

Angel Whispers

SPRING, 2016

*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

Hello to our Angel Whispers mommies and daddies,

It's time again for another edition of our Angel Whispers newsletter, meaning spring is just around the corner. Daylight Savings is this coming weekend, the time of year when we 'spring ahead' and move our clocks forward one hour. Wouldn't it be nice if we could go to sleep at night and 'spring ahead' our journey through grief and wake up in the morning having skipped the raw and intense emotions we experience in the early days following our loss?

The idea of skipping past those uncomfortable emotions may seem appealing to some, however there is no way to the other side of grief except through it. We can't go around it, we can't go under it or over it – we must experience grief by going through it as uncomfortable as it may be.

In that journey of going through 'it', it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the emotions and by the everyday tasks that we once found routine in our lives. I often speak with bereaved families that express that they are experiencing anxiety in their lives, making them question why they are anxious when that's not a typical 'symptom' they expect after their loss. Families talk about feeling isolated and alone on their journey while experiencing a wide variety of intense emotions. Combine those emotions with the fear of the unknown and it's not surprising to feel anxiety.

I have been hearing more and more about anxiety when providing support to families, which led me to focus the topic of the spring newsletter on grief, fear and anxiety. Remember that we grieve deeply because we love deeply, the love you felt for your precious baby is reflected in the intensity of the grief you feel. The devastation we experience after loss feels like a pain that will never end. Have hope in knowing that even though it won't completely end, with

time the pain softens as your heart begins to heal. Your heart will heal around the emptiness you feel within your heart, leaving a permanent imprint left by your sweet baby. You will hold your little one forever in your heart.

I encourage you to talk about your feelings, share with others what you need. You may not know what you need, but be open to expressing your thoughts. It's so critically important that you not only grieve the loss of your baby but that you open your heart to mourning as well. Grief is our internal response to loss, whereas mourning is taking those feelings and externalizing. More on grief and mourning is shared in this newsletter along with information on coping through grief, fear and anxiety.

My hope is that you find comfort in the next few pages knowing that you are not alone and that there are others that care and understand. May the change in season, the longer days and extra sunshine bring light to the darkness you may be feeling right now.

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

*Lori-Ann Huot
Program Coordinator
Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support
Program
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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. April 3, May 1, June 5

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. April 10, May 15, June 12

Healing Hands Workshop - The next workshops are scheduled for April 16, May 14, June 18

Rainbow Connection - previously known as **Rainbow Baby Play Dates** Angel Whispers Rainbow Families host get togethers 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.

Angel Whispers Volunteer Highlight

Thank you to **Rene Huot**, a dedicated Angel Whispers daddy and volunteer!

Rene is the husband to Lori-Ann Huot, the Angel Whispers Program Coordinator. Rene and Lori-Ann have two angels, Loren and Brooklynn that they hold in their hearts and four daughters that they hold in their arms.

Rene began co-facilitating the Angel Whispers monthly Baby Loss Support Group meetings approximately 4 years ago to ensure that the dads who were attending the meeting had someone they could relate to and connect with. Rene brings a caring and unique perspective to the baby loss meetings as has a wonderful way of explaining grief and loss to everyday situations that others can understand and relate to, a good example of which is his Snakes and Ladders analogy:

The one thing that holds true for both men and women is that the emotions of grief can be like a game of snakes and ladders. Like the game, you will move ahead in your journey, and as time goes on you seem to be doing well. Then suddenly you hit a snake and fall a few steps behind (grief burst); you spend some time there

and then you make your way back to the ladder to climb ahead in your grief.

The game of Snakes and Ladders will eventually end; the difference with grief is that it doesn't end, it's a lifelong journey with more ladders and fewer snakes as time goes on. Some journey through the game of snakes and ladders easier than others; some climb more ladders, some hit more snakes.

Now please don't think I'm suggesting that grief is a game, that's the farthest thing from the truth. It's simply the analogy of climbing ladders and hitting the snakes I relate to our own personal grief journey, and as I've explained it to others in my life they have been better able to understand what our experience has been like.

Rene is able to share his experiences through loss and stresses the importance of communication with your partner as you journey through loss together.

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

Online resources on grief and anxiety:

- <http://www.grief-healing-support.com/anxiety-and-grief.html>
- http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/02/five_stages_of_grief_revision_anxiety_should_replace_bargaining.html
- <http://www.karlahelbert.com/the-new-normal.html>
- <https://chasingdragonfliesblog.wordpress.com/2015/08/10/the-dark-side-of-grief-craving-escape-from-the-mental-and-physical-pain-of-loss/>

Embracing the Sadness of Grief

By Dr. Alan Wolfelt

“In every heart there is an inner room, where we can hold our greatest treasures and our deepest pain.”

—Marianne Williamson

Sadness is a hallmark symptom of grief, which in turn is the consequence of losing something we care about. In this way you could say that sadness and love are inextricably linked.

Yes, when you are grieving, it is normal to feel sad. I would even argue that it is necessary to feel sad. But why is it necessary? Why does the emotion we call sadness have to exist at all? Couldn't we just move from loss to shock to acceptance without all that pain in the middle?

The answer is that sadness plays an essential role. It forces us to regroup—physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. When we are sad, we instinctively turn inward. We withdraw. We slow down. It's as if our soul presses the pause button and says, “Whoa, whoa, whoaaa. Time out. I need to acknowledge what's happened here and really consider what I want to do next.”

This very ability to consider our own existence is, in fact, what defines us as human beings. Unlike other animals, we are self-aware. And to be self-aware is to feel sadness but also joy and timeless love.

I sometimes call the necessary sadness of grief “sitting in your wound.” When you sit in the wound of your grief, you surrender to it. You acquiesce to the instinct to slow down and turn inward. You allow yourself to appropriately wallow in the pain. You shut the world out for a time so that, eventually, you have created space to let the world back in.

The dark night of the soul

While grief affects all aspects of your life—your physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual selves, it is fundamentally a spiritual journey. In grief, your understanding of who you

are, why you are here, and whether or not life is worth living is challenged. A significant loss plunges you into what C.S. Lewis, Eckhart Tolle, and various Christian mystics have called “the dark night of the soul.”

While grief affects all aspects of your life—your physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual selves, it is fundamentally a spiritual journey.

Life suddenly seems meaningless. Nothing makes sense. Everything you believed and held dear has been turned upside-down. The structure of your world collapses.

The dark night of the soul can be a long and very black night indeed. If you are struggling with depression after a loss, you are probably inhabiting that long, dark night. It is uncomfortable and scary. The pain of that place can seem intolerable, and yet the only way to emerge into the light of a new morning is to experience the night. As a wise person once observed, “Darkness is the chair upon which light sits.”

The necessity of stillness

Many of the messages that people in grief are given contradict the need for stillness: “Carry on;” “Keep busy;” “I have someone for you to meet.” Yet, the paradox for many grievers is that as they try to frantically move forward, they often lose their way.

Times of stillness are not anchored

in a psychological need but in a spiritual necessity. A lack of stillness hastens confusion and disorientation and results in a waning of the spirit. If you do not rest in stillness for a time, you cannot and will not find your way out of the wilderness of grief.

Stillness allows for the transition from “soul work” to “spirit work.” According to the groundbreaking thinking of psychologist Carl Jung, “soul work” is the downward movement of the psyche. It is the willingness to connect with what is dark, deep, and not necessarily pleasant. “Spirit work,” on the other hand, involves the upward, ascending movement of the psyche. It is during spirit work that you find renewed meaning and joy in life.

Soul work comes before spirit work. Soul work lays the ground for spirit work. The spirit cannot ascend until the soul first descends. The withdrawal, slowing down, and stillness of sadness create the conditions necessary for soul work.

Liminal space

Sadness lives in liminal space. “Liminal” is the Latin word for threshold, the space betwixt and between. When you are in liminal space, you are not busily and unthinkingly going about your daily life. Neither are you living from a place of assuredness about your relationships and beliefs. Instead, you are unsettled. Both your mindless daily routine and your core beliefs have been shaken, forcing you to reconsider who you are, why you're here, and what life means.

It's uncomfortable being in liminal space, but that's where sadness takes you. Without sadness, you wouldn't go

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there. But it is only in liminal space that you can reconstruct your shattered worldview and reemerge as the transformed you that is ready to live and love fully again.

Sadness and empathy

Another evolutionary and still relevant reason for sadness is that it alerts others to the thoughts and feelings that are inside you. We all know what someone who is sad looks like. His posture is slumped. He moves slowly. His eyes and mouth droop. Being able to read others' sadness is useful because it gives us a chance to reach out and support them. In centuries past we intentionally made our sadness more evident as a signal for others to support us. We wore black for a year, and we donned black armbands. We literally wore our hearts on our sleeves.

Sadness elicits empathy—which is a close cousin to love. Empathy and love are the glue of human connection. And human connection is what makes life worth living.

Receiving and accepting support from others is an essential need of mourning—one we'll talk more about later in this book. If you try to deny or hide your sadness, you are closing a door that leads to healing.

Your divine spark

Your spiritual self is who you are deep inside—your innermost essence, stripped of all the external trappings of your life. It is who you were before you took on your earthly form, and it is who you will continue to be after you leave it.

It is your soul, or “divine spark”—what Meister Eckhart described as “that which gives depth and purpose to our living.” It is the still, small voice inside of you.

When you are grieving, your divine spark struggles like a candle in the wind. Many hundreds of people in grief have said to me variations on, “I feel so hopeless” or “I am not sure I can go on living.” Like yours, the losses that have touched their lives have naturally muted, if not extinguished,

their divine sparks.

When you are depressed, you no longer feel the warm glow of your divine spark inside you. Instead, everything feels dark and cold. The way to relight your divine spark is to turn inward and give your pain the attention it needs and deserves.

*Your grief is the result
of an injury to your
spirit. Now you must
attend to your injury*

Honoring your pain

From my own experiences with loss as well as those of thousands of grieving people I have companioned over the years, I have learned that you cannot go around the pain of your grief. Instead, you must open to the pain. You must acknowledge the inevitability of the pain. You must gently embrace the pain. You must honor the pain.

“What?” you naturally protest. “Honor the pain?” As crazy as it may sound, your pain is the key that opens your heart and ushers you on your way to healing.

Honoring means recognizing the value of and respecting. It is not instinctive to see grief and the need to openly mourn as something to honor; yet the capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn. To honor your grief is not self-destructive or harmful, it is self-sustaining and life-giving.

Yet you have probably been taught that pain and sadness are indications that something is wrong and that you should find ways to alleviate the pain. In our culture, pain and feelings of loss are experiences most people try to avoid. Why? Because the role of pain and suffering is misunderstood. Normal thoughts and feelings after a loss are often seen as unnecessary and inappropriate.

Unfortunately, our culture has an unwritten rule that says while physical illness is usually beyond your control, emotional distress is your fault. In other words, some people think you

should be able to “control” or subdue your feelings of sadness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your sadness is a symptom of your wound. Just as physical wounds require attention, so do emotional wounds.

Paradoxically, the only way to lessen your pain is to move toward it, not away from it. Moving toward your sadness is not easy to do. Every time you admit to feeling sad, people around you may say things like, “Oh, don't be sad” or “Get a hold of yourself,” or “Just think about what you have to be thankful for.” Comments like these hinder, not help, your healing. If your heart and soul are prevented from feeling the sadness, odds are your body may be harmed in the process. Your grief is the result of an injury to your spirit. Now you must attend to your injury.

You will learn over time that the pain of your grief will keep trying to get your attention until you have the courage to gently, and in small doses, open to its presence. The alternative—denying or suppressing your pain—is in fact more painful. I have learned that the pain that surrounds the closed heart of grief is the pain of living against yourself, the pain of denying how the loss changes you, the pain of feeling alone and isolated—unable to openly mourn, unable to love and be loved by those around you.

Yes, the sadness, depression, and pain of loss are essential experiences in life. You are reading this article because you are feeling this and are struggling with the depression. Acknowledging that depression in grief is normal and necessary—even if the people and the culture around you are telling you that you don't have to feel depressed, that there are ways around the pain—is one significant step on the pathway to healing. The next step is understanding if your depression may be what is called “clinical depression” and, if so, having the courage and self-compassion to seek help.

*See information on Dr. Wolfelt
on page 5.*

Rainbow Baby Birth Announcements

Aiden Ronan Green

Born on December 3, 2015 weighing 8 lbs 13 oz to proud parents Miranda Dore and Tim Green and big sister Adele. Aiden's big brother Neil is celebrating with the angels!

Gavin Reid Fehr

Born on January 2, 2016 weighing 7 lbs 9 oz to loving parents Carrie and Jerry Fehr. Gavin's big sisters Gabby and Ensa are watching over him from heaven!

Ira Lawrence White

Born on January 28, 2016 to proud parents Tanya and Quenton White and older siblings Hazel, Jude and Charlize. Ira has 5 angels celebrating his safe arrival!

Pyper Borys

Born on February 4, 2016 weighing 6 lbs 2 oz to excited parents Kelly and Kris Borys and big sister Lochley. Pyper has several angels watching over her!

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/>

Majority

by Dana Gioia

Now you'd be three,
I said to myself,
seeing a child born
the same summer as you.

Now you'd be six,
or seven, or ten.
I watched you grow
in foreign bodies.

Leaping into a pool, all laughter,
or frowning over a keyboard,
but mostly just standing,
taller each time.

How splendid your most
mundane action seemed
in these joyful proxies.
I often held back tears.

Now you are twenty-one.
Finally, it makes sense
that you have moved away
into your own afterlife.

In loving memory of...
Benjamin 11-15-1993
Timothy 11-28-1994
Rose 10-1998

Relaxation and Visualization

This relaxation session will help you to relieve anxiety quickly and easily. Relaxation is a natural anxiety cure that will allow you to gain control over some of your body's automatic responses.

These easy relaxation techniques can be used any time, any place, to relieve anxiety and reduce stress. You can use this relaxation script to record your own audio or learn to relax.

Begin reading the relive anxiety relaxation script here:

Some of the key symptoms of anxiety include tight, tense muscles, shallow, rapid breathing, worried thoughts, and shaking. With this anxiety relaxation script you will target each of these areas to reduce anxiety and induce the relaxation response.

First focus on breathing.

Calm breathing is key to being calm and relaxed. Take a deep breath in through your nose.

Now exhale through your mouth, as if you are blowing out a candle. Blow out all the air.

As you inhale, focus on slowing down your breathing into a calm rhythm. Exhale fully, releasing all the air.

Continue to breathe slowly and calmly.

Now that you are getting the oxygen you need, realize that your only job right now is to keep yourself as comfortable as possible while this feeling passes. Fighting against the anxiety only makes it stronger, so right now, accept that you are feeling anxious. Let's focus on calming your thoughts to relieve anxiety.

Repeat the following phrases.

I am feeling anxious right now, but I am okay. This feeling will pass, and no harm will come to me. I am safe, even though I feel frightened. I will soon be calm, even though I am experiencing anxiety right now. I will get through this. I am making myself as comfortable as possible while I wait for the

anxiety to decrease. I can help myself to become gradually more calm and relaxed until this feeling passes.

Continue to give yourself calming messages.

As you continue to breathe slowly in, and exhale fully, and as you continue to repeat calming thoughts, now we can address any shaking or trembling you are experiencing.

When you experience anxiety, your body is in fight-or-flight mode.

Your heart is pumping quickly so that oxygen can be delivered for your muscles to allow you use those muscles to escape from danger. There is no real danger right now, so the adrenaline is flowing through your body but not being used. Your muscles are so ready for action that they are trembling.

You can help this trembling to decrease by physically shaking out the tension. Imagine that you are shaking water off of your hands to dry them. Shake your hands. Allow your hands and wrists to be limp as you shake your hands and forearms quickly back and forth. Imagine drops of water flying off of your finger tips. Imagine your tension draining out your finger tips and being shaken away.

Now stop and allow your hands to be still. Noticed how much more relaxed your hands feel? They may even feel pleasantly tingly.

Continue with even breathing and calm thoughts.

Inhale, think "I am becoming more and more calm"

Exhale, think "I am feeling more and more relaxed."

Inhale "Calm"

Exhale "Relaxed"

The last area to focus on now to relieve anxiety is your tense muscles.

Your muscles become painful, tired, and cramped as a result of stress or anxiety. You can help your muscles relax now by first allowing your lower jaw to drop so your teeth are not touching. Let your jaw be relaxed and loose. Now lower your shoulders. Let your

shoulders be relaxed and loose. You may even want to move your arms or shoulders in some circles, forward.... and back.... and now let your shoulders become limp as you increase the distance between your shoulders and your ears. Raise your arms above your head and stretch..... and now release the muscles as you gently lower your arms to your sides. Turn your head to the left, back to center, and to the right. Look down, look straight ahead, look up. Bring your head to a relaxed and neutral position. Straighten your back into correct posture. Keep your back upright, but maintain the natural curves of your spine.

You can continue to move, stretch, and relax to allow your muscles to become less tense.

In summary, the four steps for quick relaxation to relieve anxiety are:

Number 1: Breathe. Remember to breathe slowly and exhale fully.

Number 2: Calm your thoughts. Remind yourself that anxiety will pass.

Number 3: Physically shake out the tension.

Number 4: Relax your muscles, especially your jaw and upper back.

From: <http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/relieve-anxiety.html>

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.

Fear, Grief and Anxiety

By: Lori-Ann Huot

In the book *'A Grief Observed'*, C.S. Lewis describes grief in this way – “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear”. We experience fear at the thought of the unknown, the emotions we experience when we grieve are unexpected and unknown often triggering fear. Fear relates to anxiety. Anxiety and fear have similar emotions attached to them. Anxiety is fear in the absence of specific danger, whereas fear is a threat that is tangible. Therefore it is expected that grief triggers fear and anxiety for many parents as grief creates a sense of uncertainty for the future, when our babies die so do our hopes, plans and dreams for the future.

We are thrown into the valley of grief and despair after the loss of a loved one, no one loved more than our cherished babies. Families that have connected with Angel Whispers have described their experiences after the loss of their baby and the emotional turmoil that resulted, these are some of the emotions that are commonly expressed: sadness, anger, loneliness, depression, anxiety, guilt and regret.

Avoiding fear and grief prevents us from moving forward – it makes us anxious. Fear often focuses on the future, grief is felt as a result of a loss in our past, however, grief also affects our future as we grieve those lost hopes and dreams. Anxiety is how we are feeling in the present. Loss therefore impacts our past, our present and our future.

Most of us make some distinction between fear and anxiety - we have a fear of something and anxiety about something. Sometimes we distinguish the two by our body's response. Anxiety is also the word of choice to describe a chronic sense of worry or tension, the sources of which may be totally unclear. The fight or flight response is often our reaction to fear, which for some can have them trying to run from their grief.

Google defines grief, anxiety and fear as:

Grief – *the normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind.*

Anxiety – *distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune; a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.*

Fear – *concern or anxiety, something that causes feelings of dread or apprehension.*

To be able to heal from our loss, we must risk taking on what we fear the most; befriending the pain of our loss. Too often, we try to run from our grief. We may try to “keep busy” to try to avoid feeling the pain and heartache from our loss. The one thing I have learned through our losses is that pain demands to be felt. At some point grief will haunt us to the point that are forced to deal with it, whether that be weeks, months or years down the road.

Not only must we allow ourselves to grieve, we must also open ourselves to mourning. Many people will use these terms interchangeably not realizing there is a distinct difference between the two. Grief is the internal emotions we feel, mourning is taking those emotions and externalizing them. Mourning is grief turned inside out. We must experience grief and authentic mourning to be able to integrate our loss effectively into our lives and allow ourselves to heal.

Here are a few examples of how to authentically mourn:

1. Talk about your baby with others
2. Cry
3. Express your feelings through art or music
4. Journal
5. If faith is important to you, pray
6. Finding meaningful ways to honour the memory of your baby

If we do not face our loss and the resulting emotions we block the possibility of integrating the loss into our lives, which can then lead to chronic grief and the complications that result. Emotionally we become dead while we are alive. As mourners we are faced with a choice, anxiety or depression. If we move towards grief and mourning, we will experience aspects of anxiety. If we move away from grief and mourning, we experience the resulting depression. Anxiety with proper support, is the path to potential reconciliation of our losses, whereas depression prevents integration of the loss into our lives and our journey towards discovering our ‘new normal’.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt describes Six Central Needs of Mourning that are necessary to reconcile our losses and be able to effectively integrate our losses into our lives, heal and discover our new normal:

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death.
2. Embrace the pain of the loss.
3. Remember the person who died.
4. Develop a new self-identity.
5. Search for meaning.
6. Receive ongoing support – now and always.

By healing I under no circumstances infer that we get over our losses, I simply mean that we are able to experience hope and happiness again. It is possible for joy and sadness to be felt as simultaneous emotions on our journey through grief.

To be able to effectively heal from your loss it's important to be open to receiving ongoing support. Perhaps you have found that support through the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program, a therapist, or perhaps that support is from understanding family and friends. It's important to identify the people in your life that

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Just For Today For Bereaved Parents

by Vicki Tushingham

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead learn to live with it, just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not just her death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, for maybe if I smile a little, my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child, for they are hurting too, and perhaps we can help each other.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt, for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world I could do to save my child from

death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child because I know that would make my own child proud.

Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent for I do know how they feel.

Just for today when my heart feels like breaking, I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving

and the only reason I hurt is because I had the privilege of loving so much

Just for today I will not compare myself with others.

I am fortunate to be who I am and have had my child for as long as I did.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy, for I know that I am not deserting her by living on.

Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did, my life did go on, and I am the only one who can make that life worthwhile once more.

Grieving and Clinical Depression

How can you tell the difference between normal grieving and clinical depression that requires treatment? Dr. Alan Wolfelt, founding director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Colorado, has created this helpful checklist to distinguish the two. You can share this with your doctor if you suspect you need help.

You have normal grief if you...	You may be clinically depressed if you...
<input type="checkbox"/> respond to comfort and support.	<input type="checkbox"/> do not accept support.
<input type="checkbox"/> are often openly angry.	<input type="checkbox"/> are irritable and complain but do not directly express anger.
<input type="checkbox"/> relate your depressed feelings to the loss experience.	<input type="checkbox"/> do not relate your feelings of depression to a particular life event.
<input type="checkbox"/> can still experience moments of enjoyment in life.	<input type="checkbox"/> exhibit an all-pervading sense of doom.
<input type="checkbox"/> exhibit feelings of sadness and emptiness.	<input type="checkbox"/> project a sense of hopelessness and chronic emptiness.
<input type="checkbox"/> may have transient physical complaints.	<input type="checkbox"/> have chronic physical complaints.
<input type="checkbox"/> express guilt over some specific aspects of the loss.	<input type="checkbox"/> have generalized feelings of guilt.
<input type="checkbox"/> feel a temporary loss of self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/> feel a deep and ongoing loss of self-esteem.

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are supportive and encouraging and reach out to them. Sadly not everyone in our lives will be those supportive individuals, it's ok to re-evaluate relationships after loss and make changes if necessary.

Have hope in knowing that you are not alone, there are others that understand and care. With time the intense emotions you are feeling now will soften, grief is a lifelong journey and you will forever be changed by the loss of your precious baby. Reach out to others that understand for the support that you need and deserve, the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program is here to provide that unconditional support and encouragement and to offer you hope and healing.

Excerpted from: Wolfelt, A. Understanding Your Grief. Companion Press, 2004. p. 64.

Bats**t Normal

language warning

By: *Lori-Ann Huot*

Have you ever heard the expression “Batshit crazy”? Perhaps I am aging myself, but I grew up hearing and using the expression, which I identified with the feelings of losing my mind or going crazy, often when I was feeling stressed or overwhelmed in life. I felt these same emotions of losing my mind and feeling like I was going crazy after experiencing the loss of our babies and after losing my mom. The intense emotions of grief can be so overwhelming that we may in fact question if we are losing our mind.

I want to reassure you that you are not going crazy or losing your mind, the emotions you are experiencing are completely normal and necessary as you journey through your grief.

Grief can make everything we experience feel very overwhelming, grief can be isolating and can affect our ability to focus and function. We lose who we once were and begin a journey towards discovering our “new normal”.

This is not a quick journey, there are no detours we can make. We must forge ahead through the uncertainty of grief with the understanding that it will be

a life long journey. The entire journey will not be filled with the intensity of emotions felt early on, but we will experience “grief bursts” for many years that will be a reminder of what those initial days and months were like.

My experience through grief has had me re-evaluate the term “Batshit crazy”, I no longer use this phrase as I once did. I instead have re-termed the phrase to a more appropriate way of thinking, I am not “Batshit crazy”, I’m “Batshit Normal”!

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 all the families who donate to cover the costs for our care packages, birth certificate keepsakes and memory boxes.
- To Barb Bundt for the generous donations in memory of baby Emma.
- To Brenda Chmilar and the Kalyna County Quilters for the generous donation of quilts for our Rainbow babies!
- To Trina and Will McCartney for the generous donation made in memory of their precious daughter Katelyn!
- To the Swiftsure Foundation for the generous donation which gives the Angel Whispers Program Coordinator the opportunity to complete her Death and Grief Studies Certification!



EmPowering Communities encourages employee volunteerism and recognizes the valuable gifts of time, skill and knowledge that employees give to the community. Employees and their families who volunteer a combined minimum of 35 hours in a calendar year can apply for a \$500 grant to be donated by Capital Power to a

non-profit or charitable community service organization of the employee’s choice.

- **Thank you** to one of our Angel Whispers daddies, Roy Seida, an employee of Capital Power Corporation for choosing Angel Whispers as his charity of choice for the generous EmPowering Communities grant in memory of Roy and Jennifer’s son, Simon!

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

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

6th Annual Rainbow Baby Reunion

Sunday May 1st, 2016 1-3pm

This is an opportunity to remember our Angels and celebrate our Rainbow Babies. Moms, Dads, children and Rainbow babies are encouraged to join us for this celebration!

FCSS offices - 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. Please come through the library entrance and proceed to the second floor. For more information or to register, please call Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225.

Annual Spring Memorial Service

Sunday May 29th, 2016 - 1pm

Every spring the funeral homes, hospitals, cemeteries and support groups in the Edmonton area collaborate to hold a special memorial service for families who have lost a baby.

This year's service will be held at Memories Funeral Home, 13403 St Albert Trail Edmonton - there will be graveside service to follow.

If you are unable to attend but would like your baby acknowledged, please call Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225.

3rd Annual Angel Whispers Picnic and Balloon Release

Information and date to be announced in the summer newsletter!

Baby Steps Walk to Remember

Memorial walks are planned for Sunday, August 21, 2016 in Sherwood Park and Sunday, October 2nd, 2016 in Edmonton. More details will be announced in the summer newsletter. *the Sherwood Park walk date may change, due to potential scheduling conflict*



Upcoming Fundraising Opportunities

- **Angel Whispers Healing Hearts Paint Night** March 22, 2016 - Bears Den, Fort Saskatchewan
This is a healing opportunity for our Angel Whispers families, friends and the community to come together in a creative setting in support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program. We will be holding a 50/50 draw to raise extra funds for the program.
- **3rd Annual Angel Whispers Pub Night Fundraiser and Silent Auction** We are planning our next pub night silent auction for mid-late May - stay tuned to our website, www.angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca for more information.
- **Shhhhh it's a secret** - but exciting news will be announced soon for a fundraiser in support of Angel Whispers to be held in June! Stay tuned to our website, www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers for details to be announced very soon!

Other upcoming fundraisers that we are looking at for later this year include a **fall pub night and silent auction** and **fall paint night**.

Because the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program is a non-funded program, we rely heavily on fundraisers to sustain our services to grieving families. If you have an idea on a fundraiser for the program or are interested in holding a fundraiser for Angel Whispers, please contact Lori-Ann Huot, Angel Whispers Program Coordinator at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or email angelwhispes@familiesfirstsociety.ca.

International Bereaved Mother's Day ***Sunday May 1st , 2016***



This is what the creator of International Bereaved Mother's Day had to say about this special day... "This day was created to get people to start talking about the real meaning of Mother's Day. Do you know who started it? Anna Jarvis founded the traditional Mother's Day to honour her mother who experienced the death of 7 of her children and somehow through the years it has turned into a commercialized mess that card companies make millions of dollars from, but the worst thing is that bereaved mothers are completely forgotten. This special day was created in 2010 to honour and celebrate the mothers who carry some if not all of their children in their hearts rather than their arms. In our modern day society, mothers who are grieving the death of their babies and children are usually forgotten. The traditional Mother's Day has proven to be an emotionally difficult day for so many mothers around the world. Just because your baby died does not mean that you are not a mother anymore. You are your baby's mother forever and people need to start recognizing this fact."

International Bereaved Father's Day will be celebrated on Sunday September 25, 2106 to honour and celebrate fathers who carry their babies in their hearts instead of their arms.

Dear Mommy, On Mother's Day

By Donna Aurora

You have created every part of me; You put me together in my mother's womb...When I was growing there in secret, You knew that I was there. Psalm 139:13-18

Today I celebrate you mommy, but I do this from up above;
I know this day is sad for you, but may it be full of Love.
You need not worry for I am safe in God's warm embrace,
I am happy here and play all day with all my angel friends.
As you sit and cry in daddy's arms, some may not comprehend
That your tender heart will forever miss the child you grieve, that's me!
But know that you are a mom, MY mommy you will always be...

On this day it may feel cold when others seem not to care;
I wish I could take away the lasting pain you seem to bear.
I cherished every day we had and if you only knew,
The kicks and flutters you often felt were the feet and tiny wings I grew.

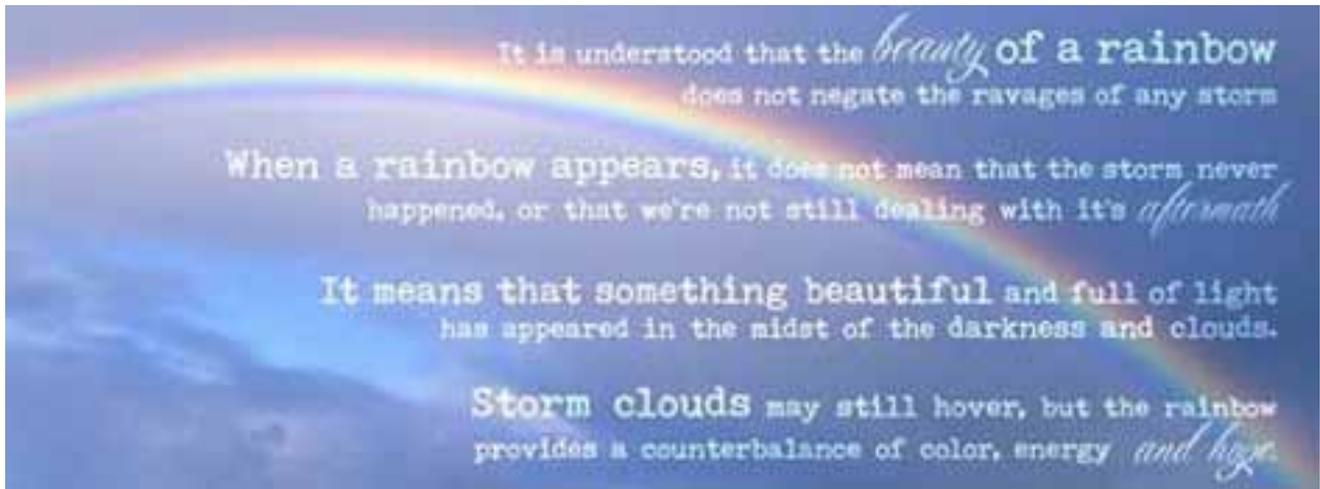
When you close your eyes at night and begin to dream,
Know that I am with you, though I cannot be seen.
Feel the little kisses on your cheek, and listen to the prayers that I speak;
And in the stillness of your heart, hear my wee voice sing,
Songs of love and peacefulness mark the gifts I bring.
Know that I wait at heaven's gate patiently for you and dad,
We'll all be together again, so try not to be too sad.

Thank you for giving me the gift of life, and taking good care of me,
On this Mother's Day remember that I Love You for Eternity...

With Love and Hugs,
Your Heavenly Angel

~ Written in Loving Memory of Baby Keaton who was Born into Eternal Life on Jan. 16, 2009 ~

***This poem is dedicated to all parents who have lost a child with special mention to those who have lost a baby through ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage and stillbirth. "Unborn" does not mean "unwanted", may others remember that we are still parents and that our children live on in our hearts always -- we will miss our precious babies forever.**



You are invited to join us...

***Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program's
6th Annual Rainbow Baby Reunion***

Date: Sunday May 1st, 2016

Time: 1-3pm

Location: FCSS Office

401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park

RSVP: Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext 225

This is an opportunity to celebrate the Rainbow babies that have been born to our Angel Whispers families over the years while honouring and remember our precious babies that we hold in our hearts instead of our arms.

You are welcome to join us for an afternoon of sharing memories, honouring our angels and celebrating our Rainbows. Families welcome!

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/angel-whispersbabylossupport>

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

Can You Help?

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



Dear Friends,

We are planning a Silent Auction Pub Night at Average Joes in Sherwood Park for May, the date will soon be announced. All proceeds from the event will support the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program, a program of the Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society.

Angel Whispers provides supports and services to families who are grieving the loss of a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Angel Whispers provides confidential support including: support group meetings, one on one support, care packages, memory boxes and keepsakes as well as other resources for families. The program allows grieving families to connect with others on their grief journey so that they need not walk their journey alone, providing a safe place to share and grieve the loss of their precious babies.

It is with a grateful heart that we invite you to help us support the program and allow it to continue the vital work it does with grieving families, assisting Angel Whispers in maintaining the lifeline that it creates for so many. You can do this by donating items to the silent auction that will be held on the night of the event. In addition to silent auction items, monetary donations will also be gratefully accepted. Tax receipts can be provided for monetary or item donations valued at over \$20; if you require a tax receipt, please let us know.

For more information on the date, to purchase tickets or to make a donation, please contact Lori Ann Huot, Program Coordinator at (780) 998 5595 ext 225 or by email angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.

Thank you for your support in assisting Angel Whispers to continue to provide hope and healing to grieving families both in our community and beyond. For more information on the program and the fundraiser, visit the Angel Whispers website – www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers.

Sincerely,

Lori-Ann

Lori-Ann Huot

Program Coordinator

Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program

(780)998-5595 ext. 225

angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

Sullivyn Grace Prokop-Fodchuk
January 15, 2016

Baby Botha-Lyseng
January 18, 2016

Baby Gushta #4
January 27, 2016

Hayden Lee Ramirez
January 28, 2016

Presley Debora Sutton
February 2016

Peyton Riley Davis-Saiyavong
February 16, 2016

Amina Daphne Collette Madrigga Neuman
February 20, 2016

Baby Gushta #2
March 1, 2015

Baby Gushta #1
May 1, 2014

Kamryn Olivia MacDonald
May 6, 2015 - February 10, 2016

Joseph Patrick Horsefield
May 8, 1999

Baby Gushta #3
July 27, 2015

Poppy October Haviland
October 21, 2015

Zachary Foster-Knott
November 30, 2015

Katerina Amelia Maria Coronado
December 21, 2012

Hummingbird Close
December 23, 2015

Brady Daniel Laffin
December 31, 2015

*All angels can be found on our website at:
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.

Father's Day

*A gift for you on Fathers Day,
What on earth could it be?
I know the gift you really want,
Is to once again, have me.
Or perhaps the gift of understanding,
To make sense of a senseless loss.
I'm sorry, my dearest Daddy,
But for those gifts, you must talk
to the boss.
The gifts that I can give today,
Are memories, both sad and sweet.
From the touch of your hand on
Mummy's tummy,
To my tiny little feet.
Remember the joy you felt inside,
When you found out you would be
my Daddy?
The great big smiles upon your
face,
You were over the moon, you were
so happy.
Remember when you felt me move,
The wonder and love you'd feel?
Remember it today Daddy,
It just might help you heal.
Remember the little cuddles we
had,
And the moments that we shared.
Remember my little nose,
And the colour of my hair,
I love you dearest Daddy, you know
that this is true.
Just keep your memories of me
alive,
And I will always live in you.*

©Sharon Swinney 1995

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.

April 3, May 1, June 5

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.

April 10, May 15, June 12

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>