

Angel Whispers

WINTER, 2015

*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

Holiday Wishes to all of Our Angel Whispers Families,

Typical holiday greetings like Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays can be difficult for bereaved families to hear when they are grieving the loss of their precious babies. What is merry or happy about a time of year that is meant to be celebrated with loved ones when the one you love the most is gone?

The first few holidays after experiencing the loss of a baby can be the most difficult for families. Holidays that are typically filled with joy, happiness, laughter and cherished memories instead can be a time of sadness, anxiety and tears for families grieving the loss of their sweet baby. As a result it can be hard to face the holidays with others that are celebrating.

If you are early on in your grief journey and this will be your first or second Christmas since your loss, I want to offer you hope in knowing that with time these intense emotions you are feeling now will soften. You will never 'get over' the loss of your baby, however as you grieve and mourn your loss, those intense emotions do soften as you learn to integrate the loss into your life. You will always feel as though a part of your heart is missing, you have lost your sweet baby and all the hopes, plans and dreams for the future that you imagined with your baby. Of course you can't help but think about what Christmas would have been like with your child which can intensify your grief or trigger grief bursts even for those that are farther along in their grief journey.

It's not just Christmas Day itself that can be hard, it can be all the activities of the holiday season that are challenging to participate in. Even what was once the simple task of shopping can be difficult to do as there are often triggers around every corner you turn; pregnant bellies, babies in strollers and children on Santa's knee in

the mall. The anticipation of Christmas Day can often be more difficult than the day itself as the work up to the day can create added anxiety in wondering what the day will be like and how we will feel. Once the day arrives it can be a bit of a relief that it's finally here and will soon enough be over.

I encourage you to take each day through the holidays one moment at a time, don't over commit yourself and ask for help from others that you can delegate some of the necessary tasks that you feel must be completed. If you feel as though you can't continue with previous traditions, change them. Don't hesitate to do something completely different for Christmas than you did in the past, or perhaps 'skipping' Christmas this year is what you need to do. Often our reluctance to decline invitations or change past traditions comes from the guilt we feel as a result; our fear about what others will think. Let me reassure you that this is your journey, don't worry about what others will think. You need to do what feels right to you to get through this difficult time of year. Perhaps next year or in a few years from now you may return to old traditions and celebrating may be something you chose to do.

Sadly much of our hesitation to 'skip' the holidays or change traditions comes from societies expectations of us after our losses. Unfortunately society often puts a deadline

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on our grief and expects us to return to “normal” soon after our loss, so when the holidays approach and we aren’t ourselves and don’t feel like celebrating, others don’t understand and try to pressure us to keep busy and pretend we are ok. Don’t fall victim to societal pressures and expectations of how you “should” be feeling and what you “should” be doing for the holidays. It’s ok to set boundaries so that you aren’t forced outside your limits of what you are able to do.

This newsletter edition is filled with suggestions on coping through the holidays and ideas for honoring your sweet baby this Christmas. May you find some comfort in the next few pages, knowing you are not alone and that there are others that care and understand how you are feeling. Honor the memory of your sweet baby in a meaningful way. One suggestion is with an online or film credit in the upcoming documentary ‘Expecting Sunshine’ – a heartbreaking story, but one of hope. The film follows Alexis Marie Chute’s subsequent pregnancy after the loss of her son Zachary and documents her mission to heal before the birth of her second rainbow baby. I’m honored to be a part of the crew

for this documentary. Help us to break the silence surrounding baby loss and subsequent pregnancies, you’ll find information on making an ‘in memory’ donation in this newsletter along with several other ideas for honoring the memory of your baby.

My wish for you this holiday season is to be surrounded by supportive family and friends, to feel the loving presence of your precious angel with you and to have a gentle holiday season filled with peace, hope and love.

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

Lori-Ann Huot
Program Coordinator
Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support
Program
(780)998-5595 ext. 225
angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca



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 6, January 3, February 7 and March 6

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 13, January 10, February 21 and March 13

Healing Hands Workshop - The next workshop is scheduled for December 12, January 23, February 20 and March 19

Rainbow Connection - previously known as **Rainbow Baby Play Dates** Angel Whispers Rainbow Families host get together in their homes several times per year as an opportunity for families who have had rainbow babies to stay connected and share their experiences in parenting a rainbow baby while honoring and remembering their angel babies. Stay tuned to our website and Facebook for upcoming dates!

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

Web Sites

For extra comfort through the holidays, you might want to check out:

- <http://www.bearsofhope.org.au/a/207.html>
- <http://facesofloss.com/real-advice/surviving-the-holidays>
- <http://www.franchescacox.com/category/12-days-of-christmas-with-you-in-heaven/>
- <http://www.sweetpeaproject.org/resources/honoring-your-baby>
- <http://www.roseandherlily.com/2012/11/remembering-your-baby-at-christmas.html>
- <http://stillstandingmag.com/ways-to-honor-your-child/>
- <http://www.erichad.com/qotm-dec02.htm>

Emmanuel

Hello Emmanuel, we just want you to know
That when we learned about your coming, our joys overflow
You will be a perfect and beautiful gift from above
We're excited to show and give you all our love.

But Emmanuel, something went wrong.
We were not prepared yet our faith was strong
You came and saw the world three months early, we did not expect
It is the will of God, we just have to respect.

We're wondering Emmanuel, what could have been.
If you're not born early for sure you're not so thin
When we first saw you, you're tiny and small
As time goes by you gained weight and became tall

Oh Emmanuel, it's been a year
When we all faced our biggest fear
Nights before your passing, in our dreams you started to appear
We were shocked and saddened but your message was clear.

Incredible you are Emmanuel, you were born a fighter
You endured life's challenges in a different manner
But when He saw that you're already tired and couldn't move forward
He carried you through, gave you rest and heaven was your reward

We're sad Emmanuel, we wish you did not say goodbye
So we can play and sing to you a new lullaby
But God knows what is best for you,
Even until now we still don't have a clue

Yes Emmanuel, you lived your life so short
We wish heaven is easy to reach back and forth
So we can see, kiss and hug you once more
That is what we are hoping and praying for.

Certain are we Emmanuel, we know you are free
Free from pain, suffering and agony
Take away our grief, sorrow and sadness
Replace it with love, hope and gladness

Please Emmanuel, guide and watch us from above
Continue to pray for us with the members of your "Heaven's Club"
For we believe that angels are true
They needed you up there because they only got a few.

Dear Emmanuel, Christmas is near
It will bring too much sadness, we will share a tear.
We'll celebrate the birth of Jesus even though you're not here.
It's also your angelversary when you became His angel, for almost a year

You are missed Emmanuel, we think of you a lot
We know that in heaven you're enjoying your spot
We wanted you to know that we never cease to pray
That someday we'll meet again in that home far away.

*In loving memory of Emmanuel
Written by Emmanuel's daddy Jude*

Angel Whispers Volunteer Highlight

Thank you to Kelly Monaghan, a dedicated Angel Whispers mommy and volunteer!

Kelly's daughter Sophie was born on December 22, 2006 and passed away on December 27, 2006. Kelly connected with Angel Whispers in the spring of 2013 after beginning the process of adopting her son Aiden and realizing that she was needing some support as she grieved for Sophie.

Kelly quickly became a huge advocate for the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program and is always searching for ways to raise money for the program. Kelly is always there whenever anything needs to be done, from collecting donations for our silent auctions, to decorating memory boxes for families, to making sympathy cards for our care packages or volunteering at events in support of Angel Whispers, Kelly never hesitates to offer her assistance!

Kelly has 2 children she holds in her arms, Aiden and Sasha and her precious daughter Sophie that she will forever hold in her heart.

Thank you Kelly for everything you do to help Angel Whispers provide hope and healing to grieving families.

Can You Help?

Contact Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society at 780-998-5595 to donate or volunteer.

Helping Yourself Heal During the Holiday Season

by Dr. Alan Wolfelt

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 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 “companioning” 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/>

Upcoming Fundraising Opportunities

Please join us for these great fundraising opportunities:

3rd Annual Angel Whispers Pub Night Fundraiser & Silent Auction

- to be held in February or March 2016. Details have not yet been confirmed, stay tuned to our website and Facebook for a date and details to be announced soon!

Angel Whispers Healing Hearts Paint Night

- details will be announced soon for an upcoming paint night benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program! Stay tuned to our website and Facebook for a date and details to be announced soon!

Bereavement Workshop

March 15-16, 2016

Dr. Alan Wolfelt will be in Edmonton to provide a bereavement workshop to grieving families. Sponsored by Park Memorial. Stay tuned to our website and upcoming newsletter for more details.

Rainbow Baby Birth Announcement

*Reeves Mable Mackay
Born on June 25th, 2015 weighing 5lbs 14oz to loving parents
Bodi and Jorday Mackay.
Reeves' big brother Letley is celebrating with the angels!*

*Rory Hope Thompson
Born on November 20, 2015 weighing 5lbs 15oz to loving parents
Rebecca and Scott Thompson and excited big brother Liam.
Rory's big brother Xavier is smiling down from heaven!*

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 ok 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 12 from 1-3pm 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

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

- Hang a stocking for you 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 ok to be honest and to share what you are needing from them.
- If you are inviting family or friends over, display keepsakes for you baby (pictures, scrapbooks, 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.

Jar of Celebration

1. Pick a start date.
2. Think of memories or anything that brings comfort of your time with your angel baby whether it was during your pregnancy or the time spent with them. This can be in the form of a written sentiment, a poem, pictures, things that happened during this time that you may not have gotten to experience otherwise. Be creative! Encourage everyone in the home to participate, friends and family may have special moments to add as well.
3. Each day add something to the jar. It can be written, physical items, anything that defines this special piece of your lives.
4. Pick the day that you are going open the jar. This may be Christmas or the birthday of your angel baby, or to start off the New Year.
5. Choose who you'd like to have around when you go through your treasure of precious memories and moments.

I hope that this brings you and your loved ones the gift of many memories and comfort over the Holidays knowing how loved and honoured your angel baby is.

In memory of Logan Jamaisom Alexander Laye. ♥

Kayla Cavaliere
Justin Laye

Dear Santa,

I'm writing this letter as I'm feeling a little blue. I hope you don't think I'm asking too much of you. You visit every year and leave us such wonderful things, but I'm wondering if you visit all the children who have wings? I know you are very busy, so much to do in one night, but could you please make an extra trip to the stars that shine so bright? You see my baby lives up there, just too perfect for life on earth, no presents I could send to truly show their worth. Please leave them a gift and put a stocking on their cloud, filled full of precious presents from their family on the ground. Please stroke their sleepy head and tell my baby I love them so, that my heart aches with sadness and my tears just seem to flow. If you could do this for me Santa, I may even be able to smile, even if it is just for a little while. So thank you very much Santa for all that you do, after all it is Christmas in heaven too xx

Anonymous

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.
- 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, 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.

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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 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.

Thank You!

Thank you to the Fort Saskatchewan Downtown Business Council, Fort Cinemas and Daisy a Day for hosting and sponsoring the November 14th movie event benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program. \$201.50 was raised to help Angel Whispers continue to provide hope and healing to grieving families.



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!

Angels in Heaven

*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.*

Tammy L. Tobac 1993

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~

Suggestions for Honouring Your Baby

A positive way of coping with your loss is to recognize your baby in a very tangible and meaningful way. Listed below are several ways to honour your baby's memory during the holidays and beyond:

1. Hang a special tree ornament with your baby's name on it.
2. Hang a stocking on the mantle and fill it with notes from the family including thoughts and feelings about your baby during the holidays.
3. Create a scrapbook in memory of your baby.
4. Contact us and we will make a special birth certificate in memory of your baby.
5. Purchase a gift for your baby and donate it in his/her memory to your local women's shelter, NICU or your other favorite charity.
6. Attend a special Christmas memorial service for families who are grieving during the holidays—more information is listed on our website and in this newsletter. Many services provide special ornaments memorializing your loved one.
7. Plant an apple tree or flowering shrub in the spring for your yard that will bloom every year.
8. Purchase a yard ornament to place under that tree or shrub.
9. Donate a book to Angel Whispers in memory of your baby, to assist other grieving parents. We will place a name plate in the front of the book as a tribute to your baby.
10. Have a special stepping stone made for your garden in memory of your baby.
11. Buy yourself a special Christmas present available at most gift shops: an angel pin with your baby's birth stone.
12. Make a donation to Angel Whispers or your favourite charity in memory of your baby.

Thank You!

- A huge thank you to Twice But Nice for the donation made to Angel Whispers allowing us to update our resource library!!!
- 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 Kelly Monaghan for beautifully designing memory boxes for our Angel Whispers families.
- To all the families who donate to cover the costs for our care packages, birth certificate keepsakes and memory boxes.

Hearts of Blue®

Hearts of Blue, our employee-run charity, was originally planned as a one-time 50th anniversary event in 1998. It was so well received, however, that it became an ongoing part of Alberta Blue Cross's community involvement. Today, Hearts of Blue is a registered charity operated by our employees and funded through both employee and corporate donations.

Members of Hearts of Blue provide help where needed by volunteering their time and donating items such as food, clothing and furniture to dozens of organizations across the province.

Thank you to the Alberta Blue Cross Hearts of Blue Team for the generous donation of Angel Wings and Resources for our care packages!



Healing Opportunities

Grieving Parents Society of Edmonton Christmas Candlelight Service

Sunday December 6, 7:30pm

Hosanna Lutheran Church, 9009 163 St. Edmonton

For more information, visit: <http://grievingparents.ca/category/events/>

Angel Whispers Annual Christmas Healing Hands Workshop

December 12, 1-3pm

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 by email - angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

ParentCare Candle Light Service

December 17, 7:30pm

In keeping with what has become a ParentCare tradition, the December meeting will once again be a Candle Light non-denominational service on December 17th, 2015 at 7:30 P.M. at the Chapel in the Misericordia Hospital. Before the busy Christmas season begins ParentCare offers each of you an opportunity to pause and remember the babies that live on in our hearts.

If you would like to attend the service please call the answering service at 780-989-5040 before December 14th and leave the name(s) and colour of candle (pink, blue or white) for your baby(ies) to be remembered or email this information to: Patti at Patti.Walker@ahs.ca or Claire at cnlefeb@telusplanet.net

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, an Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor.

For more information and upcoming class dates, please visit - www.yogaforgriefsupport.com

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 & drama for our youngest mourners to explore their unique grief journey in a safe & 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 & movement for our youth to explore their unique grief journey in a safe & 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 or 780.413.9801 ext. #302.



Bereavement Workshop

March 15-16, 2016

Dr. Alan Wolfelt will be in Edmonton to provide a bereavement workshop to grieving families. Sponsored by Park Memorial. Stay tuned to our website and upcoming newsletter for more details.

Angel Whispers Healing Hearts Retreat

Planning is underway for an upcoming sharing, caring and healing retreat, an opportunity for Angel Whispers families to come together for a weekend retreat to honour the memory of their sweet baby. More details will hopefully be announced in the Spring Angel Whispers newsletter as we are still working out details and awaiting information on a possible grant to help cover expenses. We are hoping to hold the retreat in the spring or fall of 2016!

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

*A Mother's Christmas
Wish*

*I guess if I could make just one
Christmas wish,
I would wish I could see you.
To hold, to snuggle, to just kiss,
This is something I'd really like to do.*

*My arms ache for my baby boy,
Who will always remain just that.
To never grow and experience joy,
I wish I knew where you were at.*

*Why is it God thought he needed you
more than I,
And why is it wishes can't come true?
I am just an aching heart who can
only ask why,
And a mother who can't let go of you.*

*Please God grant me this one
Christmas wish,
If just for a minute, an hour or a day.
He is someone I really need & miss,
What more must I say?*

Written By: Beckie/HeavensAngel

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.

Find our Angel Whispers Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/angelwhispersbabylosssupport>

Add the Angel Whispers Program Coordinator, Lori-Ann, on facebook, you can find her as **Lori-Ann Angel-Whispers**.

Healing Opportunities

Compassionate Friends/HEARTS 16th Annual Candle Light Memorial Service

Sunday, December 13, 2015, 7 p.m.
Glenwood Memorial Gardens
52356 RR 232, Sherwood Park



Expecting Sunshine the Documentary tells the story of writer and artist Alexis Marie Chute, as she sets out to rediscover her identity as a mother - and as a woman - after one of the most primal types of losses; the death of her newborn at birth. The story is framed within the three trimesters of her pregnancy that followed. Through artistic visuals, profound interviews, “luminous prose and with such clear-eyed insight,” Chute reveals the turbulent 40-week experience of having a baby after loss. Poignant, touching, tender and inspiring, *Expecting Sunshine* “makes death a starting point for the continuation of life.”

Why this Project is Meaningful and Needs your Support:

In 2010, Alexis Marie Chute’s son Zachary died at birth. He had a random genetic condition and a large tumor around his heart. Doctors predicted that Zachary would be stillborn, but he was born alive. He never made a sound or opened his eyes. Alexis Marie and her husband Aaron rocked and sang to Zachary. They only had a moment with their son before he died – and that was the moment that changed their lives forever.

When Alexis Marie got pregnant again with her next child, at first she was thrilled. Soon, though, that excitement turned to worry and a debilitating fear for her next baby’s life and safety. Would this child suffer the same fate?

In the 40 weeks that followed, she realized she needed to address her grief for Zachary, which she had tried to bury, before the birth of the child that followed. That is when *Expecting Sunshine the Memoir* was born; it became a creative narrative of survival. *Expecting Sunshine the Documentary* is the visual and literary manifestation of that experience.

The topic of *Expecting Sunshine the Documentary* is often taboo and uncomfortable for people who have not experienced this type of loss – which is exactly why there is a need for this film. Many do not know what to say or how to empathize with the bereaved parents, despite wishing to help. What this means is that families can feel isolated and suffer in silence, especially when they struggle with subsequent pregnancies.

This film will encourage discussion, community and healing for so many people. It will start a dialogue. It will shed light on a secret pain. It will be an education on healthy (and not-so-healthy) approaches to grief and healing. It will also show how creativity can be a balm to the wounded spirit. In this way, *Expecting Sunshine* will speak to viewers on many levels.

Pregnancy After Loss:

What many do not realize is that pregnancy after loss is actually an incredibly difficult time. Some believe conceiving after loss is a natural state of moving-on or a helpful distraction. On the contrary, it often brings to the surface many unaddressed issues, relational strains and fears.

Expecting Sunshine the Documentary chronicles Alexis Marie Chute’s experience of surviving pregnancy following Zachary’s death and navigating the delicate balance of anticipation and anxiety.

As an artist and writer, the perspective Alexis Marie brings to this project is a surreal and intimate one. She invites viewers into her creative perceptions of grief and healing, presenting her darkest days and also her moments of hard-earned

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resiliency and triumph. Anyone who has lost a person will connect with her reflections and be inspired by her stubborn determination to find the sunshine, the hope in times of personal trials.

Please donate to our Indiegogo Crowdfunding Campaign:

Every contribution is not only a financial gift to bring the vision into being, but is also a public statement that this topic matters, that it needs to be talked about, and that there is strength in community.

Please help us achieve our goal of raising \$25,000 – donate here - <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/expecting-sunshine-documentary#/>

Our Perks:

We want to honour our contributors and their unique needs through the types of perks we offer. We have created ways to celebrate children no longer with us, and the ‘Rainbow Babies’ that came after them.

\$100 CAD

“In Memory Credit” on site

We join with you in honouring your deceased child by listing his or her name in the “In Memory Credits” section on ExpectingSunshine.com. These children are the reason we do what we do and we dedicate this work to them.

\$100 CAD

“Rainbow Baby Credit” on site

We join with you in celebrating the child you had after loss, your rainbow baby, and the fact you made it through that pregnancy. These children teach us to hope and be vulnerable again. We dedicate this work to them and will proudly list the child’s name in the “Rainbow Baby Credits” on our website.

\$250 CAD

“In Memory Credit” in the Film

A unique commemoration! We join with you in honouring your deceased child by listing his or her name in the “In Memory Credits” in the film. These children are the reason we do what we do and we dedicate this work to them.

\$250 CAD

“Rainbow Baby Credit” in Film

A unique commemoration! We join with you in celebrating the child you had after loss, your Rainbow Baby, and the fact you made it through that pregnancy. These children teach us to hope and be vulnerable again. We dedicate this work to them and will proudly list the child’s name in the “Rainbow Baby Credits” in the film.

Thank you for making this project possible!

Other Ways You Can Help:

Please help us spread the word about *Expecting Sunshine the Documentary*! You can do this by telling your family, friends and colleagues about the project and sharing our Indiegogo fundraising campaign with them. Join in and be a part of the buzz! We appreciate every email, phone call, tweet, and post made on our behalf.

Thank you in advance!

Share our website: www.ExpectingSunshine.com

Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/expectingsunshine>

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/expectsunbook>

Subscribe to our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/AlexisMarieChute>

Learn more about life (and pregnancy) after the loss of a child on *Wanted, Chosen, Planned*: <http://www.wantedchosenplanned.com/>

*'Twas the Night Before Christmas"
~ For Bereaved Parents ~*

*'Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing - the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.*

*As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking - I couldn't understand.
I had lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday had in store.*

*When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was looking around,
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash*

*The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance.*

*The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift,
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.*

*As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it - as if it knew -
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
To help me get through the holiday scene.*

*In the days that followed I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart -
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.*

*Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears,
A message of hope - a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,
"To all bereaved parents - We love you tonight!"*

-By Faye McCord - TCF, Jackson, MS

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

Sheldon Michael Swanberg
May 15, 2015

Autumn Jane Hurst
June 23, 2015

James Roy Hurst
July 20, 2015

Grace Amanda Swanberg
October 5, 2015

Alex Trumbull
due June 7, 2016

*All angels can be found on our
website at:
www.angelwhispers.ca/angel-whispers*

*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 mis-
spelled your angel's name, please
let us know.*

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*

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



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 ,

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 6, January 3, February 7 and March 6

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 13, January 10, February 21 and March 13

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.

For families seeking additional support please see:
<http://www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers/support>