

# Good Grief

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## Kids' Grief Journey

At [www.griefworksbc.com](http://www.griefworksbc.com) we're getting closer to making the interactive Kids' Grief Journey section live. There have been a few kinks worked out; focus groups held; registration process created, etc.

Now, the exciting part of creating activities and exercises is under way. Alan Wolfelt's Reconciliation Needs are the basis of these activities. As each activity is done, the child receives a jewel which later is used to build a bridge to Memory Island.

We also have five scenarios where kids learn about specific, maybe troubling, areas. For example, one scenario talks about when no one in the family wants to talk about the person who died. We link that with how to ask for help when you need it.

The Gathering Circle is the place where kids invite their friends and family to come and share stories of the person who died. They will be able to post a photo of their person as well.

On Candle Island, candles are designated by colour, size & type of loss, eg. brother/sister, parent, etc. The person's name and photo will appear when the candle is scrolled over by the mouse.

The butterfly in our logo will be a character that flies over the child as they walk around and acts as a guide or helper.

The Weather Station has the 'storm' condition that best symbolizes how it was in the family when the death occurred. The child will use a 'feelings slider' to increase or decrease the intensity of the storm at each visit.

There will be places to ask email questions. In a meadow, the child will make a picture of their person's funeral. If they have questions about the funeral, they can ask them there.

The grand piano will be somewhere in the forest and kids will be able to create songs that make sense to their grief journey. We hope to be able to attach a tune when they type something like, 'I miss my dad.'

This project is proving to be a challenging, yet exciting, one. As we think about how best to support 5-12 year olds, we are more and more convinced that using familiar technology is a very good way to do that.

Stay tuned.

*BC Hospice  
Palliative Care  
Pre-Conference Day  
2006*

### **Bold Steps: Achieving Our Best in Bereavement Care**

About 70 people attended the pre-conference bereavement day at the BC Hospice Palliative Care conference in Surrey.



Jessica Easton & Toby Snelgrove gave an outstanding presentation on trauma and grief in the morning. In the afternoon, we did a small and large group process that led to identifying the issues currently facing bereavement service providers.

Finally, about 35 people met on Sunday for a round table session on how to develop a network of some kind.

General consensus was that we need a network but most of us can't meet face to face. A list serve on-line seemed to be the best way to have discussions and share information. We are researching the best way to set that up. Terms of Reference to be a BCHPCA Interest Group have been circulated for feedback.



Griefworks BC exists in partnership with Children's & Women's Hospital of BC & Canuck Place Children's Hospice to ensure that people in BC have access to bereavement support when & where they need it. Call 604-875-2741 or email [kjohnson@cw.bc.ca](mailto:kjohnson@cw.bc.ca) to reach Kay Johnson, the Director.



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To be part of our Bereavement Network Initiative, contact us at [person@griefworksbc.com](mailto:person@griefworksbc.com)



### Question Corner

**Frequently asked when folks call in to Griefworks BC looking for something to help after their loss:** Where can I go for help? Do I need a counsellor?

**Answer:** The answer to this question is a bit complicated. Because we refer our callers/emailers without meeting them, we must be aware that our answers and opinions should be general and/or carefully explained. Without doing a full psychiatric evaluation or mental health status assessment for anyone who asks that question, it's not easy to know all the circumstances around the death and also the emotional/mental health of the person asking for support. It is important to listen carefully to hear any concerns. (cont'd. on Page 3)



To have your question answered or to submit ideas for future articles, information, etc., please email [person@griefworksbc.com](mailto:person@griefworksbc.com) or call 604-875-2741. Toll free to 1-877-234-3322 outside the Lower Mainland.

Reprinted from The Compassionate Friends Coquitlam Chapter NEWSLETTER



### SHARING CIRCLES

The Sharing Circle is a very important part of our meeting. Many professionals and thanatologists believe it is beneficial, perhaps necessary, for bereaved parents to talk about their loss, to recall the events surrounding it, to express their feelings and to share their memories. It is thought that if emotions are held back and feelings are not expressed, the progress towards a positive reconciliation of grief is delayed or prevented. For these reasons, we encourage bereaved parents to talk about what happened, to express their feelings and to acknowledge the reality of their loss. We are not counselors or therapists. We are people who have journeyed (in varying degrees) the same road you are now traveling.

In the SHARING CIRCLE we give every person an opportunity to speak in turn. In order to feel free and safe to do this, we must have some ground rules. Our basic rules are:

1. A parent is free to share or not to share. Sometimes just listening to others is helpful, and it is important to know that there is no pressure to talk.
2. When a parent is sharing we just listen. We do not touch them or do anything that might distract them (even to hand them a Kleenex); if they cry or are silent for a time, we wait. This is their time to get in touch with their memories and feelings. When they are finished sharing, they are to indicate so to the next person in the circle.
3. We try to be non-judgmental when others are sharing. There is no right or wrong feeling. We do not criticize others for what they are feeling or the way in which they are approaching their grief. WE NEVER MAKE COMPARISONS re: the severity of our loss.
4. Our meetings are not a time to preach. Each member is free to have a philosophy of life which may or may not be in agreement with our own belief system.
5. Lastly, we remind those present that what is shared in the Sharing Circle or in small groups is confidential. We are sharing a precious part of our lives, and we need to know that our right to confidentiality will be respected.

To be on the TCF Coquitlam mailing list, contact: [jane-ono@shaw.ca](mailto:jane-ono@shaw.ca)

# In Memorium

Recent Honour Page Offerings



Kurt Cleaver



Michael Angelo



Madelaine Renee Reimer



To add your tribute to the Honour Page, click on Memorial Tribute on the Home Page or go to [www.griefworksbc.com](http://www.griefworksbc.com)



## Question Corner, cont'd

Usually, we start by saying that grief is a natural response to a major event in someone's life, in this case a loss through death. Notice that the word used is, 'natural,' and not, 'normal.' Using 'natural' implies that it isn't unusual or abnormal and sets the tone for the response. It's very important to let people know that they are not crazy or weak-willed or that there is something wrong with them because they're feeling such intense feelings.

Along with that idea, we add the concept that there are some times where things are more complicated such as when there has been some other stressful thing going on in the person's life or if this is one in a series of deaths, for example. The point is that we let people know that although this is a very difficult situation, it is not usually a situation that requires 'counselling,' per se.

Our recommendation is that they find a good grief support group in their community so that they can safely and comfortably share their story. Here is where we let them know that the real healing work of grieving is telling their story.

We explain that often folks feel that needing counselling implies there is something wrong or that there is a need to be 'cured' or 'fixed' and add that this is really not possible when there is a loss through death.

This is when we both hear and sense the exhaling of breath and verbal responses of relief. We often hear people say that they tried going to a counsellor but it didn't work for them. One woman kept repeating, 'Yes, yes, yes,' as she heard these messages. She said it had taken her days to get the courage to call because she was afraid someone was going to tell her that she needed a counsellor, or worse, anti-depressant medication. It was a great relief to her to hear that, even though it would be a hard and long road, she would be okay and would learn how to cope without the person who died.

We offer Griefworks BC website's database of about 800 resources in our province in Canada and explain how to access it as well as sharing any resources we **do** know about in their community. We tell people that the list does include social workers, therapists and Registered Clinical Counsellors as well as information about groups and they can choose what is right for them.

## Test Your Grief State

**Are you dealing with your grief?**

Do you talk about/deal with feelings or do you ignore them? **Yes No**

**Are you taking care of yourself?**

Do you avoid empty calories, snack or eat fast food? **Yes No**

Do you sit around or do simple things like cleaning or yard work?

**Yes No**

**Do you allow yourself to grieve?**

Have you let yourself redefine life without your loved one with time to work on the grief? **Yes No**

**Do you let your grief isolate you?**

Can you ask for help & let others help you? Do you accept dinner/social invitations? **Yes No**

**Are you taking care of yourself?**

Do you rest? Do you get medical/professional help for your physical or emotional needs? **Yes No**

**Points: 2 for a Yes. 1 for a No.**

10-12 = coping well 8-10 = ok;  
6-7 = not ok.

Your answers may change as time passes. Sharing your story or attending a support group can help.

*Thanks to Jan Borgman, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.*

## Contributor's Column

### Re-Organizing After A Life Changing Event Part 2

by Judy Brown

*Judy is a hospice volunteer, writer, professional organizer & retired Justice of the Peace. [www.organizedforever.com](http://www.organizedforever.com)*

Project a positive attitude. What's done is done; it can't be changed, but you can learn to adapt. It isn't always fun; but it won't be like this forever.

In the meantime:

Start a personal journal with all your free-flowing feelings, questions and observations on what's happening to you and your children. Set aside half an hour each day to let it all hang out on the page. If you do this daily and review it weekly, you may see themes emerging. Work on those things first.

Encourage each child/family member to keep their own journal and provide a notebook for each one. They may not want to do this, but assure them that no one else will read it. Let them get it all out on paper. If they want you to read it, great, but **don't** intrude on their privacy! Encourage the rest of the family to respect their privacy too.

Schedule daily family meetings to touch base and record the day's plans. Some days you won't feel like doing it but it puts structure into a life that's out of control and allows you to feel like you're moving ahead. Cross off accomplished tasks, no matter how small. Keep the lists reasonable and doable. It's better to have only three things to do than a long, overwhelming list.

You may need more help than personal resources allow. Don't be afraid to seek professional help if you need it. Talk with your child's school counsellor, your doctor, minister or close friend. Sometimes all it takes is talking with someone not inside your problem who may be able to help you organize your thinking. Now is not the time to worry about household chores although keeping your routine will help somewhat. Make sure everyone helps.

You can reinvent your life as many others have done. Planning a new life, while overwhelming, can be exciting if you take it one step at a time and don't try to do it alone. And remember, you don't have to do everything in one day.

## Upcoming Events

You can register and then log on anytime from anywhere!

Look at [www.griefworksbc.com](http://www.griefworksbc.com)'s on-line bereavement support training.



Click on Training and Bookstore and then Training to see the course Table of Contents and a few demo lessons.

You have a 12 week window to do the 8 modules but you can do it at your own speed and with your own timetable.

Interested in a fall workshop in the Lower Mainland on supporting children's grief?



Contact us at Griefworks BC to indicate your interest and we will set up this full-day interactive workshop.