

Angel Whispers

WINTER, 2017

*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/
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#thisisourvillage

Holiday Wishes to our Angel Whispers Families,

Another year has come and gone and the holiday season is now upon us. For most bereaved parents this is an incredibly difficult time of year.

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.

Some families may choose to skip Christmas altogether, others may choose to change past holiday traditions. Whatever you decide to do, do what feels right for you. I hope your loved ones will understand your need to do what's best for you. Here are some suggestions to consider this holiday season:

- 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, ideas on honoring your baby are shared in this newsletter edition.

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Not everyone understands what you are going through, you may hear comments that are hurtful or insensitive. Know that most often these people

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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.

Another 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.

The New Year falls immediately following a Christmas. The New Year for many is a harsh reminder of their new reality... a New Year starts without your sweet baby. For some putting the previous year behind them, one filled with much sadness and heartache is a welcome change. For others the thought of leaving the year behind makes them feel further away from the baby they have lost. Here are a few thoughts from our Angel Whispers moms on what the New Year means to them:

Renee – “With everything that happened this year I can't wait for 2017 to be over.

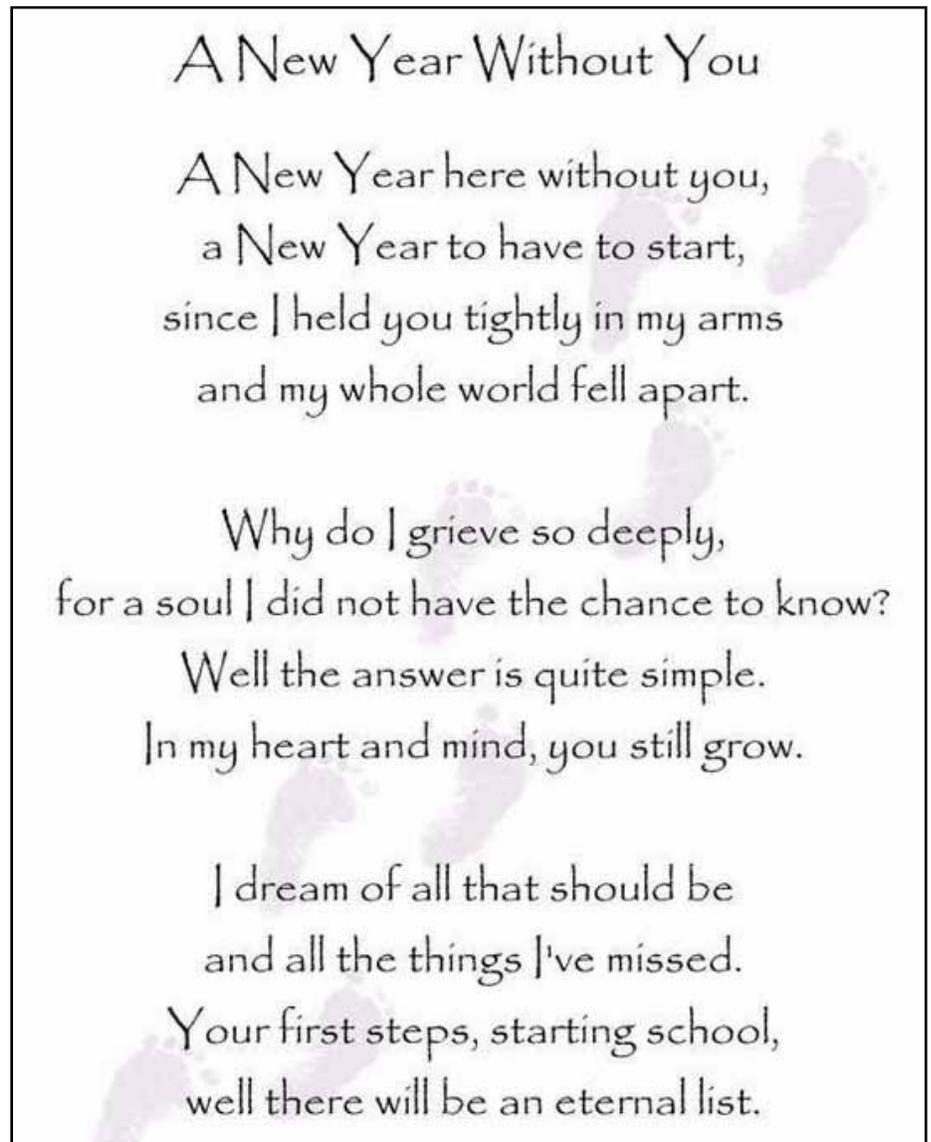
The end of a “bad” year and the start of a new year gives hope and motivation to do better for yourself (eg. exercise more, start a new hobby, look for a better job).” Crystle – “I'm torn on how to feel. 2017 was a big year. I got married. Found out I was pregnant. Had Liam. Lost him. So I want to stay in this year for him as I feel if I move forward it's a new year without him, but I also feel a new year can bring new things and time is going to keep moving with or without him. I have to find a way to bring him through the years with us.

Here are some New Year's Resolutions by Tanya Lord to consider as you enter 2018:

This year I resolve to:

- Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my lifetime whether they are physically present or not.
- Tell their stories, the happy or the sad, they will live on through me.
- Encourage others to share memories.
- Teach others that they cannot “make” me cry, tears are only an eternal expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. “Doing well” means expressing my feelings.
- Understand that others will not

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understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.

- Recognize that asking for help from those that love us is really a gift that we give to them.
- Help others, reaching out to help others in pain will help me heal.
- Do something nice for myself every day.
- Know that if today I can't get done everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- Cry when I need to, laugh when I can and to not feel guilty about either one.
- Let go, bit by bit of the guilt, regret and anger because I know holding onto these emotions can be so damaging.
- Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- Take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual health.

- Reinvest into life a little bit each day...

The journey through grief truly is a lifelong journey. Grief is the price we pay for love. You will love your sweet baby for a lifetime, therefore you will grieve for a lifetime. With time and support those intense emotions you are feeling will soften as you learn to integrate the loss of your little one into your life. Along the journey through grief, you will discover your 'new normal' and leave your 'old normal' behind. It's impossible to be the exact same person you were before the loss of your baby.

What does a 'new normal' mean to you? For Angel Whispers momma Renee, this was her thoughts – "My new normal is accepting and embracing a life altering experience that I survived, made me realize I am a lot stronger than I give myself credit for and how important and loved I am to the people closest to me. To get through the bad moments/days, this is what I must hold on to."

This Angel Whispers newsletter edition has suggestions for you as you enter 2018 and as you embark on journey towards your new normal. May the holiday season and upcoming New Year be a gentle time for you filled with reflection, the unconditional love and support of family and friends and hope for the future!

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

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On the Journey to Healing: Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

*"Mourning never really ends.
Only as time goes on, it erupts less frequently."*

How do you ever find your way out of the wilderness of your grief? A number of psychological models describing grief refer to "resolution," "recovery," "reestablishment," or "reorganization" as being the destination of your grief journey.

But you may also be coming to understand one of the fundamental truths of grief: Grief never truly ends. People do not "get over" grief. My personal and professional experience tells me that a total return to "normalcy" after the death of someone loved is not pos-

sible; we are all forever changed by the experience of grief.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as you work to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death and a capacity to become re-involved in the activities of living. There is also an acknowledg-

ment that pain and grief are difficult, yet necessary, parts of life.

As the experience of reconciliation unfolds, you will recognize that life is and will continue to be different without the presence of the person who died. Changing the relationship with the person who died from one of presence to one of memory and redirecting one's energy and initiative toward the future often takes longer—and involves more hard work—than

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most people are aware. We, as human beings, never resolve our grief, but instead become reconciled to it.

We come to reconciliation in our grief journeys when the full reality of the death becomes a part of us. Beyond an intellectual working through of the death, there is also an emotional and spiritual working through. What had been understood at the “head” level is now understood at the “heart” level.

Keep in mind that reconciliation doesn't just happen. You can help others reach it through encouraging their deliberate mourning. They reconcile their grief by...

- talking it out.
- writing it out.
- crying it out.
- thinking it out.
- playing it out.
- painting (or sculpting, etc) it out.
- dancing it out
- etcetera!

To experience reconciliation requires that you descend, not transcend. You don't get to go around or above your grief. You must go through it. And while you are going through it, you must express it you are to reconcile yourself to it.

You will find that as you achieve reconciliation, the sharp, ever-present pain of grief will give rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feeling of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person you have given love to and received love from will never be forgotten. The unfolding of this journey is not intended to create a return to an “old normal” but the discovery of a “new normal.”

To help explore where you are in your movement toward reconciliation,

the following signs that suggest healing may be helpful. You don't have to see all of these signs for healing to be taking place. Again, remember that reconciliation is an ongoing process. If you are early in the work of mourning, you may not see any signs of reconciliation. But this list will give you a way to monitor movement toward healing.

Signs of reconciliation

As mourners embrace their grief and do the work of mourning, they can and will be able to demonstrate the majority of the following:

- A recognition of the reality and finality of the death.
- A return to stable eating and sleeping patterns.
- A renewed sense of release from the person who has died. They will have thoughts about the person, but they will not be preoccupied by these thoughts.
- The capacity to enjoy experiences in life that are normally enjoyable.
- The establishment of new and healthy relationships.
- The capacity to live a full life without feelings of guilt or lack of self-respect.
- The drive to organize and plan one's life toward the future.
- The serenity to become comfortable with the way things are rather than attempting to make things as they were.
- The versatility to welcome more change in life.
- The awareness that they have allowed themselves to fully grieve, and they have survived.
- The awareness that nobody “gets over” grief; instead, they have a new reality, meaning and purpose in their lives.
- The acquaintance of new parts of themselves that they have discovered in their grief journeys.
- The adjustment to new role changes that have resulted from the loss of the relationship.

- The acknowledgment that the pain of loss in an inherent part of life resulting from the ability to give and receive love.

Reconciliation emerges much in the way grass grows. Usually we don't check our lawns daily to see if the grass is growing, but it does grow and soon we come to realize it's time to mow the grass again. Likewise, we don't look at ourselves each day as mourners to see how we are healing. Yet we do come to realize, over the course of months and years, that we have come a long way. We have taken some important steps toward reconciliation.

Usually there is not one great moment of “arrival,” but subtle changes and small advancements. It's helpful to have gratitude for even very small advancements. If you are beginning to taste your food again, be thankful. If you mustered the energy to meet your friend for lunch, be grateful. If you finally got a good night's sleep, rejoice.

One of my greatest teachers, C. S. Lewis, wrote in *A Grief Observed* about his grief symptoms as they eased in his journey to reconciliation: “*There was no sudden, striking, and emotional transition. Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight, when you first notice them they have already been going on for some time.*”

Of course, you will take some steps backward from time to time, but that is to be expected. Keep believing in yourself. Set your intention to reconcile your grief and have hope that you can and will come to live and love gain.

Read the book: “*The Journey Through Grief: Reflections On Healing*” by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

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/>.

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

By: *Mary Cleckley Bereaved Mother Lawrenceville, GA*

Try as you might, you can’t escape the holiday season. Though it has been some years now, I still remember how I approached those first few holidays with fear and trepidation. I hadn’t had the time necessary to know yet how the ‘new me’ reacted to old situations.

I didn’t even want there to be a Thanksgiving or Christmas, for it meant I had to come face-to-face with the fact that my son wasn’t going to be a part of them anymore. That brought out pain in me that I’m sure I don’t need to explain to you.

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

going to do to observe the holidays?”

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

I had several choices. Decide to do things as we always had done; decide to keep some of the old traditions, but introduce some new ones; or do as we eventually did - just ignore the whole thing. They laugh in the groups when I tell how my family spent Thanksgiving at the ‘Benihana of Tokyo’ restaurant. Can’t get any further away from tradition than that! But it was right for us.

As with many other things having to do with grieving for a child, there aren’t any rules and regulations, and don’t you believe anybody who tries

to lay a bunch of them on you. My suggestion is this: having gotten input from your immediate family as to their needs and wants, decide right now how you think you’d be most comfortable observing the holidays. Then make plans.

Your brain will keep badgering you until it gets an answer - any answer. It really doesn’t care what you decide, but it wants an answer. So give it one. You may decide at the last minute to do nothing you’ve said you would. It’ll be too late then for your brain to devil you. This is true for all the holidays and any other day that is special. Just know that it’s possible, still, for you to have some control over your life.

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

Becoming a Grandma After Loss

by Shelly Kubbernus

It was almost a year ago that my daughter came to me with the news of her pregnancy. The news of it had me in tears of joy, as it was just the week before this news that I was putting up Zoe's Christmas tree as I have been doing every Christmas for the last 10 years. I remember the day quite clearly, as I was hanging the ornaments on her tree; I sat back for a moment and started to cry. I couldn't believe that it's been 10 yrs since I've been putting up this tree, instead of decorating the Christmas tree with Zoe and her siblings. I am putting up this little tree in her memory.

Where did the time go? How did it go by so fast and each year gets harder not easier. It's a constant reminder of what we lost the day we found out the tragic news that there was no heartbeat during a weekly doctor's appointment at 37 weeks gestation. August 2, 2006 is a day I will never forget, as I attended that doctor's appointment alone. My life was turned upside down that day, and has never been the same since, as a huge part of my heart went along with my precious baby girl that day.

Zoe Reta Mary Steiner was born still on August 4, 2006 at 2:09 p.m. There was no rejoicing in the delivery room that day. Only heartbreak and tears of loss. We never heard her cry, we never saw her open her eyes.

I spent 37 hours in labour with her, as I could not have a c-section due to a blood clotting disorder that I have. So induction was the only way! I took no pain meds only a bit of gas in the later stages of labour. I didn't want to forget any part of my labour, so I opted out of the pain meds. The nurses kept trying to encourage me to have an epidural, but I refused and sat in a hot shower instead with my ex-husband Robert

sitting on a chair outside of the shower in case I needed something.

Never does anyone imagine this happening to them, it's always something that we hear about or read. Never do we imagine we would be part of this club, I never asked for this, so why did it happen. Now that's a question I have always asked myself "why" Why me! Why Zoe! She was so perfect! Too perfect for earth though! I will never understand it. I consider myself to be a Christian; I may not be a perfect one. However, if not for having faith. I would have been worse off than I was at the time, because I knew Zoe was safe and looked after. That gave me some comfort in the days that followed, maybe not to the extent that I accepted what happened, but knowing exactly where she is.

Despite being incredibly happy that I was about to become a Grandmother, it was a huge trigger for me!

Fast forward 10 years. Zoe's Dad Robert and I are divorced. Losing a baby changes the dynamic of a family, especially a blended one. Robert and I were married in December of 2005. Three weeks after our wedding I found out I was pregnant. We were both extremely happy to be sharing a child together; little did we know at that time what we would be facing. A wedding and a funeral of our child in less than a year of marriage.

I don't know of anyone who has had that happen. What should have been

still the honeymoon stage of our marriage, turned into nothing but intense grieving and cremating a child. Our marriage didn't survive; it was rocky immediately after and I fell into a deep depression/mourning state. We separated in early 2014 and were divorced in early 2016. Another loss to deal with, but knew it was for the best, our issues of loss went beyond just that.

The blame game started! Who's fault was it, was it anyone's? Did one of the kids cause this? Absolutely not! No child should ever be held responsible for this. I have no regrets or animosity towards Zoe's dad. He was the best person that I could have gone through this with. I will always be grateful for the child we shared and how supportive he was while we were at the hospital, shielding me from the many questions that were thrown at me while there. That was the end of that chapter of my life.

So now hearing the news from my daughter that she was pregnant last December had me filled with so much joy! I was going to be a Grandma! Wow! I am joining the club that so many of my friends were already a part of!

Just days before my daughter shared her news, I was browsing through facebook and seeing pictures of my friends and their grandchildren. I will be honest and say that I was jealous, thinking when will I ever become a grandparent? Probably not for awhile. I had even mentioned it to Taylor, not knowing she already knew that I was. Taylor's response was mom don't say that. She was both nervous and ecstatic to tell me of the secret she was hiding from me. Knowing that I wouldn't be upset, even though Taylor was only

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18 at the time. She knew it wouldn't upset me.

What came next after the first month shocked me! Despite being incredibly happy that I was about to become a Grandmother, it was a huge trigger for me! It came over me like a wave, a very familiar one! One that I had not felt so intensely in years. I recognized the feeling and done everything in my power to bury it and deep. I couldn't show in front of Taylor, let alone tell her. I recognized that I still needed healing in that area of my life.

So I started counselling and continuing with weekly acupuncture treatments. Counselling helped, but then that opened a whole new door and made me see that it wasn't Zoe's loss that I needed to heal. It was unresolved issues with Zoe's dad that I had and my ideas and views on marriage had been crushed. I only attended a few sessions, to recognize that I needed to do the inner work and learn to forgive myself and also my ex-husband for our failed marriage and the loss we shared.

I became clingy with Taylor throughout her pregnancy, attending every doctor's appointment and ultrasound she had. Always fearing the worst, even though I kept trying to bury that feeling, it was always below the surface wanting to rear its ugly head. I started catering to Taylor and making sure she was okay, eating healthy, resting, etc.

My obsession began, the fear began, the grief came back. Still I would not show it to anyone over the course of my daughter's pregnancy! My acupuncturist recognized something was wrong, and I shared with her what I was feeling, and when I did I was somewhat relieved, then the tears came and not just a little, it was a wave that came over me. It felt good to get all that out.

Tara, my acupuncturist, along with her business partner, Sara, are such wonderful people. They truly are a godsend when it comes to helping you heal anything, including trauma and

unresolved issues. I was able to keep my own personal misery well hidden with regular weekly treatments.

I never thought when Taylor told me she was pregnant, that it would trigger me the way it did. I was unprepared for the intense grief and sadness, but at the same time I was so overjoyed that I was about to become a grandma.

During Taylor's first ultrasound at 8 weeks I was asked to wait in the waiting room until I was called back in. The waiting was pure torment! I sat there and visualized the worst. I hated the fact that I was feeling that way. I again was trying to bury those emotions that I was feeling. It felt wrong that I was feeling that way and in no way did I want to jinx anything, even though I know that it is impossible for me to jinx anything, those thoughts and feelings were there.

Always fearing the worst, even though I kept trying to bury that feeling, it was always below the surface wanting to rear its ugly head.

Don't talk about my loss and it won't happen to her, don't think about it and it won't happen to her. I know, silly right? But that's what grief and loss do, it re-visits and rears it's ugly head whenever it is trying to teach you where you still need healing. I am grateful for it now, but during her pregnancy I couldn't see that.

We got past that first ultrasound and were able to see a viable heartbeat on the screen. I became so emotional seeing it that I burst into tears and said thank-you!

This was just the beginning! Every appointment, I became more and more

worried, about what? Anything and everything! During one of Taylor's doctor's appointments the doctor mentioned that Taylor would need a shot at 26 or 28 weeks gestation, as her blood type is O negative, translation RH Negative! I had no idea what her blood type was ever. So a shot of rogam was prescribed for that time. When I questioned what exactly the shot was for instant internal panic! The doctor explained that with O negative blood type's the body can attack the fetus at around that time of pregnancy.

I shouldn't have researched it as much as I did, but I needed to know exactly what could happen. Like I said wrong thing to do! I made sure Taylor was under no stress whatsoever after this and took it easy, I was always telling her to let me know if she ever felt different. That we would go to the hospital if need be. The waiting for that date to arrive was brutal! Why couldn't they just do the shot now, is all I kept thinking. I tried hard to put it out of my mind until it was time to go for that shot.

I was able to focus on something else. The gender reveal ultrasound! YAY! We get to find out what the sex of the baby is! This was so exciting! Then again waiting to be called into the ultrasound room was torture once again, and this time I sat and waited longer than the first one. Which caused a bit of anxiety, finally I am in the room with Taylor. Its's a boy! Again happy tears for both her and I. I promised myself that I would work hard at not letting anything else get to me, that I would enjoy seeing my daughter throughout her pregnancy and enjoying all of these moments with her. I started talking to her tummy and calling my grandson by his name, Miles! Telling him how much his grandma loves him and how he is my Superman As time went along in Taylor's pregnancy, I felt like I had

a good grasp of things now. I am not fearing as much anymore. She was further and further along and the due date was getting closer and closer now.

She hit the 37 week gestation mark! Every week Taylor would remind me of how far along she was. This particular week I kept telling myself! Yes! She is almost ready to give birth, but please don't mention how far along you are. Boom! Like clockwork, Taylor said Mom! I'm 37 weeks today! Yes, sweetheart I know! She had no idea what that meant for me. Zoe's loss was at 37 weeks! Sigh! Tears! Hold it together is all I could think.

I went back to work this same week after being on stress leave for 4 months. Friday came along, YAY! I made it through this work week.

My empty arms over the years were always begging to hold a baby again. This time it's my beautiful grandson!

11:00 a.m. text from Taylor at her doctor's appointment. Mom, I am being sent to B.C. Women's hospital because my blood pressure is really high, if it's still high when I get there, I will be induced. F**K,F**K,F**K, is all I could say in my head! I felt instantly sick! I left work to be with her at the hospital. I kept saying she is in good hands, there is medical staff here everywhere.

Don't stress, Don't stress, Don't stress is what I kept repeating in my head. Taylor is not me! Her situation is different. Don't Stress, Don't Stress!! Breathe! Just Breathe!

And that's exactly what I kept repeating. It was a gruelling 37 hours of labour for Taylor, the same amount I was with Zoe! I didn't leave her side

during labour. The first night I wanted to reach out to the Angel Whispers group for a little support for me, as I felt like my grief was at it's highest that first night! I barely slept, but that was okay, as long as Taylor and Mile's are okay, That was all that mattered.

Once Taylor became 5cm dilated a sense of relief overcame me, my grandson would be here at any moment. Taylor now became panicked, as her contractions became stronger. I put my stuff aside to talk her through her contractions and calm her down. Epidural time! I'm freaked out and so is Taylor, but she needed it so badly. Finally after some convincing from doctor's and nurses she had one. Calm Taylor equals Calm Momma!

At 12:45am Sunday July 16, 2017 my grandson Miles Paul Calvin Fertash was born! My Superman! What a beautiful sight! What a beautiful cry! Cry as loud as you want please!

Just when we thought things were all good. Taylor's blood pressure was not coming down, nor her high heart rate. Then, 2 days after birth, Mile's had a possible infection! What!!! No!! I just wanna take them home!

They spent 10 days in hospital after birth in which I spent with her and Miles. I was not leaving their side until they get the green light to go home! On July 24 that happened. They were both allowed to come home!

Mile's continues to be his grandma's Superman, helping me heal my own loss. That feeling of holding a baby again has healed me alot, more than anyone will ever realize. My empty arms over the years were always begging to hold a baby again. This time it's my beautiful grandson! He is my pride and joy!

I tell everyone being a Grandma is the best job ever!

We appreciate our Angel Whispers volunteers!

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and experiences to helping other bereaved families.

Would you like to help?

We are currently looking for volunteers to help plan and organize upcoming fundraisers.

If you would like to volunteer your time to help Angel Whispers raise much needed funds to sustain supports and services to grieving families, please contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or email - angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.

Shelly Kubbernus is an Angel Whispers mom who reached out to Angel Whispers for support almost 10 years ago after the loss of her sweet baby girl Zoe. In Zoe's memory, Shelly and her ex-husband Robert created Zoe's Memory Boxes. Zoe's legacy continues on with each memory box Angel Whispers provides to grieving families. Shelly now lives in Burnaby, BC.

'NORMAL'

Author unknown

Normal is having tears waiting behind every smile when you realize someone important is missing from all the important events in your family's life.

Normal is feeling like you can't sit another minute without getting up and screaming, because you just don't like to sit through anything.

Normal is not sleeping very well because a thousand what if's & why didn't I's go through your head constantly.

Normal is reliving that day continuously through your eyes and mind, holding your head to make it go away.

Normal is having the TV on the minute I walk into the house to have noise, because the silence is deafening.

Normal is staring at every child who looks like she is my child's age. And then thinking of the age she would be now and not being able to imagine it. Then wondering why it is even important to imagine it, because it will never happen.

Normal is every happy event in my life always being backed up with sadness lurking close behind, because of the hole in my heart.

Normal is telling the story of your child's death as if it were an everyday, commonplace activity, and then seeing the horror in someone's eyes at how awful it sounds. And yet realizing it has become a part of my "normal".

Normal is each year coming up with the difficult task of how to honor your child's memory and her birthday and survive these days. And trying to find the balloon or flag that fit's the occasion. Happy Birthday? Not really.

Normal is my heart warming and yet sinking at the sight of something special my daughter loved. Thinking how she would love it, but how she is not here to enjoy it.

Normal is having some people afraid to mention my daughter. Normal is making sure that others remember her.

Normal is after the funeral is over everyone else goes on with their lives, but I continue to grieve my loss forever.

Normal is weeks, months, and years after the initial shock, the grieving gets worse sometimes, not better.

Normal is not listening to people compare anything in their life to this loss, unless they too have lost a child. NOTHING. Even if your child is in the remotest part of the earth away from you - it doesn't compare. Losing a parent is horrible, but having to bury your own child is unnatural.

Normal is taking pills, and trying not to cry all day, because I know my mental health depends on it.

Normal is realizing I do cry everyday.

Normal is disliking jokes about death or funerals, bodies being referred to as cadavers, when you know they were once someone's loved one.

Normal is being impatient with everything and everyone, but someone stricken with grief over the loss of your child.

Normal is sitting at the computer crying, sharing how you feel with chat buddies who have also lost a child.

Normal is feeling a common bond with friends on the computer in England, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and all over the USA, but yet never having met any of them face to face.

Normal is a new friendship with another grieving mother, talking and crying together over our children and our new lives.

Normal is not listening to people make excuses for God. "God may have done this because..." I love God, I know that my daughter is in heaven, but hearing people trying to think up excuses as to why sick children were taken from this earth is not appreciated and makes absolutely no sense to this grieving mother.

Normal is being too tired to care if you paid the bills, cleaned the house, did laundry or if there is any food.

Normal is wondering this time whether you are going to say you have two children or one, because you will never see this person again and it is not worth explaining that my child is in heaven. And yet when you say you have one child to avoid that problem, you feel horrible as if you have betrayed your child.

Normal is avoiding McDonald's and Burger King playgrounds because of small, happy children that break your heart when you see them.

Normal is asking God why he took your child's life instead of yours and asking if there even is a God.

Normal is knowing I will never get over this loss, in a day or a million years.

And last of all, Normal is hiding all the things that have become "normal" for you to feel, so that everyone around you will think that you are "normal".

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

Draven Layman - March 23, 2017

Bodhi Willis - August 3, 2017

*Kieran Reid Auger - September 29,
2017*

*Eva & Alayna Steidle - October 30,
2017*

*Lillian Marie Lacey Peacock -
October 31, 2017*

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

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

Upcoming Meetings:

Baby Loss Support Group - Open to any family that has been devastated by the loss of a baby to miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death. Sunday's from 6-8pm at Strathcona County FCSS Offices, 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. Registration required.

- December 3
- January 7
- February 4
- March 4

Miscarriage Support Group - These meetings are open to any family that have experienced the loss of a baby to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy or blighted ovum. Sunday's from 6-8pm at Families First Offices, 9901-90 St. Fort Saskatchewan. Registration required.

- December 10
- January 21
- February 11
- March 11

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - These meetings are open to any family that is considering the possibility of trying again or for

families that are anxiously expecting after experiencing a previous loss. Sunday's from 3-5pm, contact Lori-Ann for meeting location. Registration required.

- December 10
- January 21
- February 4
- March 4

Healing Hands - Healing Hands is an afternoon devoted to creative healing. Saturday's from 1-3pm at FCSS offices in Sherwood Park, 401 Festival Lane. Registration required.

- March 17

Rainbow Connection - These get togethers are open to any family that has had a baby born after experiencing a previous loss. They provide an opportunity for families to connect and share their joys and challenges in raising a Rainbow Baby while honoring, remembering and grieving for their angel baby.

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

Did you know that Angel Whispers does not receive long term sustainable funding?

We rely heavily on fundraisers, donations, grants and community partnerships to sustain our services to grieving families!

We are always looking for opportunities to raise much needed funds for the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!

Do you have a fundraising idea?

Are you interested in volunteering your time to help plan upcoming fundraisers?

We are looking for volunteers to help organize upcoming events!

Contact:

Lori-Ann, Program Coordinator @ (780) 998-5595 ext. 225

or

Heather Boonstra, Families First Executive Director @ (780) 998-5595 ext. 223.

Thank you for your support!

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~

What is a Rainbow Baby?

A "rainbow baby" is a baby that is born following a miscarriage or still birth.

In the real world, a beautiful and bright rainbow follows a storm and gives hope of things getting better. The rainbow is more appreciated having just experienced the storm in comparison.

The storm (pregnancy loss) has already happened and nothing can change that experience. Storm-clouds might still be overhead as the family continue to cope with the loss, but something colourful and bright has emerged from the darkness and misery.

Rainbow Baby Birth Announcements

Ruby Joy White

Born on September 24, 2017 weighing 7lbs 13oz to proud parents Tanya and Quenton. Ruby was welcomed by her big siblings Hazel, Jude, Charlize and Ira. Ruby is watched over with love by her siblings in heaven, Haven and 5 sweet little angels.

Clara Grace McNeil

Born on September 25, 2017 weighing 7lbs 13oz to loving parents Stefanie and Simon. Clara's big brother Cooper is celebrating with the angels and surrounding Clara with his love!

Reese Austen Fehr

Born on November 1, 2017 weighing 7lbs 9oz to excited parents Carrie and Gerry and proud big brother Gavin. Reese's big sisters Gabriella and Ensa are smiling down from heaven and celebrating Reese's safe arrival!

Cohen Wyndham Hornby

Born on November 21, 2017 weighing 7lbs 8oz to overjoyed parents Cheryl and Joe and excited big brother Austin. Cohen is watched over and protected with the love of his big sister in heaven, Emercyn.

Ellie Hope Leduc

Born on November 22, 2017 weighing 6lbs 15oz to loving parents Angelina and Justin and proud big sister Evangeline. Ellie has an angel sibling watching over her from above.

Charli Elizabeth Petitpas

Born on November 22, 2017 weighing 7lbs 15.6oz to excited parents Sarah and Randy. Charli has a few angel siblings watching over her from above, celebrating her much anticipated arrival.

Christmas Wish

Author Unknown

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

The New Year gives us time.
We need time to grieve.

But most of all to Heal.

I wish you the gift of peace from
an aching heart;

I wish you the gift of strength
for the day ~

I wish you the gift of recognition,
I wish you the gift of remembrance,

I wish you the gift of care,
I wish you the gift of belonging,

These are the gifts I wrap in prayer,
And lovingly send your way.

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

Visit us on Facebook!

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

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

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

Suggestions for Honouring Your Baby at Christmas and Throughout the Year

A positive way of coping with your loss through the holiday season 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



The Stocking Project

Please remember my little one in Heaven this Christmas Season. Send a card or note addressed to baby. Your note will be placed in a special stocking and read on Christmas day.



- 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

Can You Help?

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



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

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

Thank You!

Angel Whispers 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, then find Angel Whispers under Fund Designation.

A **HUGE** Thank You to the following companies, businesses, agencies, community partners and individuals for their generous support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program over the past several years! Your support allows Angel Whispers to continue to provide hope and healing to families devastated by the loss of a baby.

“Giving is not just about making a donation, it’s about making a difference”

~ Kathy Calvin

- Cheryl and Simon Budziszyn for selecting Angel Whispers and the Stollery Children’s Hospitals as beneficiaries of Emily’s Legacy Bike Tour that was held on September 16 in Canmore/Banff and to everyone who donated and raised money in support of Angel Whispers!

The 2017 Emily’s Legacy Bike Tour raised a total of \$7004! Of this, \$4,282 was raised in support of the Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation and \$2,722 was raised in support of Angel Whispers!!!

Thank you to everyone for your support!



- To all the families who donate to cover the costs for our care packages, birth certificate keepsakes and memory box program.
- To everyone who has donated online through Canada Helps in memory of the sweet babies of our Angel Whispers families.
- To Strathcona County Family and Community Services for the Social Services Grant we recently received to help Angel Whispers sustain services to grieving families.
- To the Alberta Government for the Community Initiatives Program Grant to help Angel Whispers sustain services to grieving families.
- To the Swiftsure Foundation for the generous donation which allowed the Angel Whispers Program Coordinator the opportunity to complete her Death and Grief Studies Certification!
- To Judy’s Safety Company for the generous donation!
- To Tirsa Smale with Pampered Chef for organizing a fundraiser in support of Angel Whispers. For more information on Pampered Chef, visit www.pamperedchef.biz/tirsa.
- To Jillian & Sarah with Lularoe for organizing a fundraiser in support of Angel Whispers. For more information on Lularoe, visit www.facebook.com/groups/1193667300777412
- To Brenda Chmilar and the Kalyna County Quilters for the generous donation of quilts for our Rainbow babies!
- To Strathcona Family and Community Services for allowing us use of their meeting space!
- To Betty Dean for helping with our newsletter!
- ***And to all our Angel Whispers volunteers!***



- To AON for selecting Angel Whispers as one of their Charities of Choice for their recent AON Cares Charity Campaign.

Healing Opportunities

Angel Whispers Annual Christmas Healing Hands Workshop

- December 16, 2017 - 1-3 p.m.
- Families First Office - 9901-90St. Fort Saskatchewan

You are invited to join us to make a Christmas ornament in memory of your baby. This is an opportunity for our families to come together at Christmas to share and honour their precious babies. Families are welcome to attend.

Please RSVP to Lori-Ann with the #'s of adults and children that will be attending, along with the children's ages as we have childcare arranged for the children and need to ensure proper childcare:children ratio. angelwhispers@families-firstsociety.ca

ParentCare Candle Light Service

- December 21st, 2017 - 7:30pm
- Our Savior Lutheran Church 18345 62B Ave N.W.

In keeping with what has become a ParentCare tradition, the December meeting will once again be a Candle Light non-denominational service. 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 10th 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.

Understanding your Grief 6 week Workshop

Angel Whispers offers an *Understanding Your Grief* 6-week workshop. Cost \$25, includes the 'Understanding your Grief Workbook'. Limited to 10 participants each session.

Topics include:

- dispelling misconceptions about grief
- the uniqueness of your grief
- exploring the feelings of loss
- understanding the needs of mourning
- nurturing yourself
- reaching out for help
- seeking reconciliation not resolution

To be included on the list for upcoming workshop dates, contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext 225.

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 and drama for our youngest mourners to explore their unique grief journey in a safe and compassionate setting. Our parent/guardian group meets concurrently for other family members.

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

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



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
- Birth Certificate Keepsakes
- Miscarriage Support Group
- Understanding your Grief Workshops
- Rainbow Connection Group

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 Support Group

Open to any family that has been devastated by the loss of a baby to miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death. Sunday's from **6-8 p.m.** at Strathcona County FCSS Offices, 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. Registration required.

- December 3
- January 7
- February 4
- March 4

Miscarriage Support Group

These meetings are open to any family that have experienced the loss of a baby to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy or blighted ovum. Sunday's from **6-8 p.m.** at Families First Offices, 9901-90 St. Fort Saskatchewan. Registration required.

- December 10
- January 21
- February 11
- March 11



Families First Society
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

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)

9901-90 St. T8L 3T1
or Box 3285 T8L 2T3
Fort Saskatchewan, AB
Parent Link Centre

Phone: 780-998-5595

Fax: 780-998-5503

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

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>