

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME



Social Work Department
Royal Children's Hospital

FEBRUARY 2007 NEWSLETTER

A very warm welcome to the Family Bereavement Support Programme for 2007. We hope that through this new year you will find the newsletters and groups to be a source of support, information and connection with others to help sustain you as you grieve for your child.

On a Changed Path: Parents Living with Grief

The parents who joined the February monthly group of the Family Bereavement Support Programme were made welcome. Being the first group for the year and the first group attended by several of the parents as the time together began we spent a few moments *introducing* the group.

The group aims at being a safe, respectful environment in which parents who have experienced the death of a child can meet with other parents, receive information and share their thoughts and feelings. It is a *time and space* to explore the challenges that come with living with grief. The groups, we hope, will be an opportunity for parents to find and develop ways of carrying their loss.

Parents are invited to participate in ways in which they feel most comfortable; whether this is through listening, through talking or raising questions. It is hoped also that parents will feel *able to bring their children who have died to the group*, to talk about them and to remember.

Parents are also invited to use the group in ways which they feel helpful. This may be by attending regularly, occasionally or just once. During the evening if parents feel they need to take *some time* out from the group then they are encouraged to do so. This time may be spent on their own or with Carol or Jane.

Through the evening Jane takes some notes (without names) to help create the newsletter. The newsletter is an important means of sharing experiences and resources and is a record of the group. Carol and Jane are available to meet with parents between groups if there is something that they would like to talk over more privately. Parents who read the newsletter but do not come to the groups are also most welcome to call Carol or Jane. They can be reached through the Social Work Department on 9345 6111.

The February group was joined by our guests Ms Dayle Barrett – Harry and Ms Anita D'Eltesta. Anita and Dayle were very warmly welcomed. Anita and Dayle who are members of The Compassionate Friends had most generously accepted the invitation to come to the group, to reflect on some of their experiences as bereaved parents. In particular, we had asked Anita and Dayle if they, could speak with the group about how they in the years following their children's death, had been able to live with the changes which grief brings. Most importantly as Dayle commented she and Anita had come "not as a professional, not as a grief counsellor but a volunteer from TCF...we may have different stories... but we're all united in the common cause...the loss of a child".



Throughout the evening, encouragingly, Dayle and Anita, were to emphasize that while parents always continue to love and grieve for their child, the impact of the grief changes, becoming 'gentler' and more able to be carried. From their heartfelt reflections, it was also clear that Anita and Dayle had come to understand themselves, their needs and responses at very deep levels.

Parents, support and The Compassionate Friends

Before Dayle and Anita spoke of their particular experiences, Dayle talked a little about the needs and context of parents who are bereaved and The Compassionate Friends (TCF).

Dayle observed how less than thirty years ago there was very little support available for families following the death of a child. In more recent times however the community has become "much more educated" about the needs of parents who are grieving. More support has developed.

The story of TCF begins in 1968 in Warwickshire Hospital England where Reverend Simon Stephens was Assistant Chaplain. While supporting the family of a young boy who had been struck by a car while riding his bike, he mentioned to them that another boy was dying in the Hospital. The boys died three days apart. The family whose son had died earlier sent flowers to the other family and later with the support of Reverend Stephens the families met. Reverend Stephens suggested that the families connect with others. Soon they were joined by another family and from this in 1969, developed The Compassionate Friends in the U.K. When the Reverend Simon Stephens took up a posting as Chaplain in the Royal Navy he met with "parents in ports all around the world" and Compassionate Friends grew into a worldwide network of parent to parent support. In 1978 the Victorian chapter of TCF was formed.

TCF, Dayle went on to explain, offers grief support through groups including special interest groups (these relate to the cause of the child's death), information, newsletters, sibling groups, resources, a large library, phone contact and social groups. TCF support groups are held across the state in metropolitan and country areas, in the evening and during the day. TCF offers 24 hour telephone support and in the year 2006, 6000 calls were received by TCF. There were over 4000 attendances at groups. "The phone is always answered by a bereaved parent or sibling" Dayle said. TCF is available to parents

of children of all ages. The child may be of any age when they died- a baby, a young child, or adult and from any cause- illness, disability, accident, suicide.

Like Dayle, Anita emphasized that although in TCF each parent is an individual, and "they're all in different processes of grieving and adjustment ...there is the shared bond of having had a child die".



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Phone: 03 9888 4944
Freecall: 1800 641 091
Fax: 03 9888 4900

24 Hr. Grief Support
Phone: 03 9888 4944

Email: cfriends@ozmail.com.au

**Bereaved Parent
Centre Hours**
9.30am to 4.60pm
Monday to Friday

**For further information regarding Internet
Links, visit the TCF Victorian Homepage
www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au**

Dayle's Story

Dayle told something of her family story to the parents in the group. In 1993 her son and daughter Amanda, twelve years and Thomas, ten years were killed when they were struck by an oncoming train as they crossed under the barriers at a railway crossing. The reason- *Why*, they did not see the train, Dale explained, remains unknown. Was it because they were looking at or waving friends in another train, was the sun in their eyes or did they not look? In the early days following the children's deaths Dayle wanted *the answer*. She wondered whether it was in religion and went to many churches, searching for answers. She also read about different faith traditions and philosophies.

At the time of the accident, Dayle was 9 months pregnant with her third child. She recounted to the group that Amanda and Thomas died on Monday their funeral was held on Thursday and on Friday a new baby, a son, was born. In the midst of all of this turmoil, Dayle spoke of how she felt there was "no time to grieve. ...I knew

nothing about it (grief)...I ran on autopilot I had to go on...I had a baby, I had to get up to the baby, I couldn't put a blanket over my head and stay in bed". That imperative to *keep going* because there are other children has been felt by many parents who are bereaved and by some in the group this evening. In hindsight Dayle has come to find that having a new baby also meant in some ways that her "grief was on hold".

As a parent whose children's death had drawn considerable attention from the media and living in a small community Dayle confronted particular challenges. Many people found it "difficult to talk" to her. In shops people would suddenly "go hush hush" when she came in or "they'd cross the road" to avoid her. At that time Dayle thought of moving to another place, "it (all the pain, the thoughts, images, awkward interactions, the emotions) would go away". She felt that she would be able to create "a new life, a new beginning". In her mind "it (grief) wouldn't follow but of course it does".

One day, when her feelings and sense of isolation became very intense, Dayle recalled that a friend had mentioned The Compassionate Friends and the support they give to grieving parents. Dayle rang TCF. This would prove to be a pivotal call. In essence Dayle expressed the care TCF gave to her in this way- "first and last is, it allowed me to cry and cry and cry ... Another parent took me under her wing.... I could see further down the track and that she had survived". One of the benefits of talking with other parents who are grieving, Dayle believes "is that you can check in with other people about what's happening for you...the dreams that you have et cetera ...that you're not going crazy ...(you see) I am normal".

Dayle shared with the parents that slowly she was able "to pick up the pieces....(and)". "The pain grew softer" she said. Out of her experiences and over time Dayle, has come to know that "the grief does subside although it's never to be forgotten".

Later Dayle would say "my children are always with me... there's an attachment. It's like them being on an elastic band that sometimes goes out a bit further. There are the good memories". "The wheel of grief" is how Dayle has come now to think of her grief. "At some points it is the anger.. the *why me*"- asked over and over. "It stays there until it has turned into the *why not me* and from there has come a sense of acceptance and peace".

In looking back at the past years, Dayle reflected that she would "go through it all again" if it meant having had Amanda and Tom in her life. She now has two living children, sons, who are older than Tom and Amanda were when they died and their presence in her life means so much. "There is a path in front of us" Dayle said "and we can choose where we go. We can become bitter and twisted or we can embrace the memories and become a better person".

Anita's Story

As she began to tell something of her family story, Anita noted once more that all parents have different stories. "Mine is different from Dayle's and would be different from yours" she said to the group. Although as we were to hear there were some strong connecting experiences. These included *sharing dates* which had significance and the causes of the children's deaths.

In 1992 Anita's only child Rebecca died from an illness that was sudden and severe. She was two and a half years of age. Experienced, understandably as "devastating and traumatic", Anita commented "you wonder about going on physically and emotionally,... did I want to go on". With the death of her only child Anita was left with another pressing the question - was I still a mother? Later other parents would speak of how they have encountered and responded to this question. The particular challenges when an only child ("**our whole world**") who has been ill or in treatment dies, leaving such a void and a "**lack of focus**" were also explored during the evening. *A reason to go on* may seem out of grasp. Voicing his feelings of the absence of his son a father said "**there's an emptiness in the house**".

At that time of excruciating grief the *only support* that Anita was offered was valium on the day of Rebecca's death. One of the *sparkling* sources of unexpected support however, Anita explained, was a young friend who came "every night for weeks, months and years and listened" to Anita. "She didn't judge, she didn't give advice she just listened".

Both Anita and Dayle were to speak during the evening about how people who are bereaved often find themselves without support and understanding, without information or resources. From her own experience and subsequent professional training as a counsellor, Anita knows just how hard this lack of support and information can be for parents. Not having that support

from the early days following Rebecca's death she has concluded was "a mistake in my grief journey". Anita has become a strong active advocate for grief support and counselling. She is "passionate" about talking to and supporting other bereaved parents.

As she continued to reflect on this part of her family story, Anita recalled how she came to reach out to TCF. Somewhere in the letters that had been sent to her when Rebecca had died Anita could vaguely remember was a note which mentioned TCF in Scotland where Anita then had lived. She had the telephone number and made contact. However through the trauma of those days Anita couldn't remember the visit that she'd had with the other bereaved parent. Years later when with her son who was born after Rebecca's death Anita moved from Scotland to Australia, on a "bad day out of the recesses of my mind" TCF was remembered. Making this connection has made a huge difference in Anita's life.

In grief, Anita was to observe "you are very vulnerable". "Well meaning people will give you lots of *shoulds*. There are no *shoulds* in grief" Anita stressed. She went on to say that one of the difficulties with *shoulds* is "if you're not doing it that way you feel wrong ... judged ... mad... what you feel and think may be completely different, you try to be normal to make (them) other people, friends and family feel more comfortable". Yet "trying to make grief follow a pattern" dictated by others seemed impossible to Anita. We imagine other parents would agree with this view.

Anita's response in many ways was "to shut down". She felt isolated, without any support and especially no support from bereaved people. With this as her context and with all the *shoulds* Anita "switched off her grief". Yet despite her suffering and trauma Anita said she knew she had to live that there was "a life force within" Dayle had alluded earlier to such a drive or power within people. Both have witnessed their own and other parents survival and healing.

In looking back over her experiences Anita observed that at five years her grief "was still awful" but at six years she felt that there was "a shift". She started to notice "changes" while at the same time becoming "more assertive" about her needs.

In identifying what helped Anita had a number of thoughts. She said that talking to someone about Rebecca -"a joy to hear her name"- would have been

very good. Like wise Dayle would say to the group "I've never stopped talking about them".

"Having something to live for" was critical and that for Anita was to be her son. The numerous benefits of physical exercise were also seen by Anita as helpful. At the beginning her exercise was a way "to work out the anger". There were "lots of blows to punching bags". She would also physically wear herself out. Now the exercise she takes has turned into walking- more a meditative walk, yoga and taikwondo. "Doing something positive" so that she "didn't feel so helpless about the situation" was important to Anita so she sponsored a fundraising bike ride.



On Anita's *list* of supportive activities and resources, reading featured highly. She described how reading enabled that connection or moment of realization- "that's exactly like how I feel ...of not feeling awkward". It is important, she noted, for parents to have their grief "normalized". Later a group member gave her thoughts about this unique type of support saying "**With another parent (who is bereaved) you have an understanding... I can talk to her and she knows where I'm coming from... it helps**".

Additionally, having pictures of Rebecca has been very sustaining for Anita, "they are all around" Anita remarked. Marking special days such as birthdays and anniversaries has been very meaningful and supportive for Anita. "It's a way of remembering and honouring the child". Knowing that Rebecca's life is greatly valued has a very "positive" impact and meaning for Anita. TCF always send an anniversary card "you know that someone is thinking you and your child". Later in the evening how to mark and spend these significant days would be explored further with the group.

As the discussion continued about what may help to support grieving parents, Dayle also spoke about the value of having an activity or a hobby as an outlet. Dayle talked about creating a collage of pictures of her children. It was time consuming and constructive. Over time the collage has lived within different places in Dayle's home and is treasured. Dayle encouraged parents "to be kind" to themselves.

During their time with us, Anita and Dayle underscored the importance of *trying out* different forms of support and of “not giving up” but rather to search to find something that nurtures and encourages. Phone support, groups, or visiting a website are just some of the possibilities but “if it’s not your thing keep looking and searching for that which brings you peace”.



On a Changed Path

Through the evening we were reminded of just how dramatically a parent’s life may change after their child has died. Anita gave expression to this when she said “the old life is lost, a new book opens and there is a need to adjust”. Anita was to speak about how after a child dies there is for a parent “a before and after” where life is “split into two”. She explained that parents may “grieve their old self”.

She described these as being some of the secondary losses which flow from grief. These can add to the stresses parents are dealing with. It is useful for these to be acknowledged. From acknowledgement they can be responded to.

During the group’s time together parents who felt able shared something of their family story and asked questions of Anita and Dayle. We have captured some of this discussion.

Amongst other matters, the conversation focused on some of the dilemmas parents who are bereaved from a child’s death face. Dayle said there are “just so many issues that others don’t encounter”. Some of these mirrored the experiences of parents in the February and previous groups.

A core example is the question of *how many children do you have?* For parents who are not bereaved this is straight forward. The circumstances influence how Dayle will answer this question. If it is a *quick encounter*, a *once off* in the supermarket she may say she has two children.

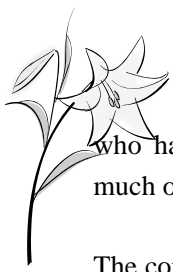
If, however, the question comes from someone that Dayle is likely to have contact with over time or a relationship of meaning, she will say she has had four children. **“You’re in survival mode....be kind to yourself”**, Dayle suggested to the group.

Being misunderstood by other people and dealing with their reactions is something that parents who are grieving may experience from almost immediately after their child has died. A father said he was **“protective”** (of other people) **“I don’t want to upset them. I have sympathy with people who don’t know what to say. I try not to be too angry, not too annoyed... I would have been like them”**. Dayle responded “you can be angry but you have to understand and try to be patient”. Over time parents in the group had seen *who they could rely on or not*. A mother commented on how she had been so moved by those people who **“feeling with us...amazed at the capacity to do this.... the depth of feeling, of their kindness. It gives you hope that there are good things and good people.”** A father remarked **“who comes out of the woodwork is very surprising. There are more bereaved (people) than you realize.”**

In contrast, for one couple only weeks after their son’s death there had been very clear messages from friends that they should be *over their sorrow*. Their friends repeated insensitivity in failing to try to imagine what it was like for the couple had prompted the father to say **“don’t say these words to us again.”**

“I’m getting there ...not quite ...I don’t think it (life) has to be normal... I’ve gone back to work”. For one group member, at least for a time work had become **“an escape route”** from grief. Like Anita, Dayle suggested that it can be useful for parents who are grieving to let others including those at work know what they are feeling. For example to let your employer “know if it’s a bad day”. In recounting something of his experiences at work, a father spoke about how on some days he just goes **“out for a walk.”** While another shared how at the beginning of the year he had started a new job new, **“I can hide in a corner.”**

Newness may bring its own issues. There can be all sorts of *newness*. One family had recently moved to another suburb. A move means a **“change of community”**, people who will never know the child



who has died and brings with it the question of how much of the family's story will become known.

The complex and often difficult issue of grieving within relationships was also touched on during the evening. Many times in a partner relationship *one is down and the other is up*. From time spent with other bereaved parents and from her experiences, Dayle has learnt how it is vital for partners to share together or to let the other know if sharing isn't possible. From comments that were made keeping the lines of communication open seemed fundamental. However it can feel really hard.

At one point in the evening a father asked when did Dayle notice *the shift* in her grieving that she had spoken about earlier. When did she feel her grief had become 'softer'. In responding to the father Dayle described how her reactions had gradually changed overtime. Through the first year, following her children's deaths, she described herself as being "detached" and in some ways this made that first year more bearable. The second year was "harder". The realization took firm hold that "they aren't coming back." She noticed a build up to anniversaries or particular days. This may have been she said several months before hand. With her family Dayle has worked out ways of marking important occasions. For example her children's 21st birthdays have been heralded with releasing 21 balloons. A mother in the group recounted some of her experiences, "**in the lead up (the first anniversary of her daughter's death) I suffered extreme anxiety more than any other part of the year but on the day I was calm**". A couple spoke about how on the day of the anniversary their family who were scattered around different parts of the country lit candles to mark the day and to connect with each other.

We were to hear how there can be other sorts of worries and fear. These could be about a range of events and processes. For example fear may grow from the knowledge that the world is not a fair or safe place. A parent reflected "**I have a deep sense of fear... I don't feel safe anymore,... the fairness of life, the balance has gone.**" As was said in the group "**there is nothing more unfair than a child's death**" and from it there is "**a new thought process**". "**You worry more**" was another comment. From a different perspective a parent remarked "**the worst has happened... nothing**

could touch me now I couldn't care". There was, too, a fear of further deaths. A terrible fear of becoming too attached to another child- of loving them and then being hurt if something happened to them. For some parents *this shifted* once the child passed the age of their sibling who had died.

For several parents in the group their very fit and healthy vibrant children had died very suddenly without warning. They were left quite bewildered. "**All normal one night and then the next not here**". Now parents were doing what in their most dreadful nightmare they couldn't have imagined. They were visiting their child's grave yet "**visiting everyday**" felt good and helped. We acknowledged this word is a terrible word to say. Like *death* it is a hard and harsh word to say- "**I don't say died I always say passed over... It doesn't change that fact that your children have gone... ..**"

Amongst the difficult emotions, that parents in the February group were addressing were feelings of guilt of regret and blame "**Did I spend enough time with them, did I do everything I could**". A father said "**the questions... it's the what if's that roam around.**" No amount of reassurance and logic may be able to move these. Although it seems having this type of burden can at times be overwhelming and destructive.

As fears were given expression, a father spoke of his fear of losing his daughter's *smell*. While for others the fear of losing the sound of a cherished voice or how the child looked was mentioned. Out of her journey with grief, Dayle was able to reassure parents that those images and memories "won't be lost" even if they are hard to retrieve at particular times. There is strangeness in that "the more you think the more it goes away it disappears". However Dayle said then "when we're not actively trying to recover a memory it comes back.... They memories play like a revolving picture forward and back. When we're not trying to conjure it, it comes".

Others in the group spoke, too, about being "**afraid of losing the memory**". A mother said "**the particular gets lost...it's not a memory... it's more an impression...from the core of love...still have the love even if the memories dissolve**". Parents were developing ways to capture memories such as writing them down or asking others to talk about their memories of the child. "**You do anything not to forget**".

On occasions in a hope to recapture memories to feel the memory and bond again special acts, greetings, games or moments shared may be **“reenacted”**. This brings a feeling of connection closer.

We heard that brothers and sisters may have their fears too. One mother also spoke about her young adolescent child was anxious if she noticed any of the physical symptoms that her sibling had, even if these were innocent. Recognizing their worries and taking the steps needed to give reassurance seems supportive to siblings.

One father’s question to Anita and Dayle was **“when does the sleeplessness go away?”** Once more Anita and Dayle highlighted in their response the very individual nature of grief reactions. Anita noted “there is no time frame at all”. Many parents find it very difficult to sleep. She encouraged parents “not to get anxious about the lack of sleep”. Watching the clock she knows may cause “additional worries” Rather than sleep which may be elusive, Anita suggested resting. However to promote sleep, a bath before bed, warm drink and healthy eating were mentioned. Anita explained that sometimes in grief people might feel nauseous commenting “so what you do eat should be good and little”. Through the night the analogy was offered by Dayle of grief being something like “climbing a ladder sometimes you’re up and sometimes your down, sometimes you might almost feel manic in doing things” and other times you might feel “totally exhausted”. **“In the morning can’t find any drive”** had been one parent’s experience. We were reminded that grief is a physical process as well as a process of the heart and mind.

Several parents in the group were experiencing significant days which flowed into thinking about what this means and about how to spend these days.

For one couple the third Thursday marked the six month anniversary of their daughter’s death. Time is a curious thing, expressed in this way-**“Sometimes it’s like yesterday...sometimes it’s hard to imagine her in our family”**.

The approach and passing of the *first* birthday since the child had died particularly resonated with several parents in the group. Ways to *celebrate or mark* the day were exchanged. One father said that he and his wife had also been grappling with **“what’s appropriate, are we doing the right thing”?**

They wanted a fun day, a way of honouring their child. However weren’t quite sure of what to do. They had settled on a day in the park complete with face painting for the little ones.

Rather than having a birthday cake special little cakes were baked. These have now taken on the name of the child who has died. From their day they had learnt **“you need to do what’s right for you what you don’t feel awkward with”**.

Yet also observed **“It’s hard because you’re not as confident in your decision making”**. The festive season had also been a time of significance and challenge for many. **“Christmas, I struggled through it was completely for the kids”**.

One parent summed up her getting through a significant day with these words **“I dreaded the day but the sun goes up and comes down”**. Another group member noted **“You can spoil yourself in remembering the whole day”**. She called it **“a day of indulgence, of remembering, of doing something for yourself and others can join it”**. The mother described the day. She had **“held”** for her daughter. There was a time first for her to be alone with her daughter and then a time with others who loved her daughter. There was a service at the cemetery. It was **“beautiful for her little friends”** It wasn’t **“a day of mourning.... we’ve done a year of that... You give the message (about the atmosphere/tone for the day) that fed through to others.**

She recalled how her family and friends had been able to find symbolic gifts for her daughter. Their choice had shown much care and thought. They had been able to share memories of her. Some who were not able to speak at funerals found their voice and the words to say. A mother commented **“many may think it’s weird but it helps them to understand that it is okay to talk then that’s fine”** and another added **“it ‘s more than ok...it’s necessary”**. This reminded us of Anita and Dayle’s earlier comments about how they love to hear their children’s names and that over the years they have continued to talk about them.



Through the evening's discussion it was suggested that living children may have ideas about how to spend important days. We also were reminded of how children can be uninhibited and very honest in their expression of grief. Dayle talked about how often children ask in very direct ways about why her Tom and Amanda died. Their questions can open up an important discussion about railway crossings and road safety.

In exploring some of the positive ways that parents were finding to live with their grief one mother related how she had undertaken the First Run for the Kids. She had worn a t-shirt printed especially to honour her daughter. As an *aside* the second Run for the Kids is being held on the Sunday 1st of April. Parents might want to think of joining with a group of family and friends and to dedicate their participation to their child. Last year the Run for the kids provided a significant contribution to the Good Friday Appeal and was good fun!



As we came to the end of this part of the evening we thanked Dayle and Anita so much for all that they had shared during the night – their children, their insights, their suffering and their strength. We also acknowledged all that the other parents in the group had spoken of and recognized the courage that they had conveyed.

For those able to stay a little longer there was more conversation over supper.

*Please let us know your experiences of the
“changed path” for Straight from the Heart.*

Early Days: Themes from the Recently Bereaved Parents Evening

1st February 2007

Experiences of bewilderment, disbelief, and of being in a now *altered* family life were just some of the several themes which ran through the conversation that grew when a small group of *more recently* bereaved parents met together.

The Recently Bereaved Parents Evening is an opportunity for parents to meet together without having a particular topic or theme to explore and to receive some resource material. It is a *chance also to test out* what it might be like to participate in a group.

As parents spoke about the days and weeks that had followed their child's death, anecdotes and memories from their child's lifetimes were shared. These recollections were mixed with questions, new learnings and huge adjustments about all manner of things as parents had begun to live a life so different than they had imagined.

The early days of grief have brought strong feelings of being “**crushed**” by the intense emotions and insatiable feelings of “**missing**” the child so much. It was difficult for parents to imagine being able to move beyond the next moment. Yet we also glimpsed that there was the possibility “**of getting out from under**”, “**moving out of the cloud**” and of making plans about holidays and returning to work.

Once more the strength, commitment and sense of hopefulness that accompanies coming to the group was explored. Parents have different experiences of returning to the hospital. Some felt familiar and secure while others felt more a sense of sadness. Throughout the evening we heard of how hope and the belief that the child would over time achieve good outcome from treatment kept parents going. We heard too of the rigors of caring for a child with multiple health difficulties. Parents spoke about different senses of knowing that their child's lifetime would end and shared some deeply moving words that their children had spoken as their life drew to a close.

Throughout the evening we learnt about the children's characters, their likes and how their parents had cared for them. From all of this it was clear just how much they were loved and the void that has been left in their parents' lives. We glimpsed how parents were beginning to rebuild their lives.

The journey continues.....

Straight from the Heart

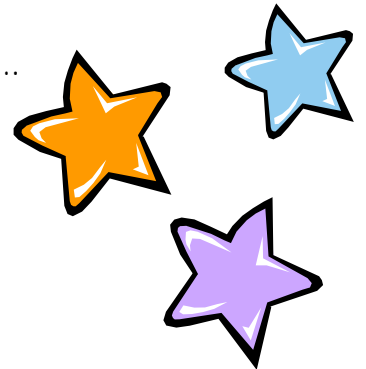
A shining star is a wonderful symbol for a loved child. It has been beautifully crafted by Tyler's mother, Ms Jelena Rendek into this moving and loving tribute. Thank you very much Jelena.

*In Memory of Tyler Rendek
15th March 2006 ~ 13th August 2006*

This, Tyler is a poem dedicated to you from mummy....

'MY SHINING STAR'

As I look out to the sky afar
Tyler, you are my shining star.
A single touch....
A single kiss.....
To have you here again...my one true wish.
When you left & went away,
I thought I couldn't live another day.
You are my soul, my heart, my air,
Dearest Tyler, I'll always be there.
My love for you will never die...cause
Tyler, You are my shining star in the night's sky!



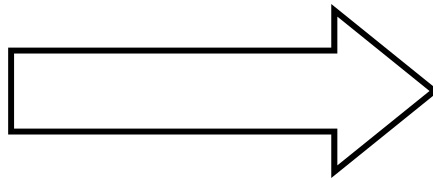
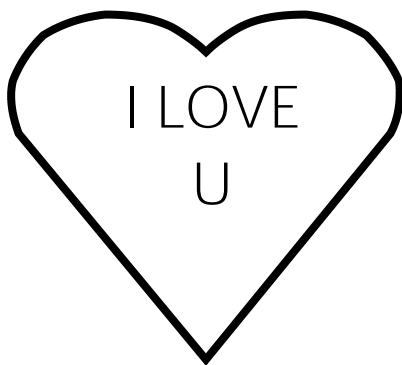
Straight from the Heart

Our sincere thanks to Ms Maha Afaneh and her mother for sharing this expressive piece created for Ameera - sister and daughter. Maha's words and symbols convey so much about Ameera and the love that is felt for her. All of which is to be honoured and celebrated. Thank you also to Very Special Kids for their thoughtfulness in allowing us to publish this poem and graphic in the newsletter.

In memory of our beautiful daughter
Ameera Afaneh
29/12/2000 - 08/07/2006
And her brothers
Maher & Sunil

AMEERA

Ameera is our loving daughter and a loving sister that we will never forget,
she was very brave and a very beautiful girl
she loved people talking to her and making her laugh
at home we still think that she is still with us she will always be in our heart,
now she has gone to heaven and she has a better life now with her 2 brothers and Allah.
From her sister and from her family!!



Straight from the Heart

*From one of the fathers ("Dads") in the group. Many thanks for the privilege of seeing this brilliant sunlight.
Jane and Carol.*

Sunlight through the Window

The sun glints through the window about this time each day
And illuminates your photograph in a captivating way.
It lights your hair and fires your eyes, it illuminates your face
a hint of how you now must look
in your world of light and grace.

How I miss you darling, my heart breaks every day
I rack my brains to recollect the things you used to say.
Your gorgeous smile, your sense of fun, your deep and thoughtful gaze
You could catch my doting heart in a thousand different ways

What would you think my darling, of your dad in such a state?
The one you once looked up to, the one you thought was great
Would my sadness disappoint you? My heart-ache let you down?
Would the way I handle losing you cause your pretty face to frown?

Or do you smile with understanding that your heavenly home now brings?
With celestial comprehension of the greater scheme of things?
With special inclination to how things yet will be
My fretting might seem foolish, If I could see what you can see

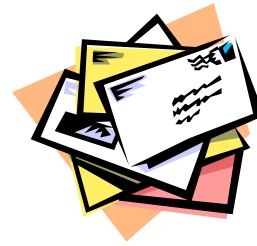
I know there's life for me to live, and work for me to do,
Challenges and opportunities that continue without you
I'll do the things life needs of me, life's bigger than my sorrow
I'll finish this day as best I can, and do the same tomorrow

The sun glints though the window the same time every day
It illuminates your photograph in a captivating way
Your smile a special signal of the bond still to be had
'till then I'll wait with patience,
With undying love, your dad.

Contributions such as reflections on the groups' themes, poems, letters, songs, quotations from parents, grandparents and friends are most welcome in the Newsletters. Share your thoughts, experiences and questions with others who are bereaved.

Please forward them to:

The Editor
Parents' Bereavement Support Group
Social Work Department
Royal Children's Hospital
Flemington Road
PARKVILLE VIC 3052



The next meeting of the
Parents' Bereavement Support Group
will be held on:

Thursday 15th March
7:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Seminar Room 2, 4th Floor
Front Entry Building
Royal Children's Hospital

Our guest for the evening in March will be Ms Margaret Haywood, Social Worker from Banksia Palliative Care Unit. Drawing on her work over many years of supporting those who are grieving, Marg will explore the topic:

***Some Times Together, Some Times Apart:
Relationships and Responses when a Family Grieves.***

The newsletter is always a team effort. Thank you to Ms Dayle Barrett-Harry and Ms Anita D'Eltesta (TCF), the parents of the Parents' Bereavement Support Group, Carol Quayle, Jane Miller (Chief Social Worker), and to our able, dedicated Administration Team Aleisha Desmond, Carly Burnett and Rebecca Welsh for their work with the creation of the newsletter.



Jane Sullivan
Author & Editor