

# Good Grief

person@griefworksbc.com

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

©2007

A quarterly publication of Griefworks BC

Vol. 2 Issue 2

June 2007

## Remembering Our Children

The basis of any bereavement program is providing a way for griever to tell their stories. Early on, we recognized that an annual memorial should be part of the program. To bring together a community of mourners is both powerful and empowering.

The objectives, created 6 years ago are still relevant. They are to plan & implement a structured memorial event for families & staff; to facilitate public awareness & education on bereavement; & to facilitate service providers' accumulated bereavement needs.

For accountability, a Working Group was struck through the organization's Bereavement Committee. Representation came from across departments - social work, spiritual care, bereavement, psychology, hospice, nursing & child life.

Tasks are broken down into: database lists, invitations, refreshments, decorating, food, publicity, music, audio-visual, crafts, & program. Our theme has been 'points of light' for the past 3 years.

This is a stressful event for staff & guests so deciding who to invite should be well thought out. It's difficult to predict when a family should be invited. Should it be in the first year? After the 1st 3 or 6 or 12 months? Some families might be ready to attend in each of these time frames. Others may not. In the end, we decided to invite all families from the past 18 months. Some families asked to be invited every year.

Attendance is usually about 200 people. Interestingly, we learned that families travel from hundreds of miles away, often from other provinces or the US.

Comments from evaluations we sent out:

"It was hard but it was great. Seeing other people crying too made it feel like I was with people who understood. I wasn't alone."

"The children's photos on the screen were so hard to see but so important to do."

Rosemary  
as  
Remembrance



The herb rosemary has, for centuries, held great meaning as the symbol of remembrance. In ancient times, sprigs of rosemary were laid at the grave of loved ones as a token of loyalty and commemoration.

In moments of quiet reflection, the herb (dried or fresh) can be scattered in any place that brings back special memories such as the cemetery or any place of shared remembrance.

You can make up packets of rosemary to give to friends and family as a memento of remembrance of your loved one. Or give rosemary seeds and a decorative plant pot as a gift on the anniversary of the death to someone who supported your grief.

**Rosemary - the herb of remembrance.**

# 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](mailto:kjohnson@cw.bc.ca) to reach Kay Johnson, the Director.



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

Email [person@griefworksbc.com](mailto: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](mailto:person@griefworksbc.com)



## Question Corner

**Frequently asked when folks call in to Griefworks BC looking for something to help after their loss:** My grandson has just died. He's only 6 years old. How do I support my child while I am in my own hell?

**Answer:** Your child's precious child has died. You are grieving the loss of your grandchild and grieving the suffering your child is going through at this terrible loss. You grieve for your child too.

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.



## Introducing Anna Guerriero Tham

Anna began volunteering for Griefworks BC after she saw how helpful The Journey World was for her son, Keenan.

It wasn't long after expressing her gratitude for how Keenan was supported that she shared how her mother had died when she was a child. She knew how the death of his grandfather had impacted Keenan because she had been there herself.

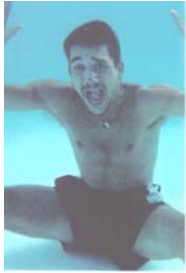
Now, Anna goes wherever she is asked to go and talk about Griefworks BC and the interactive tool that helps kids. She has talked with school counsellors and the clients in the bank where she works. Anna is also going to be on a local radio talk show to share her experiences.

Thank you, Anna, for all you do for grieving kids and families, one mom to another; one person to another; one caring individual to all who hear your story.



## In Memorium

Recent Honour Page Offerings



Darrell Ray Gillis



Thomas Gradford Gould



Katie Young



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

Somewhere back in time you may have lost a baby or child. This death may bring up long-forgotten memories or feelings of that past experience. This means that you may be grieving this child's death, your child's suffering now and maybe the death of another child, long ago. All this will have an impact on how you support your adult child and how you do your own grieving.

Things are very different in health care today than years ago. Nowadays, it is common to openly talk about the death and support the family who has lost an infant or a child.

It is important to remember that our children make their own choices in life and you may not always agree with those choices. Because they have many more options available to

them than you may have had in the past, they will probably deal with this loss very differently than you did. The most helpful thing for you to do is to be supportive of the choices they make rather than be critical of them.

It is also important for you to discuss your feelings or opinions with someone you trust. However, while your willingness to listen and be supportive of your child in their loss is a very positive thing to do right now, this is not the best time to burden your child or their spouse with your frustrations or concerns.

These feelings and reactions are very natural. If you have an awareness of what is happening to you, you will be better prepared to support your child and their family at this very sad and difficult time.

### The Grandparents' What Not to Say List

- "He wouldn't have been healthy."
- "What did you do wrong?"
- "You're young; you can always have more children."
- "It was meant to be."
- "At least you have other children."
- "Maybe next time you'll take better care of yourself."
- "You aren't going to go to the same doctor next time, are you?"
- "Try to get pregnant as soon as you can."
- "You've got to be strong."
- "Don't cry. Everything is going to be all right."
- "Can't we talk about something else?"
- "Just be glad you didn't get to know the baby, then you'd really be sad."
- "It was only a miscarriage."
- "I know just how you feel."
- "It won't happen again."
- "I understand."

#### Keep it simple & respectful:

- "I don't know what to say, but I'll be glad to listen."
- "You must feel terrible."
- "Tell me about it."
- "What can I do to help?"
- "Help me to know how I can best support you."

## Contributor's Column

**Excerpt from [www.soul2soul.ca](http://www.soul2soul.ca), a website for teens sponsored by the Bereaved Families of Ontario.**

My dad died ~5 months ago due to suicide. It's a terrible feeling to come home from school one day & have your mom tell you something like this. Trust me, if you don't know what it feels like, you don't want to know. That was truly the worst day of my life.

All of my friends at school & my teachers all said that they know how I feel & they understand the significance of my loss, but no one knows, no one can relate to how I feel, not even my little sister. No one knows the damage my dad has done to my family & I. With every day that goes by, it gets a little easier & things start to feel a little bit more normal, even though they never will be normal again. Our family is creating a new normal, one that doesn't involve my dad, & one that is simply new.

It is incredibly eye-opening to reflect on someone's death from others' point of view. My dad had a brother & I thought what it would be like to lose a sibling due to unnatural causes, I couldn't stand it. I then thought about what it would be like to lose a best friend, husband, son, co-worker & all the other relationships that my dad had with other people. It makes you think about so many things that I have never thought about before, or in a different way.

For these past few months, I have been on a roller coaster of emotions including confusion, a sense of betrayal, anger & sadness. Everyone says that it is normal, & I sure hope they are right.

I like to understand things & suicide is something that I don't think anyone understands. I never knew that things were going so badly in my dad's life that he would even consider suicide. In the end, he did what he did & no one can change it; it's as simple & tragic as that.

## Upcoming Events

### Supporting Children's Grief

Kay Johnson, MA RN

Powell River, BC

June 26, 2007

**A one-day workshop focussing on how to support children and families when a loved one dies.**

**Contact Sally Louie  
604-483-3009**

Interested in a 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.