a pregnancy loss; that is what tears are for. You do not need to apologize to the group if you lose it. Our in-person meetings are barely dry-eyed ever. When I attended a group, I would cry in the parking lot and walk in the door weeping, feeling like a complete fool. Some lovely human farther away from their loss would greet me with a pile of fresh tissues and smile softly.

What if someone says that they are pregnant? We have a specific subsequent pregnancy group that is for people who are pregnant after a loss, or are contemplating trying again and are open to a new pregnancy. We try at the beginning of the 3 virtual loss groups to remind people that there is a group for announcing and gives them a moment to leave the meeting.

Is it private? Yes, we ask that what you hear stays within the group.

Am I being recorded? No, never

What if I have questions before the meeting?

Email support@emptycradle.org.

What are the "rules"?" No politics, no doctor's or hospital names, and no religious influencing or promoting or projecting your view onto others. We are a neutral space for the hot topics that divide people. Everyone's situation is different. Please refrain from seeking or giving medical, legal, or religious advice.

Prepared by

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