

Angel Whispers

SUMMER, 2018

*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.*



Families First Society
FORT SASKATCHEWAN
www.familiesfirstsociety.ca

#thisisourvillage

Warm summer wishes to our Angel Whispers families,

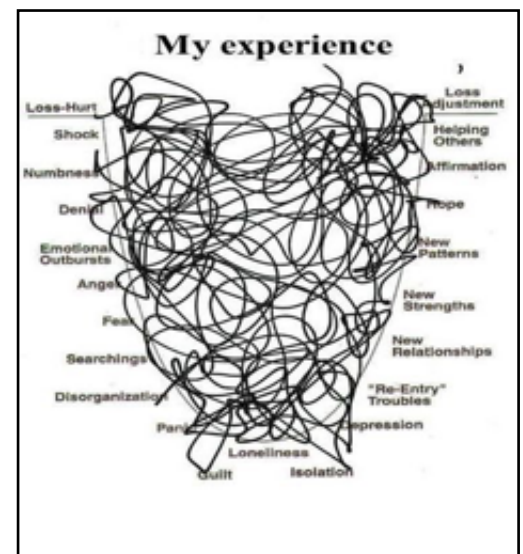
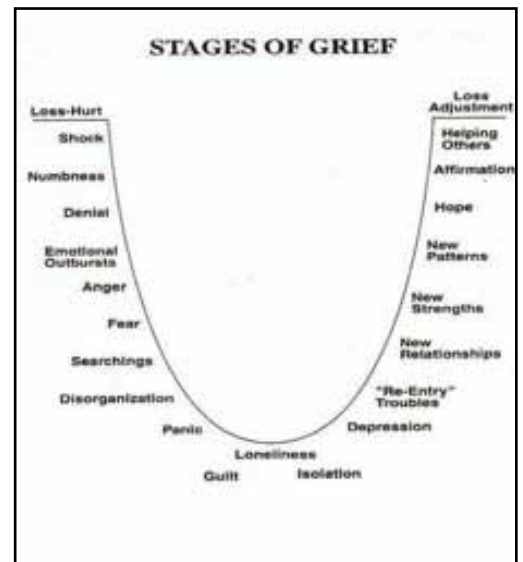
Summer has arrived in our corner of the world...just days ago we celebrated the Summer Solstice, a day marked on the calendar recognizing the “official” start of summer. We will celebrate summer for the next 3 months before the calendar will acknowledge that summer is over and the start of fall begins.

We go through these seasonal transitions every 3 months and yet do the seasons completely change overnight? Not at all, instead our experience is often of the seasons blending together and we experience a gradual change to the weather and the landscape of the world around us. Our own personal grief journeys can be very similar to the change of seasons...our emotions often blend together and it can be hard to differentiate what “season” we may be in.

Grief in itself is a complicated experience. Society traditionally expects grief to follow the typical 5 Stages of Grief model, first introduced by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. This model makes grief sound like it’s a linear and finite process with a beginning and an end.

Grief certainly has a beginning, when we experience the loss of someone we love. However, grief in contrast does not have an end. Instead it can help to look at grief in this way...Grief is the price we pay for love, when you love for a lifetime you will grieve for a lifetime. When you realize that instead of “getting over” grief, that we experience a softening to our grief as we learn to integrate our loss into our lives it can truly make a difference in how we approach our grief. Grief is so much more

than the 5 stated “stages” listed above. This illustration is so much more representative of the reality of grief:



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Some people may assume that grief is only an emotional experience, that we will move through the emotions of grief towards healing and yet grief involves so much more than emotions.

Grief has an impact on every realm of who we are. Grief will touch us in the following ways:

1. Physical
2. Emotional
3. Mental
4. Social
5. Behavioral
6. Spiritual

This newsletter edition focuses on the Spiritual realm of grief. Spirituality will have a different meaning to each of us. It's not necessarily connected to a specific religion, for many individuals their spirituality is a different experience than their individual faith beliefs. The spiritual side of grief can influence our grief journeys in the following ways:

- Questioning God or a higher power
- Doubting or affirming religious or spiritual beliefs
- Questions about our loved ones who have died:
 - Where are they now?
 - Are they ok?
 - Are they with me? Can they see me?
 - Will I ever see my loved one again?
- Questions of our own mortality:
 - What will happen when I die?
 - Is there a heaven?
- Existential questions:
 - What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning behind my loss?
 - Have I been enough in my life?
 - What is my purpose in life?
- Mystical experiences:
 - Sensing loved ones presence
 - Signs from our loved ones
 - Dreams

In my own personal grief journey, my

spirituality has been integral in my healing. I contribute the work I do now to my spiritual journey and the search for meaning in my losses. I believe that I was meant to be on this path in life, doing the work I do now in providing support, hope and healing to families that have been devastated by the loss of a baby. I had to go through my own losses to help me discover my passion. Without my experiences in losing our two babies, Loren and Brooklynn, I wouldn't have the ability to connect and understand on a deep and personal level with the families that reach out for support. I have experienced signs from my babies and my loved ones that have died, providing so much comfort to me. I have faith that when my time here on earth is done that I will be reunited with my babies, my mom and other loved ones that have gone before me. I have seen psychic mediums to connect with my babies and loved ones...finding so much comfort and healing in their messages.

When you nurture yourselves spiritually your heart opens and your life takes on renewed meaning

and purpose. You are filled with compassion for others, especially those in grief. You love deeper, become kinder, more gentle, more forgiving of others and yourself. If it helps you to feel as though you have a bit of an idea of what to expect on your grief journey, instead of looking at grief as a 5 stages of grief analogy, perhaps it will help to view it as a 5 level of integration analogy:

- Shock Response where we feel psychically and emotionally numb;
- Cognitive Response where we think about our loss;
- Affective Response where we feel the intense emotions related to our loss;
- Spiritual Response where we search for meaning in our loss;
- Behavioral Response where our grief is expressed through what we say and do.

It is possible to heal after the loss of a baby; healing does not mean "getting over" our losses. Instead healing means that we integrate our losses into our lives as we discover our "new normal",

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Spiritual Experiences

At first I was upset and angry with God. Who does this to someone? Who takes this small innocent child away from its parents? Why me? What did I do wrong for this to happen to me? What kind of God allows this much hurt?

After some thinking and a few one on one meetings with Lori-Ann, I realized that this happens to more and more people than I thought or could even imagine. That it wasn't karma or God that made this happen. It just happens. An unanswerable question in life.

Then I decided to go see Connie, a spiritual advisor. She provided a lot of answers to questions I had. She told me all about Liam. She told me things that I knew only he could tell her. She told me he was around, he could hear us and see things we did. She told me all about the letters and things I wrote to him. She told me that someone would draw me something amazing for him. At the time I didn't know what it could be till 3 months later I went and got a tattoo. It was drawn up so nice. Seeing her provided some much needed comfort.

By: Crystle in memory of Liam

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experience joy and happiness and find ways to honour the memory of our little ones. However it is important to know that healing does not just happen by grieving, instead we must express our grief outwardly through mourning. If we spend our entire lives only grieving and not mourning, we risk getting “stuck” in our grief and deny ourselves the opportunity to heal.

You may be asking what the difference between grieving and mourning is? Grief is what we feel inside; the intense emotions and feeling of sadness and emptiness. Mourning is the outward expression of these emotions. We can mourn through opening up to share, talking with friends, family or others that offer unconditional support. Mourning can also occur through journaling, creativity through art, music and finding ways to honour our loved ones.

Grief is the price we pay for love, when you love someone for a lifetime you will in fact grieve for them for a lifetime. The grief will change, and with time and support and a commitment to doing the hard work of mourning the grief will soften but it never truly ends.

May you be comforted on your grief journey by knowing you are not

alone, there are others that understand and have walked this path before you towards healing. Have hope in knowing the intensity of the emotions you are feeling will soften. You don't have to walk this journey alone, reach out to others that care and can help you to nurture and encourage you through your grief. And remember to pay attention to all the realms of your grief: physical, emotional, mental, social, behavioral and spiritual.

Wishing you a gentle summer filled with warmth and sunshine to help brighten the dark days of your grief.

With Love and Understanding,

Lori-Ann

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



Angel Whispers Funding

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!

I Believe

Performed by Diamond Rio
©2002

*Every now and then soft as breath
upon my skin
I feel you come back again
And it's like you haven't been gone
a moment from my side
Like the hands of time are holding
you and me
And with all my heart I'm sure
we're closer than we ever were
I don't have to hear or see, I've got
all the proof I need
There are more than angels watch-
ing over me
I believe, I believe
That when you die your life goes on
It doesn't end here when you're
gone
Every soul is filled with light
It never ends and if I'm right
Our love can even reach across
eternity
I believe, I believe
Forever you're a part of me
Forever in the heart of me
And I'll hold you even longer if
I can
The people who don't see the most
Say that I believe in ghosts
And if that makes me crazy, then
I am
Cause I believe
There are more than angels watch-
ing over me
I believe, I believe
Every now and then
Soft as breath upon my skin
I feel you come back again
And I believe*

Healing your Grieving Soul

“Spirituality often requires stillness and silence.”

After the death of someone you love, you have been “torn apart” and have some very special needs. Among these needs is to nurture yourself in five important areas: physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially and spiritually.

When someone we love dies, it is like a deep hole implodes inside of us. It's as if the hole penetrates us and leaves us gasping for air. I have always said we mourn life losses from the inside out. In my experience, it is only when we are spiritually nurtured (inside and outside) that we discover the courage to mourn openly and honestly.

I have discovered that many of us are hard on ourselves when we are in mourning. We often have inappropriate expectations of how “well” we should be doing with our grief. These expectations come from common societal messages that tell us to be strong in the face of grief. We are told to “carry on”, “keep our chins up”, and “keep busy”. Worse yet, many of us are told, “God wouldn't give you anything more than you can bear.”

These and other similar messages often discourage us from practicing spiritual self-care, which, by contrast, is needed because it invites and encourages us to suspend. In actuality, when we are in grief, we need to slow down, to turn inward, to embrace our feelings of loss, and to seek and accept support. No, it is not always easy to be spiritually self-compassionate in a mourning-avoidant culture. Without doubt, spiritual self-care takes time, mindfulness, and discernment.

To integrate spiritual practices into your life demands a reminder that:

- Spirituality invites you to slow down and turn inward.
- Spirituality invites you to feel deeply and to believe passionately.
- Spirituality invites you to get to know your authentic self.

- Spirituality invites you to celebrate diversity.
- Spirituality invites you to be open to the mystery.

To practice spiritual self-care doesn't mean you are feeling sorry for yourself. Rather, it means you are allowing yourself to have the courage to pay attention to your “special needs”. For it is in spiritually nurturing ourselves, in allowing ourselves the time and loving

attention we need to journey through our grief, that we find meaning in our continued living. It is having the courage to care for our own needs that we discover a fullness to living and loving again. That is why, if I could, I would encourage all of us when we are in the midst of grief to put down "Nurture my spirit" first on our daily to-do lists.

Excerpt taken from 'Healing your Grieving Soul', by Dr. Alan Wolfelt.

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/>.

Celeste's Story

Our daughter, Blake, died five years ago. She was born at 23 weeks and died 11 minutes after birth.

I never got to know her. I don't know what colour her eyes were, or what her favourite flavour of ice cream would have been. I never got to see her catch a ball or graduate university or have children of her own. And for the longest time, worse than the loss was not knowing WHY. Why did all this happen? Why was this little soul, who was so desperately wanted and loved beyond measure, given to us and then stolen away so quickly and without explanation?

In the days and weeks after her passing, I was obsessed with finding "the answer." I searched and searched for meaning but could find none that satisfied my heart. As it often does, time eventually doused that burning question within me, though I knew it was never truly extinguished.

I eventually settled into a new kind of life, and soon enough, I was something of myself again. I was celebrating Christmases and birthdays. I was working, making plans for the future. I was cleaning my house and shaving my legs and getting up everyday and doing everything I thought I should be doing. But inside, I knew something was still terribly, terribly wrong.

I chalked it up to, "My baby died. How could something NOT be wrong?" Still, things in my life started to change.

I had always struggled with my weight, but after the pregnancy, the 20 extra pounds I'd always fought with suddenly became an immovable 50. My hormones also became out of whack, not so much that the doctor would treat me, but enough that I could feel the difference. My ability to deal with stress became so diminished that I eventually had to change careers. I was tired, passionless, scattered.

We decided to trade in our city life

for a smaller, quieter one in the country. On our newly acquired homestead, I could dabble in the garden, raise some small livestock, and begin to truly heal.

Only, I didn't. Don't get me wrong... Things were wonderful on our little acreage, and for a time it provided exactly the kind of distraction I needed. But when the work became a burden, and we agreed to take a break from our little agricultural experiment, I found myself as lost as ever. Once again, I began searching for the peace that had alluded me all along.

*Why did all this happen?
Why was this little soul, who
was so desperately wanted and
loved beyond measure,
given to us and
then stolen away so quickly*

At this time, I want to mention that I grew up Catholic. And though I know many people grow up in that faith and have wonderful experiences and come to know God in ways that bring them tremendous joy and comfort, especially in times of crisis and loss, that was not my experience.

For me, church was a place of shame and guilt, where I learned all the myriad ways in which I'd failed God. A place where it was reiterated, Sunday after Sunday, that I was nothing but a sinner in desperate need of saving. I couldn't understand why God would give birth to a species He himself seemed to find detestable. And I didn't understand why God seemed more interested in punishment than in compassion. In short, I equated God with rejection, and that rejection turned into unworthiness.

At the learned age of 14, I decided I would never measure up to God's

expectations, and as a result, believed He would never really "have my back." We respectfully parted ways, God and I, and I accepted the lonely truth that I was (spiritually) forever on my own. That is, until a mid-life experience completely up-ended my whole belief system.

Back on the farm, without chicken coups to clean or goats to milk, I found myself endlessly surfing the web. It started with Facebook and Instagram, but I soon grew bored. Instead, I began delving into sites about metaphysics and expanded consciousness. One fateful afternoon, I watched a movie called *The Reality of Truth*, which set into motion events that would forever change my life.

The movie's premise was simple, and in truth, not that fantastic. A group of Hollywood pals trek across South America experiencing the shamanic plant medicines of the indigenous tribes there, finding self-realization and healing along the way. I had never heard the term before, but something about it instantly and completely called to my soul.

Plant medicine

In the shamanic sense, plant medicines are any and all plants that help heal the mind, body and spirit. They each act on the participant in a specific way – much like Western medicines – to bring about specific kinds of healings. Jungle pharmaceuticals, if you will. They are considered curative and sacred. Among the most powerful – and the most sacred – is Ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic brew made by the medicine folk of the Amazon. And like Buckley's Cough syrup, it tastes terrible but it works.

Wait, did she just say hallucinogenic? As in the dangerous, illegal, mind-destroying class of drugs that so many misguided youths destroyed their

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potential with?

Before you stop reading, let me say that there is a growing body of evidence that suggests psychedelics like psilocybin, ibogaine, and DMT (like that naturally occurring in both the human brain and Ayahuasca) have powerful medical and psychological benefits. You don't have to search the internet very hard to find a plethora of studies that conclude conditions like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and addiction are improved, if not cured, through the use of psychedelics. Even treatment resistant PTSD, long believed to be nearly incurable, is responding to psychedelic therapy.

From a spiritual standpoint, it is the visionary states that these medicines elicit which make them so powerful. They allow for self-reflection, trauma clearing and, believe it or not, communion with God. From a scientific perspective, psychedelics encourage neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. In short: they help circumvent old habits, uproot unwanted behaviours, and chisel away at old patterns of thought, even feelings of deep grief.

In a recent European study*, 60 participants dealing with the death of a loved one were compared. Thirty participants had taken Ayahuasca in a ceremonial setting and 30 had attended peer-support groups. The researchers found that the Ayahuasca group presented categorically lower levels of grief. But more interesting to me was the fact the participants also described "experiences of emotional release, biographical memories, and experiences of contact with the deceased" during their Ayahuasca journeys.

I was in.

It was not long after that I found myself at a retreat in Costa Rica, preparing for my first Ayahuasca ex-

perience. I chose the set and setting of my Ayahuasca journey with care and thorough research. Many seekers find their way into the deep jungle, laid out on bamboo mats, swatting away humming-bird sized mosquitoes, and speaking with their shamans through translators. This wasn't the experience I was looking for. I knew I needed a place considerably more familiar in order to do this thing which was going to be so completely unfamiliar.

*I was desperate
Desperate times call for
desperate measures.*

I settled on a resort called Rythmia, a five-star, medically-licensed "life advancement center" that offers a number of healing modalities, including yoga, transformational breathwork, meditation, metaphysical classes, and yes, Ayahuasca ceremonies facilitated by experienced shamans. I was going to need all the help I could get.

Let me be frank: Ayahuasca is no joke. The divine intelligence that lives in the "vine of the soul" is know as Mother Ayahuasca, and just like any mother, she can dole out the toughest of love when it's needed. The work she asks you to do is shadow work. It is deep and dark and sometimes grueling. It can be frightening beyond measure. Anyone who tells you otherwise is either lying or hasn't been through it themselves. And people who suggest it's recreational are delusional, pun intended. This is no party drug.

In addition to the visions, which aren't always unicorn-coloured, there are the physical effects. Releasing old wounds is an important part of the process, and this typically happens through purging. Participants can find themselves yawning, laughing, profusely sweating, crying, frequenting

the bathroom with diarrhea, and the most commonly, vomiting as physical means of clearing away old baggage.

Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Demon-filled visions and vomiting in front of a group of strangers. But I was desperate, and desperate times call for desperate measures. So on that fateful Costa Rican evening, reluctant but supportive husband at my side, I entered the ceremony hall.

It was about an hour after my first cup that the pungent brew began to take effect. I was woozy, propped up against the wall of the maloca, and hurting. I looked down and saw a familiar stance. Hips wide, hands on belly, a sense of feeling deeply rooted into the ground. As crazy as it sounds, I knew I was going into labour. I knew I was somehow about to complete the incomplete experience of bearing a child who dies before you even get to hold it in your arms. I only hoped that this time I would be offered some of the understanding I had longed for all these years.

*I found myself in a dizzying,
kaleidoscopic version of
reality, lost in dark, swirling
circles of loss.*

As the night wore on, my pain, nausea and visions grew more intense. They came in waves, like contractions, increasing in duration and strength. Afraid of how much further Mother Ayahuasca was going to take me down the rabbit hole, I sat up and opened my eyes. This helped suppress the visions for awhile, but as the second cup of medicine began to kick in, the visions began to crowd out my waking sight, as well. There was nowhere to hide.

I soon found myself in a dizzying,

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kaleidoscopic version of reality, lost in dark, swirling circles of loss. Suddenly, I was up on all fours, the bucket positioned in front of me. I threw up. And again. And even in a heavily fasted state, I managed to impressively fill the bottom of the plastic vessel. Before I knew it, I was surrounded by shamans chanting for my well-being, clearing away the heartbreak. Their incense filled my nose, and I threw up once more. Every time I thought I was done, the medicine's soul-wringing grasp would pick me up and we'd begin again. And all the while, I could hear the spirit of the medicine urging me to surrender, to look at what she wanted to show me. But I refused.

I was too afraid.

You see, I had always believed myself to be a strong, fierce survivor. In fact, the experience of losing Blake had solidified that truth in the core of my identity. "After all I've been through," I'd congratulate myself, "All the terrible tests, the anguish, the loneliness, I am still standing. I am a warrior." That's who I thought I was. That's why it was so shocking, and so humbling, to find such terror dwelling in me that night.

But I realized it was fear that had kept me running all these years. All the work I thought I had done to "move on" was really work to distract, to forget, to pretend. I had never really stood face to face with my grief, my guilt, my outrage. That's what she was trying to show me – so I could finally be free of it.

Broken by exhaustion and sadness, I whispered, I surrender.

But instead of punishing me, just as I thought God would, she lovingly and compassionately embraced me. I was sucked towards a blue, swirling portal encircled by interwoven jungle vines and ocean waves. As I passed through, I saw a sharp burst of white light and the sound of chimes on the air. I was

still reeling, but the fear was gone. And then, greeted by the smiling face of my own sweet soul, I knew.

I was on the other side. The other side of sadness, of despair, of life itself. I was in a place of total peace and joy, and I was filled with such gratitude and love that I began to weep like I've never wept before.

Resting finally, my clothes damp with sweat, tears pouring from my closed eyes, I felt the presence of two women gather round the crown of my head. I could not see them, only hear them. But there was absolutely no doubt in my heart. One was God, and the other was our sweet angel, Blake.

My heart overflowed with joy as we three talked into the small hours of the morning. All the questions I had ever had – about Blake's death, about death in general, about my own life's purpose – were all answered with gentleness, patience and a healthy dose of humour.

I understood my whole life had been leading up to that moment. As a friend of mine would say, "Soldiers don't train in the classroom. They have to get muddy." The events of my life were preparing me for the work I had come into this life to do. I understood that everything had happened exactly as it was always going to, and that there are no mistakes, no matter how mistaken they may feel.

Like a mother is apt to do, I often found myself worrying about if Blake was alright, if she was taken care of in whatever place she was in now. Worrying about if she knew how much I loved her and worrying whether she loved me back.

I have no worries now.

I still can't tell you what colour Blake's eyes were, or what kind of ice cream she would have preferred. But I can tell you about the sound of her voice, the love in her heart, and the joy that's on the other side. I can also tell you that my 14-year-old self got

it WAY wrong. God has had my back every step of the way, even when – especially when – the path was hidden from me, and She's so much cooler than I ever gave her credit for.

**Potential Use of Ayahuasca in Grief Therapy, by González D1, Carvalho M1,2, Cantillo J1, Aixalá M1, Farré M3,4.*

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28556759>

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.

Can You Help?

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



Fund Raising Opportunities

Emily's Legacy Bike Tour

Date: **Saturday September 15, 2018**

- Location: Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Provincial Recreational Area just east of Sherwood Park
In memory of Emily's Budziszyn benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program and the Stollery Children's Hospital.
- Online Silent Auction August 12th-18th.
- Visit www.emilysbiketour.com to register or for more information.



Emily Budziszyn,

was born on September 14, 2013. Shortly after her birth Emily contracted a virus and ended up in the hospital. The virus attacked her heart and resulted in myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). The damage was too great and it became apparent that her heart wouldn't recover. Emily was placed on the heart transplant list and she was lucky enough to receive a new heart a couple months later. Unfortunately, complications arose and she passed away on January 1, 2014 as the result of a heart attack that severely damaged her new heart.

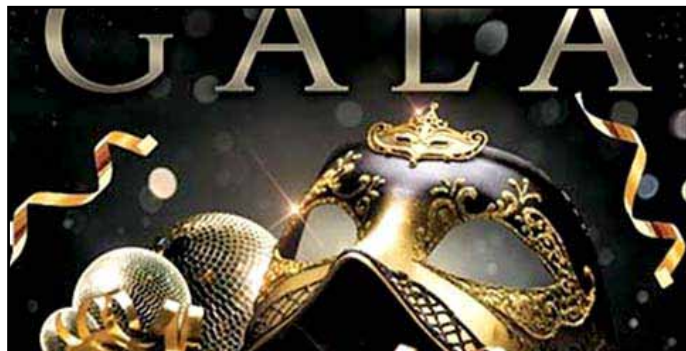
Saturday September 21, 2013 is the day Emily was first admitted to the hospital. Each year on the 3rd Saturday of September we will remember Emily through Emily's Legacy Bike Tour.

Funds are being raised in support of the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundations and the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Group.



Whispers of Hope Masquerade Gala

Save the date: **Friday, February 15, 2019**



We are just finalizing details and getting final Board of Directors approval for our upcoming Gala fundraiser!

All proceeds will benefit the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!

Angel Whispers is a non-funded program relying on fundraisers, donations, grants and community partnerships to sustain support and services to grieving families. Your support ensures that Angel Whispers is able to continue to provide hope and healing to families devastated by the loss of a baby.

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.

Healing Opportunities

5th Annual Picnic & Balloon Release



Date: Sunday July 29, 2018

- Time: 1:00-3:30 p.m.
- Location: Broadmoor Lake Park, Sherwood Park
- All of our Angel Whispers families are invited to an afternoon of honouring and remembering our sweet angel babies.

Please join us for our 5th Annual Potluck Picnic and Balloon Release! Families welcome!

Please bring an appetizer, salad or dessert to share with everyone! Bring lawn chairs and/or blanket to sit on.

- RSVP with the #'s of adults and children that will be attending to Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.
- Deadline is Thursday July 26.



1st Annual Healing Hearts Grief Retreat

Date: Saturday September 8, 2018

- Time: 8:30am-4:30pm
- Location: Families First Office 9901-90 St. Fort Saskatchewan

You are invited to join other Angel Whispers families for a full day of healing activities & speakers. A light breakfast & lunch will be included.



The following speakers will be sharing their knowledge & gifts with us:

- Sandy Ayre - Yoga for Grief Support
- DeeAnne Riendeau - Psychic Medium, Intuitive Reader and Angel Communicator - DeeAnne offers a powerful transformational session that assists with healing, growth and nurturing for your mind, body and spirit.
- Kristina Zuk - Healing Hands Painting Workshop
- Lynn Sutankayo - Body Mapping Workshop
- Ashley Yachimec - Master of Arts Counselling Psychology Graduate - Session on Grief & Anxiety

We have applied to DOW for some funding to cover the costs of the Grief Retreat, but haven't yet heard if we have been granted the funding. If we receive the funding there will be no cost for families to attend; if we don't receive the funding, we will have a minimal cost to attend \$15-\$20. Stay tuned to our Facebook groups for details on registration costs. To register for the workshop, contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca



Emily's Legacy Bike Tour

In memory of Emily's Budziszyn benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program and the Stollery Children's Hospital.

Saturday, September 15th, 2018

at Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreational Area just east of Sherwood Park.

Online Silent Auction August 12th-18th.

Visit www.emilysbiketour.com to register or for more information.

Understanding your Grief 6 week Workshop

Angel Whispers, in partnership with the Alberta Heartland Primary Care Network is offering an 'Understanding Your Grief' 6-week workshop. Public session begins in September for anyone touched by the loss of a loved one.

September 6, 13, 20, 27 & October 4, 11

- Thursdays from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Location: Alberta Heartland Primary Care Network, 9821 108 St #206 Fort Saskatchewan
- Limited to 10 participants each session
- Facilitated by Lori-Ann Huot, Program Coordinator - Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program



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 register, call (780) 997-0046.



Annual Baby Steps Walk to Remember

For anyone touched by the loss of a precious baby, during pregnancy or anytime after birth.

Tentative Date: Sunday October 14th

More details will be announced soon! For more information and updates, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/206201382882813/>

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.

Rainbow Baby Birth Announcements

Samson Gabriel Ewasiuk

Born on March 15, 2018 weighing 8lbs 5oz to loving parents Serena and Shawn and excited big brothers Leo and Silas. Samson's big brother Atticus is smiling down from heaven and celebrating Samson's safe arrival!

Maxwell William Doyle

Born on April 5, 2018 weighing 6lbs 9oz to excited parents Jessica and Steven and proud big sister Wren. Maxwell is watched over and protected with the love of his big brother in heaven, Wyatt.

Eliza Elena Marie Bombino

Born on April 25, 2018 weighing 7lbs 13oz to proud parents Sarah and Alex. Eliza's big sister Elena is watching over her from above, celebrating her much anticipated arrival.

A huge thank you to Tara Needham of 'Happiness is You Photography' who has generously offered free photography sessions to our Angel Whispers families expecting a Rainbow Baby.

A few words from Tara...*"My husband and I attended Angel Whispers very shortly after we lost our baby girl, Ella, in July 2004. We have since been blessed with three boys and life is full!*

I have started a professional photography business focusing on newborns and families. I have always tried to think of a way to give to grieving families and I have found something that makes my heart sing.

I give free photography sessions to families that are expecting a Rainbow Baby. The session is valued at \$300.00 and the parents are responsible for purchasing whatever photos they want afterwards."

Tara's website is happinesisyoudphotography.com. You can contact Tara at: (780)916-3294 or by email happinesisyoudphotography@gmail.com.

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.

- Sunday, July 8
- Sunday, September 9

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.

- Sunday, July 15
- Sunday, September 16

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.

- Sunday July 15
- Sunday, September 16

Healing Hands - Contact Lori-Ann for more information.

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

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.

Spiritual Experiences

This story is about the evolving relationship I have with my daughter, Annie, whose body was stillborn on January 1, 2014. She brought to me a changed sense of my own existence, which now seems to live in both a material and a spiritual plane, perhaps as a necessary way of keeping her close to me. I am grateful for nature's magical aspects, where I can touch her baby softness in a flower petal, and sense her beautiful soul.

Here is a story: The roots of a seed dug into warm dirt, finding a home there. A girl came walked across the patch of dirt and felt something change within her, so she visited the patch every day. She saw a small green shoot spring from the dirt and was amazed by its tiny perfection. She attended to the little shoot, and the next day, she saw a leaf grow. She provided sunshine, and the day after that, another leaf grew. She decided to stay up all night to be with the shoot, and in the morning, a wood lily emerged, exquisite in every petal and detail. Oh how she loved that flower. She saw the wind blow tickles to make wood lily laugh and dance. She saw wood lily's pistils reach for the sun. She saw wood lily bathe in rain. She saw the trees protect wood lily, dropping leaves and sticks because the flower wanted to play.

One day, an osprey flew south and wood lily was covered in soft, white, frost. Wood lily was cold and stopped dancing as much. It was time for her to go. Wood lily didn't need to stay in that dirt any longer. The girl picked the flower, and tenderly carried it in the crook of her arm. She brushed its petals, nuzzled its cold center against her nose, and found a different piece of earth for the flower to lay. She covered wood lily with earth and sat on the new patch of dirt for a very long time.

The girl missed wood lily, even though the flower was right there in the earth under her feet. The girl lay down

on the dirt, closed her eyes and cried for a very long time. She cried so long that the dirt became wet underneath her. The tears loosened the soil and became mud, and finally she felt her body sink. She got heavier and heavier as she sunk further and further, layer by layer into the ground. She sank so far down that her legs touched the middle of the earth. And you know all the energy that is there in the middle of the earth, she got so much of that energy just by touching her feet to it, that she felt herself shoot straight up through the dirt.

I am grateful for nature's magical aspects, where I can touch her baby softness in a flower petal, and sense her beautiful soul.

The girl was different now. She was long, and delicate, and connected. Just then, she felt a tingle all over her body and a leaf appeared. She felt her head grow light and burst into petals. She was a wood lily!

She was so happy she could see the earth just as her little flower did. She felt the wind tickle her and it made her laugh as she danced. She felt the sun shine and turn her head to feel its warmth. She drank the rain and napped. She woke to gifts from the trees and spelt her name on the earth, forming leaves and twigs into letters.

How nice it was to be a flower. How her little wood lily must have loved her time on the earth. One day, the osprey flew south and she grew cold. She was embraced by soft arms, nuzzled and carried to a new place. She gathered her blanket of frost, tired now, and lay on the earth. The frost melted into puddles and it was wet for a very long time. She listened to the sound in the earth. It became quieter and quieter as

she sunk down into the earth again, this time even deeper than before.

All of a sudden, she submersed in a flood and found herself at the bottom of a lake, rocking to the rhythm of the gentle waves above. How different the world was, from under the water. She had always wondered what it was like to float on the earth. All of a sudden, she saw the head of an osprey plunge towards her. She thought, this is it. But the osprey snatched a nearby fish, and was off again.

She followed the osprey's track to see some light above. She climbed a thick vine to see where the light came from and found herself on top of the water. She had become a lily pad. And right there, before her eyes, was a yellow water lily, giggling as the wind danced her on the water. The lily pad embraced the yellow flower, and there they stayed together, forever.

By: Lynn in memory of Annie

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**.

Thank You!

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

To Cheryl and Simon Budziszyn for selecting Angel Whispers and the Stollery Children’s Hospital as beneficiaries of Emily’s Legacy Bike Tour that was held on September 16, 2017 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 \$7,004! 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! We look forward to the upcoming Emily’s Legacy Bike Tour on September 15, 2018!



- 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 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!
- To all our Angel Whispers volunteers!

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

*Nataliah Fediuk
January 8-17, 2018*

*Ezekiel Kerney
February 24, 2018*

*Baby Matthiessen
March 26, 2018*

*Daxyn Leon Harris
April 12, 2018*

*Rosie Johnson
May 4, 2018*

*Casey Roux Hall
May 11, 2018*

*Reign Willis
May 16, 2018*

*Baby Winterton
June 15, 2018*

*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.



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

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.

- Sunday July 8
- Sunday September 9

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.

- Sunday July 15
- Sunday September 16



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>