

Good Grief

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So What Do You Say When You Don't Know What To Say?

Sometimes, you just have to make a decision without looking at all sides of the issue and examining every little detail. Sometimes, you just have to listen to that little voice inside that says that this is the right thing to do. Sometimes, like right now, you have to say it out loud.

I'm leaving Griefworks BC for an Executive Director's position with the Canadian Mental Health Association.

I don't really know what this means for Griefworks BC itself. I don't know if there will be someone replacing me or if the tasks associated with the work will be shared or somehow 're-configured.'

I do know that the infrastructure of the web site and all the resources listed there as well as the articles and the Honour Page will carry on because they are built on solid ground, if that's possible in the ether that we call the internet.

I also know that the on-line training will continue on with someone managing the registration but it will still be there, giving lessons on how to listen and how to companion grievers on their journey.

I also know that there will be all of you, those loyal care providers, who share their compassion and their passion with those who experience loss.

For that, I feel extremely grateful and humbled. Thank you for your patience, support, interest, enthusiasm, and caring these last 8 years. I have learned so much as I travelled on this journey with all of you.

To all of you, I say, adieu.

*And finally, I say, farewell to my dad who died on
July 16, 2008.*

Children Living with Dying Workshop

Andrea Warnick works at the Max & Beatrice Wolfe Centre for Children's Grief & Palliative Care in Toronto. On June 16th she shared her deeply insightful experiences with a group of about 50 nurses, social workers, teachers and others.

Andrea helped us understand not only how to support dying children, but also to support children when someone close to them is dying or has died. This was the grief part.

Participants came away feeling more confident in their ability to help kids no matter what the situation. This is a final quote from her presentation:

"The greatest gift you can give your children is not protection from change, loss, pain or stress, but the confidence and tools to cope and grow with all that life has to offer them." (Wendy Harpham, 1997)

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.

This newsletter is published at Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC, in Vancouver, Canada. For permission to use our articles, email person@griefworksbc.com.

With sadness & excitement, I'm letting you know that I will be leaving Griefworks BC at the end of July 08. I don't know what the future holds for the organization but I hope that you all will support whatever happens. I move on to the Canadian Mental Health Association. You can contact me at kay.johnson@cmha.bc.ca in August. Kay J.



Question Corner

Frequently asked when folks call in to Griefworks BC looking for something to help

after their loss: My sister's son saw his best friend run over by a car on the way to school. We don't know what we're supposed to do to help him because it seems like he's really messed up.

Answer: Usually 2 things stop us from helping someone who has been involved in a traumatic event. We aren't sure what to say or do and we don't want to see them in any kind of pain or discomfort.

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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.



Shattered

*It is lying all around me,
Shattered into useless pieces of glass
That could now rip my unprotected feet.
It was the glass castle in which I lived
As fairy princess and heroine in shining armor,
Ready and able to rescue all in need.
It was my fragile fantasy,
Designed to protect me from the searing pain
Of having never been rescued
From my own unspeakable distress.
But an invited guest came
And rammed my castle doors, besieged my walls
And shattered my glass defense.
And so, what I once thought of as my castle grand
Is now nothing more than unrecognizable jagged pieces,
And here I stand, exposed and stunned.
It is mine now, not to gather,
But to leave these shattered remains.
It is mine to find a way to live without this illusion.
It is mine to learn to be the peasant child that I am,
Bereft of shining armor and magic wand.
But all I can see at this moment
Are the broken pieces of my shattered castle walls,
And all I can do is weep.*

author unknown



In Memorium

Recent Honour Page Offerings



Alyssa A. Bartraw



Travis James McCarron



James Author Cook



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

What these kids really need is someone to hear their questions & their story.

Spend time with them without judging or demanding anything. They'll work through things on their own time & way, not anyone else's. It may take longer than you expected but that's okay.

Offer support & a listening ear. Talking is one of the best things they can do to work things out but they may need to go over things many more times than you expect. Try to be interested in what they want to say even though you've heard the story so many times. *Don't give advice or try to solve their problems.*

If they can't find the words, have them draw what they are feeling; a picture of what happened; a picture of them or their family before/after the event. Ask them to tell you about their pictures without leading them. Say, "Tell me about what you've drawn" instead of "That looks like..." or "You look sad there."

Give them time, space & patience. Don't take it personally if they are cranky or want to be alone. This is natural & will pass as they work through their grief.

Don't try to talk them out of their reactions or say 'you're lucky it wasn't worse,' or 'pull yourself together.'

Don't ask them to look on the bright side. Stressed people need to focus on themselves at first. They will feel supported if you tell them you are concerned, want to help & will try very hard to understand.

It is very important that these children have a way to get out all of their fear, anger, sadness, guilt, & have support for their grief.

Although there aren't many answers to their questions of 'why or why me,' it will help them to know that someone cares enough to hear their story, sometimes over & over & over again.

Adapted from handouts from the State Emergency Recovery Unit, State Government Victoria, Australia & from Griefworks BC's web site

Resources

There are not many non-private resources to support kids who have been traumatized. In other words, families will have to pay a service provider to get this type of support unless their Employee Assistance Program through work covers it. In that instance, it is also important to find a private counsellor who works with traumatized children.

Here are some public (free) services that are trustworthy:

Healing Resources Info

http://www.traumaresources.org/emotional_trauma_online_video.htm#int

Here you view short videos to help you understand kids' trauma.

Kids Help Phone

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Kids call themselves and can talk with someone trained to listen and support whatever issue the kids bring up.

Contributor's Column

Life

Life is fragile - something not to be taken lightly. It is also beautiful and mysterious.

My father, Dean Phillips, decided to end his life early by suicide though I don't know how he committed suicide. If you are going through hard times, do not choose suicide. You are ruining more lives than just your own.

After my father left, I was not able to get back in regular school for two months and my sister was not able to get back in regular school at all. Suicide is not the way to go. The better way is to talk to your friends and family.

This is my message of hope to all people that have lost a friend/family member to this senseless act of desperation. Things will get better no matter how bad the world seems at the moment. Remember the world seems dark before the light and only think of the good times you spent with them.

If you spend all your time focusing on the bad times or the little time you had with them, you'll start to hate them or become so frustrated that you won't be able to realize that they loved you.

Trust me, I chose that path and I still regret that. So now, for all the people who have suicide in their lives, remember that the person made their choice no matter what you could have done. It's not your fault!

And another little tip: don't blame yourself for their death! You will start to become depressed and it will change your life.

PS: if you have any feedback, send a email to Dillon_bigman@hotmail.com

Dillon Phillips lives on Vancouver Island and requested that this article be published.

Upcoming Events

You're invited!!

To learn about an exciting, new, on-line group support program

FOGs

attend an on-line seminar with

**Kay Johnson &
Richard Mardon**

To register, email
richardm@mobidextrous.com

New seminars will be scheduled
for the fall.

Mark Your Calendar!

IPPC Training

March 5-7, 2008
at BC Children's Hospital

Learn all you ever needed to know
about pediatric palliative care by
working in small seminar groups
over 3 days

Faculty is local and international.

Contact Camara Vanbreeman
cvanbreeman@canuckplace.org

Registration: \$350