

# Angel Whispers

WINTER, 2014

*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/  
angelwhispers.*



[www.familiesfirstsociety.ca](http://www.familiesfirstsociety.ca)

## *Happy Holidays to all our Angel Whispers Families,*

**H**appy is not typically a word that grieving families can relate easily to, especially during the holidays. Christmas can be a very difficult time of year for a bereaved family, especially if their loss is recent or if it's the first Christmas since the loss of their precious baby.

Families struggle with a season that is typically filled with family, friends and celebrations. It's hard to celebrate when you're missing the most important member of your family, your sweet baby. The holidays can be hard if friends and family don't acknowledge your baby, they may not ask how you are doing or talk about your baby for fear that it will upset you or make you cry. What they should realize is that you will cry anyways, that there isn't a day that goes by that you don't think about your little one and that it means so much to hear your baby's name and to have your sweet baby acknowledged.

The thought of celebrating Christmas can cause great anxiety for some families. The anticipation of the pending holiday can often be much worse than Christmas Day itself. What is most important is to honour your feelings and decide if and how you want to celebrate.

Some families chose to "skip" Christmas, perhaps not permanently, but at least the first Christmas after the loss of their baby. Others may decide to change past traditions and create new memories at Christmas. Most importantly, regardless what you decide to do through the holidays, be gentle with yourself and take time to honour your baby.

An Angel Whispers tradition that we began many years ago is our Christmas Healing Hands Workshop, where our families come together to make an ornament

in memory of their baby. It's a safe place to share with other families who are walking a similar journey while honouring our sweet angels. You will find more information on this workshop in the newsletter. Each year I make an ornament that is then placed lovingly on my angel tree in memory of my two angels, Loren and Brooklynn. Loren and Brooklynn's angel tree has a special place in our home each Christmas and gives me comfort knowing that our girls are remembered each Christmas!

This newsletter is filled with suggestions on how to cope through the holidays and ways to honour your baby as well as upcoming Healing opportunities and Christmas Memorial Services. Remember this is your journey, try not to be influenced by others telling you what you should be doing this Christmas, there is no right or wrong way to cope, do what feels right to you. Don't be afraid to tell others what you need from them to get through the holiday season. If you do decide to participate in holiday festivities, plan ahead for the possibility that you may want to leave early. Have a code word arranged in advance with your spouse in the event you begin to feel overwhelmed and want to leave, by just saying this predetermined word or phrase that your spouse will know it's time to go with no questions asked.

Take time this season to enjoy moments

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of laughter and happiness, this can be difficult without experiencing the associated guilt that often accompanies joyful emotions. We question how we can possibly be happy when we are so heartbroken and devastated by the loss of our babies. With time as the intensity of the emotions associated with your loss soften, you will find it easier to experience happiness, it's through opening our hearts to joy again that we heal and find hope for the future. It is possible to find a new normal that allows you to experience things you previously enjoyed while still remembering and honouring your baby.

As we approach the end of 2014, I want to thank each of you for opening up your hearts and allowing Angel Whispers to be a part of your grief journey. May you feel the love of your babies with you each and every day this Christmas. We wish you peace, hope and love this holiday season.

With love and understanding,

*Lori-Ann*

*Lori-Ann Huot  
Program Coordinator  
Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support  
Program  
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## Thank you!

- to Strathcona Family and Community Services for allowing us use of their meeting space.
- to Betty Dean for helping with our newsletter!
- to all our Angel Whispers volunteers!
- to Jennifer King from King's Quilting Queen - Jennifer handcrafts beautiful baby quilts and donates them to Angel Whispers to be given to Angel Whispers families after the birth of their Rainbow Babies - for more information on Jennifer's quilting, please visit her website - <http://www.kingsquiltingqueen.com/>
- to the Fort Saskatchewan Hospital Auxiliary for the generous donation to Angel Whispers!
- to DOW for the generous grant to cover the cost of supplies for our Healing Hands group!
- to Kelly Monaghan for the donation of books to enhance our Angel Whispers library in memory of Loren, Brooklynn and Madison
- to Jody and Ken Vandervies for the generous donation in memory of Willow.
- to Roy Seida and Capital Power's Corporations EmPowering Communities Volunteer Grant Program for the generous grant to Angel Whispers in memory of Roy and Jennifer's son Simon.
- to Guy, Christina and Kelsea Baines for the generous annual donations in memory of their nephew Nicholas Applin.
- to all the families who donate to cover the costs of care packages and birth certificate keepsakes.

## Another Christmas Morning

*By Marty Heiberg*

Another Christmas morning  
and my family is still not complete.  
Not enough stockings on the mantel,  
not enough toys under the tree.

Too few little hands helping make cookies,  
too few tiny ice skates and mittens,  
too little noise and excitement,  
too little confusion and commotion.

Why can't I just be grateful  
for the child I have,  
at this sacred time of year?

Because it's another Christmas morning,  
without my baby  
and I miss him.

# New Year's Resolutions For Bereaved Parents

## *I Resolve:*

That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

That I will talk about my baby as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how I feel.

That I will not blame myself for my baby's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job I could. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.

That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

I will keep the truth in my heart--the truth that my child is always with me in spirit.

That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

To know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all a normal part of the grief process.

To know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.

To let myself heal and not feel guilty about not feeling better sooner.

To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous--that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the mourning process, and that these moods, too, will pass.

To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.

That I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.

That even though my baby has died, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

*~Adapted From the Brooksville/Spring Hill FL. TCF Newsletter~*

# Helping Yourself Heal During the Holiday Season

by Dr. Alan Wofelt

Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than being times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness.

## **Love Does Not End With Death**

Since love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief—a feeling of loss unlike that experienced in the routine of daily living. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights and smells trigger memories of the one you love who has died. No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. We hope, however, the following suggestions will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful, yet painful, time of the year. As you read through this article, remember that by being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal.

## **Talk About Your Grief**

During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen—without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.

## **Be Tolerant of Your Physical and Psychological Limits**

Feelings of loss will probably leave you fatigued. Your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. And lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

## **Eliminate Unnecessary Stress**

You may already feel stressed, so don't overextend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief, but may actually increase stress and postpone the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

## **Be With Supportive, Comforting People**

Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your

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feelings—both happy and sad.

### **Talk About the Person Who Has Died**

Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are able to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

### **Do What Is Right for You During the Holidays**

Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. As you become aware of your needs, share them with your friends and family.

### **Plan Ahead for Family Gatherings**

Decide which family traditions you want to continue and which new ones you would like to begin. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear and anxiety during the time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

### **Embrace Your Treasure of Memories**

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think about times past. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's alright to cry. Memories that were made in love—no one can ever take them away from you.

### **Renew Your Resources for Living**

Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The death of someone loved created opportunities for taking inventory of your life— past, present and future. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

### **Express Your Faith**

During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk

about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony.

As you approach the holidays, remember: grief is both a necessity and a privilege. It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving, caring people

**About Dr. Alan Wolfelt: author, educator, and grief counselor**



Dr. Alan Wolfelt is known across North America for his inspirational teaching gifts. His compassionate messages about healing in grief—based on his own personal losses as well as his experience supporting children, teens, adults, and families over the last three decades—speak not only to the intellect but to the hearts of all who hear him. Perhaps best known for his model of “companionship” versus “treating” mourners, Dr. Wolfelt is committed to helping people mourn well so they can live well and love well.

Founder and Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, Dr. Wolfelt presents numerous educational workshops each year for hospices, hospitals, schools, universities, funeral homes, community groups, and a variety of other organizations. He also teaches the 4-day trainings described on this website in beautiful Fort Collins, Colorado.

Dr. Wolfelt is a popular media

resource who regularly provides his expertise to many top-tier television shows, newspapers, and magazines. Recipient of the Association for Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, Dr. Wolfelt is also a faculty member of the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine.

*“Mourning in our culture isn't always easy. Normal thoughts and feelings connected to loss are typically seen as unnecessary and even shameful. Instead of encouraging mourners to express themselves, our culture's unstated rules would have them avoid their hurt and 'be strong.'”*

*“But grief is not a disease. Instead, it is the normal, healthy process of embracing the mystery of the death of someone loved. If mourners see themselves as active participants in their healing, they will experience a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life.”*

To learn more about Dr. Wolfelt and his Centre for Loss and his extensive Resource Library, visit <http://www.centerforloss.com/>

## Christmas Wish

*Author unknown*

The heart of Christmas is hope  
We need hope.  
We need Christmas!

The New Year gives us time.  
We need time to grieve.  
But most of all to Heal.

I wish you the gift of peace from  
an aching heart;  
I wish you the gift of strength for  
the day ~  
I wish you the gift of recognition,  
I wish you the gift of remem-  
brance,  
I wish you the gift of care,  
I wish you the gift of belonging,  
These are the gifts I wrap in  
prayer,  
And lovingly send your way.

May the memories of this Season  
Come on Gentle Wings and  
Bring you, your family and friends  
Love and Peace.

Angel Whispers receives some funding from the Ed Stelmach Foundation. We also rely on grants, fundraisers, and donations from generous individuals to sustain our services to grieving families. Thank you for your continued support!

# Upcoming Fundraising Opportunities:

- Unfortunately the Christmas Mini Photo Shoots fundraiser could not be planned in time to be held for this year. Stay tuned to our website [www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers](http://www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers) and upcoming newsletters for information on this fundraiser being rescheduled. Thank you to our Angel Whisper mommies who are planning this fundraiser in support of the program!
- Angel Whispers Bottle Drive - Saturday January 4th, 2015 - this is your opportunity to donate all your Holiday and New Year's bottles with all money raised helping to sustain services to grieving families. If you are interested in donating your bottles in support of Angel Whispers, please contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 to make arrangements.
- 2nd Annual Angel Whispers Pub Night - to be held in February 2015. Details have not yet been confirmed, stay tuned to our website for a date to be announced soon!

If you have an idea for a fundraiser or if you or your company are interested in hosting a fundraiser for the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program, contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or by email at [angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca](mailto:angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca).

Thank you for your support in helping us to continue to provide hope and healing to grieving families!

## Congratulations!

*Carmichael Donovan Rochefort  
Born on October 2, 2014 weighing 4 lbs 13 oz  
to proud parents Justina Ackeral & Patrick Rochefort  
and big sisters Jocaya and Savienne.  
Big brother Declan is celebrating his safe arrival with the angels!*

*Amelia Gabrielle Clair  
Born on October 10, 2014 weighing 8 lbs  
to loving parents Karen and Michael Clair and excited big sister Olivia.  
Amelia's older brother Gabriel is celebrating with the angels!*

*Alexa Grace McCartney  
Born on November 10, 2014 weighing 7lbs 10 oz  
to loving parents Trina and Will McCartney.  
Alexa was also welcomed by her excited siblings Jenna and Nathan.  
Her angel sister Katelyn is smiling down from heaven!*

## Forever Christmas Night...

*Author unknown*

All I really want for Christmas is something I cannot have.

A wish from deep within my soul  
A longing only those who've been there know  
For a little face staring at the tree  
Dancing with excitement on daddy's knee  
Eyes full of wonder, shining so bright

And a head full of dreams on Christmas night.  
There's something missing as I gaze at the tree  
For the thing I want most can never be.

Christmas night is a magical time  
It's mysteries held in a nursery rhyme  
Where anything's possible and dreams do come true  
That's where my heart is waiting for you.

I do believe I'll see you again  
I'll have to settle for wishes 'til then  
But so long as that day is well within sight  
It will be forever Christmas Night.

# Handling the Holidays

**By Therese Rando, Ph.D.**

One of the most painful issues for you to deal with is how to survive the holidays after the death of the person you love. Because holidays are supposed to be family times, and because of the extraordinary (although unrealistic) expectation that you should feel close to everyone, this time of year can underscore the absence of your deceased loved one more than any other time. The important thing to remember is that you and your family do have options about how to cope with the holidays. These are a few things to keep in mind:

As much as you'd like to skip from November to January 2nd, this is impossible. Therefore, it will be wise for you to take control of the situation by facing it squarely and planning for what you do and do not want to do to get through this time.

Realize that the anticipation of pain at the holidays is always worse than the actual day.

Recognize that what you decide for this year can be changed next year; you can move to something new or back to the old way. Decide what is right for, you and your family now. Don't worry about all the other holidays to come in years ahead. You will be at different places in your mourning and in your life then.

Recognize, also, that your distress about the holidays is normal. It doesn't make you a bad person. Countless other bereaved people have felt, and do feel, as you do right now.

Ask yourself and your loved ones to decide what is important for you to make your holidays meaningful and bearable. Then, through compromise and negotiation, see if everyone can get a little of what he or she wants and needs. Give-and-take is important here.

Do something symbolic. Think about including rituals that can appropriately symbolize your memory of your loved one. For example, a candle burning at Thanksgiving dinner, the hanging of a special Christmas ornament, or the

planting of a tree on New Years Day may help you to mark the continued abstract presence of your deceased loved one while still celebrating the holiday with those you love who still survive. Remembering your deceased loved one in this fashion can make an important statement to yourself and others.

Recognize that the holidays are filled with unrealistic expectations for intimacy, closeness, relaxation, and joy for all people—not just for the bereaved. Try not to buy into this for yourself—you already have enough to contend with.

Be aware of the pressures, demands, depression, increased alcohol intake, and fatigue that comes with holidays. As a bereaved person you may feel these more than others. Take time out to take care for yourself during this time. You will need it even more.

*Having some fun at the holidays does not mean you don't miss your loved one. It is not a betrayal.*

Re-evaluate family traditions. Ask yourself and your surviving loved ones whether you need to carry them on this year or whether you should begin to develop some new ones. Perhaps you can alter your traditions slightly so that you can still have them to a certain extent but don't have to highlight your loved one's absence more than it already is. For example, you may want to have Thanksgiving dinner at your children's house instead of yours. Or you might open presents on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning.

Recognize that your loved one's absence will cause pain no matter what you do. This is only natural and right. After all, you are mourning because you love and miss this person. Try to mix this with your love for those you

still have and your positive memories of the past. "Bittersweet" is a good word to describe this. You can feel the sweetness of the holiday but also the bitterness of your loved one's absence. Together they can give you a full, rich feeling, marked with love for those present and those gone whom you will never forget.

Plan ahead for your shopping tasks. Make a list ahead of time. Then, if you have a good day, capitalize on it and do the shopping you can. Try to consolidate the stores you want to visit. If you have trouble with shopping right now, do your shopping by catalog or mail order, or ask friends to help you out.

Tears and sadness do not have to ruin the entire holiday for you or for others. In yourself have the cry you need and you will be surprised that you can go on again until the next time you need to release the tears. Facing family holidays in your loved ones absence are normal mourning experiences and part of the healing process. Let your tears and sadness come and go throughout the whole day if necessary. The tears and emotions you do not express will be the ones which are destructive to you.

Ask for what you want or need from others during the holidays. One bereaved mother said that, as appropriate, she wanted to hear her dead daughter mentioned. She knew everyone was thinking of her daughter and wanted them to share their thoughts.

You may find yourself reminiscing about other holidays you shared with your deceased loved one. This is normal. Let the memories come. Talk about them. This is part of mourning and doesn't stop just because it is a holiday. In fact, the holidays usually intensify it.

Having some fun at the holidays does not mean you don't miss your

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loved one. It is not a betrayal. You must give yourself permission to have fun when you can, just like you must give yourself permission to mourn when you have the need.

You may have to let your limits be known to concerned others who are determined not to let you be sad or alone. Let others know what you need and how they can best help you. Don't be forced into doing things you don't want to do or don't feel up to solely to keep others happy. Determine what and how much you need, and then inform others.

Discuss holiday tasks and responsibilities that must be attended to, for example, preparing the meals, doing the shopping, decorating the house. Consider whether they should be continued, reassigned, shared, or eliminated.

Break down your goals into small, manageable pieces that you can accomplish one at a time. Don't overwhelm or over-commit yourself. The holidays are stressful times for everyone, not just the bereaved, so you will need to take it slow and easy. Look at your plans and ask what they indicate. Are you doing what you want or are you placating others? Are you isolating yourself from support or are you tapping into your resources? Are you doing things that are meaningful or are you just doing things?

Do something for someone else. Although you may feel deprived because of the loss of your loved one, reaching out to another can bring you some measure of fulfillment. For example, give a donation in your loved one's name. Invite a guest to share your festivities. Give food to a needy family for Thanksgiving dinner.

*Taken from Therese A. Rando, 'How To Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies'. New York: Bantam Books, 1991, pp 289-292. — with Janeil Bennett.*

# A Christmas Card for Robbie

*By Kathleen Paley Smith*

It's the night before Christmas, we're all filled with joy,  
Except when we think of you, little boy.  
The stockings are hung by the chimney with care,  
And in our hearts it's as if you were here.  
My children are sleeping, in their bedrooms they lie,  
But we're still filled with grief for our baby that died.  
You see, this Christmas you would have been two,  
But every Christmas I know we'll miss you.  
As I wrap up the presents my thoughts are on you,  
And what we'd have bought if you were here, too.  
A car, a ball, a red fire truck?  
Or maybe a rabbit's foot to bring you good luck.  
The tree is all trimmed with bright colored balls,  
And decorations hang on all of the walls.  
It looks so pretty - - I wonder if you see  
Your Christmas ball we've hung on the tree.  
I made it for you before you were here,  
Not knowing I'd hang it with eyes filled with tears.  
Tomorrow is Christmas, I'll try not to be sad;  
I'll count all my blessings and try to be glad,  
You're not a part of our future - -  
you were a part of our past  
And someday I know we'll be together at last.

## 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 FCSS offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive. December 7, January 4, February 1 and March 1

**Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group** - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Contact Lori-Ann for meeting location. December 14, January 11, February 8 and March 8

**Healing Hands Workshop** - an opportunity to remember your baby through healing activities such as scrapbooking, card making and other crafts. From 1-3 p.m. December 13, January 17, February 21 and March 21 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park.

**Parenting after Loss Group Meetings** Please Call Lori-Ann for upcoming dates

*For all meetings and workshops please contact Lori-Ann to register (780) 998-5595 ext. 225.*

# Coping Through The Holidays After The Loss Of Your Baby

**by: Lori-Ann Huot**

The holidays are a difficult time of the year when you are grieving. When you have lost a baby, the thought of celebrating Christmas, especially if your loss is recent, is too much to bear for many families. Holidays are meant to be shared with loved ones, and yet when a loved one as significant as your baby is missing, it can be too difficult to imagine a Christmas without them.

For some, skipping Christmas may feel like to best option, although there are many things to be considered when making a decision to not celebrate the holidays:

- Express how you are feeling to your family, explain that it's too difficult to face the usual traditions and that you're hoping that next year may be easier.
- Be gentle with yourself, remember that it's okay to experience moments of joy and happiness. Don't feel guilty if you find yourself smiling or laughing. You are not disrespecting your baby by allowing yourself to enjoy life.
- Decline invitations – no explanation is necessary, friends and family will understand.
- Make shopping easy – consider online shopping for those that you need to buy gifts for and avoid the holiday bustle of the stores.
- Find a balance between staying busy and having time to yourself – try to plan a few activities that you enjoy. Grief can be very lonely, try not to add to those feelings of loneliness by isolating yourself.
- Take a vacation – a trip away may be the best way to remove yourself from the traditions that are too difficult to face. You may want to travel away as a couple or perhaps consider inviting family to join you. Consider a travel destination where Christmas isn't celebrated. If a vacation isn't

possible, consider taking on a project around your home to keep you busy.

- Do something special to remember your baby, continue reading for ideas on honoring your baby.

If you chose to attend holiday gatherings, the following suggestions may make the experience easier to tolerate:

- Know your limits – if you feel as though you will feel more stress than enjoyment, decline the invitation. Do consider however if attending events with friends and family may help to take your mind of things for a short time.
- Make a plan in advance – if you are attending a holiday gathering, find a quiet place to spend a few moments alone if you need to. Plan an excuse to use in case you feel overwhelmed and need to leave.
- Share your feelings with friends and family – your loved ones will know best how to support you if you can express to them what you need.
- Not everyone understands what you are going through, you may hear comments that are hurtful or insensitive. Know that most often these people make comments with the best of intentions, but without them understanding exactly what you are going through it's hard for them to know the right things to say. Often times they will say nothing as they are concerned that they may upset you, when in reality they are worried about being uncomfortable by you being upset. What you need to express to them is that you want desperately to talk about your baby and hear your baby's name.
- Reach out to others that understand – it helps to talk to someone that

can truly understand what you are going through. Connect with other baby loss families through support groups or in online chat groups. If your faith is important to you, attend extra services. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a counselor or mental health professional.

The other way to cope with the holidays, instead of skipping Christmas, may be to start some new holiday traditions.

As you journey through your grief, your needs may change. You may try something one year and decide to change it and try something new the next year. With time you may even decide to renew old traditions. Most importantly do what feels right to you and allows you to honor your baby and incorporate your baby's memory into your new reality. Here are some ideas for honoring your baby's memory at Christmas:

- Ornaments – have an ornament engraved with your baby's name on it, add a new ornament each year in memory of your baby. I invite you to attend our annual Christmas healing hands workshop on Saturday December 13th from 1-3 p.m. where you can make an ornament in memory of your baby.
- Dedicate a tree specifically to your baby – I did this several years ago in memory of my angels, Loren and Brooklynn. Every year I decorate my angel tree to honor my babies, and each year I add a new ornament that I make or buy for them. Consider having a theme to your tree: angels, butterflies, dragonflies or something meaningful to you. Tie ribbons on your tree, blue for boys, pink for girls or white if you don't

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know the gender of your baby. Search the internet for baby loss awareness ornaments.

- Hang a stocking for your baby – write a letter to your baby and tuck it inside the stocking, invite loved ones to do the same. Add a new note each year and save them to read every year. Consider a Random Acts of Kindness stocking.
- Buy a gift in memory of your baby that you can donate to a local hospital or needy child – buy an age appropriate gift for the age your baby would be. This can become an annual tradition. Include a note that the gift is being given in memory of your baby.
- Make a donation in memory of your baby to a hospital, charity or program designed to help families after the loss of a baby.
- Give your baby a special signature – feel free to sign holiday cards with a designation for your baby like a stamp of an angel or baby feet, it may help you to know that your baby is not being forgotten and being remembered by others.
- Update friends and family by sharing how you are feeling – if you typically send out a letter with holiday cards, let them know how you are coping. It's okay to be honest and to share what you are needing from them.
- If you are inviting family or friends over, display keepsakes for your baby (pictures, scrapbookays, ornaments, etc.)
- Light a candle in memory of your baby.

Whether you decide to skip Christmas, create new holiday traditions or attempt to celebrate Christmas like you have done in years past, I wish you peace, love and hope. May hope for the future and the love of family and friends bring comfort to you this Christmas. Please know that your angel is smiling down on you from above wishing you love and happiness.

# In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

Taylor Aiden Foster  
July 9, 2013

Alan & Jamie Dunleavy  
September 28, 1991

Dikoti Willa Malone  
July 15, 2013

Joslyn Kaai  
October 13, 2014

Josie & Michael Fleming  
September 6, 2005

*All angels can be found on our website at:  
[www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers](http://www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers)*

*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.*

## Pilgrims BriarPatch Centre for Grieving Families



- Expressive Arts for Children ages 5 to 12 years old who have experienced the death of someone they love. We offer art, music, play, puppetry and drama for our youngest mourners to explore their unique grief journey in a safe and compassionate setting. Our parent/guardian group meets concurrently for other family members.
- Expressive Arts for Teens ages 13 to 18 years old who have experienced the death of someone they love. We offer art, music, writing and movement for our youth to explore their unique grief journey in a safe and supportive environment. A parent/guardian group meets concurrently for other family members.

For more information on these children's grief programs, contact Cheryl Salter-Roberts - [cherylsr@pilgrimshospice.com](mailto:cherylsr@pilgrimshospice.com) or 780.413.9801 ext. #302

# Christmas Blue

By Joanne Burkey

My heart is so fragile, and I'm falling apart.  
The thought of the holidays is breaking my heart.  
There is no cheer to spread this year,  
I just want to run away and forget I'm here.

I feel guilty and sad and full of despair.  
I'm letting down everyone and it's just not fair.  
Do you know the kind of pain that I feel?  
I can't do it this year; I just can't deal.

So let me do this in my own way,  
And then I'm sure that you will see  
That because love is there inside of me,  
I must endure what is meant to be.

I pray ever day, "God show me the way.  
When I feel alone at night,  
There's no one here to hold me tight.  
I need Your help to find the path that is right."

It's been over a year, and I still cry.  
Sometimes I don't even know why.  
The tears, the sorrow, the pain I feel  
My aching heart that will not heal.

I wonder if only there could be  
One more time for you and me.  
A time when God could share a place  
For us to meet, face to face.

One last time to say farewell,  
And know that you are safe and well.  
The comfort I would then feel  
Would ease my pain and help me heal.

# Christmas

By James A. Kisnerer

Standing by my baby's grave, here on Christmas Eve,  
While other families are rejoicing, I can only grieve.

Tomorrow, it will be 5 years, since he's gone away,  
My 3 day old son passed away on Christmas Day.

So while the world rejoices for a Christ Child that was born,  
Happiness eludes me for it is my time to mourn.

I think of other mothers with their babies at their breast,  
But empty are my arms tonight my baby's laid to rest.

I know there must be other mothers, who have felt this pain,  
And wonder how they kept from going totally insane.

I thought about the Virgin's child so many years gone by,  
The first time that She held Him, She knew He was born to die.

She was a special lady so the Christmas story reads,  
But She had angels sent from God that helped to soothe her needs.

I stand alone beside his grave in the Christmas snow,  
This pain I suffer by myself no one will ever know.

The hour's growing late now soon it will be Christmas Day,  
I turn to go and quietly I hear a soft voice say.

"You're not alone the Angels know your pain and why you grieve,  
But be content he's safely in our arms this Christmas Eve."

## 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](http://www.causes.com/angelwhispers)  
or <http://www.facebook.com/lorian-nangelwhispers>

Find our Angel Whispers Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/angelwhispersbaby-losssupport>

## Donations

*AngelWhispers accepts donations. A \$10 donation will sponsor a care package for an Angel Whispers family.*

*Donations can be made through the CanadaHelps website - [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)*

*Find us under Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society, find Angel Whispers under Fund Designation.*

# Ready Or Not...Here They Come!!!

By: *Mary Cleckley*

*Bereaved Mother, Lawrenceville, GA*

Try as you might, you can't escape the holiday season. Though it has been some years now, I still remember how I approached those first few holidays with fear and trepidation.

I hadn't had the time necessary to know yet how the "new me" reacted to old situations. I didn't even want there to be a Thanksgiving or Christmas, for it meant I had to come face-to-face with the fact that my son wasn't going to be a part of them anymore. That brought out pain in me that I'm sure I don't need to explain to you.

But they came anyway, complete with turkey, trimmings, jingle bells and lots of ho ho ho's. Since a ho ho was hard for me to come by in those early years I didn't try. I fumed and fussed about what I was going to do, that first year in particular. What was left of my feeble brain deviled me to get an answer to the old question "What are you going to do to observe the holidays?"

I soon realized that if I tried to please everybody on the periphery of my life, I was going to please nobody. And since my needs were paramount it was only necessary that I work out something that afforded the least amount of pain for my husband, my daughter, and me.

I had several choices. Decide to do things as we always had done; decide to keep some of the old traditions, but

introduce some new ones; or do as we eventually did-just ignore the whole thing.

They laugh in the groups when I tell how my family spent Thanksgiving at the "Benihana of Tokyo" restaurant. Can't get any further away from tradition than that! But it was right for us. As with many other things having to do with grieving for a child, there aren't any rules and regulations, and don't you believe anybody who tries to lay a bunch of them on you.

My suggestion is this. Having gotten input from your immediate family as to their needs and wants; decide right now how you think you'd be most comfortable observing the holidays. Then make plans. Your brain will keep badgering you until it gets an answer - any answer. It really doesn't care what you decide, but it wants an answer.

So give it one. You may decide at the last minute to do nothing you've said you would. It'll be too late then for your brain to devil you. This is true for all the holidays and any other day that is special. Just know that it's possible, still, for you to have some control over your life.

Remember, Benihna of Tokyo" is always an option for you. Don't worry about making reservations. It just isn't a busy day for them somehow!!!

## Angels in Heaven

*Tammy L. Tobac*  
1993

We have angels in heaven  
Who look down on us here  
while the world all around us  
says  
"Be of good cheer!"

Everyone else is bustling about  
We simply watch it go by,  
yet we just want to shout~  
Don't you know it's not merry  
at this time of year,  
when our lives feel so empty  
and our eyes fill with tears.

We can't bear the thought of  
another holiday  
without our precious loved one  
who was taken away.  
But your child's spirit does live  
on,  
though their physical being may  
be gone.

Look around and you will see  
their soul lives on in your  
memory.  
You'll see your child's eyes so  
bright  
In every twinkling Christmas  
light.

There are angels in heaven  
Who look down on us here  
And they are trying to tell us,  
Don't worry we're near!  
We love you and miss you,  
we'll never be far...  
Just look to the sky  
and the bright Christmas star.

Take a special moment  
throughout these blessed days  
to remember me in the kindest of  
ways...

Give my smile to a person,  
who needs it like you,  
and my spirit will live on  
through the things that you do.

# Healing Opportunities

## 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](http://www.yogaforgriefsupport.com)

- **December 7th @ 7pm**

Grieving Parents Society  
Christmas Candle Lighting Service  
Knox-Metropolitan United Church  
8307-109 Street, Edmonton

For more information on the Grieving Parents Society and the Christmas Memorial service, visit - <http://grievingparents.ca/>

- **December 10th @ 7:30pm**

St. Albert Bereavement Fellowship  
Remembering our Loved Ones at Christmas Candle Lighting Service  
St. Albert 50+ Club  
7 Tache St. St. Albert

For more information on the St. Albert Bereavement Fellowship and their Christmas Memorial service, visit - [www.stalbertbereavement.ca](http://www.stalbertbereavement.ca)

- **December 13th 1-3pm**

Angel Whispers Annual Christmas Healing Hands Workshop  
You are invited to join us to make a Christmas ornament in memory of your baby. An opportunity for our families to come together at Christmas to share and honour their precious babies.

FCSS offices - 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park  
Please RSVP to Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or by email - [angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca](mailto:angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca)

- **December 14th Time to be announced**

HEARTS (Helping Empty Arms Recover Through Sharing)  
Annual Candle Lighting Service  
Glenwood Memorial Gardens  
52356 Range Road 232 Sherwood Park

For more information on HEARTS & their Christmas Memorial Service, visit - <http://heartsbabyloss.ca>

- **December 18**

Parent Care  
Annual Candle Lighting Service

For information on Parent Care and the time & location of their Christmas Memorial Service, visit their website - <http://parent-care.ca/>

## Special Handling Please

*By: Mary J. Pinkava*

I was handed a package the other day.

It was wrapped securely to be mailed away  
Attached to the outside as plain as could be  
Was a simple note for all to see.

Please rush through the holiday season;  
Too painful to open for any reason.  
Contained within, find one broken heart-  
Fragile, broken, falling apart.

Tried to go shopping the other day;  
The hype of the season blew me away.

Sat down to write cards,  
That was insane.  
Couldn't find the list  
Or think of my name.

People say,  
"Come over, be of good cheer."  
"Celebrate the holidays,  
Prepare a New Year."

But my grief overwhelms me  
Like waves in the sea.  
Can they cope with my crying,  
an unsettled me?

I don't have any holiday cheer.  
Decorations, traditions, big family meal

I can't do this year.  
Do you know how I feel?

Guilty and frustrated!  
I've let everyone down!  
Our holiday celebrations  
used to be the best in town.

So just ship me away  
Address unknown  
When my grief is better  
I might fly home.



*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

*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

**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 or email [angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca](mailto:angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca) ,

**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 and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive.

December 7, January 4, February 1 and March 1

**Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group**

For families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Contact Lori-Ann for meeting location.

December 14, January 11, February 8 and March 8

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

*Angel Whispers is a non-denominational program. However we honor and respect the individual beliefs of our families.*