

WHEN A CHILD DIES: WHAT I WISH I KNEW (YOU HAVE MORE CHOICES THAN YOU THINK)

When my son William died, I didn't know I had choices.
Everything felt urgent.
Everything felt like it had to happen right now.
And I trusted the process because I didn't know there was another way.

Now I know:
There is often more time.
More flexibility.
More room to decide what feels right for you and your child.
This is what I would do differently—and what I want you to know.

1. You can ask questions—and you should

In those early hours, you may feel afraid to ask.
Ask anyway.
Ask how your child died.
Ask what happens next.
Ask what your options are.
You are not being difficult.
You are being their parent.

2. You do not have to rush

There is rarely a legal requirement to move as quickly as it feels.
You can slow things down.
You can take time to sit, to process, to decide.
If something feels too fast—it probably is.

3. You can stay with your child

You are allowed to spend time with their body.
You can sit with them.
Talk to them.
Touch them.
Stay as long as you need.
No one told me that. I wish they had.

4. You can go with them

If your child is being transported, you can ask to go too.
You do not have to let them go alone.

5. You can kiss and hold them before anything changes

Before embalming or any procedures, you can ask for time.
To hold them.
To kiss them.
To say goodbye in your own way.
These moments matter more than you can imagine.

6. You can ask for keepsakes

You can request things like:

- Handprints
- Footprints
- Locks of hair

These are not automatic—you often have to ask.
Take them. You will not regret it.

7. If you are far from home, ask your people to come to you

If your child dies away from home, the isolation can feel unbearable.
You may feel lost. Disoriented. Completely alone.
Ask your family or closest friends to come be with you.
Even if it feels like too much to ask.
Even if you're not sure how it will work.
Most people will drop everything to be by your side.
We were far from home, and we were alone.
We were lost in it.
I wish we had said yes when people offered to come.

8. You do not have to spend the first night alone

This is one of the hardest nights of your life.
Have someone with you.
Ask them to come.
Let them stay.

9. You can protect your space after the funeral

You do not have to host.

You do not have to entertain.

Grief is not a gathering.

It is sacred, quiet, and deeply personal.

You are allowed to say no.

10. You can seek answers about the death—right away

If there are questions about how your child died, pursue them early.

Information can become harder to access later.

You deserve to understand what happened.

11. You can go back to the place where it happened—when you're ready

For me, I wish I had gone sooner.

There can be something grounding about seeing the place,
connecting it to reality,

and beginning to process what happened.

There is no “right” timing—but you are allowed to go.

12. You are still their parent—always

Even in death, you are still their mother.

You are allowed to:

- Take your time
- Stay longer
- Ask for more
- Do things differently

There are fewer rules than you think.

If you are in this moment right now...

I am so sorry.

This is not information anyone should need.

But if you do—you deserve to know:

You have choices.

You have time.

And you are allowed to use both.