

# FOUNDING A MOVEMENT

Kathleen Loxton shares the extraordinary work of Nathalie Belle-Larant, founder of Mammaste, a movement that is changing lives by helping women and their families through pregnancy loss



**Where it all began**  
“I believe we become more of who we are meant to be every day, and sometimes it takes a while to know what that is.”

At a young age Nathalie had a desire to help others, whether it was other people or small, wounded animals. Nathalie admitted, “I can’t stand seeing people suffer. Not just physically but also psychologically...” Today she uses these skills to help people and her philanthropic drive isn’t slowing down. Author, speaker, intuitive healer, fertility coach, transformation coach and soul midwife, are among the roles Nathalie has undertaken.

However, at first Nathalie went the traditional route, earning university degrees, graduating summa cum laude from a prestigious university in Paris, France, and going on to excel in international law and IT. It took her a while to follow her calling — being a high achiever, Nathalie focussed on always doing well. In her 30s, Nathalie travelled internationally for work and was at a networking event when she was introduced to neuro-linguistic programming (NLP for short, it is, according to *Psychology Today*, “a set of language and sensory-based interventions and behaviour-modification techniques intended to help improve the client’s self-awareness, confidence, communication skills, and social actions”).

Having been aware of Maria Montessori’s educational approach, and NLP, Nathalie continued to be well-read in these areas, but she didn’t know quite how to utilise this knowledge until later. As a passion and hobby, Nathalie also studied Ericksonian hypnosis, which “felt like home” while she continued with her high-flying career. When she reached her late 30s/early 40s, Nathalie began to think about starting a family after meeting the man of her dreams.

However, this was not an easy path for the couple, but it led her to where she is now and a deeper scientific and emotional understanding of dealing with trauma.

**The story behind the movement**  
“No matter how educated, and high-functioning, intelligent, or successful I was, nothing had really prepared me for becoming a mother.”

Nathalie is well-versed in the changes, responsibilities, and new experiences motherhood brings, and she shared her experience with us, in hope her story will empower and inform others.

Sadly, Nathalie’s journey to motherhood wasn’t an easy one, and as she so eloquently put it, “Life and death often intertwine in the cycle of life.” And after losing three pregnancies in the space of four years, Nathalie and her husband had a beautiful rainbow baby.

Looking back, Nathalie explained

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that while she didn’t have trouble falling pregnant, which she noted is becoming more and more common today due to multiple lifestyle and scientific factors, staying pregnant was the issue.

Nathalie elaborated, saying, “My road to motherhood was filled with terrifying and devastating choices that I didn’t feel equipped for at all...”

“I remember one time I was going to fly, I was about to jump on an aeroplane, and I was in the middle of a miscarriage, so I spent the two hours in the lounge’s bathroom, gushing blood and terrified at the idea I was going to lose my baby in the toilet. These are the things that we don’t know, because although we hear about, and know, ‘yes miscarriages happen’, we somehow feel that it happens to others, not to us. Or [we think], ‘falling pregnant is a natural thing, so why wouldn’t I? It’s a natural thing, it should be easy’...”

Nathalie spoke of the fact that in these circumstances you can be faced with decisions you feel so utterly alone in making, such as an abortion she was forced to hide. Like many women, Nathalie felt the pressure to lie to close friends and family about the abortion, and, shockingly, had the surgeon throw the guilt back in her face post-procedure. There were also more impossible choices along the way, including high-risk, but critical, medical tests and going into labour at 20 weeks.



Artwork by Lydia Jansen, lydiajansen.com

When the unthinkable happens, it is undoubtedly devastating, but Nathalie is encouraging the community to start a conversation about miscarriages, abortions, still births, and neonatal loss, because stories like Nathalie’s are more common than we think, and together we can better support those affected.

“There’s terrifying statistics; I mean, there’s 2.6 million stillborn babies every year that have been recorded by the World Health Organization,” said Nathalie. Globally, not all deaths are recorded, however, and in Australia there are “six stillborn babies every day” alone.

“No parent should have to carry the coffin of their baby to the grave and have to live through the grief of losing a child. Unfortunately, that’s the reality of what happens,” Nathalie added.

Falling pregnant again and handling interactions with others surrounding such loss, including young children and explaining to them why the little brother or sister they were expecting isn’t coming home, are some gargantuan tasks faced. It’s never easy, as Nathalie described, “no matter how rational, how researched, how intelligent and how informed you can be.”

Our culture tends to “sweep it under the carpet” when it comes to such loss, and “unless we are equipped to deal with it as a community and individuals” the situation won’t improve.

Nathalie’s hope is to “open [people’s] minds to the fact that it is possible, and it can happen, and we need to be able to support, even if it doesn’t happen to us, we need to be able to give space to families that are going through such an ordeal.”

Nathalie’s advice, to take onboard when the time is right, is inspiring: “Use that extreme grief as an opportunity for growth, learning and transformation.” And as Nathalie quoted from a Ted Talk we mentioned, “We can move forward, but we don’t want to move on.”

Another crucial piece of advice is “don’t leave the pain untreated, as it has dramatic consequences to not only your mental health as an individual, but also for the people around us.” It was actually a conversation Nathalie had with her son, while she suffered from postnatal depression, which highlighted to Nathalie that grief manifests in different ways, and when her thoughts took her to dark places she knew it was time to find the light.

## The start of Mammaste

“I wanted to create a movement that was really going to honour our experiences.” For Nathalie, depression and suicidal thoughts were a wakeup call. She soon contacted a naturopath and clairvoyant with the driving force of “I cannot give up on my family, my son. It’s not possible.”

From there she wanted to create a movement reflective of her family’s experience. And that’s where the name Mammaste came from, it’s a beautiful play on namaste, which embodies the mantra “my child, the divine in me bows to the divine in you.”

In 2018 Nathalie launched a meet-up group in her local area, starting the Facebook group to arrange a meeting at a private space, providing intimacy, a social outlet and support. Today, Mammaste’s numbers continue to grow.

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## Looking to the future

“Educate generations in self-empowerment and healing.”

Educating future generations is a large part of Nathalie’s goal, and she hopes for more chapters of Mammaste to be founded around the planet. Presently, her message of hope and awareness has also led to Nathalie writing a book, *Raising Leaders. The Influential Motherhood Academy for Evolutionary Women and Visionaries*.

Another current and exciting project Nathalie is working on is Motherhood by Design, which is described as the following: “Being a mother and a leader are no longer exclusive; as we reveal your unique motherhood identity, we catalyse the uncertainties and struggles of being or becoming a mother into pathways to new and unprecedented levels of fulfilment, not only as a parent, but more critically as a woman, lover, creator, influencer, contributor and leader.”

Nathalie is excited, curious and hopeful about her future and Mammaste’s, and in the spirit of 2020 encourages us to ask the women around us if they, too, have experienced a loss. With one in four women experiencing miscarriages (most in their first 12 weeks), spreading awareness is crucial, in particular using #1in4 on social media. You can also keep an eye on Queensland Women’s Week 2020 for more ways to help our community.

With SBS publishing the piece “Early tests raise hopes new drug could help lower rates of miscarriages” in January this year, and changing laws around leave after pregnancy loss, there is potential for a brighter future, but we must talk about it.