

M a t e r n l ©

I would like to introduce you to MATERNL.

MATERNL is an original and unique web-based program (<http://maternl.org>) intended for *all* in need of comfort, healing and solace, specifically for parents and families who have experienced *infertility, miscarriages, stillbirths and neonatal deaths*

MATERNL arises from my work with families who experienced the tragic loss of a pregnancy or newborn is founded on a model of care I have practiced throughout my career; the use of language to help the grieving and healing process: words we write, words we read, and words we say and hear to serve as an invaluable source of solace and hope. I believe our words are songs from our hearts: "songs of hope and songs for hope." I have written and continue to write words and thoughts in letters of condolence when my patients have experienced a pregnancy, newborn or infant loss and include a personalized, original poem which I either send to them and / or read at their memorial services / funerals. I have many years of experience doing this and the responses from my patients have been universally positive and "healing". This has enabled me to foster deep and lasting relationships with them. I have been fortunate to have presented this work at local, national, and international meetings and symposiums and it is currently a core element in my lecture series to third-year medical students at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and prior, to the students and house staff at the Yale School of Medicine.

The online program offers the opportunity:

- for families who have experienced these tragic losses to individually download a personalized poem dedicated to their child or their friends' or family member's child.
- for Physicians, Nurse-midwives, Nurse Practitioners and / or other Health Professionals to download an appropriate poem and to send to their patients as a personal, empathetic thought when their patients endure these losses. I believe the impact of words and thoughts at these difficult times of loss are powerful and of universal need.

As an example, sometime ago I received a note from a father who just had lost his prematurely born daughter to the condition of twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. One twin died in utero and the remaining twin was born at 25 weeks, gravely ill and on life support systems in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit. After a brave but futile struggle, she, too, died. Her father contacted me from England, asking if I could suggest some words to read at the memorial service for his children. I sent a few lines to him and his bereaved wife. In their reply I learned that they placed these words upon the headstone of their twins' grave:

"Let us not succumb to this portent,
The solstice of our darkest hour.
For it is but a finite point
Upon an infinite journey
Which began with all creation and

Upon whose path walk
The souls of our children;
Pure as the silence of the virgin winter,
Alive with winds of indomitable hope"

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The program and further information about the poetry and my work can be found at the website: <http://maternl.org> and in my book, *Parenthood Lost: Healing the Pain after Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Death*.

I have written scores of poems but only include at this time first-lines of five poems each written for a particular but universally common reason for loss. More will be added going forward. Each poem addresses the universality of loss and the promise of hope. When a poem is selected, it is dedicated to and personalized with the child or parent's name and signed by me as the author. It will be suitable for framing or to place in a "memory box" that many families have after their loss. It is available immediately in PDF format and can be printed or sent electronically. It is my hope that by sharing these poems at this very difficult time along with a brief personal note, a healing process can begin even when there is no "cure". This program is available pro bono. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about the program.

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