

Angel Whispers

SUMMER, 2012

*Angel Whispers
Newsletter is a resource
for parents who have lost
a baby during pregnancy
or shortly after birth.*

*Meetings are held in
Sherwood Park and Fort
Saskatchewan.*

*For meeting information,
or to receive our
newsletter or a special
care package, please call
780.998.5595,
ext. 225.*

*You can also reach us by
email at
angelwhispers@
familiesfirstsociety.ca
or visit our website at
www.angelwhispers.ca.*



www.familiesfirstsociety.ca

Hello Angel Whispers Mommies and Daddies!

Welcome to the summer edition of our Angel Whispers newsletter! Since our Spring Newsletter, Mother's Day and Father's Day were celebrated; both days can be very difficult and emotional for families that have lost a baby. I hope you took a moment to reflect and recognize that you are, in fact, still mommies and daddies to your angels.

In this edition we will be celebrating you together as couples! Losing a baby is one of the most devastating and trying experiences for a couple to endure. Naturally, men and women grieve differently, which can make you question where your partner is in their grief journey.

I remember after my husband and I lost Loren, he seemed to be able to move on and return to "normal"...whereas I was left devastated and alone. However when I expressed to him how I was feeling, he shared with me that he was grieving. He was doing his best to "keep it together" for me. A man's instinct is to protect us and "fix" what's broken. They feel helpless after a loss, because not only can our broken hearts not be "fixed", neither can theirs.

Once we started to share with each other how we were feeling, it was clear to me that he was grieving, it was just in his own way. When I was having a bad day, he was able to be a bit stronger, and the reverse happened as well. When I was experiencing a good day, he could feel a bit more vulnerable in his grief. Through our experience I realized that communication and sharing our feelings and needs with each other was critical on our path to healing.

I encourage each of you to make communication with your partner a priority as you journey through your grief. Take a few moments each day to share your thoughts and needs with each other. Remember you are both grieving the loss of your precious baby. Be gentle and patient with each other and remind yourself that you are not alone. You are in this together.

In this edition two of our Angel Whispers families share their experiences and how

their grief journeys differed and impacted their relationships. We also have included some suggestions for you and your partner to help you communicate. Most importantly if you feel as though you are needing additional support remember it's okay to ask for help. Many couples make the decision to seek professional support after their loss to help them reconnect and strengthen their relationship.

Lastly I invite you to visit our newly redesigned website: www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers. Featured on the home page is a link to our new Angel Whispers video with interviews with myself and co-founder Melissa Kondro and a few of our cherished Angel Whispers families sharing their stories and how they have found hope with the Angel Whispers program.

May you feel the love of your angel babies with you during these warm and sunny summer months. Remember you are not alone on this journey. We are here to walk along side you and provide you with hope and understanding!

Hugs to you!

Lori-Ann

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Men and Women Grieve Differently

Men and women grieve differently. There are a number of reasons for this. Variations in your personalities and the way you've been raised, as well as how bonded you were with the baby, are primary factors.

Generally, women are more expressive about their loss, more emotional about it, and more likely to look for support from others. Since society expects men to be strong and unemotional, they most often grieve in more solitary and cognitive ways. Men also tend to be more oriented to fact-gathering and problem-solving and may, therefore, not choose to participate in support networks which are oriented toward talking and feeling. While women may cry and dwell on their memories of the baby, men may express their grief by burying themselves in their work. Keep in mind, though, that because grieving is such an individual experience, the opposite may also be true.

These differences in style may be misinterpreted. If you're a woman and your partner doesn't appear to be as upset as you are, you may believe that he doesn't care about the loss of the baby, and you may feel abandoned by him. If you're a man, on the other hand, you may feel that your wife will never get over her mourning. It's important to remember that how a person acts is not always a true indicator of his or her inner feelings.

There are differences, also, because parents experience different levels of bonding with a baby. The bond between a pregnant woman and the baby growing inside her is unique. Generally, it grows more intense as the pregnancy progresses. For the father, the baby may seem less "real." Although he may begin bonding during pregnancy as he experiences physical signs of the baby, like seeing an ultrasound picture or feeling the baby kicking, a father's real bonding may not develop until after the

From the March of Dimes

baby is born. For this reason, men may seem less affected when the loss of the baby occurs early in pregnancy.

These differences may cause conflict in a relationship as you struggle together and separately to come to terms with the loss of your baby. But there are things you can do to help your relationship survive:

- Be caring about each other and your feelings and needs.
- Keep an open line of communication and share your thoughts and emotions.
- Accept your differences and acknowledge each other's pain.
- Assure one another of your commitment to your relationship.
- Talk about your baby and find ways to remember him or her.



Precious Little One

I'm just a precious little one
who didn't make it there.
I went straight to be with Jesus,
but I'm waiting for you here.

Many dwelling here where I live,
waited years to enter in.
Struggled through a world of sorrow,
a world marred with pain and sin.

Thank you for the life you gave me,
it was brief but don't complain.
I have all Heaven's Glory,
suffered none of earth's great pain.

Thank you for the name you gave me.
I'd have loved to bring it fame.
But if I'd lingered in earth's shadows,
I would have suffered just the same.

So sweet family-don't you sorrow.
Wipe those tears and chase the gloom.
I went straight to Jesus' arms
from my loving Mother's womb.

~Author Unknown

We Need Your Help!

Are you interested in sharing your story?

We're looking for families to share their short stories with us, telling us how Angel Whispers has helped you through your grief journey after the loss of your baby.

We would also appreciate having a picture of you holding a piece of paper with just one word expressing what Angel Whispers has given you.

We need to compile this information for our upcoming annual report to present to the board for September.

Submission deadline is August 31, so that we have enough time to compile your stories and pictures.

Five Ways to Help Your Relationship After Pregnancy Loss

By Jody Nelson

In my work as a therapist I've heard many stories about how pregnancy loss has been devastating to couples. Here are five pitfalls couples often find themselves facing following a miscarriage.

1. Forgetting that they are grieving. Grieving is a long, winding, complicated journey. The journey of grief follows a twisted path through depression, anger, and often, despair. Don't mistake the current patch of the road you are on for the entire journey. Where your relationship is at right now is not where your relationship will be 6 months or a year from now. The difficulties, stressors and strain that you are experiencing currently will also be different in 6 months or a year. Have patience with yourself and your partner.
2. Not sharing their feelings with each other. Couples may sometimes feel that they are burdening their partners with their feelings. To maintain a healthy relationship, it is important to acknowledge to one another that what your partner is thinking and feeling is important to you. It's important to talk about what you each can handle hearing, how often, and how the topics should be brought up. Sometimes people are afraid to ask how their partner is doing in their

process of grieving out of fear of somehow bringing up or even creating a painful feeling. Believe me, that painful feeling is already there. Talking about it seldom makes it any worse, and usually helps a great deal.

3. Sharing their feelings too much, and too often. It can be very easy to slide into the habit of focusing on the negative. This can be as dangerous to a couple as not sharing feelings can be. Figure out what times of the day are best to have these conversations. Not everyone is able to have an intense emotional talk before their first cup of coffee at six a.m. Equally valid is the fact that leaning over and whispering your innermost depressed thoughts of despair and woe are not always the best way to wish your loved one goodnight. Timing is important. It's crucial that you are mindful about the way you approach your partner when you want to talk about sensitive and painful topics.
4. Expecting to "be over it by now." Grief takes a long time, and different people grieve at different rates. Your partner is probably going through the stages of grief at a different rate than you are. This can complicate things if you aren't open about what you are feeling. What if you feel you are at the "acceptance" stage and

your partner is at the "anger" stage? Give grief time. It's not something your partner can rush through. And neither can you.

5. Forgetting that they are going through grief together. The emotional pain of a miscarriage can be so consuming that sometimes partners forget that their partner is also grieving. Nobody is at their best when grieving. As a result, we may be more easily irritated, frustrated, annoyed, or hurt by things our partner says or does. One of the most important things for a couple to keep in mind is that they are both grieving. Don't lose sight of the fact that this pregnancy loss has affected you both. Give them the benefit of the doubt, take a deep breath, and make time each night to mindfully and calmly discuss problems or concerns you've noticed in your relationship.

Each couple is unique in the way they deal with the trauma of pregnancy loss. It's not something that is easily overcome. Paying attention to the health of the relationship in this difficult time is more important than ever.

*Jody is a clinical social worker who blogs about miscarriage and pregnancy loss recovery at <http://www.miscarriagerecovery.com>
Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Jody_Nelson*

Upcoming Meetings:

Baby Loss Support Group - for families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family & Community Services offices at 401 Festival Lane. July 8, August 12 & September 9

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Meetings are held from 7-9 p.m. at the Family & Community Services offices at 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. July 15, August 19 & September 16

Healing Hands Workshop - an opportunity to remember your baby through healing activities such as scrapbooking, card making & other crafts. Next workshop Saturday September 22 from 1-3:30 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park

For all meetings & workshops please contact Lori-Ann to register - (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or (780)964-7464.

One Family's Story

I met my husband, Darcy, three months after losing my first husband to cancer. It had been an extremely difficult illness and had taken a lot out of me both physically and emotionally. I was neither looking for someone, nor was I ready for a new relationship, but from the moment we met, we both knew we needed to spend time together and see where things went.

To say he was amazing was an understatement. He was understanding as I went through all those firsts after losing my husband and never once did I feel like I couldn't just grieve as I needed to. It was certainly not your typical first year of dating!

After two years of dating, Darcy asked me to marry him! I was thrilled to be starting a new chapter in my life and four months later we were married in front of friends and family and ready to begin our lives together. We were both 30 and decided to get started on a family right away! I had been unable to have children with my first husband, but four months later, we found out we were pregnant!

We were giddy with excitement and read all the books and counted the milestones of our growing baby. At thirteen weeks, I had some heavy bleeding and had an ultrasound which showed that my pregnancy was fine and no explanation was found for the bleeding.

I was cautious, but continued being hopeful for the pregnancy. I had my regular ultrasound at twenty-one weeks and that's when our journey really began.....

We were told that our baby had many issues, including all four limbs not developed, and several other severe markers of genetic syndromes. We both sat in shock as the doctor explained what the ultrasound showed. I simply remember lying on that ultrasound bed saying over and over, "I can't go through this again!" I just couldn't imagine caring for someone I love and watching them die, as I had done with my first husband for three years!

An appointment was made for a few days later at a perinatal clinic in Calgary and we were sent home from Red Deer to wait. I cried the entire two hour drive home, and Darcy held my hand as he had done all day. He, too, was in complete shock, but he just kept saying "we will get through this together".

We got home and the next few days were a blur, but the one constant was Darcy's constant reminder that we would deal with this together. He was so calming when all I could think about was how unfair this was and what would this do to us. We had only been married less than a year!

The visit to the clinic in Calgary reaffirmed the diagnosis of a very sick baby, but no specific syndrome could be accredited. Through many difficult hours of discussion with doctors and counsellors, we made the decision to terminate the pregnancy. Again through all of this, Darcy was my rock, never pushing to make a decision, and completely respecting my craziness.

The next few days are a blur, and I don't remember much other than that we were together always. We discussed everything together, made preparations to get us through the delivery, bought a blanket to wrap our baby in and a small toy and chose names for the baby we knew would be stillborn.

On July 17, 2004, our first son was born still, and we named him Myles Lawson O'Hara. Together, we held him and cried over what should have been, and took pictures so we would be able to remember his sweet face forever!

I remember thinking, I've been through some pretty horrific things dealing with cancer, but this was Darcy's first experience with death. He was so calming and never once left my side even though I knew he was terrified and so unsure of all that was happening. We talked when we could about our feelings, and when we couldn't find the words, we simply held each other.

The next 6 months were extremely emotional, but we continued to talk through things and Darcy just kept say-

ing "we will get through this together. I waited a long time to find you and we have to make it through this."

Never once did we try and hide our grief or pretend Myles never happened. Instead, we talked about him and celebrated his first birthday and we looked at his pictures. I was so proud of our relationship and that we had survived this! We tried again, and after 10 months, we were pregnant again. I was a complete wreck during the first few weeks of pregnancy, I had heavy bleeding again at nine weeks and thought I'd miscarried. We spent a very emotional night waiting to have an ultrasound only to be told the pregnancy looked good, I asked a million questions about how the baby looked, but it was too early to know much more than that it had a strong heartbeat.

We were going through a ton of changes during this pregnancy. We bought our first home in Gibbons, I worked at a new job, we were in a new community, and we renovated. Any one of these things could have put a strain on a marriage, but we just seemed to be able to get through anything. We talked, we were respectful of each other's feelings, and we loved each other!

On January 22, 2006, we had a beautiful baby boy with 10 fingers and 10 toes and we named him Cole Ansel O'Hara. We wrapped him in the same blanket we had bought for Myles and brought him home. We both watched very carefully for signs of post partum depression, as I was at risk, but we got through the first year quite well and just enjoyed our new family.

Twenty two months later, we welcomed Eric Andrew to our home. I'd had similar heavy bleeding at about ten weeks, but had an otherwise normal pregnancy. After having Eric, I realized at about five months post natal, that I was suffering from fairly severe post partum depression, I had let my guard down after having such an easy go with Cole that it kind of snuck up on us. For anyone who has been through this, you

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will know that it can be crippling with anxiety. I was emotional, and can't imagine the stress and pressure this put on Darcy. He worked full time, worried about me at home with two small children, tried to help out with household chores at night and around all of that, we tried to find time for each other. It was a very trying time in our marriage, lot's of resentment on both our parts, and lot's of petty arguments.

When things got really difficult though, instead of giving up, we called in some family help. I joined a support group and had counselling and got on some medication, and we continued talking and working on our marriage. We often say to each other and to our friends that "Marriage is hard work every day but it's worth it". We got through yet another chapter in our lives and our relationship seemed stronger for it!

When Eric was one, I began a new chapter in my personal life and began my journey to become a photographer. I took many classes, and with full support from Darcy, I started my own business! Again, adding stress and taking time from family and us, we talked our way through the first bumpy year. We also had a surprise pregnancy in the summer of 2008. I was in shock and very stressed with the thought of having three kids under four and a new business. Just as we were accepting the pregnancy, we miscarried at thirteen weeks.

I felt guilty for not having been excited right from the beginning and felt selfish for wanting to have a sense of normalcy in our family. Hadn't we been through enough? At what point was my husband going to say "that's it, this is too hard". He would never say that, we were to find out soon enough.

The most recent chapter in our journey began when we decided that we would try once more to add another to our family. It was a difficult decision, with Darcy feeling very anxious about what another pregnancy may do to me and my mental health afterwards. I assured him that we would be diligent in

watching for signs of post partum and staying on top of the pressures another pregnancy would bring.

I had a much different pregnancy, I was extremely nauseous for the first trimester and for the first time. I had no heavy bleeding in the first trimester. I began to suspect maybe this was a girl! I had early ultrasounds to ensure things were going well and all looked good!

At my midterm ultrasound, which I had at twenty weeks, it took an unusually long time to get all the images they

markers.

How could this be???? After having Myles, we had an autopsy done to try and give us some answers. We needed to know if this was a syndrome that may appear again if we had another baby. There were no definitive answers and we were ultimately told that this was a case of DNA taking a wrong turn. No genetic syndrome. Now we were being ushered into a small room and being told that there must be a syndrome and that we now have another



needed. This felt like déjà vu as my very first ultrasound with Myles had taken forever! Darcy sat nervously in the waiting room, this time with two young boys, and was feeling the same déjà vu I was feeling!

We left there being told the baby was just in an awkward position which is why it took so long. The next week, at my check up, my doctor told me that the ultrasound had shown that our baby likely had club feet which he said not to be concerned about; we would deal with it when the time came. He also said there were some shadows showing on the baby's heart and that he was sending us for another ultrasound. He said not to be concerned, he was just being cautious.

We were both quietly concerned, things didn't feel right. We went for the appointment to the Perinatology clinic at the Royal Alex and had the ultrasound. Soon after a doctor came in and sent us reeling..... Your baby's arms and legs are badly twisted, there is something very wrong with the heart, and there are several genetic syndrome

baby affected with it!

We were speechless. How can this be happening, what did we do to deserve this again! I was appalled at the thought of having to make another life or death decision about a baby we hadn't even met yet!

The next few hours consisted of MRI's and cardiac testing. The news we got was not encouraging at all. This baby's heart was seriously damaged. We were told it looked like an 80 year old's heart after years of congestive heart failure. The shadows first seen on the ultrasound were calcium deposits that had already formed at just twenty-three weeks gestation.

We left the hospital with the termination decision looming over our heads. We sent our two boys to their grandparents so we could focus on the decision we had to make. It was much different this time....we both had experiences to draw from, and we now had two boys to think about as well.

We talked, we cried, we were angry,

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we cried some more. Ultimately our decision was made to terminate. Our heads knew it was the right decision for our family but our hearts were having a very hard time getting there. A couple days later, on April 21, 2011, our daughter Claire Nina was born still and we relived that horrific time of trying to say goodbye without ever having heard her cry or looked into what I'm sure were beautiful blue eyes, or felt her sweet breath on our necks as we snuggled her close. Again we went home empty handed and discussed how we were going to tell our boys that their baby sister was gone. There are so many other feelings and thoughts that surround this last loss that I am not ready to share yet, just know that it was the hardest and most stressful time in either of our lives.

This last year has certainly been our most difficult. I had to be treated for Post Traumatic Stress and spent many hours with a therapist. Darcy had to get back to work, where he started in a new position which was stressful. Our boys required extra attention which neither of us felt we had the energy to give.

We found ourselves drifting apart a little under the everyday stresses. Fortunately, we have always communicated very well, and we began talking more and focussed on some time for ourselves. We asked for help from family and friends, and we began building our foundation again. We often talk to each other and just focus on the things that are good between us. We have always communicated very well, we

are very affectionate with each other (some days we all just need a hug!). We are grateful everyday that we are still together and that our hard work has paid off. Our boys have excelled in their schooling (preschool and kindergarten), my business is doing well and Darcy has settled into his new position very well. We realize that any one of our tragedies could have easily put our marriage in jeopardy, but instead, we are closer than ever, we take nothing for granted, and we will continue to work at our marriage every day.

During the past nine years of our marriage, there are some things that we credit the strength of our relationship to: We have always dealt with any issues head on and never let the small things become big; We have been very aware of our mental states and have never hidden anything from each other. Being honest about what's going on in your head is huge! Lastly, we have respected each other's need for grief and space but have kept communicating with each other a priority!

Our best talks seem to happen while driving, when we have each other's complete attention, no TV, no kids (sometimes they are there watching a movie with headphones!) and only miles of road ahead of us to just talk! I hope our story gives hope to other families who find themselves in similar situations and know that through all the darkness, if you look for it, there is light!

Sincerely,

Corry-lyn and Darcy O'Hara

Thank you!

- to Strathcona Family & Community Services for allowing us use of their meeting space.
- to Betty Dean for beautifully designing our new Angel Whispers logo and for her help in creating the brochure and newsletter!
- to Allison Smith for her assistance in redesigning our website!

to the following people for providing letters of support for Angel Whispers:

- Jacquie Fenske - MLA Fort Saskatchewan/Vegreville
- Gale Katchur - Mayor Fort Saskatchewan
- Mayor Osinchuk - Mayor Strathcona County
- Jackie Winter - Director FCSS Strathcona County
- Reece Sellin - Board Chair FCSS Fort Saskatchewan

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- Jane & Trevor Slywka
- Cara & Devin Richards
- Melissa & Alan DeLeon
- Nikki Jones
- Rene Huot with Outlaw Productions for producing our new video!

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- Melissa DeLeon

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- AMIK Oilfield Equipment
- Twice but Nice
- Dr. Todd Berg
- Margaret Robinson for the Creative Memories Scrapbooking donation for the Healing Hands workshops

and to all our volunteers with Angel Whispers!

Thank you to everyone for your generous donations which help to sustain the services provided by Angel Whispers.

Congratulations!

Duncan John Carpenter

Born on May 3, 2012

Weight 6lbs 13 oz Height 18 "

Parents - Kim & Adam Carpenter

Big sister Hope Anne is smiling down from heaven and celebrating Duncan's safe arrival!

Congratulations!

Our Grief Journey

Shelly's Story

On August 4, 2006 my husband Robert and I began a journey that we never would have imagined. Our grief journey. That is the day that our beautiful daughter Zoe Reta Mary Steiner was stillborn at 37 weeks gestation.

We never anticipated that something like this could have ever happened to us; we both had healthy children from previous relationships. My pregnancy was high risk because I have a protein C deficiency which means I am on Warfarin for life. However, at the beginning of my pregnancy I was switched over to Lovenox, a low molecular weight Heparin which I had to inject twice a day. I was already familiar with doing this because I'd had to in my previous pregnancy with my daughter Taylor seven years ago. So I thought this time it would not be a big deal.

I saw my Ob-Gyn monthly as well as a doctor who specialized in high risk pregnancies. I was in good hands it seemed. Both doctors were very diligent in making sure Zoe and I received the best possible care. Many tests were run by both of them; some were even run twice just to make sure everything was okay and that the tests results were correct. I ate healthy, drank lots of water and got plenty of rest daily. I was having a perfectly normal pregnancy. It was great.

Life was good we were looking so forward to welcoming Zoe into the world; little did we know that our precious little girl would not take a breath outside of the womb. On August 2, 2006 during my weekly check-up my doctor could not find a heartbeat. I saw the panic on his face as he searched. I asked him what was wrong, but got no response from him. Instead, he left the room and came back with his nurse and an ultrasound machine.

I knew something was wrong, but they still weren't saying anything. They were both working frantically to find a heartbeat, but nothing and it was finally said. "I am really sorry but we

cannot find a heartbeat".

It felt like the walls had just closed in on me, that I was dreaming and I would wake up from this nightmare.

But it was real. I wanted to scream so badly, but couldn't. This was the first doctor's appointment that Rob did not attend with me and now I was faced with phoning him to tell him this horrible news. I had no idea how I would explain this to him. All I remember saying was that you need to meet me at the hospital now. There is no heartbeat; they are sending me across the street to the hospital to do another ultrasound.

Once I was wheeled across to the hospital, I was ushered into another room where three different doctors performed three separate ultrasounds to be positive there was no heartbeat and again it was said, "I am very sorry but there is no heartbeat".

This was the most devastating thing that I have been told when it comes to my children. I had so many things going through my mind at that very moment like How? When? And most importantly WHY!!! WHY!! US?

We were sent home after this horrific news and told to go home, process what just transpired and come back the following morning to be induced and deliver Zoe. I was unable to have a c-section due to the Lovenox. We went home to tell our children and families our terrible news. It had been such an overwhelming day, I was numb from the pain of our loss. I just wanted to be left alone, but we now were faced with making arrangements for the kids to be looked after and preparing for what would come next. Never did we imagine that we would have to make funeral arrangements for one of our children. It's not supposed to happen like this, it should be the other way around.

After 37 hours of painful labour Zoe was born still, and what should have been a joyous occasion was nothing but tears and heartache and still questioning WHY!?!? Why did this happen to us? To Zoe? She was such a beautiful baby, we were given only 24 hours to spend with her, in which we bathed

her, clothed her, held her, kissed and hugged her as long as we could and still that was not enough. We wanted her to be alive, we wanted to hear her cry, but God had chosen another path for our Zoe! WHY!?!?

That is how it began our grief journey. I was familiar with grief, having lost many close family members just a few years before. But this one was different because this was my child. A child that I only knew while she was in the womb, one that I had so many hopes and dreams for and now I will never know. Our future with her was lost just like that. I had no idea what life would be like after Zoe's funeral.

Life was anything but normal! I cried so much, I was angry at everything, I was numb from the pain, and I thought I was having a heart attack from this overwhelming grief. I felt so bad that I ended up in the emergency ward, and was told that it is part of the grief process and that everyone deals with it differently. This was how my body was deciding to react at that time.

That was just the beginning; little did I know how the cycle of grief works and that you continue to go through it over and over and not always in the same order even years later. Rob and I grieved together in the beginning, going through the grief cycle at the same rate. This slowly changed as we started grieving individually and at our own pace, sometimes visiting one cycle more often or longer than others. I started to realize that I needed to seek outside support, as I felt Rob just didn't fully understand how I was feeling. I even lashed out at him and accused him of being over his grief. All I could think was how he could let things get back to normal so quickly, it upset me. He said he was not over his grief, but realized he needed to stay strong for me and the kids.

I am still grieving. Rob had chosen to stay silent with his grief, and not display it in front of me. This angered me! I was upset that he did not share

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'Our Grief Journey' Continued from [page 7](#)

this with me. Everything seem to anger me very easily, I was on edge most days. I avoided phone calls because I didn't want to hear people tell me that I needed to get over this and move on. This was my grief and I had a right to grieve for my daughter and no one could take that away from me. I knew that I needed to find outside support, as I started to feel that I needed to talk to people who knew exactly what I was going through.

I sought out support groups and found Angel Whispers. Rob was not as receptive to joining a support group as he did not feel as if we needed it, but I knew I did. Rob went along with me at every meeting and soon found that it was quite helpful to him as well. We attended the monthly meetings for over a year together, they started to become less and less as time went by. In the mean time I started painting Zoe's memory boxes, as my way of giving back. Painting brought me healing as it was a way to deal with the stress brought on by the grief.

Rob started painting the boxes with me. At first I was not okay with this, it was supposed to be my way of healing not his. I thought why are you doing this? Why can't you figure out your own way of healing, let this be mine? Rob was taken back at first by my comment. I guess in my own way I thought he was trying to move in on my grief. I know this sounds selfish of me, but it was how I was dealing with my grief at that time.

This was the beginning of a downward spiral for our marriage over the next four years. At the time of Zoe's stillbirth Rob and I were still newly-weds married for only nine months. We never had a chance to experience our married life together when we were hit with this painful loss.

Over the next four years our marriage went through many ups and downs as we started to drift apart. A big part of me wanted to put the blame on Rob for causing stress in the house with our blended family. At one point I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown with all the grief,

stress, and arguing. I just didn't know anymore how to deal with our loss. I was overcome with grief. I just wanted our daughter to be here with us. Being angry was all I could be and stayed that way for quite some time. I really did not like who I was becoming. At times, Rob and I didn't even talk and I was okay with that, because it meant I didn't have to argue.

Our marriage took a drastic turn when I decided to follow a dream of mine and enroll in a one-year Culinary School in Vancouver. On September 1, 2010 my daughter Taylor and I moved to Vancouver. Rob stayed behind in Edmonton. It was a break in our marriage that we needed or things would completely end.

It was a long tough year, as I had been out of school for so many years, and was not sure I could do it. Being in two separate cities meant not being able to work on our broken marriage and broken hearts from the loss of our Zoe. It also meant not celebrating her birthday as we always had. But it was a necessary journey that we both needed in order for us to heal ourselves and then try to heal our marriage. Rob joined us in Vancouver in November 2011 just before my graduation.

Things have been rocky at times, as both of us got used to being apart. But we are trying to make things work and hopefully bring some normalcy back to our lives as we continue on with our grief journey together.

I wish that I could share that "we have arrived" and that all is well. Truth is, every day we need to bring to remembrance that we need to treat each other gently.

Rob's Story

August 4, 2012. Two thousand, one hundred and ninety two days will have passed and yet, I remember the day as if the sands of time have stood still.

Not a day goes by that she has not written a word, sentence, paragraph or chapter in the chronicles of my heart. Grief, a forged friend, a constant companion; an unremitting reminder of the emptiness caused by Providence, who saw it fit, in its plan and wisdom, that she live among angels rather than remain in the company of imperfect mortals.

It still seems as if it was only yesterday that we held Zoe in our arms. Looking at me, the smiles and laughs sometimes betray the pangs of hidden tears. If it were possible to peer into the prism of my heart, you would be able to see a translucent void reflecting her cherished memories in the place where she should have made her abode. Conversations are communion in spirit and in my mind's eye; I see her with all the radiance and beauty she would have displayed.

Faced with an unprecedented loss, our grief journey would have been much different if it were not for the love and support of Angel Whispers who helped us in our healing path. With time, we were able to slowly make the transition from numbly wounded to being able to empathize with others in their loss.

My wife founded "Zoe's Memory Box", a keepsake healing tool, to give to grieving parents to be able to place precious mementos of their brief visit with their precious little one(s). For me, other than teaming with my wife in making the memory boxes, I found comfort in sharing my experience by submitting a few articles to Angel Whispers' newsletter to share with grieving Fathers.

Like the parts of an old watch with all its moving parts working in perfect synchronicity, grieving between mother and father is an intricate balance.

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'Our Grief Journey' continued from [page 8](#)

Recognizing when to give each other space and when to provide support can be an everyday challenge.

In an unknown moment of time, the fragile grief balance leaned to a point of disparity. Despite being able to recognize "the signs", it would seem that Grief stealthily wedged itself between us. Daily routines were becoming increasingly arduous, each of us looking to blame the other for the bloating heaviness swelling inside. We were metamorphosing into people we couldn't recognize. Slowly, the light of hope was being eclipsed by grief's dark veil. But, for whatever reason, be it our faith, hope, prayers or Providence, the veil slowly lifted from our eyes and we can see again, and our grief journey continues.

I wish that I could share that "we have arrived" and that all is well. Truth is, every day we need to bring to remembrance that we need to treat each other gently. So, together, we continue our grief journey with the resolve that we take it one day at a time for our sake and those we love, especially our little Zoe.

It is my hope and prayer for those reading this, to be encouraged not dismayed. For those who are struggling, try to hug each other, and let there be hope knowing that this may be an ephemeral moment, that things can get better. For those who are blessed to have been spared or survived the dichotomous struggle, hug each other and let there be a whisper of thanksgiving.

Remembering Zoe...

Robert

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; - Psalms 23.4*

Just Those Few Weeks

By Susan Erling Martinez

*For those few weeks—
I had you to myself.
And that seems too short a time
to be changed so profoundly.*

*In those few weeks—
I came to know you...
and to love you.
You came to trust me with your life.
Oh, what a life I had planned for you!*

*Just those few weeks—
It wasn't enough time to convince others
how special and important you were.
How odd, a truly unique person has recently died,
and no one is mourning the passing.*

*Just a mere few weeks—
And no "normal" person would cry all night
over a tiny, unfinished baby.
Or get depressed and withdrawn day after
endless day.
No one would, so why am I?*

*You were just those few weeks, my little one.
You darted in and out of my life too quickly.
But it seems that's all the time you needed
to make my life so much richer
and give me a small glimpse of eternity.*

In Memory of our New Angels

Baby Coppernall
2008

Baby Adnum
February 2012

Jeremiah Scott Brazzle
February 8, 2010

Parker Robert Everett
March 7, 2012

J'aiyanna Arielle Springs
March 17, 2012

Charity Mae Weis
March 31, 2012

Precious Riter-Keeler
April 3, 2012

Wyatt Samuel Burchfield
April 4, 2012

Baby Delgado
April 19, 2012

Kelly Iris Hrynchuk
May 14, 2012

Rowan Angel Skyler Noircent
May 21, 2012

Twin Babies Adnum
May 30, 2012

Marisa Lorraine Denniston
September 18, 2011

Baby Adnum
September 23, 2011

Ni'tia Rose Flowers
September 25, 2011

Baby Beaunoyer
December 31, 2011

Stephanie Alexis Bass

All angels can be found on our website at: www.angelwhispers.ca

Please call or email us if you would like to submit your baby's name to be remembered. If we have forgotten to remember your baby on this page, or have misspelled your angel's name, please let us know.

Upcoming Healing Opportunities:

Walk to Remember: Sunday September 29, 2012 at noon at the Legislative Grounds.

Gather & walk to celebrate and honour the babies we carry in our hearts. We remember the joy they brought into our lives and the love they left there. Funds raised for the Lois Hole Hospital for Women to help other bereaved families begin their healing journey.

Yoga for Grief Support: Yoga specifically designed for people who have suffered the death of a loved one.

Classes involve yoga postures, breathing and meditation along with educational and supportive topics related to bereavement support. Guided by Sandy Ayre, and Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor. For more information & upcoming class dates, please visit - www.yogaforgriefsupport.com.

Thank you to the Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Grant for providing the funding for our new Angel Whispers video. Please check out the video on the home page of our website: www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Government
of Alberta** ■

Visit us on Facebook!!

Facebook is a fast and easy way for us to send out meeting reminders and notifications about our healing hands workshops, as well as what is new in our community.

You are also able to make a donation to our program in memory of your baby through facebook.

Please visit:

www.causes.com/angelwhispers

or Lori-Ann, the Angel Whispers program coordinator -[facebook.com/loriannangelwhispers](https://www.facebook.com/loriannangelwhispers)



Families First Society is a non profit organization established in 1996. We are directed by a volunteer board and work in partnership with many community agencies to offer a variety of programs and services. Our programs promote positive parenting and early childhood development.

Families First Society offers parent education, programs for young children to learn and play, and family support services, as well as information and referral to other programs and services in the community.

Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society (main office)

10302A – 99 Avenue T8L 1Y2
or Box 3285 T8L 2T3
Fort Saskatchewan, AB
Parent Link Centre

Phone: 780-998-5595

Fax: 780-998-5503

For meeting information, or to receive our newsletter or a special care package, please call 780.998.5595, ext. 225.

Our thanks to all the volunteers with Angel Whispers!

Angel Whispers was created by three moms in the Edmonton area who experienced the loss of their babies: one shortly after birth, one through miscarriage, and one through still birth.

It is a program of Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan, a non-profit charity funded primarily through individual donations.

Donations, in memory of your baby, are acknowledged in our newsletter at your request. Charitable donation receipts are issued upon request.

Angel Whispers provides:

- baby loss support group
- Healing Hands groups
- subsequent pregnancy support group
- resource lending library
- quarterly newsletter
- special care packages
- Memory Box program
- one-on-one and email support
- birthcertificate keepsakes
- website with memorial star page

Angel Whispers Care Packages

Angel Whispers sends out care packages to grieving families. Each package includes a special memento and strategies for coping. Birth Certificate keepsakes are also available.

If you would like to receive or send a care package, please call us.

Pregnancy After Loss Support Group

For families who are joyfully & anxiously pregnant again after losing a baby. From 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family & Community Services offices at 401 Festival Lane on the following evenings:

July 15, August 19 & September 16

Baby Loss Group

For families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family & Community Services offices at 401 Festival Lane.

July 8, August 12 & September 9