

A Gift of Time:

Continuing Your Pregnancy When Your Baby's Life is Expected to be Brief

REVIEWED BY DIANE VARGO, RN, MS, CGC

New technologies can be both a blessing and a curse. While your iPhone allows you to almost instantly access information, it makes it increasingly difficult to unplug. Recent technological advances have resulted in prenatal testing options that are more accurate and can be performed earlier in pregnancy. Thankfully, in most cases, prenatal testing provides reassuring information about the health of an unborn child. However, for a subset of expectant parents, testing reveals that their baby has a life-limiting condition.

A Gift of Time: Continuing Your Pregnancy When Your Baby's Life is Expected to be Brief is a book for families who have received devastating information that no parent ever wants to hear. Kuebelbeck is a former journalist well known for writing and speaking about [perinatal hospice](#), a model of care that supports parents through continuing a pregnancy in which their baby is expected to die before or shortly after birth. In her first book, *Waiting with Gabriel: A Story of Cherishing a Baby's Brief Life*, she wrote about continuing her own pregnancy after her son was prenatally diagnosed with a life-limiting cardiac condition. Davis is a developmental psycholo-

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gist, writer, and expert in perinatal bereavement. She is a founding member of the Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance, an organization that promotes awareness about perinatal loss and improves care for families experiencing these issues.

The introduction states that this book “describes and affirms the wide range of experiences and emotions that can follow a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis,” and indicates that it offers “encouragement and practical ideas for moving forward, including guidance for decision-making, strategies for coping with the remainder of the pregnancy, and ideas for nurturing and being with your baby, before and after birth and death.”

The book is interspersed with quotes from parents who have gone through pregnancies with a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis. I particularly like how the authors gently encourage parents to take an active role in decision-making and planning for their baby's birth and



death, while instilling confidence in their ability to make the “right” decisions on behalf of their baby. They make the important distinction that opting for palliative care is not the same as “doing nothing” and cover practical details without reading like a “how to” book.

As a prenatal genetic counselor, it is a professional fact of life that I am involved in the care of families with babies diagnosed with life-limiting conditions. This book is a valuable resource to help families find ways to make a very difficult experience more manageable, and perhaps even meaningful. I think it is a “must read,” but keep a box of Kleenex handy.



Diane Vargo, RN, MS, CGC has worked as a prenatal genetic counselor for more than 25 years. She currently works at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and has a special interest in perinatal palliative care.

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