

'I had seven devastating miscarriages'

IT TOOK NICKI LLOYD, 36, EIGHT YEARS BEFORE SHE FELT THE BLISS OF HOLDING HER BABY IN HER ARMS

I CAN still remember the excitement of falling pregnant the first time at 28, after four years of marriage. Tears flowed as I told my husband, Alistair, and we imagined this exciting journey in front of us.

We did have an incredible journey in front of us – just not the one we had in mind. It took us through depression, bitterness and hopelessness. But it made us stronger and we survived.

My first pregnancy ended in miscarriage at 10 weeks, after we had shared the news with close friends. It took almost a year to fall pregnant again and we began an obsessive roller-coaster ride of having nine or 10 weeks of being pregnant, miscarriage, and then being pregnant again.

We went through many years of testing for anything our specialist could think of. But the results all came back normal, so we were advised to keep trying – and try we did.

I became frustrated with Western medicine and started looking at alternative therapies including Chinese herbs, hypnotherapy and even past lives. But the miscarriages continued, including two at around three months, which were particularly heartbreaking. More investigations suggested there might be a problem with my immune system or with a slightly heart-shaped uterus – although this would usually cause losses later on in a pregnancy.



AS TOLD TO ZOE TAYLOR PHOTO: JULIAN KINGMA

"Friends continued to have babies...I felt like there were pregnant women everywhere and couldn't help feeling envious"

Nicki endured years of hopelessness before giving birth to precious Grace

and intrusive. Many people had no idea how to behave around us and we lost a number of friendships.

To miscarry feels like failing as a woman. The physical wounds heal, but the emotional ones tend to be forgotten. It is so hard to grieve for a person you have never met, but part of my heart will always belong to the babies I have lost. They have changed me forever.

My husband is my best friend, but we coped differently and a lot of stress has been put on our marriage. We tried eight times before any success and that amazes most people, but it helped that we were united in our desire to have children.

After the fifth miscarriage I decided to leave work to avoid stress. Our seventh miscarriage was one of the most heartbreaking. I was taking Chinese herbs as well as aspirin and Heparin, which can sometimes prevent miscarriage. I had nerve-racking weekly ultrasounds and it was amazing to watch our little baby grow and hear its heartbeat. I was feeling sick and taking things easy and we really thought we'd get there.

But at almost 12 weeks I started bleeding. One day we had seen

Pregnancy after losses is difficult and throughout our eighth one I held my breath – until our little miracle, Grace, was born.

During the caesarean delivery it was discovered I had a septum wall in my uterus – a wall of muscle that may have caused the two later miscarriages. Part of me is frustrated it wasn't picked up earlier, but I look at Grace and that frustration melts away.

Meeting my daughter, now 14 months, was incredibly emotional, and after losing so many babies I have

our active baby moving around on the ultrasound images and four days later our baby was dead. It was all over – again.

For the second time, we took a brief break from trying. But friends continued to have beautiful babies and that was incredibly hard. I felt like there were pregnant women everywhere and couldn't help feeling envious; we found group emails announcing a pregnancy really difficult.

After 10 years of marriage, I used to sigh silently to myself when asked, "Haven't you started a family yet?" An innocent question, yet so painful

to remind myself she is for keeps. She is more than we were beginning to think we would ever have and, when we imagine our future, all we see is ourselves and our amazing Grace.

Pregnancy Loss: Surviving Miscarriage And Stillbirth, by Zoe Taylor (HarperCollins, \$27.99) is out February 1; www.pregnancylossbook.com

