

Rachel Goldberg Story:

In June of 2015, I found out I was pregnant. My husband and I expected to have a complicated journey to pregnancy, and we were beside ourselves to discover I was pregnant. I took the pregnancy test and started brushing my teeth, telling myself not to be disappointed when the test came back with a "NO". I remember vividly seeing the words "YES" and the little plus sign. I just started screaming and laughing, and hugging my husband. I couldn't believe it. I called my best friend and woke her up at midnight, to tell her I was pregnant. We couldn't wait to meet our baby.

Then like a slow moving storm, our world started to darken. It started with abnormal blood work, the doctor told me not to worry, they would run more tests, it could be nothing. My heart still sank and I cried, and worried everyday. The second test came back, everything was fine, and we were having a boy! My husband and I were thrilled, we could continue preparing for the arrival of our son, without worry.

We went in for our 20 week ultrasound, confident that nothing was wrong, excited to get pictures to share with our family. The ultrasound tech asked if our blood work had come back normal. This was my first pregnancy, I assumed this was a normal question. I confidently answered yes. The tech said okay, and continued. After the ultrasound our doctor entered the room. I will never forget the feeling in my heart when she said "we are seeing some abnormalities". I just stared at her, I was numb, there were a million questions I wanted to ask, but I couldn't speak. Due to our conflicting blood work and ultrasound, she referred me to a perinatal specialist.

One and half weeks later, I was at the perinatal doctor's office. This ultrasound took over an hour. The more pictures we saw of him on the screen, the more and more my heart broke. It was obvious something was very wrong with the son we wanted to so much. I felt my husband squeeze my hand, everyone in the room was completely silent. We all knew the same thing, though no one daring to say it out loud.

As we waited for the doctor to come in and talk to us, we fought back tears, trying to tell ourselves the doctor might have better news. The doctor didn't have better news: "incompatible with life", "we can't find all your son's organs", "he is severely underdeveloped". An amniocentesis was recommended. We agreed, the results wouldn't be back for another two weeks, maybe three due to the Thanksgiving holiday. We went home, and I cried, and cried. I couldn't believe this was happening. I called the specialist every day with new questions. It became clear that if our son survived birth, he would suffer immensely. If he survived birth, he might suffocate to death because his organs may not all be there or be connected. If he didn't suffocate he would need multiple surgeries until one caused complications he wouldn't survive. My son would suffer; it wasn't something I could imagine asking him to do for me.

My husband and I decided to terminate the pregnancy. We couldn't understand why this was happening, but I knew as his mother, it was my job to protect him, and so I chose to take any suffering he might experience onto myself. I called the doctor, and due to the holiday, the soonest

we could terminate would be the week after Thanksgiving. I heard the emotion in my voice as my doctor told us he couldn't help us. Due to the laws of our state, we would have to see someone else to terminate. This was the worst moment of my life, and the doctor I trusted was not allowed to help me or my baby. It crushed me, but I knew, as my son's mother, I couldn't ask him to suffer for me. My husband and I took out a loan to cover the cost of the procedure and traveled to Colorado.

I said goodbye to my son on December 8th. He was completely encased in my body, and in my love for him. As distinctly as I remember the moment I found out I was pregnant, I will remember the moment I was no longer pregnant. The doctor asked me if I was okay. I surprised myself when I said yes. The only thought that went through my mind was "Thank you God, for giving me the gift of his pain, no one can make him suffer." A little prayer from what he had given me, and equally taken away.

My son's name is Jonathan. In Hebrew Jonathan's name translates to "A gift from god" and he truly was. My son gave me the courage I never knew I had. I am his mother, and as his mother, I made the decision that was best for him. These decisions are deeply personal and often complicated, they are decisions best left to the women, their families and their medical team. The question becomes, do you have the courage to stand with me?

Thank you,
Rachel Goldberg
Missouri
Senators Claire McCaskill and Roy Blunt