

Six Core Principles of Prenatal Twin Loss

There are currently six principles which longstanding activists and experts in this field agree upon, based on experience and research. Independent experts working in collegial association with the Womb Twin community and movement share these as an evolving consensus. These insights can be life changing.

The six Core Principles* are:

1. With the advent of ultrasound in the 1970s and its widespread use in the 1980s and 90s in many countries, we now know that many human pregnancies begin with a twinned conception (two or more embryos). Such pregnancies are higher risk and often result in a single baby being born.
2. This loss of one or more co-twins** in utero (or at the time of birth) can have major aftereffects on the surviving infant/s. 'Vanishing Twin' refers to a fetus that died. However, a 'Womb Twin' survives, and the impact of this very early loss must be understood and healed. Otherwise, these effects tend to persist, affecting relationships, wellbeing, psychophysiology, and sense of place in the world.
3. It is estimated that between one-in-ten and one-in-four human pregnancies ends up as a Womb Twin – a baby who lost one or more co-twins in utero. This estimated world population, then, may be of more than one billion human beings whose deepest experiences and wounds remain largely unseen.
4. The loss of a co-twin in utero leaves a deep imprint on the surviving co-twin/s. Thankfully, we can now draw on psychological, neuroscientific and physiological research, tools and perspectives to support understanding and healing in a gentle, sensitive, compassionate and illuminating way.
5. There are various kinds of healing journey that a womb twin might take at different times in their life. No two journeys are identical, and each person's path changes over time. One path doesn't fit us all. At times, physical, somatic and physiological components of prenatal loss (and its link to emotion and state-of-mind) can open up. At other times, the psychological components of prenatal loss are key. You can access support groups, psychoeducation, counselling, and help with healthy mourning.
6. Supporting yourself to heal from a prenatal loss or trauma is always a gradual process. Your journey is your own and the Womb Twin community recognises and honors this diversity and uniqueness. On their journey, an adult womb twin needs recognition, safe and supportive spaces, and guidance at specific stages on their path, especially at the very beginning of the process. That is why our learning and research actively continue - so that vast swathes of unseen loss and grief can become the fruits of wholeness and hope, and joy can be reclaimed from the pain of unrecognised loss and isolation.

* A comment on Womb Twin related terminology:

The term 'Womb Twin' was coined for any person who lost one or more of their co-twins in the womb. Most womb twins were *born* in a *singleton birth* – seemingly a single baby – but *conceived* as a *co-twin*. Althea Hayton coined the term to acknowledge and validate the experiences and find a healing path.

Various terms are used in this area of prenatal science ('death before birth'): Lone Twin or Lone Twin Survivor, Alone-Born Twin (in Europe), Sole Survivor, Early Twin Loss, and Half Twin. Terms such as Vanishing Twin (VT), Miscarriage, Abortion, Still Birth, ART/IVF, and others are also relevant.

** The term 'twin' is understood to apply to twinning in pairs and in sets of twins ('multiples').