

## Is Carrying to Term Psychologically Safe for Me?

Again, yes. Grief is a natural response experienced by all parents who have lost a baby due to a medical condition. However, **studies show that mothers who chose to carry their baby to term recover to baseline mental health more quickly than those who aborted due to fetal anomaly.**

(<http://www.perinatalhospice.org/faqs.html>)

Terminating the pregnancy does not shorten the grieving process or allow you to “put it behind you”; on the contrary, abortion is a complicating factor in healing.

“Women who terminated [following prenatal diagnosis of a lethal fetal anomaly] reported significantly more despair, avoidance, and depression than women who continued the pregnancy. **There appears to be a psychological benefit to women to continue the pregnancy following a lethal fetal diagnosis.**” (2)

## What Do I Do Next?

Slow down and make sure you have all the information you need regarding your options. Seek out services that will support you in carrying to term and in parenting your baby to the best of your ability.

For more information on perinatal hospice and a nationwide list of perinatal hospice providers, visit [www.perinatalhospice.org](http://www.perinatalhospice.org). For parent stories and immediate peer support, visit [www.benotafraid.net](http://www.benotafraid.net).

## Lived Stories of Families Who Experienced Prenatal Diagnosis:



<http://www.benotafraid.net/Parent-Stories>



## References:

- (1) Horning, Melissa L., and Braun, Carie A., PhD, RN. *The Lived Experience of Families Who Are Told Their Child Will Die at or Shortly after Birth*. The University of Arizona College of Nursing. Web. 23 Apr. 2016. College of St. Benedict: St. Joseph, Minnesota. <http://www.juns.nursing.arizona.edu/articles/Fall%202006/horning.htm>
- (2) PerinatalHospice.org: <http://www.perinatalhospice.org/>
- (3) Winsor, Tracy L., and Buck, Sandra K. (2014). *Be Not Afraid Pastoral Care Manual*, p. 15. [www.benotafraid.net](http://www.benotafraid.net)
- (4) Calhoun, B.C., Napolitano, P., Terry M., Bussey C., Hoeldtke N.J. *Perinatal hospice. Comprehensive care for the family of the fetus with a lethal condition*. J Reprod. Med. 2003 May;48(5):343-8. PubMed PMID: 12815907.

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## If You Have a Prenatal Diagnosis...



## Abortion Isn't Your Only Option

## Facing a Prenatal Diagnosis: You Are Not Alone

Expectant parents have many hopes and dreams for their baby, and the news of a poor prenatal diagnosis can come as a shock. Parents often feel as though their entire world has been turned upside down, and suddenly the joy of pregnancy is affected by grief and worry. They may even have been urged by doctors, friends, or family to terminate the pregnancy quickly and “try again.”

If this sounds like you, know that you are not alone. Other parents have walked this path before you, and compassionate, practical support for parents who carry to term is available. **Your baby has not changed as a result of this diagnosis;** you just have more information about his or her needs. (1) Continuing this pregnancy and carrying to term will provide you with the opportunity to honor the life of your child, and to cherish whatever time you will have together.

## What Do Other Parents Do?

Most parents experiencing a prenatal diagnosis want a better option than abortion, and 80% choose to carry to term when offered comprehensive support. (2) In addition, after carrying to term and giving birth, these parents reported that they were glad they chose to carry to term with support, and would encourage others to do the same. (2) (4)

## Have You Been Offered the Option of Carrying to Term?

Your doctor may not have offered you the option of carrying to term because he or she may not understand the benefits it provides to parents experiencing a prenatal diagnosis. Remember too that your doctor’s relationship with your baby is different than your relationship with your baby.

Don’t allow yourself to be rushed in making a decision about your baby’s life before you understand all the options. Parents who have carried to term report that the experience of the diagnosis is the hardest part of the journey -- even if the birth results in loss. (1) Ending your pregnancy now at diagnosis can be emotionally and physically traumatic. Take time to make an informed decision.

*“Looking back, I know I would never trade his 9 months in my belly...We don’t regret anything, and we would do it all over again...We just can’t imagine our lives without knowing him.”*

~ Mom to Baby Joel, diagnosed prenatally with anencephaly

## Were You Offered Perinatal Hospice Support?

Perinatal hospice is a service that provides compassionate, comprehensive support to parents following a prenatal diagnosis. (2)

Parents carrying to term benefit tremendously from specialized services when their baby has been diagnosed with a serious condition. In reframing the experience, parents honor the life of their child, and are empowered in their role as parents as they prepare for their baby’s birth and whatever follows.

Comprehensive perinatal hospice support focuses on providing bereavement support as needed, helping parents find ways to cherish and celebrate the life of the baby no matter the diagnosis, and making certain they are fully prepared for birth. (3) You will be assisted in obtaining appropriate prenatal and neonatal referrals, and preparing a plan for your baby’s birth.

## Is Carrying to Term Medically Safe for Me?

Yes. Studies have found that **there are no increased medical complications for the mother** associated with carrying to term a baby with a prenatal diagnosis. (2) Carrying to term also allows you to avoid the risks to future pregnancies associated with abortion, including premature birth and low birthweight. (2)