

## **An honest conversation about Baby Loss with Jennie Agg and Elle Wright**

This week's episode marks Baby Loss Awareness Week as Jennie Agg and Elle Wright speak to Clemmie about the heartbreaking experience of baby loss. Navigating this difficult conversation, Clemmie learns how Elle and Jennie's different experiences of grief have led them to encourage a more open dialogue for other women who have also lost children. This episode is sponsored by Tommy's, a charity who fund research into preventing miscarriage, stillbirth and premature birth. If you're affected by any of the themes in this episode, you can find support over at <https://www.tommys.org>.

### **Clemmie**

Today I am joined by two people, who I'm honoured to have featured on Mother of All Lists before. And I'm a huge fan of your work and both of your social media presence because, I guess, in essence, it's a lot of what I try and do as well, which is about being really honest. Elle Wright is a blogger and a fundraiser, and you have a hugely popular Instagram account and it's both a space for interior inspiration, a bit of pug-love in the form of gorgeous Boris, but, more importantly, her Instagram is a space to share her story since the death of her son Teddy. Her book, Ask Me His Name, is brilliant. It's an emotional, frank account of what it feels like to be in the storm of baby loss. And she is joined by Jennie Agg, author of The Uterus Monologues, and journalist and your work has been published, literally, everywhere. Grazia, Marie Claire, Huffington Post, Daily Mail, Red magazine. To begin things and to remind you that first of all this podcast is called Honestly, so it's all about being Honest, I like to start with a quick fire round. On a scale of 1-10, how cool are you?

### **Jennie**

Oh God, like nought. Very, very uncool.

### **Clemmie**

I mean, you could give yourself more than a nought.

### **Jennie**

Two

### **Clemmie**

Elle?

### **Elle**

I'd probably sit around the bottom somewhere as well, two or three. I actually infamously said to my husband on our first date, when I turned up late, not intentionally late, and he

was sitting there waiting for me. He'd been waiting quite a long time. I said hello to him, because I didn't know him that well, and the next thing I said was: I didn't do this to try and be cool, I'm not cool. And then he gave me a hug and said: Yeah, I can see that. I was like: Oh my God!

**Clemmie**

So being not cool is kind of your thing.

**Elle**

Yeah, it is.

**Clemmie**

On a scale of 1-10, how nice are you?

**Jennie**

I think I'm quite nice. I hope I'm quite nice. Err, it's quick fire, isn't it? Seven? Seven.

**Elle**

I'd probably go mid range because I can go either way. I'd probably say I'm a five or six because when I'm nice, I'm really nice but when I'm being, yeah...

**Clemmie**

I want to know what star sign you are but I'm going to ask you in a minute. On a scale of 1-10, how strong are you?

**Jennie**

I can beat my husband in an arm wrestle.

**Clemmie**

That's good. Haven't arm wrestled in years.

**Jennie**

I don't know, five? Five.

**Elle**

Are we talking physical strength or emotional strength?

**Clemmie**

That's for you to interpret.

**Elle**

OK, physical strength probably a one. But I'd say emotional strength, but only because of what we have had to endure in the last few years, I'd say I'd back myself as a strong nine.

**Clemmie**

Good. Own it. You're strong women. Night owl or early bird?

**Jennie**

Night owl.

**Elle**

Night owl.

**Clemmie**

Are you? Dog or cat person?

**Jennie**

Well, I don't actually think I'm either. I have three cats and they are quite a feature of my Instagram, I love them dearly, but I really, really want a dog as well. But that's controversial, isn't it, to be both?

**Clemmie**

No.

**Elle**

Believe it or not, I'd say I was both. I have a dog and a cat-

**Clemmie**

And you couldn't choose?

**Elle**

And I had a real scare with our cat last week. He's really poorly, he nearly died. And actually, although he is the most ungrateful bastard on the face of-

**Clemmie**

What's he called?

**Elle**

Moses. But we just call him Mo. We've had him for eight year. Cats just are aloof, aren't they? Well, he's aloof. And he doesn't care. And actually, I've always joked to people: Oh he's my first cat, he'll be my last. But when he nearly died, I was in tears and I was like: No,

Mo don't leave me, it's not your time. So yeah, I'm 50/50. I'm just an animal person, I'm an every animal person.

**Jennie**

Same.

**Clemmie**

Getting honest about cats, OK! Introvert or extrovert?

**Jennie**

Introvert.

**Elle**

I would probably have said I was an extrovert but in recent years, I kind of swing between one to the other. I'm an introverted extrovert now, I'd say.

**Clemmie**

That's what I think I am as well. What star sign are you?

**Jennie**

Virgo.

**Clemmie**

Are you?

**Elle**

Taurus.

**Clemmie**

Are you? I thought you were going to say Gemini with your switching around. I could go deeply into the star sign thing but I'm not going to. When did you last weigh yourself?

**Jennie**

About a year ago. I don't weigh myself now. I gave it up.

**Clemmie**

Yeah, same here.

**Elle**

Same, I don't weigh myself.

**Clemmie**

It's so good, isn't it? When did you last go to the dentist?

**Jennie**

Oh no, this is going to be really shaming. I haven't been to the dentist for ages because I left my job and I used to go to the dentist near my work, and now I'm moving so I haven't registered with a dentist.

**Clemmie**

That's alright, there's no judgement.

**Elle**

No judgement here, Jennie!

**Jennie**

I feel judged. Don't look at my teeth!

**Elle**

I think I was there in May, April or May.

**Clemmie**

I mean, yeah, you're doing well. Have you ever wet yourself as an adult?

**Elle**

I came very close on my niece's trampoline the other week. So I hadn't been on a trampoline since I'd given birth and, I don't know, I guess in my head my pelvic floor was still fully intact, and I was good to go. Obviously going on a trampoline as a 34-year-old woman doesn't come up as often as you might hope it would, and I was in my sister-in-law's back garden and I was trying to show-off to my niece, down she goes and literally in that moment I was like: I have nearly pissed my pants, what is going on?

**Clemmie**

Were you wearing a dress?

**Elle**

No, I had jeans on and luckily a pair of big knickers so it was just like a: oh, uh-oh. And then I was just bouncing really slowly and my niece was going: Auntie Elle, do it again, do it again. And I was like: No, Auntie Elle's had enough now. And I saw my sister-in-law's face and she was like laughing her head off at me because she knows, she's had two children! I was like: What the hell just happened? It's a thing and she was like: Now you know why I didn't go on there. Naive.

**Clemmie**

How did you do in your GCSEs and has it impacted your life?

**Jennie**

I was a mega-nerd at school, so I did pretty well in my GCSEs. And apart from the fact it meant I got to go to university, I think it's made no difference at all to my life.

**Clemmie**

How about you, Elle?

**Elle**

So yeah, I came out with GCSEs like As, A\*s, few Bs. I didn't go to university. But I do think that probably having a keen interest in English and English Literature, because those were always my best subjects, have helped me because that's what I do now. I write. I never thought I would use it to write a book so yeah, I guess it did.

**Clemmie**

And where are you happiest?

**Jennie**

In my garden with a book.

**Clemmie**

Good answer.

**Elle**

On the beach in Cornwall, every time.

**Clemmie**

We've both got a shared love of that area of Cornwall. What are you most afraid of?

**Jennie**

On a silly level, I'm really scared of snakes, I can't even watch them on TV. Is it bringing everything down if I say never having children? That's my biggest fear, right now.

**Elle**

Silly level, I've an irrational fear of birds, pigeons in particular.

**Clemmie**

But guys, I really don't think it is irrational, birds and snakes are both sketchy creatures.

**Elle**

They are fucking terrifying.

**Clemmie**

I've done a whole episode on phobia and they're very common.

**Elle**

On a serious level, I guess one of my deepest seated fears since Teddy died is that people will stop talking about him and forget him. Which, I guess life moves so quickly and everyone, sort of, moves on and there's lots of stuff happening. So that's why I keep talking about him because it's like, I just want to keep them in the present if that makes sense?

**Clemmie**

Which I'm going to pick up on that in a minute. Biggest regret?

**Jennie**

I don't really believe in regrets per se. But I do sometimes think about how, when I was younger, I was not a very good friend to people who were grieving, and I would behave very differently now.

**Elle**

That's such a good one, and it's so true.

**Clemmie**

How much younger are you talking then?

**Jennie**

In my early 20s I had a couple of friends who lost a parent or a sibling and I... I mean, it's that age, isn't it? You're very, kind of, wrapped up in yourself. But I do look back and think what a shit I was.

**Elle**

I guess I'm a bit like Jennie, I don't really believe in regrets. And I think I tend to not really think too much about the past and how I could correct it. I try to, sort of, more focus on how I can correct that going forward. Whatever twist that gave and what I can learn from it, so yeah, I can't really off the top of my head think of a regret. And I know there are probably things in there I shouldn't have done or could have done better but-

**Clemmie**

But that's the whole point. If I... I don't particularly love the person I was in my 20s in quite a lot of my behaviour but that is exactly the point, isn't it? I remember on one of those camera programmes in schools, Educating Essex, and a teacher was saying: We get cross with kids for misbehaving but that's exactly the point. You're meant to learn. All the mistakes I made in my 20s were exactly what stood me in good stead to not make them at later points in my life.

And three words your friends would use to describe you?

**Jennie**

Organised, I'm always the one who organises things. I hope they'd say I was loyal, steadfast.

**Elle**

Dedicated.

**Jennie**

I hope they'd say I'm funny. Yeah, there you go.

**Clemmie**

They're three good ones.

**Elle**

They're really good ones. Probably control freak, I know that's two words but at home I have to have everything a certain way.

**Clemmie**

Coping strategies.

**Elle**

Total coping strategy but it's just got worse. I don't know whether they'd say funny but they might say joker, because I am that person that always tries to make a joke out of inappropriate situations. And then I hope that they'd say that I was happy. Because I never, I always try to be that person that jollies the situation along and I hope that when I am happy, that it radiates onto other people when they're feeling a bit shit.

**Clemmie**

I really love the idea of a happy, funny control freak! I've been through a lot of therapy about my own control freak tendencies and she's like: You need to let yourself off the hook for it because although it sometimes can be damaging and too much, it also stands you in very good stead in a lot of situations, so be kind to yourself about that. There you go.

**Elle**

Little bit of free therapy there, thank you.

**Clemmie**

But it's true isn't it, you know?

**Elle**

It's so true.

**Clemmie**

So, onto the big topic. That was just meant to be a little intro and we've gone quite deep but that's fine. And it is going to... You know, we can't keep joking because we've got a very serious subject to talk about. We are here to talk about baby loss and, if you're listening to this, you'll already know that this episode is sponsored by Tommy's, the baby charity. And they estimate that baby loss is something that will affect 1 in 4 of us, and actually, when I was at the awards a few weeks ago, they said that that probably isn't even representative because so many people don't report, particularly miscarriages, so it could be far more than that, so let's say 1 in 3. That is just about everyone because if it isn't you, it's someone close to you, it's a colleague, it's a sister. So let's crack on and learn a little bit more about these ladies.

Elle, as I said to your off-mic, I read your book in four days, I loved it. And I love it when you are lucky enough to know the author a bit, it's like you're reading it, so yeah, you're in my ear all the time, which is really nice. You can hear all your tone, it's brilliant.

**Elle**

That's nice, thank you.

**Clemmie**

But what really struck me is, I think in the intro or quite early on, you talked about the fact that you wanted to reach outside of the echo chamber of the baby loss community because, of course, yes, you'd pick up your book if you'd sadly lost a baby. But it's to try and make the much wider audience understand and I definitely felt that, I'm lucky enough not to have lost a baby, although I've got close friends and relatives who have, but I still found it such a powerful read. But for those who don't know your story, could you tell us a little bit more about you and Nico and Boris and, of course, Teddy.

**Elle**

I am 34, live in Surrey with my husband Nico and we had our son, Teddy, in May 2016. He was a natural pregnancy, we tried for about 10 months to have him, which felt like a lifetime but I now know I was incredibly, incredibly lucky to have fallen pregnant so quickly. And I had a brilliant pregnancy but when Teddy was born, after an induced labour because of

leaking waters, he wasn't breathing. But we were told not to worry and they, sort of, gave him some oxygen, gave him a rub down with a towel and gave him back to us. And he seemed fine. He hadn't opened his eyes and he wasn't crying but they said that was quite normal after an induced labour for him to be quiet. And then in the night, after Teddy was born, he stopped breathing altogether and was taken away by a midwife.

**Clemmie**

And you'd dozed off, hadn't you?

**Elle**

Yeah, because we'd been in since the Sunday night. I'd been induced on the Sunday night, Teddy wasn't born until the Monday evening, I'd not slept, obviously, all through... I'd been awake for, like, 36, 38 hours by this point. Luckily Nico stayed because he didn't want to go because Teddy had only been born early evening, didn't want to leave me. But yeah, he stopped breathing in the night and it was, it was like a horrible scene from Casualty or ER where they start pulling curtains round and there are lights flashing.

**Clemmie**

So you're going through this trauma but you're, kind of, on the back foot already because you're exhausted and being woken up... We've all been woken up in shocking situations, your adrenaline goes...

**Elle**

Yeah, and I did not have a clue what was going on. I just remember, I can literally close my eyes and replay it, like most of us can with anything that's really affected us and traumatic, and Teddy's little arms just flopped down by his side and she ran off with him. And we found out that he'd stopped breathing and he'd been resuscitated for 18 minutes but they don't know how long before they found him he hadn't been breathing. And I just remember the consultant who came to speak to us, sort of... We were in a room on our own, a quiet room with a box of tissues on the table, so I thought: This is terrible news. And he crouched down in front of me to eye level and he just said: You have a really sick little boy. And all I remember thinking is: He's not dead, he's not dead. And that's all I hung onto. He was transferred to a neonatal unit the next morning, a neighbouring hospital. So that's a neonatal intensive care unit, which not every hospital has, so he was in a SCUBU at our hospital, our local hospital, which is Special Care. But when a baby's really sick then they need to go to, basically, an Intensive Care Unit but for babies. So he got taken there and he lived there for three days, while they ran every test on him. He was wired up to all kinds of machines and we couldn't really touch him or hug him, or do any of the normal things that you do when you've just had a baby. And they told us, so three days later, that they would have to withdraw his life support because he had no brain activity, they think potentially

from oxygen starvation because he hadn't been awake for such a long time. And they very kindly let us hold him while they withdrew his life support so that was how he died-

**Clemmie**

Is that a norm?

**Elle**

Well, I think... We were lucky that the room that was for bereaved parents or where, perhaps, somebody who was delivering a stillborn baby, would be, we were in there. And so they said rather than just withdraw his life support in the neonatal unit, surrounded by other babies in tanks-

**Clemmie**

Could that be-

**Elle**

I assume that could be a thing, yeah. But I said to them: Would it be alright if we took him in his tank, took him to the room that we were in. My parents were there, my husband's parents were there and some other family, and would it be OK if we took all the wires off him and just had him. And they said: Yes, that's fine, we can hand pump oxygen into him and hand him to you that way. And that, for me, just felt, I don't know... I think in that moment you're just clutching at straws and you think: What can I do as a mother? This is my moment to do the right thing. You don't know what the right thing is because your head's all over the place. But I guess I just wanted, for all of us, to try and think really clearly in that moment so that I could do something that would be something I could look back on and have a nice memory, rather than a terrifying memory. So I'm glad we were able to do that.

**Clemmie**

It's remarkable, it speaks volumes about you that you had that clarity of thought at that point.

**Elle**

I think it's adrenaline. Like you were saying earlier that the adrenaline kicks in and you think: Right, what the... Can I do right now to correct this? And you can't correct it because you're in free fall but you do the little things that you can do to make it better. So yeah, after that, obviously we went home without Teddy and it was, kind of like, this new chapter, this new life started. And about nine months after Teddy died, I started, after I'd shared a bit on Instagram, through posts, I kind of decided I would start writing a bit more about him and about what happens and about that, sort of, narrative of parenting, a child who isn't here. And it snowballed.

**Clemmie**

Turned into quite a big thing. There is so much of your book that stood out for me but there were a couple of things that really hit home with me, and one is that really weird human instinct to try and empathise and try and act like you know. And, you know, you say quite clearly in the book: There is nothing really compares to losing a baby but people go: Oh, you know, I had this really bad thing happen.

**Elle**

Yeah.

**Clemmie**

Yeah, and I just think it's so bizarre that we do that and I think that yeah, it's that trying to rationalise, isn't it? And you're trying to put yourself in someone's shoes but actually, for you, it's like, don't try and make this OK. This is the worst imaginable thing and I think it's just a really important reminder to say that to people.

**Elle**

It's human instinct, isn't it? We want to try and fix it for somebody. We want to try and fix it, we want to make it better and we want to say the right thing. And actually, I think it's just all of us taking a step back and realising it can't be fixed, it's the unfixable.

**Clemmie**

Yeah, which is I guess, everyone's brain short circuits, doesn't it?

**Elle**

I always say it's like when the happiest event becomes the saddest. Everyone's pumped, aren't they? Your friends, your family, people who you work with, everyone's excited. And then it becomes the complete opposite. It becomes the unthinkable. And I think that's when our brains can't cope and so then we just say anything. And I totally get it. I totally get why people try and say: Oh, me too, because of this. But it's cool like, you don't have to fix it. You don't. And I think as bereaved parents or people who've experienced any kind of loss, if we just say: Look, it's OK, you know. Don't try and fix this for me, I don't want you to understand how this feels because it's really horrible, and I don't want-

**Clemmie**

Don't want to inflict this on anyone. Why would I?

**Elle**

Yeah. And you become really well practised, and I'm sure Jennie will agree with this. When you go through a trauma like and people say: How are you? Once you're kind of going through it and you get really well practised at, I just did the same sound bites of saying the

same thing that would pacify them, and let me just carry on, so that I didn't have to think about it too much.

**Jennie**

Yeah, I think that's really... I'm a little bit reluctant to, kind of, completely... Our experiences are slightly, well, very different. I think you're right, you do, kind of, become very practised in finding things to say that almost absolve other people, and let's them go. They've done their bit, they've asked you, they've checked-in. And it's really lovely that people want to do that but, at the same time, it's, like, it puts more, it's more work for you.

**Elle**

It's exhausting, isn't it?

**Jennie**

It is exhausting, yeah. Because you have to be convincing. You have to convince people that you're fine and that you're in a healthy place and that you're moving on, or moving forward or whatever it is-

**Clemmie**

Other than a few certain people, people don't want the real answer.

**Jennie**

No.

**Clemmie**

Jennie, could you just give a little bit about your story and why you started The Uterus Monologues?

**Jennie**

Yeah, sure. Me and my husband Dan started trying for a family about three years ago now. And it took us a little while to get pregnant in the first place. It didn't... Not very long in the grand scheme of things. And then we had a miscarriage. Two days before our 12 week scan and I was completely, completely unprepared for it. It just hadn't entered my sphere of consciousness that that might be something that happened to me. I didn't think I knew anyone it had happened to. At that point, we were probably about 50/50 split, kind of half the people, our friends, had children, half didn't. That balance is slowly tipped. And then, unfortunately, from there we've gone on to have three more miscarriages, all before the 12 week mark. And three were in the space of about nine months. And we've gone through testing and we are one of quite a lot of couples who just are told that there's not really anything, there's no obvious reason. There's nothing they can treat, particularly. It just seems to be bad luck. And I started writing, really, because I didn't know what else to do. I

mean, I am a writer, that's what I do for work and initially I wrote about that first miscarriage for the newspaper that I worked at, at the time. But that was, kind of, how most people I knew found out. Which is, I don't know if that's a bit of a weird move, really? Kind of keeping this thing secret and then, oh here's my story in a national newspaper.

**Clemmie**

I really relate to that. It's very, it's sometimes easier to have that conversation into the void than to have it sitting next to-

**Jennie**

Yeah, it certainly felt that way, actually.

**Elle**

You feel like you blanket cover everyone who might ever ask. And then you think: I don't have to have that awkward conversation because they know. I know that sounds weird but I did that!

**Clemmie**

Yeah, because how do you do it?

**Jennie**

And then from there, I think when we... Because, of course, when you have a miscarriage because, unfortunately, it is very common, I think there is this, kind of, idea, that it, well it's just a blip. You know, it's very sad but it'll be over quickly. At least you can get pregnant, is the sort of annoying thing that everyone says to you.

**Elle**

Oh I love that one. That's one of my personal faves.

**Jennie**

And then I was very lucky, I did get pregnant again very quickly and then when we lost that baby as well, I don't know, something started to shift in my mind that this wasn't over. This wasn't something we'd move past really quickly, this was something else. And this was more complicated. I didn't know that story, I didn't know anybody who'd had multiple miscarriages. It wasn't a conversation that I heard around me, particularly.

**Clemmie**

Are you offered any, kind of, counselling, or...?

**Jennie**

I wasn't. I know some people are. I think it's really hit and miss.

**Clemmie**

Postcode lottery, probably.

**Jennie**

Depending on where you are. The research shows it. PTSD is really common and not just in the, kind of, immediate few weeks. This is something that's happening a year down the line.

**Elle**

And I think, you know, any kind of trauma, particularly surrounding pregnancy and birth, we all naturally replay it in our head. As much as you want to shut that in a box, if that's what you want to do and not have to rethink about that moment that hurt so badly again, it will, if you bury it, it will come back. It will come back for you. So you may as well just accept it and talk about it.

**Clemmie**

Have either of you had therapy beyond your own therapy through writing?

**Elle**

I started seeing a therapist this year, actually. Because I had a miscarriage after IVF at the beginning of the year and I think reached my saturation point of my capacity of shit that I was able to deal with on my own. And I remember saying to my husband, sitting there in floods and floods of tears, after I'd been into hospital for the final time and saying to him: I can't do this anymore. I don't know what to do. I've tried everything, I've tried to carry on, be that happy person and use all these other coping mechanisms and it's like I'm reaching into this toolbox of stuff that I can use and my toolbox is empty. And it just keeps coming at me. And I was like: I need to talk to someone. And he was like: You talk to everyone. And I was like: No, I need to talk to *someone*. And it just happened to be the following week I was seeing my acupuncturist and I was in this little holistic place that I go. And as I was waiting, and normally I don't sit down because she always runs on time, but she was running a bit late and there was a card of a lady who does 1-2-1 counselling and psychotherapy. And I just picked it up and put it in my bag. And then it took me a couple of weeks but I called her. And that was my 34th birthday present to myself, a therapist! About time. But I was, like Jennie said, were you offered anything? Even losing a baby at full-term, I walked out of hospital with a bundle of leaflets.

**Jennie**

It's just unthinkable.

**Clemmie**

I mean... And I know in your book but, at the time, a bunch of paper, you don't want it.

**Elle**

I don't want to read anything.

**Clemmie**

And then at the time that perhaps you can begin to process and think: Oh, that would be useful, it's long gone.

**Elle**

Yeah, I've chucked it in the bin or recycling. And then I think: Oh, God. That I guess would be, I don't really give out advice because I'm just a grieving mum, but I would say to anyone leaving hospital who does get given a lot of paper or sent a lot of stuff in the post: Just put it in a box somewhere, put it away, don't chuck it and maybe go back to it. Because you don't know when you're going to need it.

**Clemmie**

I guess, continuing on the mental health thing, is the other myriad of emotions you feel, which is, like, jealousy and envy, which is really hard when you're presented... It's so bizarre. Because I was coming to speak to you guys, my eyes were open, and just seeing a pregnant woman, it's just everywhere, isn't it? And it can be when you least expect it, you know. That feeling like that sucker punch is going to happen, whether that be on social or in real life. And it's, none of us enjoy feeling envy and jealousy because they're not comfortable emotions but it's absolutely, it can't be helped, can it? And that must be hard to live with those feelings.

**Jennie**

I went through a really... The first, sort of, few months, the jealousy was almost the hardest thing for me. I just felt like... And it's because you don't know at that point. I mean, I now know, that I know loads of people who've had miscarriages or struggled to get pregnant, you know, all kinds of stories that I now know were out there. You just feel like everybody else is getting pregnant-

**Clemmie**

Winning at life-

**Jennie**

Pregnant really easily. Bringing home their babies, moving onto their second child, you know, while you're still struggling to get out of the starting blocks. And it... I mean, envy is the natural emotion, isn't it? And, you know, the sort of mixed in with feeling left out and are all your friends with children going to forget about you? And that's all difficult to navigate.

**Elle**

I found envy is then coupled with guilt.

**Jennie**

Yeah!

**Elle**

I feel envious of that person. Oh my God, I shouldn't feel like that, I'm a terrible human.

**Clemmie**

It's a circle of doom.

**Elle**

And then I'm like: I don't know where to go with this. I can joke about it because I have had these dark feelings of... I feel really envious of that and I wish, I sometimes, do you just wish you could wave a magic wand and magic it in a totally different way for yourself and for your friends that are going through it.

**Clemmie**

You're not wishing that they don't have it...

**Elle**

No, you're just wishing it for everyone. You wish that everyone could have it and I think that's where the jealousy becomes quite complex and multi-layered because you're feeling bad already and then you feel jealous, and then you feel bad for feeling jealous, and then it's just like, it goes around in circles.

**Clemmie**

But Jennie, I read something, I don't know where I read it, on one of my many bits of stalking you, but where you reframed it for yourself and it's brilliant, about you, of course, when you hear other pregnancy announcements, you do feel that pang but try and see it as a proof that it can happen rather than envy that you haven't got it.

**Jennie**

Yeah, I do try and do that, actually. And I think it does really help if people are... It's happening more and more, I think. There are a couple of celebrity pregnancy announcements this week and, actually, both came with a...

**Elle**

Oh yeah, somebody put something on Instagram.

**Jennie**

Anne Hathaway?

**Elle**

Anne Hathaway.

**Jennie**

And she posted a picture with her baby bump and, kind of said, for anyone who struggled, I see you, I've been there. And, actually, it's quite a brave thing to do, particularly when you're that high profile. But that does help a little bit.

**Clemmie**

We don't know what journey anyone's been on. In fact, that's the premise of everything that I do, on Mother Of All Lists and Honestly, is that you can be sitting on a tube carriage and mark my words, everyone will have a remarkable story. Everyone has been through hard stuff and, actually, I was going to come to it in a minute but you can't put scales of grief, you know. Because you were saying: Oh well I don't, compared to you. But everybody's grief is valid in whatever form, isn't it?

**Elle**

And the outcome is still the same. We've both lost children. It doesn't matter how pregnant anybody is or whether they lose a baby when they're in hospital or, you know, five years down the line or 18 years down the line, when you lose a part of you.

**Clemmie**

So, this is an amazing conversation between us but I always like to ask the people of the internet as well, to get their insight, which actually, is something I do before every podcast but with this one, I found that it the most difficult because as I put out the first one, I had a couple of people DM me. In fact, I want to say her name because she ended up being like my little editor for me. Jenny Watling, who really, really helped me because I was trying to get the language right. Because people were... I asked if they'd ever had baby loss and people were saying: Is that a stillborn, is it miscarriage? And my whole point was that I was trying to keep it blanket because-

**Elle**

Open it up to everyone, yeah. I think what it is as well, particularly when it's medicalised in hospital, it becomes, well which box do I fit into? Have I had a miscarriage? Have I got an ectopic pregnancy? Has my baby been stillborn? Neonatal death? Sudden Infant Death? Which slot do I fit into? And I think we then feel like that's our narrative and so that's going to be totally different to how somebody... But, as I said, I guess come from it from quite the unfortunate perspective that I've lost Teddy at full term, I lost a pregnancy at 15 weeks and I

lost a pregnancy early on at eight weeks, which turned out to be a twin pregnancy as well. So it's just, you know, I think that, for me, having been through so many different things it's all encompassed. It's all together. And that's why I think Tommy's, with the work that they do, and you know, a couple of years ago, they did the we need to talk about baby loss campaign, which was really powerful. Last year, we did the together for change campaign, which Jennie did a brilliant piece with myself and a few others in a national newspaper. And it was across all types of loss. The message was: We are stronger together. If we all talk about this together, we don't get that sliding scale of, well it happened so often, we don't talk about it, or it happens too rarely, we don't talk about it. No, we just talk about it and we'll just be normal. Who makes the rules?

**Clemmie**

So I asked my followers: Have you experienced baby loss? And 40 per cent had. So that, yeah, it's huge, isn't it?

**Jennie**

It speaks for itself, doesn't it?

**Clemmie**

Yeah it does. I asked: If it was an early loss, did you tell family and friends? And 25 per cent didn't. I asked them: If there's anything they wish they'd known? And the tidal wave answer, which you know, usually when I ask these things you get a variety but nearly everyone just said that they wish they'd known it was so common.

So yeah, that is the main thing we can do. A lot of people said they wished they'd known how physically painful it was and the reality of the blood loss, which I think, again, with all women's health, post-labour as well, we're not in touch with that amount... No one talks about it. And it's shocking.

**Jennie**

There was more in the pregnancy pamphlets I was given on flying long haul while pregnant than what to do if you have a miscarriage. Which is bonkers, isn't it? I mean, really. I think there's a lot of damage done by people not being prepared and it's that shock and that trauma.

**Clemmie**

And I asked people then: If they could be honest about baby loss, what would they say? Which was super powerful, I mean, yeah, 100s and 100s of responses. And these were some of them:

"That it is fucking shit. But that being told it's common doesn't help."

And I think the answer is that you want to know that it is common but you don't want to be, to have your experience devalued. And say: Oh everyone's been through it. I think that's the line, isn't it?

**Jennie**

I think it's often used as a dismissive thing that, it's really common, it's like a cold.

**Elle**

I think it depends on the language that we use and how it's... Sometimes I think you can misinterpret written text, whereas if I were to sit with you and say: Do you know what? This happens to a lot of people and I'm not devaluing what's happened to you. I think it depends how it comes across.

**Clemmie**

That is where the spoken word and tone of voice...

"That it can make you feel inadequate."

Which I thought was a piece of language I hadn't thought about but could understand. "That it's very hard to see friends post-baby loss."

Which is something you've both mentioned.

"That it hurts for siblings too."

Which, again, is something that had never, ever crossed my mind. That if you have baby loss, when you've already got children, and actually, my mum lost a baby when I was six and doing this whole thing has brought back a whole load of fuzzy memories that I didn't really think I had. But you can pull them out and I wondered where this space was for children whose parents had lost a baby.

And then I asked my audience: Any questions you wish you could ask?

Someone said: "When does miscarriage become baby loss?"

And we've already covered this, really. We could do it by dates but it's, I don't think, do we need to put things in categories?

**Jennie**

I don't think you do. I think it's really difficult. I know I've found that really hard, knowing whether my experience counted. And also, if you start, if you talk about baby loss with an early pregnancy, are people going to misinterpret your position on women's reproductive rights? Or there's a whole other conversation. I don't think we need to draw those lines, it's unhelpful.

**Elle**

And we end up drawing them because, again, in medical terms, you go into hospital: Oh you are an early miscarriage, you are a late miscarriage, now this is a stillbirth. You know, it's kind of like, we're doing it week-by-week-by-week.

**Jennie**

I think it then means people spend a lot of time thinking: Oh well, what's happening to me isn't a big deal. People go through worse, they have it much worse. And it's...

**Clemmie**

And then a question that I think is important to ask: How do you ensure that it doesn't ruin your relationship? And both of you, I mean, Nico's passage in your book is amazing, and I absolutely love how much you celebrate your marriage and Dan on your feed. Marriage is a complicated beast in itself but how on earth do you navigate this? It's a difficult question because you navigate it because you have to navigate it, I'm sure, but how has it impacted your relationships?

**Jennie**

Personally, I think it's made us stronger and I know that I'm very lucky to be able to say that. Because there is a lot of fear, I think, around, you know there are some scary statistics out there about what losing a baby at any stage can do to a relationship.

**Elle**

For us, and obviously I can only go on our own personal experience, of how losing Teddy, kind of, drove us more down the same path. If that made sense. I think, don't read statistics for one. Jennie and I are both coming at this from an incredibly fortunate position, that we are both fortunate, white, middle-class, women in marriages, there are so many people out there who are not in that privileged and fortunate position.

**Jennie**

Yeah, that's really true.

**Elle**

And I think our story is only one story.

**Jennie**

It is a privilege, actually. I think that's a really, really good word to use about it. Because, actually, I do think there is this idea with baby loss that it's only something that happens to married couples who don't have children yet. And actually, as you were saying, the truth is so much bigger than that.

**Elle**

It doesn't discriminate and that's what I think I've learned from meeting so many different people, from so many extreme walks of life. It can happen to any of us and I think it really brings people together when they start to talk. And I just hope that by us, kind of, cracking

the surface of it from our perspective, that it encourages everybody, regardless of their circumstances, to be able to talk as well.

### **Jennie**

I do try not to, like, wrap everything up in a, you know, it was all for the best. Because that's not what I'm saying at all. But, you know, there are positives, there are things that maybe you stop and think about that you wouldn't have done before, and things that you learn. I don't know, whether it's how to be there for a friend or... They don't feel like very much as consolation when you're in the thick of it, they really don't. I remember interviewing a psychologist about that, just after my first miscarriage, and she was giving me these examples of ways that people find to reframe their experience and I thought: That sounds rubbish, what are you talking about? I don't want to reframe it. I want my baby. But actually, you do find those things, they are only small things but I think that you do find them.

### **Elle**

You find ways of like, I found ways of, sort of, parenting Teddy. Like one of my ways of parenting him is through fundraising. Because he can't physically be here. I guess it goes back a bit to what you were saying at the beginning, about asking us if we had any regrets. Do I wish every single day that Teddy was here? Absolutely I do. But if somebody said to me, OK you can have not had him or you can have had him and lost him, had him and lost him every single time. Because that's your life, isn't it? You own it and that's, like, the journey you go on, without sounding too cliché. And then that, kind of, shapes where you're going and how you become as a human and hopefully you're able to support other people going through it.

### **Clemmie**

And there's a great line, Elle, you have in your book, that I now can't remember, which like, grief doesn't last forever but...

### **Elle**

Love does. And that was actually something that a vicar, I'm not religious particularly at all, but I didn't know what to do about a baby's funeral and the vicar came to our house and he didn't, sort of get all high church evangelical, or do anything like that. He just said: I'm going to say to you that I know this feels awful, I'm a father, I'm a grandfather. And that was how he spoke to me, as a father and a grandfather. And he said: I promise you, you feel awful in this moment and I don't want you to underestimate how awful you feel, but grief doesn't last forever and love does. And he said it again at Teddy's funeral and I was like: He's so right and actually, it's one thing, I had to put it in my book because I really think that a sentence like that can help so many people.

### **Clemmie**

Something to ladder back to-

**Elle**

When it feels desperate.

**Clemmie**

Yeah, exactly, when it's the most dark thing.

I feel like that's a good place to end. Although I always do three things before the actual end.

Thank you, ladies, first of all. But in case people don't already follow you, can you let them know where to find your social media, and also, if you have anything in particular you want to shout about.

**Elle**

You can find me @feathering\_the\_empty\_nest on Instagram and then my website blog is Featheringthemptynest.co.uk and the book is Ask Me His Name, available in all good bookshops and on Amazon!

**Clemmie**

You nailed it.

**Jennie**

So I'm on Instagram as @jenniemonologues and my blog is [www.uterusmonologues.com](http://www.uterusmonologues.com)

**Clemmie**

You both did that bit really well. Well done, girls.

And going back to the name of the podcast, which is Honestly. If you could have an honest conversation with one person, what would you say? It could be a troll, a celeb, a friend, a younger version of yourself, anyone. Who would it be and what would you say?

**Elle**

I would go for a younger version of myself. I would go for pre-married me and just yeah, have that, kind of, you're going to be alright chat.

**Clemmie**

You've got this.

**Jennie**

Yeah, I think that's where I would go as well. Twenty-something, don't worry about what other people think of you so much.

**Clemmie**

And then I am always really aware that you guys have been really honest so I always just like to do a little tidbit of honesty and, I don't know what inspired me to do this, but yesterday I was Googling how often you should change your bed sheets. And according to Good Housekeeping, which is the bible on these things, they say every week. And, I'll be honest, I do not change our bedding every week. Like, three weeks. Where are you at with that, girls?

**Elle**

I'm every week.

**Clemmie**

Oh I knew you would be.

**Elle**

Comes back to control freak. I think I am just my mother's daughter.

**Clemmie**

Do you do it, like, on a Sunday?

**Elle**

I am my mother's daughter. I normally do it on a Friday, like ready, like fresh sheets at the weekend.

**Clemmie**

Elle, you're winning at that.

**Jennie**

I think probably every couple of weeks. I think. Interesting Googling!

**Clemmie**

Yeah, exactly. Well, I think we're going to try and be a bit more Elle, here's Friday night sheet changing! I like a system, so I could get on board with that.

**Elle**

That's how wild my life is!

**Clemmie**

Well, there you go, what a way to end this. I've been Clemmie Telford and these excellent women have been Elle and Jennie, and this has been Honestly podcast. Thank you for

listening, please rate, review, subscribe and tell your mates all about it. Thank you very much.

**Clemmie**

And one final thought, I'm always looking for inspiration for new subjects, so if you've got any topics you'd like me to cover that I haven't done already, please do send your suggestions my way. You can either leave a comment below on iTunes or hop over to Instagram and send me a DM, and I'd love to hear from you. Thanks very much.