

# Q&A WITH *Alexis Marie Chute*

## **Why did you write *Expecting Sunshine*? Is there a back story that inspired you to write?**

I have always been a creative person who experiences life in a visceral and visual way. After my son Zachary died, I was surprised that I could not paint or express myself through creative writing. It was only when I became pregnant again that I thought, "Whoa, I had better deal with my grief or I'm going to carry it forever." That is when I got back into artmaking and writing – and I found it was an amazing tool for healing and personal self-discovery.

I wrote the first draft of *Expecting Sunshine* in real-time while I was expecting my next child. I felt compelled to record my story as a testament to the experience of loss, the discovery of deep human resiliency, and also as a legacy for my son. People are starting to talk about loss more, it is not as taboo as it once was, but I wanted to bring the experience of pregnancy after loss into the light. Those forty weeks need to be discussed and families need support.

## **Where does the term *rainbow baby* come from?**

The term rainbow baby refers to children born to bereaved parents after their loss. While another child never replaces the baby that died, the new pregnancy and the new life represent hope in the midst of the storm of sorrow.

The cover of my memoir, *Expecting Sunshine: A Journey of Grief, Healing, and Pregnancy After Loss*, shows a woman holding a rainbow umbrella. This is symbolic for me. She seems to be on the cusp of a storm, either coming or going, beneath a dusty teal sky; still, she clutches this umbrella as if she is literally clinging to hope. This hope is what so many families hold onto after personal tragedy. I find this visual metaphor extremely inspiring.

## **What are the FIVE key messages readers will find in your story?**

1. **LOSS:** The loss of a child is a heartbreaking reality for so many families, yet many people feel they must suffer in silence and that theirs is an unacknowledged grief.
2. **PREGNANCY AFTER LOSS:** While getting pregnant again is a joyful time, it is also full of worry, anxiety, and fear for the health and safety of the next child
3. **THEMES:** I grapple with the seasons of grief, a strained marriage, parenting after loss, and a silent faith, all the while I intentionally search to restore my identity as a woman and mother, and find healing before my next child is born.
4. **BOOK STRUCTURE:** Every chapter in *Expecting Sunshine* is one gestational week, with the whole book divided into three sections, the three trimesters of pregnancy. For me, this was a natural structure in which to tell my story and I think it is unique as well since it gives the full breadth of the experience.
5. **HEALING.** Healing didn't find me, I had to be intentional in its pursuit. Fortunately, I did come out on the other side and I did this through honest communication, experimenting with different support systems, and through creative expression and storytelling.

*EXPECTING SUNSHINE: A Journey of Grief,  
Healing and Pregnancy After Loss*

**EXPECTINGSUNSHINE.COM**

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**BY ALEXIS MARIE CHUTE**

She Writes Press ♦ April 18, 2017 ♦ 203 pages  
Print ISBN: 978-1-63152-174-4 ♦ \$16.95 USD  
E-ISBN: 978-1-63152-175-1 ♦ \$9.95 USD  
Distribution United States: IPS ♦ Canada: Manda

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## *What were your marital struggles like after your loss?*

I discovered first-hand how different men and women process grief – probably, even, just the differences between our two distinct personalities. My husband disassociated himself from our loss to cope. I, on the other hand, was hyper-aware and clingy. I know lots of couples don't make it after losing a baby, and I do hope that my candidness in my memoir will give individuals permission to grieve in their own ways and also to communicate authentically with each other.

## *At the end of *Expecting Sunshine* you are a different person from the first few pages. What was that transformation like?*

When Zachary died, I felt that so many parts of who I was died as well. A mother should be able to protect her child and I believed my body had failed us both. I forgot what made me happy and what my purpose was in life. It was only when I began to search-out ways to regain my joy and find peace on the journey of pregnancy after loss, that I blossomed into a new person. I would exchange this new life to have Zachary with me, any day, but I do feel that the lessons I've learned are his gift to me.

## *On top of a writer, you are also an artist, photographer, and filmmaker. How do those roles play into your book?*

I definitely write *Expecting Sunshine* with the visual sensibilities of an artist. The language paints pictures in the mind and draws the reader into the scenes. How I see the world, it's textures, colors, and rhythms make the story more than an introspective head-game between faith and fear – that's my goal at least!

Also, I have spent the last few years working on a documentary film called *Expecting Sunshine: The Truth about Pregnancy After Loss*. In it I interview other bereaved parents, both men and women, clinical psychologists, doctors, and nurses. My crew filmed me painting and making wood sculpture, two artistic practices that aided in my recovery. The film follows my second pregnancy after loss, right through to the delivery. We live in a visual age and I hope this documentary will put a face to the experience of loss and trying again.

## *Who would enjoy and benefit from reading your book?*

The most obvious answer to this question is bereaved parents. They will relate the most closely to my story. However, everyone grieves and heals differently. For that reason, I believe anyone struggling with the loss of a person they love will be able to connect with my book. And for sure, those that enjoy inspiring family memoirs should add *Expecting Sunshine* to their reading list.

## *What is next for you with your writing?*

I am currently editing the first of a fantasy trilogy I wrote, which is a wild story of new worlds, strange races of beings and one family's mission to find the magical cure for six-year-old Ella.

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