

Good Grief

person@griefworksbc.com

604-875-2741
1-877-234-3322

©2007

A quarterly publication of Griefworks BC

Vol. 2 Issue 1

Mar. 2007

The Journey World Goes Live!

Who knew there would be so much bureaucracy interfering with launching our new interactive kids section. The most difficult was our Freedom of Information legislation. Anyhow, it's all fixed and tested, etc Click on **You're a Kid** at www.griefworksbc.com.

There are about a dozen activities built using Alan Wolfelt's model. As each activity is done, the child receives a jewel which later helps build a bridge to Memory Island.

Memory cards are collected to use in the Coat of Arms exercise.

The five common scenarios that address specific, troubling areas are linked to friendly advice from the animals in the forest. For example, one scenario is 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.

We have built in safety measures when kids invite their friends or family to the Gathering Circle and will monitor what goes on there.

On Candle Island, candles glow after they are lit. This is the only place on the site where all who enter will be able to view everything.

The butterfly in our logo will act as a guide or helper. She will speak any directions for the younger kids.

The Weather Pagoda's storm metaphors made perfect sense to the kids who have already tested the site. The slider shows the storm's intensity which is linked to the child's emotional state at the time.

The Memory Book will store all of the activities and also any entries the child wishes to make. They will be able to look back at what they wrote anytime or share it with their parents, etc.

The grand piano is in Harmony Hollow and was popular with the kids. They can save the tune they create and play it whenever they want.

As we think about how best to support grieving kids, we are more and more convinced that using familiar technology is a very good way to do that.

The project has been so inspiring that we already have enough ideas to do a Phase 2 when we can find the funding to carry on with the development. Your feedback is welcomed.

Bereavement
Workshop
2007



The BC Hospice Palliative Care Association has decided not to have a bereavement day again this year in conjunction with their annual event. Instead, they hope to have more workshops dedicated to the issues.

At our time together last year, the group indicated that they wanted a way to connect regularly and to have regular education or professional development offerings.

We can do our own pre-conference day again this year but in a different location. In other words, if you are coming to the conference, you can tack this day onto the front end and still have the bereavement day.

If you would like a day long education event just for bereavement, please email kjohnson@cw.bc.ca with your #1 priority on what you would like to learn about.

Thanks. I look forward to hearing from you soon.
Kay

Griefworks BC

A partnership between Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia and Canuck Place Children's Hospice

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 to reach Kay Johnson, the Director.



To receive this newsletter regularly, send us your email address.

Email person@griefworksbc.com for permission to use copyrighted articles. This newsletter is published at Children's & Women's Hospital of BC, Vancouver, Canada

To be part of our Bereavement Network Initiative, contact us at person@griefworksbc.com



Question Corner

Frequently asked when folks call in to Griefworks BC looking for something to help after their loss: Won't my teen be frightened if I talk with her about cremation?

Answer:

We teach children to stay away from fire because we don't want them to be burned, hoping our explanations give them a healthy fear. It's natural to wonder about telling them that someone we love will be put in the very situation we caution them about.

Cont'd on page 3

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



Grieving the Death of a Pet



I never expected that the death of my dog in September would hit me so hard or hurt so much.

We had a 12 year old Schipperke cross named Sassy who was a wonderful family dog, so gentle and so sweet natured all her life. In late July, we noticed our dog was slowing down, having trouble going up our front stairs and panting. X-rays and bloodwork revealed nothing that we could put our finger on, but our dog was clearly starting her final days.

We kept her comfortable at home. I spent many a lunch hour coming home to check on her. My husband and I had a vacation planned in September so, with mixed feelings, we went on that holiday and left our dog with my parents.

Sassy had to be put to sleep two days before our arrival home. My parents tried to tell us via email that, thankfully, we did not receive.

The reality that our dear, sweet dog was gone, hit me really hard. The tears were relentless and I mourned the fact that I had not been there for her final hours. I kept seeing her everywhere. She loved to sleep on the floor at the end of our bed. I missed her always being at the door when I came home from work.

Our vet was wonderful. When I called them to see about cremation, they told me that they did not cremate her and had waited for my direction. I did not hesitate at this point to ask if I could come and say goodbye.

Being able to see and hold my dog was very therapeutic for me. I was able to tell her I loved her and that she would no longer have any pain.

I am taking my days one at a time. I miss my dog. She was like one of my kids. I would love another dog one day but for now, I want to remember the good times and give myself time to grieve a true friend.

Goodbye, Sassy, we will meet again I am sure.

Submitted by Leanne Johnson, Kelowna

In Memorium

Recent Honour Page Offerings

It's wasn't how it's supposed to be...
in living memory...

MY BELOVED BROTHER TONY



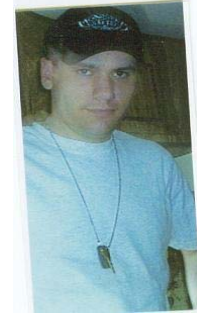
JAMES ANTHONY GORDON
FEB.24,1976 - AUG.6,2003



James Anthony Gordon



Shirley May Reine (Bitz)



Clayton Dejarlais



To add your tribute to the Honour Page, click on Memorial Tribute on the Home Page or go to www.griefworksbc.com



Question Corner, cont'd

When talking about cremation, it's usually more our own fear that makes it a difficult topic to talk about. Telling her the truth using simple terms in language that makes sense to her age level is better than letting her imagination fill in the blanks.

The first thing to remember is to avoid words such as 'fire' or 'burn' that may sound frightening. Try saying, "Uncle Bill's body is placed inside a casket or large box and a very high heat changes it into what is called the remains. Remember that being dead means that the body will not feel anything during the cremation."

Remains are mostly fine white or gray ashes. After the cremation is over, the remains are placed in a container called an urn which the family can take home with them.

Make sure you have seen the ashes yourself and then describe in a simple, concrete way what you saw.

She can then make up her mind if she wants to see them. If she sees them, ask if she has questions or anything she'd like to talk about.

Depending on cultural and family traditions, your family will decide what to do with the ashes. Some families have a funeral where the ashes are buried in the ground. Others have a memorial service where friends and family gather to honour the person who died either with or without the ashes there. Some families don't have any event at all.

After the event is over, the ashes may be kept in your home. The remains can be scattered over a favourite spot, weeks or months later.

What's important is, by being truthful about what's happening, she will feel safe and comfortable sharing feelings and fears with you. Building the trust and openness early on with her helps her confide in you as she matures.

But Your Son Wanted To Die Mine Didn't

Maureen Hargreaves, TCF Melbourn, Aus.
I cringed as heard this remark again, repeated so often since Warren took his life 3 1/2 yr. ago. Even now, when I thought I was steeled to the harsh meaning of the words, they still hurt and demolish.

Is it that simple? Could anyone 'feeling good' just choose to die if they knew the pain and suffering that engulfs their family? How do we know his emotional pain, obvious to us, but skillfully masked? It's still incredible that he shot himself after returning from hospital "cured" of his depression. Our beautiful first born grew to a perfect son but somehow our masterpiece had a flaw as cruel and as tenacious as any disease that strikes.

So, until we prove otherwise, we use the words of professor Erwin Ringel that "suicide cannot really be chosen since an intense and overwhelming inner compulsion renders any free choice null and void."

Our loss is as great as any parent's. We grieve as deeply. Remember this and don't judge, we beg. We and all Survivors of Suicide suffer too much already from a horrendous tragedy that can, & does, happen to anyone.

Contributor's Column

Kathy Sinclair works in the Emergency Room in a large hospital in Vancouver, Canada.

I had the most wonderful experience yesterday in the trauma room. The actual fact that a young man of 50 died was not good of course, but how it happened will affect me forever...

This man came in with crushing chest pain. We knew it was a massive heart problem, tried to stabilize and get him to treatment immediately, but he arrested just as we were trying to transfer him. I started CPR and we did everything. All the drugs! Shocks! You name it. (What is most upsetting to me as I replayed this scene in my head over and over, was the fact that this man came in talking and said, "Don't let me die!" I guess I sort of felt like we let him and his family down.

Anyway, the writing was on the wall. We weren't going to get this man back so the social worker and doc went out to talk to his wife and asked her if she wanted to come in and see what we were doing and be with him. We brought her to the head of bed where she leaned over and kissed him on the forehead, whispered to him and cried. The wife then left the trauma room as we carried on our resuscitative efforts.

About 10 minutes later, we invited the wife, daughter and son to come back in and say goodbye. The daughter and son said their goodbyes, finding the experience difficult, and then left. The wife stood there, massaging her husband's hand.

She then reached over to me, cupping her hands over my hands as I was continuing to do CPR on the chest of her husband and she said, "You can stop now. Let's let him go..."

I have been involved in many deaths and end of life events, but this was the most positive thus far. This woman got to make the call. She directed his care. She told us to stop. It wasn't us going into a room telling her that he had died and we did everything we could. She saw all that with her own eyes.

Upcoming Events

BCHPCA 2007 Annual Conference

Bold Steps : Expanding the Circle

May 25th, 2007

Sheraton Guildford Hotel
Surrey, BC

bchpca@cheos.ubc.ca

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.