

Angel Whispers

Summer, 2020

Hello to our Angel Whispers families,

*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](mailto:angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca) or
visit our website at
www.angelwhispers.ca.*



Families First Society
FORT SASKATCHEWAN
www.familiesfirstsociety.ca

#thisisourvillage

It's such a crazy world we've been living in over the past 3 months since our Spring Angel Whispers Newsletter was published. Living in a pandemic has been challenging for many individuals, grieving during this pandemic has complicated those challenges in so many ways for those that have experienced the devastating loss of a baby. Grief is an isolating experience, even when surrounded by family and friends those that are grieving often feel isolated and alone, the quarantine we have faced during this pandemic has further isolated those that are grieving.

The isolation experienced with grief can be magnified in any experience where others don't understand or can't relate to what you have gone through. This newsletter focuses on a topic that not everyone understands or relates to but impacts far more families than most people realize, infertility. Infertility is more common than you may think, a recent Canadian study reported approximately 16% of couples experience infertility. That is 1 in 6 couples that struggle to conceive.

What defines infertility? In general, the definition of infertility is being unable to conceive after a year of regular, unprotected intercourse if a woman is under age 35, or 6 months if a woman is 35 or older.

Grief is an inevitable part of an infertility journey. Infertility cycles are experienced with paradoxical emotions of hope and loss. "Month after month, cycle after cycle, treatment after treatment, the losses compound and the grief can expand" (Resolve, The National Infertility Association). And to compound grief further, many couples who are struggling with infertility experience a loss of their much wanted, much loved and dreamed for baby.

When a couple has tried for several months or years to conceive their longed for baby and then experience the loss of their baby, their intense grief can be compounded by the uncertainty of the future not knowing whether they will be able to conceive again. There are so many losses families grieve associated with infertility:

Loss of an imagined or expected family

Loss of pregnancy and parenting milestones

Loss of ability to pass on family or holiday traditions

Loss of ability to pass on genetic and surname legacies

Con't. on pg. 2

Con't. from pg. 1

Loss of future life stages (ie. Grandparenthood)

Significant meaning is often attached to these secondary losses which further compounds the pain. This newsletter edition is dedicated to all of our Angel Whispers families that have experienced the grief of infertility alongside the grief they feel for their sweet babies, these families who ride the roller coaster of hope and despair.

May you hold onto hope in the face of uncertainty and grief. May you feel the love and support from our baby loss community that hold you up and honour your stories.

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

Lori-Ann Huot

Program Coordinator - Bereavement Services

Angel Whispers Baby Loss

Support Program

Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society

780 998 5595 Ext.225

angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers



From our new Executive Director:

Hi! My name is Jacqueline Dagneau (most people call me "Jac") and I am the new Executive Director for Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society. I am brimming with excitement to be joining this amazing village.

I was drawn to Families First because of the connection they have with families. Not only do they provide support with compassion, but the kindness the families show in giving back to Families First, to their community and village, is heart warming. I am looking forward to getting to you more as I begin my journey here with Families First.

Jacqueline Dagneau

Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society (main office)

9901-90 St. T8L 3T1 or Box 3285 T8L 2T3

Fort Saskatchewan, AB

Phone: 780-998-5595

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.

Infertility by: Brittney

Infertility is defined as “a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse”.

My husband and myself are on year 3 of fighting with infertility. I am a 31 year old pediatric nurse and he is a 33 year old glazier. As per Canadian standards, we are 1 in 6 struggling with infertility. We are also 1 in 4 who have had a miscarriage.

We started trying to conceive a handful of months after our wedding in 2017. I had always figured we would have difficulty conceiving as I've always had “off” cycles when I was younger, meaning I would only have my menses two times per year. I was put on birth control to pretty much just “mask” what was really going on. I figured I had always had PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome) but it wasn't until we were referred to our local fertility clinic that I was officially given the diagnosis. We were started on oral medications (letrozole) to induce ovulation, we had one pregnancy but unfortunately lost it around the 6 week mark. We have continued with the oral medication since then but are moving along to IUI in the next few months.

Infertility has been the wildest ride we have ever been on. It has consisted of the highest highs and the lowest lows. There is nothing in the world that could have prepared me for this battle. The weird thing

about infertility is that from the outside I look fine. I often get told- “you don't look like you would have pcos”- like I'm supposed to have a sign across my forehead or something. Some days I smile and mean it. Some days I just can't. Some days I have hope, others I'm destroyed by our aspirations. It's by far the hardest thing I have ever been through and I am still in the process of fighting.

Each month I am not pregnant, I grieve that cycle. I grieve for what could have been. I grieve for what is not happening, another lost egg, growing my family, a piece of me and a piece of my husband mixed into one. I go through each stage of grief every single month for a total of 34 months, thus far.

Denial - that test HAS to be wrong, let me pee on another one tomorrow. Something is clearly wrong with these tests. We must have just got the timing wrong, again.

Anger - also insert jealousy, irrational behaviour and selfishness. Why is this happening to us? Would we not be good enough parents? Why ya when there are so many other people who get pregnant so easily? Why do we have to be the ones to struggle? Of course the test is negative, why would it be positive? You feel stupid for testing and having hope that it would be positive.

Bargaining - I'd give/do anything to be pregnant. If I become pregnant, I promise I

will be the best and happiest mom on this planet- I won't take a thing for granted. “What if” questions creep in- what if I wouldn't have had that one glass of wine? What if we had intercourse on this day vs that day? What if I would have ate more pineapple (wives tale that it helps with implantation). The list goes on forever.

Depression - I'll never be pregnant. Another wasted cycle. I am never going to have a baby. This is phase feels like it will never end.

Acceptance - alright, my body has finally reset! Let's try this all over again!

The grief of seeing a negative pregnancy test month after month after month is gut wrenching. In a matter of minutes you have your entire life planned as you hope to see 2 lines. Within those minutes, your heart is pounding with hopes, dreams, wishes and anticipation that you've been praying for for years. Then you see that negative test and your world comes crashing down. Your heart sinks into your stomach, tears stream, grief blindsides you and a black cloud hovers over you. You sometimes feel stupid for grieving a baby that never was... and yet this is my every day life.

Infertility isn't for the weak hearted. You pour everything you have into it. Diet, exercise, finances, intercourse, relationships, weekend plans,

Con't. on pg. 4

Infertility (con't.)

Con't. from pg. 3

you become weirdly obsessed with testing your urine- it consumes everything! I have tried every old wives tale in the book. Legs up, different positions, eating certain foods, avoiding certain foods, over the counter medications, tried to "relax", acupuncture, remained "positive", tried to let it "happen when it happens", I've "stopped" stressing, etc etc.

I've lost who I am in this fight. They say experiences make us who we are, but what happens to who we once were? I often miss my "old" self. I miss the

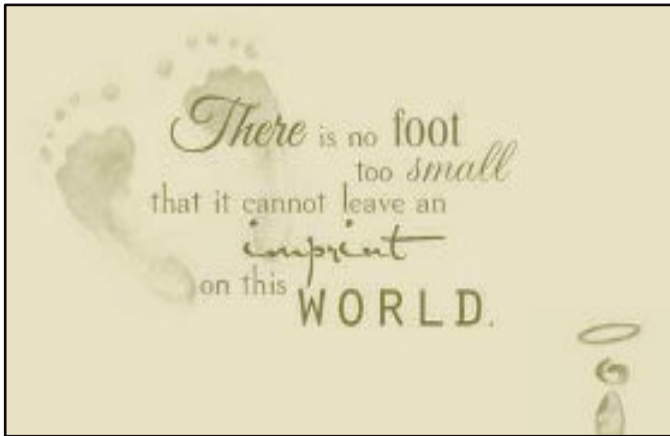
laughing, care free, joyous person I used to be. Now I look in the mirror and see someone who is exhausted. Huge bags under my eyes, tired, very serious about life and not wanting to let things go. I often see a very angry and bitter woman. I get small glimpses of my old self and know that she is in there somewhere and I can't wait for the day that I get to meet her again. I have to constantly tell myself that I need to be kind and gentle, I have been through hell twice over. But you know what they say "if you're going through

hell, keep going"- and that's exactly what we intend to do.

All in all, the biggest things I've learned on this journey.

- *Kids are not a guarantee. No matter how badly you want them.*
- *Infertility is the absolute worst.*
- *I am one of the toughest people for fighting this battle, staring it in the face and not giving up.*
- *This is all we've ever wanted and it's hard.*

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels



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.

Stephen DeMille - November 13, 2014

Mira DeMille - May 10-12, 2018

Angela Viola Wutzke - June 7, 2018

(due February 14, 2019)

Zeus Gabriel Zamano Sanchez - October 26, 2019

Lexie Ava Frank - February 4, 2020

Sweet Pea Hempel - March 2, 2020

Winry lanthe Niwa - April 28, 2020

Peanut Hempel - May 7, 2020

Hope Assimwe Kagoro - May 29, 2020

Joshua Paul Wutzke - June 11, 2020

(due February 10, 2021)

Maria Louise Stephenson - March 4, 2020

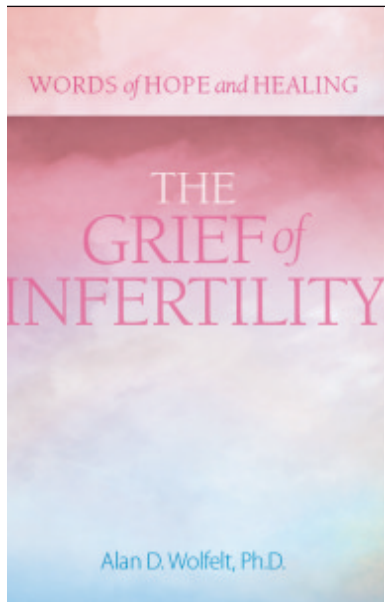
Almond Flowers - June 8, 2020

The Grief of Infertility

The Center for Loss is pleased to announce:

The Grief of Infertility

by Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt



When you want to have a baby but are struggling with fertility challenges, it's normal to experience a range and mixture of ever-changing feelings.

These feelings are a natural and necessary form of grief. Whether you continue to hope to give birth or you've stopped pursuing pregnancy, this compassionate guide will help you affirm and express your feelings about infertility.

By giving authentic attention to your grief, you will be helping yourself cope with your emotions as well as learn how to actively mourn and live fully and joyfully at the same time.

This compassionate guide will show you how. Tips for both women and men are included.

About the Author:



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 & his extensive Resource Library, visit <http://www.centerforloss.com/>

Thoughts on Becoming a Mother

Thoughts on Becoming a Mother

There are women that become mothers without effort, without thought, without patience or loss and though they are good mothers and love their children, I know that I will be better.

I will be better not because of genetics, or money or that I have read more books, but because I have struggled and toiled for this child.

I have longed and waited. I have cried and prayed.

I have endured and planned over and over again.

Like most things in life, the people who truly have appreciation are those who have struggled to attain their dreams.

I will notice everything about my child.

I will take time to watch my child sleep, explore and discover. I will marvel at this miracle every day for the rest of my life.

I will be happy when I wake in the middle of the night to the sound of my child, knowing that I can comfort, hold and feed him and that I am not waking to take another temperature, pop another pill, take another shot or cry tears of a broken dream. My dream will be crying for me.

I count myself lucky in this sense; that God has given me this insight, this special vision with which I will look upon my child that my friends will not see.

Whether I parent a child I actually give birth to or a child that God leads me to, I will not be careless with my love.

I will be a better mother for all that I have endured. I am a better wife, a better aunt, a better daughter, neighbor, friend and sister because I have known pain.

I know disillusionment as I have been betrayed by my own body, I have been tried by fire and hell many never face, yet given time, I stood tall.

I have prevailed.

I have succeeded.

I have won.

So now, when others hurt around me, I do not run from their pain in order to save myself discomfort. I see it, mourn it, and join them in theirs.

I listen.

And even though I cannot make it better, I can make it less lonely. I have learned the immerse power of another hand holding tight to mine, of other eyes that moisten as they learn to accept the harsh truth and when life is beyond hard. I have learned a compassion that only comes with walking in those shoes.

I have learned to appreciate life.

Yes I will be a wonderful mother.

Megan's Story

I always wanted a second baby. I work with children and feel like I was born to be a mother, but my experience when pregnant with my now 2.5 year old daughter was tough. I p-promed with Chloe. Meaning Preterm Premature Rupture of the membranes. This is when the sac surrounding the baby ruptures prematurely. I was 31.5 weeks and had to stay in the hospital as I leaked fluid. During that time we met with multiple specialists and premie doctors to prepare for every situation. I was terrified, but my husband, Dave spent most of his time and every night with me. He was my strength. Finally at 34 weeks they decided to induce me to reduce any risks to Chloe's or my health. I was in labor for 1.5 days and was not progressing. They went over the max on the drip and I was finally ready to start pushing. An hour in and she was face up and stuck. I was to be rushed in for a c-section. The c-section was hard on me, I threw up, went into shock and ended up being withheld by the operating room for several hours after in case I needed blood transfusions from hemorrhaging. It was nearly 24 hours and I was finally able to see my baby.

The recovery was hard and being a NICU mom for a month was hard. Chloe was a big and thriving baby, she did great. I ended up retaining placenta that I ended up passing and ended up with an infection that took 3 months to clear.

2 years later after much discussion with Dave, we decided we would give having another baby a try. I was done letting the fear demolish my dreams. I went off the pill and started after our Disneyland trip at the end of July. I missed 2 cycles and still no positive pregnancy tests. I decided I wouldn't stress and let my body work it out. 1.5 months passed by and I finally had what seemed like a very strange and short lived period. After a few days or it being off and on, I decided to take tests - positives - once, twice, third and fourth time. At least 3 weeks- I was on top of the world and figured just implantation bleeding. After all, I didn't have a period for 3 months and could have been further along. I kept it a secret and physically shook with excitement. Then it was time to tell my husband, Dave! My 2 year old daughter, Chloe wore a big sister shirt and I excitedly recorded announcing it to him. He was thrilled!

We talked about baby rooms, names, what we thought we were having. Dave kissed my belly every night and Chloe needed hers kissed too. Chloe was adamant she was going to have a "sisder" We were excited and my god I was starting to have symptoms. Soooo much sleeping and soooo hungry. Our lives were about to change even more. This was happening. My best friend who also has a daughter Chloe's age, just found out she

was expecting too. This was going to be perfect!

But a few days later I passed something small but strange looking. It didn't set right with me. I went into the hospital the next day. They did all sorts of tests and my heart felt like it was going to explode from the anxiety. Finally a doctor took me into a room and told me I was miscarrying. My heart dropped. He left the room. Left me to cry it out before seeing myself out and driving myself home.

My dreams of this baby were shattered. I went for another blood test a couple of days later and my family doctor called me the next day to tell me my hcg levels weren't rising while confirming the miscarriage. I remember breaking down in the middle of the corn maze. I didn't want this to be real...

My doctor told me she was going to put me in touch with the pregnancy loss clinic. Couple of days of terrible cramping go by followed by some intense nausea. The pregnancy loss clinic calls and would like to do a repeat hormone level check. They call me the next day at 8:15 a.m., right after they open. My levels tripled. I break down at work. I'm completely confused. The clinic tells me to hang up and they were going to call me right back to go for an emergency ultrasound.

Con't. on pg. 8

Megan's Story (con't.)

Con't. from pg. 7

I drive myself there thinking, maybe I'll see a baby today on that screen. The lady was the loss clinic was also optimistic!

I go in for my ultrasound and it's taking a while. The lady comes back with the radiologist and he wants to look. I can hear them talking about a sac and then the focus is on my left side. He then tells me there is no pregnancy to be found but my left tube looks dense. Dense with blood. I need to go to the emergency before I rupture. I get into my car and I feel numb. I call the pregnancy loss clinic and they tell me to go directly to the Misericordia and to tell them at the triage that I'm having an ectopic. I drive there blankly.

Feeling absolutely nothing, I go into the hospital, they get me in and they need to operate. Still, I'm feeling nothing. I'm in shock. I honestly don't remember much until I was wheeled into the operating room. I hopped onto the table from my bed and I lost it. This is not the ways things were supposed to be. They strap my arms down like the day I delivered Chloe. By this time I'm in hysterics. This happened before, but this isn't supposed to happen again yet. The doctors and anesthesiologist are consoling me. Rubbing my face, holding my hand. They take the mask out and tell me to have a sleep.

I wake up later that night and I have no clue what had

happened. My stomach is in pain, but I dare not look. Finally the surgeon comes in and everything goes over my head. I don't understand a damn word. I force some food down, in the dark, with barely enough energy to chew. I attempted sleep, but mostly laid there staring at the ceiling in confusion.

Later, in the morning a nurse comes in to check on me. She explains to me that they attempted to cut the pregnancy out of my left tube but there was so much blood. Eventually my tube looked like hamburger meat and wasn't salvageable-so they removed it as well. I'm in shock. Utter shock. That shock-it took days. Days to fathom how my day started usual and ended the way it did....

I went home the next day and the recovery quickly became rough. My body started to pass what it prepared for pregnancy. I passed a lot and bled a lot. That's when it became mentally exhausting. This went on for 1.5 weeks and I noticed that I was still struggling with pain in my one incision. I made an appointment with the surgeon where I found out I had an infection in it. The infection was so bad it had to be punctured, I had to be on antibiotics and my incision continued to leak blood and fluid. I decided I would focus on my physical recovery before giving myself the ability to grieve the loss off my baby and the loss of my tube. Unfortunately, the infection worsened and after 3 months of

antibiotics I was in the clear and diagnosed with a chronic wound. The stress of physically recovering put stress on my life and my marriage. I was a wreck, I felt defeated, I felt like I was being punished, I felt like my body let me down. Everything felt unfair. How come my best friend was able to have a successful pregnancy thus far and not me. I was jealous. I had a lot of anger and sorrow. I cried a lot. The new year started with Dave and I separating. Now I had a marriage to grieve. I decided to really start my mental recovery. My body was still and is still working to get itself back on track. My hormones are still needing to be balanced out, but I was encouraged by my OB to give it a year.

Here I am now. My best friend gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, I made a lot of headway on my pregnancy loss and now terribly grieving the dreams and hopes I had for Dave, Chloe and myself. It's a process. Patience is virtue. I learned the importance of self-care and that it's okay to cry and feel. Who knows what the future has in store for me, but I'm going in it as a different person. I have Chloe on earth with me and Ava looking down on us. I'm optimistic that things will get easier in time. I'm optimistic better things are to come. One day at a time.

In memory of my angel baby who came through my dreams as Ava. Born in heaven on October 16, 2019.

Megan's Letter

Dear Friends and Family,

I am writing this letter with the hope that you will understand a little more about what it is like to lose a baby. Some of you may have lost a child yourself, others may know someone who has. And just maybe, some of you have never heard or known anything about loss, until after reading this letter.

Wherever or whomever you are, just know that this is not just my story, but also many others who have had to endure the loss of a pregnancy or multiple pregnancies, grapple with the waves of grief, suffer the weight of empty arms, and even struggle with the endless pain of infertility. These are my experiences within a circle of grieving mothers.

I want you to know that I lost my baby and after losing a baby, I lost many other "things."

First, I lost my dreams. I had dreams of a beautiful birth with a happy ending. I had dreams of cradling and feeding a newborn. I had dreams of a gathering; a celebration of the life I co-created and birthed.

Then, I lost myself. I lost my identity, and for a time, didn't know who I was. I didn't know who I was or what I deserved. I didn't know if I had done something wrong or had karma finally caught up with me. I didn't know what my purpose was or if God no longer loved me.

I have also lost my naïveté, or my innocence. I now know that at any moment, I could lose again. I now know that nothing is ever promised. I now know the the pain of loss; the pain I now live with every single day of my "new" life. I have seen and lost so much, and yet, I am filled with wisdom that I did not want. I am no longer and will never be the woman I was before.

I will never know my baby's eyes or my baby's voice. I will never see the seasons of growth and a fruitful life. I will never know and don't know, and that is the most painful thing of all. My baby is a mystery that I could never solve.

Losing a baby is backwards; parents are not supposed to outlive their children. And giving birth to death doesn't make any sense, but it is real and I am living proof.

So, do not be alarmed if I am not present: to your baby showers, the birth of your babies, to your baby's first, second, third, even fifth, sixth, or seventh birthdays. Do not be curt or offended if I do not shout with happiness, "Congratulations!" during your announcement or hold your babies. Do not misunderstand me when I say that it is not because I am not happy for you, but that I am sad for me. I often feel that what happened to me and my baby is unjust. I often struggle with feelings of jealousy and envy, blame and shame. Forgive me if I am not compassionate of your complaints of pregnancy and motherhood.

And despite how hard I try not to, I will always feel the hurt and the pangs of pain when I am watching my dreams unfold for someone else, and not myself. I ask, "Well, why not me??"

I ask that you hold space, not just for me, but also my baby. Remember me and my baby on Mother's Day and every other family holiday. Remember me and my baby, while you are holding and hugging tightly your baby. Remember me and my baby on your baby showers, the births of your babies, and your baby's first, second, third, and forever more birthdays.

Con't. on pg. 10

Megan's Letter (con't.)

Con't. from pg. 9

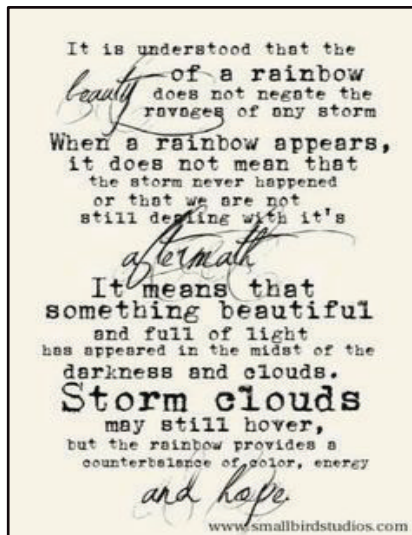
I ask that you know that our world celebrates life more than it acknowledges death. I ask that you know that when a baby dies, it changes the meaning of life. I ask that you know and remember and say my baby's name. Please say her name for the silence of her cries. Please say her name to give her a voice because I am tired of doing it alone. I am exhausted and my heart is incomplete, constantly shattering in hope and doubt.

When I am distant, please show me that you care. When I am present, please give me a hug and tell me that you are there. It is not that I isolate myself from you, but that I feel life has isolated me: from joy, from peace, from rest. All I know is that I must survive this new life of sorrow, and even so, it is painful to watch life pass me by without the one person who should be here.

There is no cure for grief and I do not want to be cured. I just want to be loved as a friend, as family, and as a mother.

Signed,

Megan (A Grieving Mama)



Rainbow Baby Birth Announcements

Brynlee Ryan Buschkiel

Born on April 14, 2020 weighing 8 lbs. 4 oz. to loving parents Amy and Adam.

Brynlee is surrounded with love by her sibling watching over her from above.

The Angel Whispers Rainbow Connection group exists to give families a safe, supportive environment to celebrate their rainbow babies while having opportunities to grieve for their precious babies. This group has changed format through the years from a structured support group to an informal play group. We seem to have challenges in finding the perfect day and time to offer this group in a format that meets the needs of all families. My vision for this group is to see Angel Whispers Rainbow families taking turns planning informal get-togethers in their homes on days and times that work for them, and inviting other Angel Whispers Rainbow families to join them. The babies and children can play while the parents talk, share and grieve together.

If you are interested in being part of the Rainbow Connection group and would like to plan a get-together in your home, contact Lori-Ann at angelwhispers@familiesfirst.ca

We also have a private Rainbow Families Facebook group. If you aren't a member of the group and would like to be, send Lori-Ann a message.

Infertility Poem

Pick yourself up from the floor
You're barely recognisable
Even you don't know you anymore.
Those big brown eyes once so pretty
They turn green, every new day that dawns
Who is this person within you
That cries, every new baby born.
It's hard for you to be happy
You're consumed by "why's that not me"
So desperate to give him a baby
Break these chains, be finally free
Right now you can't see a future
Or imagine your body with child
You're grieving for something you long for
Can't remember the last time you smiled.
On good days you manage to hide it
When womb pryers ask if you're trying
Another one line on your test today
Spent most your morning crying
You've so many people around you
Just a handful who understand
What it's like to want this so badly
The future is out of your hands.
All of a sudden a light shines
Amidst the blinding darkness and gloom
You realise it's time to start talking
About this elephant in the room
You usually talk for hours
But this subject forces you mute
Turns out, he's as scared as you are
Hadn't planned to go down this route.
It feels like a weight has been lifted
As you lay out your private life bare
Unburden yourselves from this secret
Infertility love affair
That moment, the start of your journey

This person before you, your guide
There's no guarantee what the outcome
Together you stand, side by side.
It's not how you imagined making baby
Forefitting your moments of fun
For injections and hormones aplenty
Be worth it when all this is done.
One day you'll be feeling hopeful
The next you'll question it's worth
But keep your eyes on the prize girl
This is why you were put on this earth
Your exhausted body is healed now
Your tired mind restored
Then a second line starts appearing
There's miracle babies on board.
All of the tears and the yearning
Dragging along this third wheel
Your tears of sorrow, now happiness
Pinch yourself, this is real.
Months go by, and you flourish
There's beauty in you to discover
Forgiven your body of failing
You got here one way or another.
Your prayers are finally answered
Overcome by feelings of joy
You screen shot his face in your memory
As you hand him his new baby boys.
It's worth everything you've been through
The heartache, tears and pain
Don't just wait for the storm to pass
Learn to dance in the rain.

By Stacey Hill, Kickstartbabies

Fundraising Opportunities

2020 Whispers of Hope Gala benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support

Program - date TBA

In light of the ongoing and continuously evolving Covid-19 situation, and because the health and safety our Angel Whispers families, supporters and volunteers is of utmost importance to us the Whispers of Hope Gala planning committee made the difficult but necessary decision to postpone the 2nd Annual Whispers of Hope Masquerade Gala originally scheduled for March 14, 2020.

A new date will be set once we have a bit more certainty of the future of this pandemic. Those that have purchased tickets can choose to apply those tickets to the new date or request a refund. Alternately, if you have purchased a ticket and would rather donate the cost of those tickets to the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program, you can receive a tax receipt for your donation. If you would like to request a refund, please contact LoriAnn Huot, Program Coordinator at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

We would like to thank you for your patience and for your understanding of our decision to postpone the Gala! Thank you for your ongoing support! We look forward to setting a new date soon and will be communicating with everyone once that new date has been set!


The Whispers of Hope Gala planning committee.

WINGS OF HOPE

Your donation will benefit the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program

“THANK YOU FOR HONOURING ALL OF THE BABIES WHO DIDN'T GET TO LIVE THE LIVES WE WANTED THEM TO. THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT THAT PARENTS LIKE US NEED.”

- Participant of Angel Whispers Program

 **Families First Society**
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Can You Help?

The Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program receives no contract funding, instead Angel Whispers relies on fundraisers, grants, donations and community partnerships to sustain programs and supports for grieving families. To make a Wings of Hope donation to the program, please contact Lori-Ann Huot, Program Coordinator @ (780)995-5595 ext 225 or angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

Angel Whispers is a non-denominational program.

We honour and respect the individual beliefs or our families.

Célène's Story By: Célène Winterton

After four and a half years of battling infertility, my husband and I fell pregnant with twins after our second round of IUI. I wish I could tell you that I was over the moon and that I approached the upcoming 9 months with grace and enthusiasm. But I felt terrified. I felt as though it were too good to be true and unfortunately it was. I lost my two little dreams 2 weeks apart, at 5 ½ and 7 ½ weeks, through a series of traumatic and terrible events that would wreak havoc on my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self.

While I'm far from out of the woods, I wrote the story I'm about to share with you one week after my second miscarriage. It just came to me as I was writing in my journal and it helped immensely. More than anything, I was and am able to share this story with those around me, to help them understand how I feel. Where along this journey I am.

I pictured a little boy and girl walking home through the woods in the dark. The girl was holding a big red balloon. They were tasked with looking after the balloon and its contents were love. As they walked through the woods, the girl thought to herself that she should have known better than to pick such a scary and precarious route home. She felt foolish even.

And sure as the night, an awful creature began following them. They ran and ran as fast as they could until they were so exhausted they couldn't run any longer. And the evil creature caught up to them and snatched the balloon out of the girl's hands. And then before they could catch their breath, they were chasing after their balloon, running and running.

They chased that monster to the top of a mountain peak where it jumped off of a cliff. The girl jumped off after the creature, the boy trailing behind. And after all of that running, they stumbled and fell and smacked their bodies and faces on sharp rocks, clothes ripped and torn along the way, skin bruised at every opportunity, trying to find that balloon.

When they finally stopped falling, they stood up to

find themselves lost and in the middle of nowhere. No concept of time or direction, and no starts to point the way home. The balloon was gone, and they were lost.

And that is where we still are. Lost in the woods.

I've actually gotten a bit comfortable out here, with my evil creatures. I've even made a little home for myself. The problem with being lost though, is that no one knows where you are. If you're lucky enough, you've got a search party trying to find you. I'm lucky enough to have that but there are still some days where I just don't want to be found.

I don't know how this story will end; if I'll find my way out, end up with more balloons, or stay lost forever, but I've come far enough along to realize that the choice to stay lost or be found is mine.

Célène's story was first shared in our Fall 2018 Angel Whispers Newsletter, we are happy to share that Célène and her husband Billy welcomed a healthy baby girl name Juniper into their family on September 9, 2019. Juniper's angel siblings are watching over her from above.

Upcoming Meetings

Because of the current Covid-19 pandemic, our in person support group meetings are suspended until further notice. Contact Lori-Ann at (780)974-7054 for more information on virtual support group meetings.

Healing Opportunities

Annual Picnic & Bubble/Balloon Release



Each year Angel Whispers hosts an annual picnic for families to come together to honour their precious babies that they will forever hold in their hearts. Because of Covid-19 restrictions and Families First Society programming restrictions, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the picnic for this year and instead will be holding virtual support group meetings throughout the summer to ensure families receive much needed support. We look forward to holding our annual picnic in summer 2021!

Virtual Baby Steps Walk to Remember - Sunday, September 20, 2020 @ 2 p.m.



This year, the HEARTS Baby Loss Support Program is presenting a Virtual Walk that will be broadcast beginning at **2 p.m. on Sunday, September 20th, 2020**. More details will be provided on both the Baby Steps Walk to Remember website and FB page as they become available.

To register, please visit - <https://www.babystepswalk.com/registration>.

Once you have registered, you will receive an automated reply. If you have any questions, please email heartsbabyloss@shaw.ca.

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.

Annual Remembering our Losses Baby Loss Memorial Service

Sunday October 18, 2020 - 1 p.m.

Every spring the funeral homes, hospitals, cemeteries and support groups in the Edmonton area collaborate to hold a special memorial service for families who have lost a baby. Because of Covid-19, the memorial service originally scheduled for May 31st had to be postponed. The hope is that the memorial can be held in person on the rescheduled date, however in the event of ongoing restrictions, the memorial will be held virtually.

Further details will be announced in our fall Angel Whispers newsletter and on Facebook.

Healing Opportunities (con't.)

Dr. Alan Wolfelt - Park Memorial Community Grief Seminar

- Date: **To be rescheduled for November, 2020** due to Covid-19 pandemic (previously scheduled for April 2020)
- Location: Westin Hotel, 10135 - 100 Street, Edmonton

Park Memorial is proud to be able to bring back this dynamic grief counselor and speaker to help families in their journey through grief. 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 “companionship” 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.

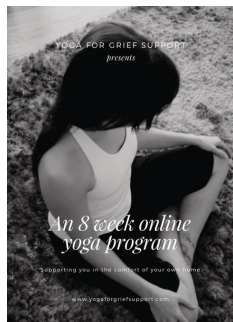


**Park Memorial
Funeral Home**

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/>.

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

Healing Opportunities (con't.)

3rd Annual Healing Hearts Grief Retreat

We have held an annual full day grief retreat every September for the past few years which has been a wonderful opportunity to connect with other grieving families for a day of sharing, connecting and healing.

Because of Covid-19 and the current AHS restrictions and limitations on Families First programming we are not certain whether this years retreat will be possible. Stay tuned to our website - www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers as well as our Facebook groups and upcoming fall newsletter for more information.



HEALING HEARTS

Thank you for your understanding!



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 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 the Andrews family for the fundraiser benefiting Angel Whispers in memory of Eric Andrews.
- To Cheryl Budziszyn for raising money for Angel Whispers - Cheryl bakes incredible cakes and in lieu of payment requests a \$300 donation to Angel Whispers!
- To the Sheeptown Players Society for the \$300 donation to the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program from their 2019 Halloween Walk.
- 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.

Thank You's (con't.)



- 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 all our Angel Whispers volunteers!
- To the 2020 Whispers of Hope Gala planning committee: Jacqueline Dagneau, Clark, Kyla, Alana, Meagan, Crystle, Carol-Anne and Angela!
- To our 2020 Whispers of Hope Masquerade Gala Title Sponsor - Straightline Chrysler! Thank you Straightline!
- To everyone who supported the 2019 Whispers of Hope 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!
- Thank you to everyone who has donated towards the 2020 Whispers of Hope Gala originally planned for March 14, 2020. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Gala has been postponed, your donation will instead be used towards our rescheduled Gala that we hope to plan in the near future•!

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 Co-ordinator @ (780) 998-5595 ext. 225 or Jacqueline Dagneau, Families First Executive Director @ (780) 998-5595 ext. 223.

Thank you for YOUR support!

About Angel Whispers



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 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.

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

To receive our newsletter or a special care package, please call 780.998.5595, ext. 225.



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

Phone: 780-998-5595 Fax: 780-998-5503

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We honour and respect the individual beliefs of our families.

Upcoming Meetings

Because of the current Covid-19 pandemic, our in person support group meetings are suspended until further notice. Contact Lori-Ann at 780-974-7054 for more information on virtual support group meetings.

For families seeking additional support please see:

<http://www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers/support>