

Grandparents

August 2018, Volume 24, Issue 8

Support for Grieving Grandparents When a Baby Dies

By Kelly

Babies aren't supposed to die. It goes against everything in the natural order of things. When it happens, it shakes the foundation of the entire family and often the close friends of the parents. I stand at the hospital bed of many of those families as a perinatal loss support companion. Time and time again, I see the devastation in the eyes of the grandparents, as they feel broken that their grandchild has died and helpless in the face of their child's pain.

"What do we do?" grandparents will ask with agony in their eyes.

There's a strong desire for grandparents to protect their children, to fix this broken, to make the pain better. Only, we all know there's nothing that can heal this wound in a moment's time. There's no kissing away this "boo-boo," no band-aid big enough to cover the oozing.

"I'm so sorry," I will often whisper, "This is a double dose for you as a grandmother. You have your own grief for your grandbaby. But, also, that's your baby (referring to the mom) in the hospital bed. She is in the worst pain of her life. And, you can't make this better...you can't protect her from this pain."

1. Validation and Acknowledgment

As in most support situations, recognizing and validating a person's struggle or pain helps to give it a name. It also helps them understand their own helpless feelings, to know that what they are feeling is a "common response" under the circumstances, and it helps them to know that they are not alone. Someone sees them. They need support, too.

2. Understanding Perspective

Grandparents may grieve differently than parents. That can make it hard for them to understand the choices of

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BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

Upcoming Events

HAYDEN'S HELPING HANDS

8TH ANNUAL HANDS ON HOPE BENEFIT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2017

6:30 pm - 10:30 PM

Uptown Billiards Club

Portland, Oregon

Details at HaydensHelpingHands.com

Hayden's Helping Hands is a 501(c)3 non-profit foundation dedicated to financially assist parents with the medical expenses after the birth of a stillborn baby. It will forever be our goal to stand by families who were not able to welcome home a child due to a stillbirth.

NORA MADELYN FUND

4TH ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE WALK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2017

Registration at 1 pm, Walk at 2 pm

Providence Newberg Medical Center, Newberg

All are welcome. The 1.6-mile route is stroller and wheelchair accessible. No dogs, please.

There is no fee to participate in the walk. Donations to the Nora Madelyn Fund are gratefully appreciated to help continue our outreach and community support programs, including this walk as well as the annual Remembrance Ceremony and butterfly release in July.

Register at noramadelyn.org. All participants must register and acknowledge the waiver. Register by 9/15 to receive a walk t-shirt.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS REMEMBRANCE WALK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2017

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

Remember and honor our children with a 2-mile neighborhood walk to visit the Portland Wishing Tree. Children and infants welcome. Coffee and donuts before as we gather for the walk. Suggested donation of \$20.00 per family. All proceeds go directly to Brief Encounters.

LIGHTS OF LOVE

INTERNATIONAL WAVE OF LIGHT

MORRISON BRIDGE LIGHTING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2017

GATHER AT 6:45

CANDLE LIGHTING AT 7:00 PM

Join us at the Eastbank Esplanade (just north of Fire Station #21 located at 5 SE Madison St, Portland) for a candlelight vigil to remember our babies and view Morrison Bridge illuminated in pink and blue for PAIL Remembrance Day. Bridge lighting organized by Lights of Love International

Wave of Light

From the editor...

The anticipation of meeting the child of your child is filled with excitement and joy. When that joy is disrupted by the unthinkable, grandparents can feel lost and unsure of how to support their children. At first read, the advice in this month's newsletter may seem mostly fitting for the acute period of grief. But as we know the grief is only just getting started. This journey requires love and support that evolves over time. Follow the lead of the parent with these thoughts in mind and your relationship is bound to not simply survive, but grow.

Shannon Stemm Patel
mother of Charlie and her big sis



Upcoming newsletter topics...

September

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

How did your medical team help you in your time of loss? What could they have done differently? What did they do well? Please consider sharing your experience in the newsletter so they may learn how to better support future loss families.

October

EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Early pregnancy loss is so often misunderstood by those that haven't been forced to bear it. Please consider sharing your experience with us.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome and encourage submissions to the newsletter. Submissions may be published anonymously if requested. Sharing your story can provide healing and comfort for you – and other parents. The editor reserves the right to edit and select from the materials submitted. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Brief Encounters, but those of the individual authors. Please send titled articles and submissions to:

newsletter@briefencounters.org

Newsletter printing provided by AnchorPointe

* * * * *

*We weep for that which would
have been our delight.*

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: www.briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Facebook: [private/closed groups Brief Encounters](https://www.facebook.com/private/closed/groups/Brief-Encounters-Pregnancy-and-Infant-Loss-Support-and-Brief-Encounters-Parenting-After-Loss)

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss

Established in 1992 by a group of parents, Brief Encounters is a non-profit, non-sectarian support group for parents whose babies have died before, during, or after birth. At informal, mutually supportive meetings, bereaved parents and their families share their stories, discuss issues that arise from pregnancy and infant loss, and remember their children. Through talking or just listening, we learn what grief is --- and how, through understanding and caring, we heal.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AND STEERING COMMITTEE

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OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Monica Thompson (Spanish interpreter)

LOVE GIFTS

Please send Love Gifts and messages to 2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212. For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 10th of the prior month. Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors by using the form on page 5.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR REMOVAL FROM MAILING LIST

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED: INCLUSIONS OR CHANGES

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at megan.k.wright@comcast.net. For children to be remembered in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive your request by the 10th of the prior month.

SAFE ARRIVALS

Please send Safe Arrivals to newsletter@briefencounters.org.

How to Help Your Child

By Pat

Offer to stay at the hospital with your child and his/her partner, but also assure them of your willingness to honor their privacy if that is what they prefer. Don't wait until they invite you to stay, however. They may be trying to protect you by not suggesting that you come, when in fact your presence is what they most desire.

Take your camera to record pictures of the baby, of your children holding their child, and of you holding your grandchild. Ask the nurse to take a family picture of all of you. Have the pictures developed, but let your children decide when they want to see them. Don't assume they will want to see them right away. Don't discard any of the pictures just because you think they aren't good enough. Also, it's better not to show the pictures to anyone else without your child's permission. If your child offers you a picture of your grandchild, consider displaying it with the pictures of your other grandchildren.

Offer the parents an opportunity to spend time alone with their child.

Don't go to your child's home and begin arranging the room, which was set up as a nursery for your new grandchild. This is something the bereaved parents will probably need to do as a part of their grieving process. You may be asked to do it with them later, but they need to decide if and when. Don't worry if they wait longer than you think they should before beginning to rearrange the room.

Buy your daughter a new outfit so she won't have to wear maternity clothes home from the hospital.

If there are other grandchildren in the family, offer to provide respite care for them.

Run errands and provide food.

Save the dried flowers from bouquets that were sent to your children and fill clear glass Christmas ornaments with the petals, or make potpourri or some other treasure for them.

Later, when anyone asks you how many grandchildren you have, be sure to include your dead grandchild in the total.

Always mention your dead grandchild by name, just as you would any other grandchild.

Remember your child on Mother's Day, Father's Day and other holidays. Observing holidays may be especially hard for them. Your acknowledgements to them of the possibility of it being a difficult time may help ease the pain somewhat.

If prayers are offered at family gatherings, acknowledge the absence of the dead child in your prayer, just as you would any other member of the family who has recently died.

Send your child notes that let her know you haven't forgotten.

Take her out to lunch.

Bring up the subject of your grandbaby from time to time. If your child doesn't want to talk about it, she won't. But it helps her to know that you are thinking of the baby too, and that you don't mind talking about the infant who died.

Avoid telling your child what he/she should do.

Encourage your child and his/her partner to find a grief support group so they can talk with others who have experienced the death of a baby, too. Though you may be a wonderful sounding board for your children, they (and you) will probably benefit from an expansion of your support system.

Remember, the grief process will take much longer than you want it to.

How to Help Your Child is an excerpt from the booklet A Grandparent's Sorrow written by Pat Schwiebert, RN. With more than thirty years of experience working with grieving individuals and groups, Pat is proud to be the founder and creative director of Grief Watch. Pat is the author of many books, including Tear Soup, We Were Gonna Have a Baby...But Had An Angel Instead and When Hello Means Goodbye. She has created a number of other resources available at GriefWatch.org to help those who are grieving.

Letter to Harvey

By Rich Welty, April, 2015

Hey Harv,

It's Papa. Tomorrow is the second anniversary of your arrival. You left the next day but you are still with all of us every day. I like calling you Harv instead of Harvey. Hope you don't mind.

I have tried to write a poem for your second birthday but nothing seems to come to me. I think what I am supposed to do is tell you about this little tree that is in my front yard. It was planted for you the week you left us by your great-grandmother. She put it in her front yard so that it would always remind her of you. The first time I saw the tree was in a picture on the alter at your memorial service. I thought to myself, "What is that doing there?" I didn't know until much later that week that it was your tree.

Your great-grandma is a marvelous person. She had a life change and had to move to where she could get some help with her day to day living and your great-uncle and I got her house ready to sell. I had the tree moved to my house where it seems to be pretty happy and it remains a remembrance of you.

It is kind of small but growing. It just sprouted its new leaves for the year and will flower in a month or so. New growth will come and it will, year by year, become bigger and stronger the way you would have. It gives me great comfort to have it near me. I will plant some flowers around it to make it even prettier for the summer. In the fall it will go dormant. It is a bit like losing you again when that happens. But then I know that it will return in the spring like I know that you return to me every day in my heart and my dreams. You know Harv that you are always with me. I don't really need the tree to remind me of you, but it is there, and it is very handsome, like you are.

I love you Harv,
Papa



Love Gifts

Donations to Brief Encounters help us to maintain our outreach to bereaved families through this newsletter, support groups, and other resources. Often Love Gifts are given by a family in memory of a child who has died. Others may wish to give a general donation, or give thanks for their own living children. We acknowledge gifts here without reference to amount given.

Brief Encounters is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization; therefore, no gift is too small. Each donation goes a long way toward printing brochures, maintaining the Brief Encounters website, providing monthly meetings, performing outreach to healthcare providers, mailing this newsletter, and many other ways we seek to care for bereaved parents.

This month, we thank the following donors for their generosity and love:

In loving memory of **Emma Claire Prins**, 8/6/2014-8/6/2014, daughter of Laura & Tim Prins. Donated by her grandparents, "Grandma and Grandpa love you."

In loving memory of **Theodore David Jones**, 3/4/18, son of John and Pia. Donated by his grandparents, Alexis and Michael, "In memory of our precious grandson."

Ongoing Gift: The internet service for the Brief Encounters Web site is provided by the Wedin Ohana out of love for **Marina Alyssa Wedin**, beloved daughter and sister.

Love Gift Donation Form

Enclosed is a donation of: \$
In memory of:

Message to be included in the newsletter with your
donation acknowledgement:

Birth date: Death date:

Donated by:

Please consider your employer's matching gift program when submitting a donation. To receive a receipt, please provide your return address:

I wish for my gift to remain anonymous.

Name(s) of Parents:

Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors or omissions by sending your Love Gift message with this form. Please **do not** send your message separately to the editor or database manager. Thank you!

Send form and payment to: 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, OR 97212

Checks can be made payable to Brief Encounters.

For credit card payments, please provide the following:

Name as it appears on card:

Credit/Debit # ____-____-____-____ Exp date ____-____ CVC# ____

Please note: For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a particular newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 15th of the prior month (example: June 15th for July issue).

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS is a non-sectarian, non-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3), Federal ID #45-4822283.

Support for Grieving Grandparents

Continued from page 1
their children (the parents of the baby). They may come from a generation that doesn't believe you should see and hold your baby or get pictures. They may or may not understand the importance of doing so. Grandparents often filter what they think is best through the lens of trying to protect their children, sometimes thinking that if they can just shield them from all of this, it won't hurt so badly. Parents spend their entire lives protecting their children. It makes sense that in the moment when their children experience the worst pain imaginable that they would want to find a way to protect them.

Years ago, when I lost my twin daughters and later our newborn son, my mother struggled in the weeks and months after our loss. Wanting me to get better quickly. It was very hard for her not to be able to fix my pain. She worried that I was not being healthy when my grief took some time. She needed to understand that my pain was a healthy response to grief, and I needed her to be patient and present with me instead of trying to fix me. Communication on both ends, and giving one another grace can help keep relationships intact.

3. Be Sensitive to a Grandparent's Compounded Grief Story

The experience of watching their child give birth to a baby with a brief life or one who is born still may trigger memories of their own loss and missed opportunities. If you are present with a grieving grandparent, please be sensitive to their own stories. They may be processing grief that's been repressed for years as they hold their grandbaby. Allow them an opportunity to process their grief for the child they lost as well as the grief they're feeling for the loss of their grandchild and the pain their child is feeling.

4. Include Grandparents

Feeling helpless as your own child is hurting and grieving is crippling. If you are a parent, caregiver, support person, or even a family member reading this, include the grandparents. Include them in the care of the baby if you are in the room with the family. The baby's mother is sometimes not feeling well or up for all the baby care...bathing and dressing of baby immediately after she gives birth (although if she is, please allow her and baby's father to do this! Always offer parents the opportunity and give them the options to decide about baby care.). If the parents are open to it, include the grandparents in this healing time of memory-making. Parents can still bathe if they would like, and grandparents can help in another way. Perhaps applying lotion to the baby after parents bathe. When parents and grandparents are offered options and given the opportunity, baby care and memory-making will naturally and beautifully flow together.

If you are the grandparent reading, please understand if parents don't know how to include you in this time. They have never done this before, and their own pain is bigger than anything else. They may react with so many different emotions, and because you are their safe person, you will likely see them all. Find ways to gently stay involved...ways to help they may not know they need, while also respecting

the space of your grieving children if that's what they require. Perhaps making a blanket, buying or making an outfit, offering to make phone calls or help with funeral arrangements, sending over some homemade meals or gift cards to restaurants they like for when they are feeling up to going out, and offering to watch their other children are all ways you can provide tangible support to the parents. As time goes by, know that it will mean so much to the child's parents if you continue to find ways to honor and include the memory of your grandchild in family celebrations and when you are doing things for your living grandchildren. It is typically a comfort if you remember with them.

5. Allow Yourself Time to Grieve

Grandparents can be so concerned with the pain their children are feeling, that they don't allow themselves time to grieve. If you are reading this as a grieving grandparent, know that you have your own grief that will need your attention at some point. Please have someone in your life to go to with your pain. Taking care of you is important so that you can continue to take care of your grieving child.

Grieving Grandparents, please know you are not alone. We see you, and the way you quietly carry the pain of grief for your grandchild mixed with the pain of watching your own child grieve for their baby.

Originally posted on StillStanding.org

Kelly Gerken is the president and founder of Sufficient Grace Ministries, an organization providing perinatal hospice services, bereavement support and Dreams of You memory-making materials to families facing the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death and the death of a young child. Kelly has walked through the loss of three of her five children, and now reaches out to walk with other grieving families as an SGM perinatal loss support doula and SGM Remembrance Photographer. She is a creator and facilitator of training for birth professionals on compassionate care for bereaved parents facing perinatal loss. Her memoir, Sufficient Grace, was published in 2014. You can read more about Kelly's journey of grace, hope and healing and the outreaches of SGM, order resources or find her book here: www.sufficientgraceministries.org.

I can see him laughing

I can see him loving

I can see him playing, this son of mine.

*All I need to do is close my eyes
and see the two of them hand in hand
heading for their next adventure.*

*But this dream will have to wait
till my next grandchild comes along.*

-Pat Schweibert

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS MEETINGS

Our support group meetings are a safe place to talk about your child, your loss, and your grief. You are welcome to share, or just listen. A facilitator guides the meetings.

For more information or directions, please call 503-699-8006.

PARENTS OF INFANT LOSS & PREGNANCY LOSS, INCLUDING EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

August 13, September 10

Contact: Rachel Murfitt (RachelM@briefencounters.org)

This group also meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm

August 28, September 25

Contact: Daniele (DanieleR@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF PREGNANCY INTERRUPTION DUE TO MEDICAL REASONS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you. Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00pm

August 23, September 27

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF SUBSEQUENT PREGNANCIES, ADOPTIONS, & PARENTS TRYING TO CONCEIVE

Babies welcome. Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00pm

August 27, September 24

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

All meetings held at The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

RESOURCES

Brief Encounters Online

WEBSITE

The Brief Encounters website www.briefencounters.org is a great resource, including past newsletter issues, upcoming events and announcements, helpful links, numerous resources, support meeting information, etc.

TWITTER

@briefencount (twitter.com/briefencount) is the Twitter handle to follow for news and helpful links and information about pregnancy loss, infant death, and grief resources.

FACEBOOK

Brief Encounters Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and *Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss* are the names of our private/closed Facebook mutual support groups. Because they are private, each group requires approval to join, and posts are hidden from anyone who is not a group member.

Please remember to take the usual precautions to protect yourself when using any social media outlets, keeping in mind that online communication is never completely private or secure. And remember that everyone who posts or reads will be in different places in their grief, so let's all be mindful and considerate. You can find articles about online safety with a quick online search. Be safe.

Counselor Referrals

Not all counselors are familiar with the issues that parents face after the death of their baby or during infertility treatment. If you feel like you would like to talk with a counselor, listed below are individuals who have been recommended to us by parents in the BE community.:

- ♥ Gaby Donnell, LCSW, Inner NE Portland
503-287-2295 www.mootherootscounseling.com
- ♥ Teni Davoudian, Ph.D., OHSU
503-418-4500 www.ohsu.edu
- ♥ Britta Dinsmore, PhD, SW Portland
503-913-4791 www.brittadinsmore.com
- ♥ Adria Goodness, CNW, PMHNP, SE Portland
503-224-3438 www.adriagoodness.com
- ♥ Rachel Starck, LPC, North Portland
503.929.2773 www.thethrivingmama.com
- ♥ Laurie Cox, LCSW, NE Portland
503-819-6354 mootherootscounseling.com/laurie-cox
- ♥ Lauren Marie Barthelemy, LPC, SE Portland
412-715-2391
- ♥ Debbie Bensching, MSW, LCSW, SW Portland
503-944-5032 DebbieBensching.com

- ♥ Tina Lilly, MS, Inner SE Portland
503-380-0424 www.foryouaremadeofstars.com
- ♥ Ava M. Stone, Ph.D., PC, SE Portland
503-279-8160 www.pacificcenter.org
- ♥ Tara May, PhD, Vancouver
360-904-1008 www.taramay.com
- ♥ Nalini Kuruppu MSW, LCSW, North Portland
503-753-9157
- ♥ Kari Maljai, LPC, SE Portland
503.936.7658 www.pnwbh.com
- ♥ Brooke Noli, MFT, Inner NE Portland
971-645-1180 portlandbirthcounseling.com
- ♥ Brynna Sibilla, LCSW, Inner NE
503-280-1101 www.psychotherapyportland.com
- ♥ Jennifer Singleton, PhD, PC, Downtown,
503-242-1558
- ♥ Lynne Phillips-Werbel, LCSW, Beaverton
503-690-9119 www.wildwoodpsych.com
- ♥ The Dougy Center (for bereaved siblings)
503-775-5683 www.dougy.org

Editor's note: We would appreciate receiving suggestions, changes, or corrections to any of these resource listings; please send them to the editor at newsletter@briefencounters.org

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and
infant loss

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Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Find us on Facebook

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Grandparents

Change of Address or Removal from Mailing List

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at
database@briefencounters.org.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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