

ALTHEA HAYTON is a womb twin survivor, writer and therapist, in that order. She began her writing career in 1991 with a book about addiction to food. Then, after several years writing about the grief associated with the loss of a baby before birth and the need for rituals of mourning, she discovered in 2002 that she is a womb twin survivor. At that time there was no information or psychological support available for womb twin survivors, so she began work at once to put this right. She started recruiting hundreds of womb twin survivors by means of a web site. In 2007 she founded a non-profit organisation, WombTwin.com, to provide information, help and support for womb twin survivors around the world. She has edited two anthologies, *Untwinned* and *A Silent Cry*. Her womb twin research project continues with the help of an online questionnaire. She gives talks and seminars around the world about the psychological effect on the survivor when a co-twin dies before birth. She also facilitates group workshops for womb twin survivors to help them to heal. Althea was educated at Oxford University and is a qualified social worker and counsellor. She is married with two sons and lives in Hertfordshire, England.

The Womb Twin series

Untwinned: Perspectives on the Death of a Twin Before Birth
Althea Hayton, Editor

A Silent Cry: Wombtwin Survivors Tell Their Stories
Althea Hayton, Editor

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Lucy's Baby Brother
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Prayer in Pregnancy
Not Out of Mind
The Lonely Halo
Walk With Me
Food and You
The Food Addicts Diet

Womb Twin Survivors

The lost twin in the Dream of the Womb

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Althea Hayton



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*Two in a pod, two in a hold, two in a teacup,
commas curled together, Yin & Yang tumbling end over end.
Yet one grows fatter as one thins. One drinks in
as one seeps away. One's shape sharpens
as the other's lines blur. One grows fingers and toes;
for the other, at the wrists and ankles, clumps,
then knots, then fraying threads,
as cells flake off, migrate across the black waters.*

From "Chimera" by Frances Rublen McConnel

*This book is dedicated to all the womb twin survivors
who did not win their lifelong battle against despair.
No one explained why they wanted so much to die.*

They are the inspiration for this book, so they did not die in vain.

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Editor's note:

To preserve the authenticity of the stories, which have been sent from various countries of the world, the original spelling is retained.

Introduction

At the start of this century, I suddenly came to the conclusion that I once had a twin but my twin died before I was born. Almost at once, I began to research this unusual phenomenon. I quickly came across the concept of the “vanishing” twin and discovered that this was more common than I could ever have realized. I named the survivors of twin or multiple conceptions “womb twin” survivors. As I made my own pathway towards healing, I embarked on a journey of discovery that has lasted until this day and will no doubt continue.

I now know that on average just one percent of births in the world are twin births. Research has revealed that for every pair of twins born there are at least ten babies born whose twin died in the womb, their “womb twin.” So we now know that there are more than 600 million womb twin survivors in the world. It is astonishing that society has somehow managed not to notice or correctly identify such an enormous group of millions of people. This is probably because, until the 1980s, the loss of a twin in the womb was not fully recognized or acknowledged. People can hardly be expected to pay any heed to the needs of the sole survivors if the lost twins remain hidden from view.

Research using ultrasound scans has repeatedly shown us how many twins are lost in the first few weeks of life. These are called “vanishing twins” but they don’t really vanish - they die. Their tiny bodies may be miscarried, disintegrate or gradually fade away, leaving tiny traces that an expert may be able to identify but that many people would not even notice. Since that amazing day when I realized that I am a womb twin survivor, I have been looking for the others. One by one, womb twin survivors have come to me by means of my web site. With their help, I have learned how to identify them and help them heal. I know that womb twin survivors have a need to understand why they feel as they do and in order to help them, I intend to bring these little lost twins out of the darkness and into the light: this book is their story.

We will begin by exploring the big idea of human reproduction and some seemingly trivial events occurring in the womb which are actually of vital importance. Bit by bit, we will explore the development the Womb Twin hypothesis that underlies this work. We will discover the intricacies of twinning - an extraordinary but common anomaly of human reproduction that has far-reaching consequences for the survivor when a co-twin dies. We will uncover the implications of zygosity and the different physical consequences of losing your twin at different stages of development.

We will then consider the psychological effect of such a personal loss on the sole survivor and examine closely the pre-birth experiences that lie in your Dream of the Womb. We will take a look at the science of prenatal psychology, which lies on the fringes of general psychology but at the very heart of this book. Next, we will carefully scrutinize what was learned during my seven-year Womb Twin research project, which I carried out with the help of many hundreds of womb twin survivors.

On almost every page you will hear the voices of womb twin survivors from all over the world, telling a story rarely told in public. There is plenty of room for interested observers who are not womb twin survivors but with important questions to ask. Some of those questions and their answers will be scattered along the way. By the end of this stage you will hopefully have a clearer idea of how it feels to be a womb twin survivor.

The final stage sets out a pathway to healing. This is a step-by-step progress through five stages of healing that may take you three years or three weeks to do, depending on your level of engagement and desperation. The rewards will make all the difficulty and pain worthwhile. You will end up with a new way of seeing the world. On almost every page, dozens of inspirational stories, sent to me from womb twin survivors across the world, will give you hope as you make your own journey to autonomy as a womb twin survivor who has awakened from the Dream of the Womb.

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