

Angel Whispers

SUMMER, 2019

*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,

Another season has come and gone as we head into summer. I seem to blink and time passes right before my eyes, I can't believe we are ½ way through 2019. I wish I could slow down the clock and stop time from passing so quickly. I could use a few more hours in each day to have enough time for family, friends and work and the multitude of other responsibilities I have each day. Perhaps that is why my life seems to be going so fast as I need to slow down and as the cliché says "smell the roses".

Don't get me wrong, I do my best to ensure I have balance in my life. I have the opportunity to enjoy quality family time, time with friends and time for me, as I pursue my passion of supporting grieving families. However it seems as though the older I get, the busier I get and the more demands I need to manage. I ensure my clients are taking care of themselves and making self-care a priority, I need to practice what I preach. My husband is constantly reminding me to slow down and enjoy life, a reminder that I appreciate so much as I know his comments come from a place of love and concern. His interests and mine vary greatly and even though we are so different in many ways we both know what is best for each other.

As men and women we often don't understand each other, inherently we are very different and there are many influencing factors beyond gender that define those differences. Hormones, family of origin, personality, culture and societal expectations greatly influence our

individuality and our roles within society and our families. These differences are often magnified in grief as men and women grieve much differently. As women we are often more comfortable expressing our feelings and emotions, generally we wear our hearts on our sleeves easier than men. Men, on the contrary, are thinkers and fixers, they have thoughts, feelings and emotions but are often not as comfortable expressing those emotions. Men are often raised to be strong, to be tough, to be a man and not to cry. Those messages are carried with them from little boys into men and even in the midst of great loss and grief those messages are at the forefront of their thoughts, giving them the perception that even in grief they must respond in the same way.

As fixers they struggle with not being able to "fix" grief, especially their partner's grief. This inability to "fix" the pain their partner feels can leave men feeling helpless. For some men, they can equate these feelings of helplessness in to a feeling of failing their partner. As men, feelings of failure can lead to feelings of inadequacy as a man and therefore creating a ripple effect into self-esteem. These differences between men and women especially in grief can create a disconnect between partners, affect communication and create misunderstandings of where each other are at.

My husband is always wanting to take care of me to ensure my needs are met, he fixes our vehicles and home and is our family's protector and primary provider.

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When we experienced the loss of our daughter Loren, our grief looked so different I began to resent him for appearing as though he was “fine” and not devastated like I was. It was through expressing this to him that he was able to reassure me that he was in fact hurting but was trying to be strong for me. I was able to express to him that as women we appreciate when our partners can be emotionally vulnerable with us. We made a promise to each other that we would do a better job of communicating our emotions and needs to each other moving forward.

The gender differences in grief have been studied for years. Dr. Kenneth Doka and Terry Martin’s model of Intuitive Grief vs. Instrumental Grief has been so enlightening to me not only in my personal relationship but in the work I do with couples grieving the loss of their babies.

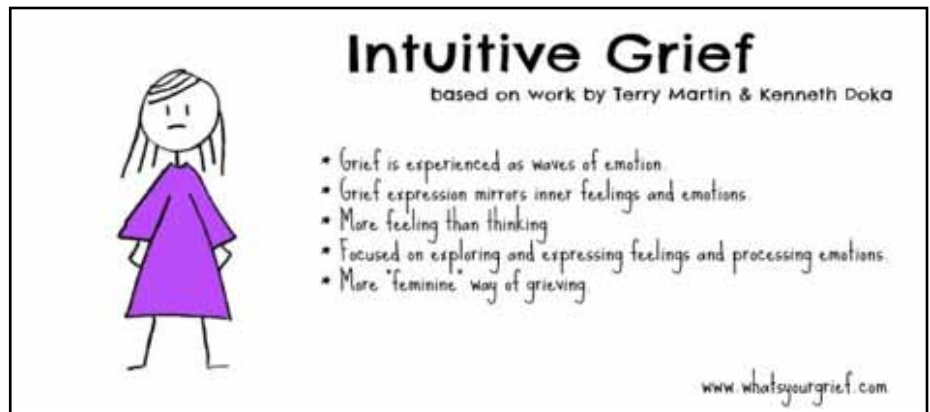
Some individuals experience both styles of grief, both intuitive and instrumental at different times in their journeys. Men are not always instrumental grievers and women are not always intuitive grievers. I’ve worked with many couples where the female is the instrumental griever in the relationship and the male is the intuitive griever.

Know there will be moments where you and your partner may change roles. I believe it’s possible for each style to compliment the other. At the foundation of whichever style you and your partner are is communication, it is critically important so as not to misinterpret your partners grieving style and their resulting response.


Because of society’s expectations that men be strong even in the face of grief, men are often the forgotten mourners. They often feel judged by society if they express emotions or show vulnerability. They instead yield the questions and concerns from others about how their partners are doing, and rarely are they asked how they themselves are doing.

This edition of our Angel Whispers newsletter is dedicated to all grieving dads who forever hold their babies in their hearts instead of their arms. The dads who are grieving for their babies along with the lost hopes and dreams of the future with their babies...teaching their little one to ride a bike, to play sports, kissing booboo’s better, kindergarten graduations, high school graduations, mending broken hearts, walking their little girl down the aisle...these dreams and so many more.

We hear you, we support you and we feel with you dads. Give yourselves permission to not just grieve and keep your emotions locked inside but to open up and express your thoughts, feelings and emotions into mourning. It’s through mourning that we facilitate eventual healing. It’s ok for a man to cry, in fact many women love a man who can express vulnerability and tears. Please know you are not alone in your grief, there are other men who understand and your partner’s are here to support you on your journey as well!

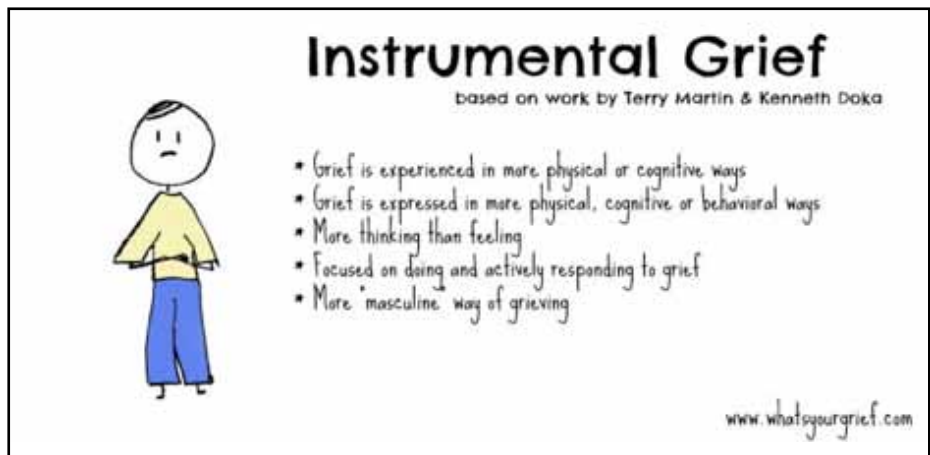


Intuitive Grief
based on work by Terry Martin & Kenneth Doka




- Grief is experienced as waves of emotion.
- Grief expression mirrors inner feelings and emotions.
- More feeling than thinking
- Focused on exploring and expressing feelings and processing emotions.
- More "feminine" way of grieving

www.whatsyourgrief.com



Instrumental Grief
based on work by Terry Martin & Kenneth Doka



- Grief is experienced in more physical or cognitive ways
- Grief is expressed in more physical, cognitive or behavioral ways
- More thinking than feeling
- Focused on doing and actively responding to grief
- More "masculine" way of grieving

www.whatsyourgrief.com

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To all our Angel Whispers families and especially the dads...wishing you gentleness in your journey and the unconditional love and support from your family and friends as you grieve the loss of your precious babies.

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*



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.

Men and Women Grieve Differently From the March of Dimes

Men and women grieve differently. There are a number of reasons for this. Variations in your personalities and the way you've been raised, as well as how bonded you were with the baby, are primary factors.

Generally, women are more expressive about their loss, more emotional about it, and more likely to look for support from others. Since society expects men to be strong and unemotional, they most often grieve in more solitary and cognitive ways. Men also tend to be more oriented to fact-gathering and problem-solving and may, therefore, not choose to participate in support networks which are oriented toward talking and feeling. While women may cry and dwell on their memories of the baby, men may express their grief by burying themselves in their work. Keep in mind, though, that because grieving is such an individual experience, the opposite may also be true.

These differences in style may be misinterpreted. If you're a woman and your partner doesn't appear to be as upset as you are, you may believe that he doesn't care about the loss of the baby, and you may feel abandoned by him. If you're a man, on the other hand, you may feel that your wife will never get over her mourning. It's important to remember that how a person acts is not always a true indicator of his or her inner feelings.

There are differences, also, because parents experience different levels of bonding with a baby. The bond between a pregnant woman and the baby growing inside her is unique. Generally, it grows more intense as the pregnancy progresses. For the father, the baby may seem less "real." Although he may begin bonding during pregnancy as he experiences physical signs of the baby, like seeing an ultrasound picture or feeling the baby kicking, a father's real bonding may not develop until after the baby is born. For this reason, men may seem less affected when the loss of the baby occurs early in pregnancy.

These differences may cause conflict in a relationship as you struggle together and separately to come to terms with the loss of your baby. But there are things you can do to help your relationship survive:

- Be caring about each other and your feelings and needs.
- Keep an open line of communication and share your thoughts and emotions.
- Accept your differences and acknowledge each other's pain.
- Assure one another of your commitment to your relationship.
- Talk about your baby and find ways to remember him or her.



Helping a Man Who is Grieving

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

A man you care about is grieving. Someone he loved has died and you would like to help him during this difficult time. This brochure will help you know what to do and say as you offer your love and companionship to your friend.

Men feel the need to be strong.

Even in the face of tragic loss, many men in our society still feel the need to be self-contained, stoic and to express little or no outward emotion. It is very much in vogue today to encourage men to openly express their feelings, but in practice few men do so. The outward expression of grief is called mourning. All men grieve when someone they love dies, but if they are to heal, they must also mourn.

You can help by offering a "safe place" for your friend to mourn. Tell him you'd like to help. Offer to listen whenever he wants to talk. Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on the words that are being shared with you. Let him know that in your presence at least, it's OK for him to express whatever feelings he might have—sadness, anger, guilt, fear. Around you, he doesn't have to be strong because you will offer support without judgment.

Men feel the need to be active.

The grief experience naturally creates a turning inward and slowing down on the part of the mourner, a temporary self-focus that is vital to the ultimate healing process. Yet for many men this is threatening. Masculinity is equated with striving, moving and activity. Many grieving men throw themselves into their work in an attempt to distract themselves from their painful feelings.

Maybe you can offer your friend both activity and time for reflection. Ask him to shoot hoops or play golf. Go for a hike or fishing with your friend. Let him know that you really want to hear how he's doing, how he's feeling. In the context of these activities he just might share some of his innermost thoughts.

Active problem-solving is another common male response to grief. If a father's child dies of SIDS, for example, the father may become actively involved in fundraising for SIDS research. A husband whose wife is killed may focus on the legal circumstances surrounding the death. Such activities can be healing for grieving men and should be encouraged.

Men feel the need to be protectors.

Men are generally thought of as the "protectors" of the family. They typically work to provide their spouses and children with a warm, safe home, safe transportation and good medical care. So when a member of his family dies, the "man of the house" may feel guilty. No matter how out of his control the death was, the man may feel deep down that he has failed at protecting the people in his care.

If your friend expresses such thoughts, you will probably feel the need to reassure him that the death was not his fault. Actually, you may help your friend more by just listening and trying to understand. By allowing him to talk about his feelings of failure, you are helping him to work through these feelings in his own way and his own time.

It's OK for men to grieve differently.

We've said that men feel the need to be strong and active in the face of grief. Such responses are OK as long as

your friend isn't avoiding his feelings altogether. It's also OK for men to feel and express rage, to be more cognitive or analytical about the death, to not cry. All of these typically masculine responses to grief may help your friend heal; there is no one "right" way to mourn a death.

Avoid clichés.

Sometimes words, particularly clichés, can be extremely painful for mourners. Clichés are trite comments often intended to provide simple solutions to difficult realities. Men are often told "You'll get over this" or "Don't worry, you and Susie (can) have another child" or "Think about the good times." Comments like these are not constructive. Instead, they hurt because they diminish a very real and very painful loss.

Make contact.

Your presence at the funeral is important. As a ritual, the funeral provides an opportunity for you to express your love and concern at this time of need. As you pay tribute to a life that is now passed, you have a chance to support your grieving friend. At the funeral, a touch of your hand, a look in your eye or even a hug communicates more than words could ever say.

But don't just attend the funeral then disappear. Remain available afterwards as well. Grief is a process, and it may take your friend years to reconcile himself to his new life. Remember that your grieving friend may need you more in the weeks and months after the funeral than at the time of the death.

Be aware of holidays and other significant days.

Your friend may have a difficult time during special occasions like

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Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt, con't.

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holidays and other significant days, such as the birthday of the person who died and the anniversary of the death. These events emphasize the person's absence. Respect this pain as a natural extension of the grief process.

These are appropriate times to visit your friend or write a note or simply give him a quick phone call. Your ongoing support will be appreciated and healing.

Watch for warning signs.

Men who deny and repress their real feelings of grief may suffer serious long-term problems. Among these are:

- chronic depression, withdrawal and low self-esteem
- deterioration in relationships with friends and family

- physical complaints such as headaches, fatigue and backaches
- chronic anxiety, agitation and restlessness
- chemical abuse or dependence
- indifference toward others, insensitivity and workaholism

If you see any of these symptoms in your friend, talk to him about your concern. Find helping resources for him in his community, such as support groups and grief counselors. You can't force your friend to seek help but you can make it easier for him to seek help.

Understand the importance of the loss.

Always remember that the death of someone loved is a shattering experience. As a result of this death, your

friend's life is under reconstruction. Consider the significance of the loss and be compassionate and available in the weeks and months to come.

"Helping a friend in grief is a difficult task. Helping a man in grief can be especially difficult, so few friends follow through in their desire to help. I encourage you to stand by your friend during this painful time. Your ongoing presence, patience and support will help him more than you will ever know."

*Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
Center for Loss and Life Transition*

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.

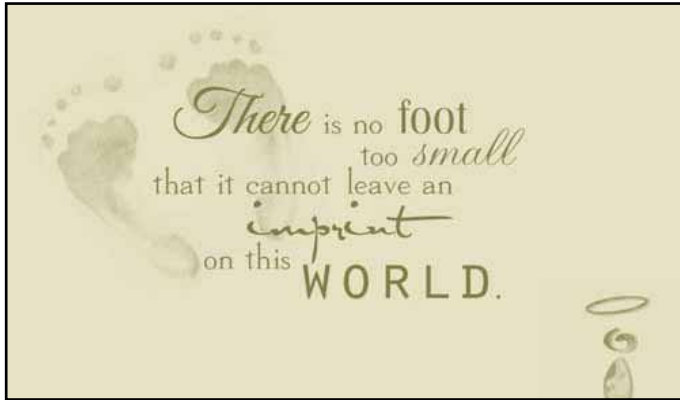
Dr. Wolfelt is a popular media resource who regularly provides his expertise to many top-tier television shows, newspapers, and magazines. Recipient of the Association for Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, Dr. Wolfelt is also a faculty member of the University of Colorado Medical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

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels



*Avah Praize Dickie
July 7, 2007*

*Baby Stelmach
December 5, 2018*

*Alexander Lamarre-Dunphy
April 24, 2019*

*Lavender McMaster
May 15, 2019*

*Ivanna Marie Assiimwe Kagoro
May 18, 2019*

*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 is a non-denominational program. We
honor and respect the individual beliefs
of our families.*

Snakes & Ladders

*By: Rene Huot
Daddy to angels Loren and Brooklynn*

A father's grief is different.

Inherently men and women are different, we are raised differently and we express ourselves differently than women therefore it's only natural that we grieve differently. From conception our bond with our baby is different than that of our partners, because we can't feel our babies move from the inside, we don't have quite the same intimate connection that a mom and baby have.

We as men tend to be strong on the outside to help with our partner's grief. This doesn't mean we aren't grieving, it simply means that we want to give the appearance of being strong. We are raised to be that way; to "suck it up", "don't cry". Men are naturally fixers, when something goes wrong our instincts are to fix it. We can't fix the pain and heartbreak of losing a baby, instead we do our best to be strong and be there for our partners. We often don't know how to process the pain of losing a baby and show those emotions, therefore for many men, we grieve while alone.

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

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

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

Some Daddy Time with Phoenix

Hey little girl, it's daddy.

I just wanted to take a moment to spend some time with you.

It has been a busy time for us, and I did not want you to think that with all this attention on the wonderful arrival of your little brother, that Daddy had forgotten about his little girl.

I know it is not a coincidence that he has come home from the hospital on your special day. It has been two years today that we got to see you. We knew you had already moved on ahead on your journey when your mom gave birth to you, but you know that is still your birthday in our hearts. I remember when I held you that day, I saw the whole world you meant for me to see all along. I held all the presents with you in my arms, and it is that picture that shapes what I see today, with your little brother.

So my sweet angel, to have your little brother come home on your second anniversary, on your very special day, after his long time in the NICU – well, let's just say that Daddy knows you helped your little brother get ready sooner so that he could share your day, and make it something a little less sad, and a lot more special for your mommy and me.

He is quite the little man, your brother Jaxon. He is very special, as are you. He looks more like daddy, just like you were certainly going to be your Mommy's little princess. But then, I think you already know all about him. Your mommy and I, well, we know you held his hand all that time in the hospital. We know he was never alone. Thank you so much my little angel. You helped Jaxon along so that mommy's heart could touch that part of happy once again, and so daddy could share all that you taught me, now with

your little brother.

So Daddy just needed to take a moment now to let you know that we love you so very much. And we miss you, even though you are always with us each and every day in our hearts.

I wanted my little girl to have some of her very own Daddy time. And, honestly, Daddy wanted some special time with his little girl, because I have been missing you terribly.

Mostly Phoenix, Daddy just thought you might need to know, or maybe I just needed to make sure I told you, that while your little brother gets all of this attention, you are part of everything we do with him. I just wanted you to know that this family is the four of us, and I carry you high on my shoulders each time your brother is in my arms. You are, and always will be, a part of the love that grows with this family in this home. It is just so important that I know that you understand that.

Every "I love you" is for both of you; Jaxon and his big sister Phoenix.

Thank you my little girl. Daddy just needed to spend some time with you, and make sure you knew what he was feeling.

Goodnite sweetheart. We will talk with you again soon.

Love Daddy.

*Written to baby Phoenix Marie Couturier, who was born with angel wings on March 11, 2007.

Pierre is a talented local author and we are grateful to have him share this precious letter with us. You can visit his website at www.awakenyourday.com.

*Reprinted from summer 2009 Angel Whispers newsletter.



A Father's Grief

It must be very difficult
To be a man in grief,
Since "men don't cry"
and "men are strong"
No tears can bring relief.
It must be very difficult
To stand up to the test,
And field the calls and visitors
So she can get some rest.
They always ask if she's all
right
And what she's going through.
But seldom take his hand and
ask,
"My friend, but how are you?"
He hears her crying in the
night
And thinks his heart will break.
He dries her tears and
comforts her,
But "stays strong" for her
sake.
It must be very difficult
To start each day anew.
And try to be so very brave-
He lost his baby too.

Author Unknown

Myth of Silence

by Rob Steiner

The modern image of a man has certainly evolved from our culture. More and more we have seen an enigma on how a 'man' is supposed to behave. Long gone is the image of yesteryears of man off to work and wife stays at home tending to household duties and mothering the children. Fatherhood seemed to be somewhat more of a hat or a role that men put on. Children approached dad as they would approach a boss or manager. Social rules were more defined, clear cut; it was well known how children were to behave around parents, how women were to behave in front of men and in retrospect how men behave towards women and children.

Over the years, we have literally seen an evolution, a shifting of social expectations between men and women. More women have gone out into the work force and became co-workers with fellow men. We have seen more men participating and being active in the home. However, there is still a paradigm that has not followed the tide as closely, despite the age of information that has been passed down. There is a stereotype that plagues men despite our modernization. To this very day, tears are still considered a sign of weakness. Still prevalent is the myth of the 'strong silent type'.

Media continues to show successful, masculine, virile heroes as anyone who is able to face any situation head on with either rational or excessive violent passion. All we need to consider are past blockbusters as the Rambo and Rocky series, the popular Schwarzenegger films, Braveheart and more recently 300. However, submitting to such a stereotype may also cause conflict, not only within us, but with our significant other.

When grieving the loss of your child, it is natural for men to want to "keep it together" for the sake of our partner. And that is certainly a plausible cause. However, grief is patient, and if left unattended, will rear her embrace soon enough. In fact, it is reported that the average man usually experiences the severe pangs of grief 6 months after the initial event. This is partly due to our setting aside our own feelings to take care and protect the mother of our bereaved child/ren. This is okay, as we are instinctively hardwired to protect our family in such a manner. But heed the warning: do not ignore the grief. In fact, I would encourage embracing it as quickly as possible.

To accept your loss is not about trying to block it out of your mind. Instead, it has to do with realizing the loss will change your world, and that you're still meant to have a whole and healthy life in this new and different world. It is just that the new world is composed of a new "normal", one without your little one(s). You can identify all your losses in your brain, but true grieving requires you to use your heart.

To be silent may be golden, but to stay silent may be costly. Love's natural tendency is to flow outwardly with expressions such as smiles, kisses, touch and comfort. Grief is also one that has a natural nature, one of sorrow, loneliness and isolation. But the healing process is the giving a voice to and crying through sorrow and pain. A man needn't feel ashamed of the tears shed, for every tear that I have shed for the loss of our little girl was the result of my love for our little Zoe. What father doesn't share a special place for his daughter? A tear

shed before your partner serves to confirm that she is not alone in her grief and sorrow. It also demonstrates that this is just not a bad dream to awaken from, but a reality that you are willing to walk through with her. Indeed, a man's courage and strength is not measured by how strong and silent he remains, but his strength is measured by the compassion and tears he is able to share. The shortest verse found in the Bible is located in John 11 verse 35 where only two words are written, "Jesus wept". Whether you believe that He is real or fiction is immaterial, the fact is that entire civilizations, laws, and moral compasses and teachings were formed based on this man.

Certainly, if he was able to shed a tear, I can to.

Written with love in memory of Zoe Reta Mary Steiner, born with angel wings on August 4, 2006.

Angel Whispers accepts donations.

A \$10 donation will sponsor a carepackage 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.

Daddies Grieve Too

By Lori-Ann Huot

The loss of a baby has a profound impact on a parent – sadly the grief that many fathers feel often goes unnoticed.

There seems to be little recognition of the fact that fathers experience feelings associated with lost dreams, loneliness, failure and the loss of their identity. Society generally seems more concerned for the well-being of the mother as men are usually expected, or expect from themselves, to be the strong and supportive partner in the relationship. As a result, their grief is ignored or minimized as they are expected to heal much quicker.

Grief is an individual and unique experience regardless of gender. However, men are not given permission to express the range of emotions that women are. Men are generally less open to talk about their feelings of hurt and loss than women, however these feelings are present and need to be recognized.

The physical nature of pregnancy may contribute to the gender differences in society as women directly experience the loss as the baby is physically connected to them – many women feel as though they lose a part of themselves when a baby dies. The women's physical changes after the loss are constant reminders of the baby that was lost.

Men, by nature, are “fixers”; they want to be able to fix anything that is broken. However a broken heart from the loss of a baby cannot be fixed, and this can be very difficult for a man to accept. Some dads may feel the pressure to resolve their partner's grief and may suggest that a new baby may “fix” the grief, however their partner may not be ready for this. A subsequent

pregnancy can provide some healing and may fill an emptiness in your arms and your heart, however another baby could never replace the baby that was lost.

Many men cope with their grief with attempts to keep busy; many men return to work quickly as a result. Deborah Davis (1996) states five methods of how men may avoid their grief. They include:

- silence – not expressing one's feelings;
- secrecy – expressing one's emotions only in private;
- anger – becoming easily frustrated instead of expressing feelings of hurt and sadness;
- addiction – altering one's emotions through the abuse of substances like alcohol and drugs;
- action – making oneself busy with work or hobbies.

If a woman is devastated by her own grief, her bereaved partner may feel as though he has nobody he can talk to, which may lead him to put his own feelings on hold. Family, friends and colleagues may overlook a father's grief and may not offer support – men tend not to have the same social networks as women do instead relying on their partner for emotional support. Many fathers are overwhelmed with concern for their partners and may avoid talking about their own feelings in order to protect their partners.

Losing a baby is one of the most difficult experiences for a couple to endure. Communication in the relationship is critical in order to be able to integrate the loss of the baby into a couple's lives and journey

through the grief effectively.

After my husband and I lost Loren, I felt as though he was able to move on quickly and that upset me. Once I shared how I was feeling with him, he was able to express to me that he was, in fact, grieving, but he was trying to be strong for me. We made a commitment to each other that we would no longer hide our feelings from each other and that we would walk this path together, supporting each other. Our marriage was strengthened through our experience.

It's important for men and women to listen to their partners and to respect each other's differences in the journey, recognizing that their partner's needs and feelings may not always be the same as their own and that each person will have their own unique way of expressing their emotions. These differences do not indicate that one partner feels the loss more or less intensely than the other.

Can You Help?

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

Healing Opportunities

6th Annual Picnic and Balloon and Bubble Release

Date: Sunday, August 25, 2019

- Time: 1:00-3:00 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 6th Annual Potluck Picnic and Balloon and Bubble Release! Families welcome!

We are trying to find environmentally friendly balloons (so far no luck), this year we will offer balloons and bubbles so families will have their choice as we want to respect everyone's preferences and at the same time we want to be respectful to the environment.

- 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 as well as your preference of balloon or bubbles to Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.
- RSVP deadline August 20, 2019



Healing Opportunities



Annual Baby Steps Walk to Remember

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

- Date: Sunday, September 22nd
- Location: Alberta Legislative Grounds
- For more information and updates, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/206201382882813/>

2nd Annual Healing Hearts Grief Retreat

- Date: Saturday September 28, 2019
- 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 and speakers. A light breakfast and lunch will be included.

We will be including a formal session for sharing our stories based on feedback from last year's retreat. Details on speakers and costs are still being finalized, we are anticipating a registration cost of approx. \$30.

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



HEALING HEARTS

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.

Dates:

- Thursdays 6-8pm - September 12 - October 24 (except October 10)
- Wednesdays 9-11am - September 25 - November 6 (except October 9)

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 - Bereavement Services
- Limited to 10 participants each session

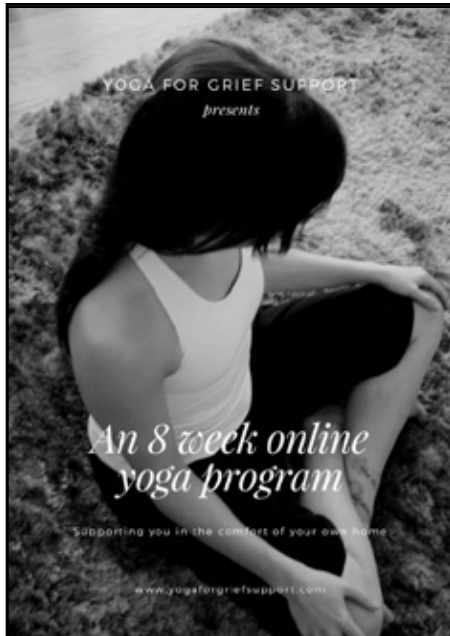
Facilitated by Lori-Ann Huot, Program Coordinator - Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program

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

Healing Opportunities



Yoga for Grief Support

Yoga specifically designed for people who have suffered the death of a loved one.

Classes involve yoga postures, breathing and meditation along with educational and supportive topics related to bereavement support.

Guided by Sandy Ayre, an Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor.

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



Angel Whispers Funding

Did you know that Angel Whispers does not receive contract funding?

We rely heavily on fundraisers, donations, grants and community partnerships to sustain our services to grieving families and 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 hosting a fundraiser for Angel Whispers?**
- **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!

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 at cherylsr@pilgrimshospice.com or 780.413.9801 ext. #302.



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**.

Men Do Cry

by Ken Falk

I heard quite often “men don’t cry”
though no one ever told me why.
So when I fell and skinned a knee,
no one came to comfort me.

And when some bully-boy at school
would pull a prank so mean and cruel,
I’d quickly learn to turn and quip,
“It doesn’t hurt,” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years,
I learned to stifle any tears.
Though “Be a big boy” it began,
quite soon I learned to “Be a man.”

And I could play that stoic role
while storm and tempest wracked my soul.
No pain or setback, could there be
could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night, I stood nearby
and helplessly watched my son die.
And quickly found, to my surprise,
that all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry, and have no shame.
I cannot play that “big boy” game.
And openly, without remorse,
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can’t abide
a man you’ve seen, who’s often cried,
reach out to him with all your heart
as one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men DO cry when they can see
their loss of immortality.
And tears will come in endless streams
when mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Upcoming fundraisers:

heART Paint Café benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program

- Rescheduled Date: ***Friday, December 6, 2019***
- Time: 6:00-9:00pm
- Location: Common Ground Community Café - #150, 161 Festival Way, Sherwood
- Park
- Painting: Glitter Grinch
- Artist/Instructor: Fiona Graham

heART Paint Café - In our ongoing commitment to give back to the community, join us for heART Paint Café and make a difference for charities in our region. You will enjoy a fun-filled evening with friends at Common Ground Community Café creating a beautiful painting to take home. Thirty per cent of the registration proceeds and 100% of raffle proceeds from heART Paint events are donated to the organization.

Thank you to Next Step Continuing Education for this fundraising opportunity benefiting Angel Whispers!

2nd Annual Whispers of Hope Gala Spring 2020 - Date to be announced soon!



We have received approval from our Families First Society's Board of Directors to begin planning our **2nd annual Whispers of Hope Gala** benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!

Angel Whispers does not receive contract funding, we therefore rely 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.

Upcoming Meetings

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

Baby Loss Support Group - Open to any family that has been devastated by the loss of a baby to miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death. 1st Sunday of each month (rescheduled on long weekends or holidays) from 6-8pm at Strathcona County FCSS Offices, 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. *Group does not meet in August. Registration required. To register please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

- July 7
- September 8

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. 2nd Sunday of each month (rescheduled on long weekends or holidays) from 6-8pm at Families First Offices, 9901-90 St. Fort Saskatchewan. * Group does not meet in August. Registration required. To register please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

- July 14
- September 15

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. 2nd Sunday of each month (rescheduled on long weekends or holidays) from 3-5pm, contact Lori-Ann for meeting location. * Group does not meet in August. Registration required. To register please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

- July 14
- September 15

Healing Hands - Healing Hands is an afternoon devoted to creative healing. Registration required. We will no longer be offering this workshop quarterly due to lack of registrations. We will continue to offer the Christmas Healing Hands Workshop in December and will offer a Healing Hand Workshop as part of our annual fall Grief Retreat.

- December 14

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. Dates scheduled when there is enough interest. If you are interested in attending a Rainbow Connection get-together, please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

A Dad Hurts Too

People don't always see the tears a DAD cries,
His heart is broken too when his beloved child dies,
He tries to hold it together and tries to be strong,
Even though his whole world's gone wrong,
He holds on to her as her tears fall,
Comforts her throughout it all,
He goes through his day doing what he's suppose to do,
But a piece of his heart has been ripped away too,
So when he's alone he lets out his pain,
And his tears come down like pouring rain,
His world has crashed in all around him,
All that was bright has gone completely dim,
He searches for answers but none are to be found,
Who offers to help a DAD up when he's hit the ground,
He smiles through his fears,
Struggles trying to hold in his tears,
But what you see on the outside is not always real.
Men don't always show how they really feel,
He feels he has to be strong for the others,
But DADS hurt too, not just the mothers,

www.iamamotherloanangel.com
& [facebook.com/iamamotherloanangel](https://www.facebook.com/iamamotherloanangel)
Dads remember we're here for you too!



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 Melissa Andrews and Fort Saskatchewan Scotiabank for the recent fundraiser benefiting Angel Whispers in memory of Melissa’s son Eric Andrews. The fundraiser raised \$2688.65 which was matched by Scotiabank, raising a total of \$5377.30 to ensure support for grieving families!
- To Sarah Stalzer and Alex Bombino who hosted an incredibly successful fundraiser in partnership with World Financial Group on October 13, 2018 benefiting Angel Whispers. \$4135 was raised at the fundraiser! We just received word from WFG that they are donating another \$2635 to the fundraiser through their matching grant program. A total of \$6770 was raised from this fundraiser for Angel Whispers to ensure grieving families receive much needed and deserved support! Thank you to everyone who donated and attended the fundraiser!
- To Strathcona County Family and Community Services, the Mayor of Sherwood Park and council for the 3-year Social Framework Community Grant to help Angel Whispers sustain programs and supports to grieving families.
- To the Alberta Government for the Community Initiatives Program Grant to help Angel Whispers sustain services to grieving families.
- To DOW Canada for the donation towards our Angel Whispers Care Packages and Resource Library!
- 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 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 Shelley Duffin for generously donating her time to put care packages together and make sympathy and thank you cards for Angel Whispers.
- To Betty Dean for helping with our newsletter!
- To Birch and Briar Custom Design for their support of Families First Society’s Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program! Birch and Briar held a Mothers and Fathers Day fundraiser for Angel Whispers. Thank you Michelle Poitras, this is such a touching way to honour your sweet angel Griffin. For more information on Birch and Briar or to place an order, visit - <https://www.facebook.com/birchbriardesign>
- To all our Angel Whispers volunteers!
- To the 2019 Whispers of Hope Masquerade Gala -
 - planning committee: Heather, Clark, Kyla, Meagan, Crystle, Carol-Anne, Nicola and Angela!
 - our 2019 Whispers of Hope Masquerade Gala Title Sponsor - Straightline Chrysler!
 - everyone who supported the Gala. Whether you attended as a guest, volunteered your time, became a sponsor, donated a silent auction or raffle item or made a Wings of Hope Donation you made a difference! ***Over \$20,000 was raised in support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!***





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>

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. 1st Sunday of each month (rescheduled on long weekends or holidays) from 6-8pm at Strathcona County FCSS Offices, 401 Festival Lane, Sherwood Park. *Group does not meet in August. Registration required. To register please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

- July 7
- September 8

Miscarriage Support Group

Open to any family that have experienced the loss of a baby to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy or blighted ovum. 2nd Sunday of each month (rescheduled on long weekends or holidays) from 6-8pm at Families First Offices, 9901-90 St. Fort Saskatchewan. *Group does not meet in August. Registration required. To register please contact Lori-Ann @ (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

- July 14
- September 15