

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME



Social Work Department
Royal Children's Hospital

OCTOBER 2006 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the October newsletter of the Family Bereavement Support Programme. Through reading the newsletter and being a part of the groups we hope you find an opportunity for reflection, support and connections with others to help sustain you as you grieve for your child.

A SMALL RESPITE FROM GRIEF: Connecting with inner resources to find ways to nurture the grieving self

We warmly welcomed parents to the October group. Most of the parents who came together on this third Thursday night were coming to the group for the first time. For some parents it was also the first time they had visited the Hospital since their child's death, and so the significance of these experiences was particularly acknowledged.

The group is a safe and respectful time where each person's unique experiences are recognized and valued. In the group parents are invited to share however much of their story, and their child they feel able and together to explore ways of living with loss. Parents are encouraged to come to the groups whenever they feel it would be helpful to them.

Carol and Jane are available to meet with parents between groups if there is something they would want to talk about outside the group setting. Parents who read the newsletter but do not come to the groups are also most welcome to call Carol and Jane. They can be reached through the Social Work Department on 9345 6111. Through the evening Jane takes notes without names to help create the newsletter. The newsletter is an important way of sharing resources and experiences.

As the October group was a little different *in style* from most other of the monthly groups, we thought it may be good to talk a little of how this session came about.

Throughout the year in the P.B.S groups we hope that we can provide parents with a range of ideas and resources that may be supportive to them as they grieve for their child. Grief, as parents know only too well from their experiences, has many dimensions – physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social even vocational and financial. Grief brings many questions, worries and stresses. Grieving can be an exhausting process which often puts people *out of emotional and physical balance*. Tonight's group aimed at offering parents *a small sample of techniques or activities* which may be useful in buffering the impact of grieving.

To help the group *think about* and *try out* some ways of nurturing the grieving self we were joined by Ms Janet Etty – Leal. In welcoming Janet we heard how she has a professional background in education and runs her own consultancy "Meditation Capsules". This name is intended to reflect the possibility of small, achievable ways to counteract stresses and restore the self. "Meditation Capsules are ways to give practical effective strategies to people in a variety of life circumstances" Janet said. Janet has used meditation techniques with people who have Huntington's Disease, dementia or are receiving palliative care. She has taken meditation and stress management programmes and workshops into primary school settings and into the business world, conducting seminars with C.E.Os of corporations.

By way of further introduction Janet explained that because of a series of personal life experiences and events over time, she had become aware of the importance and meaning of meditation. Meditation can be a simple way to gain some respite from the daily reality of grief. For some parents meditation may offer a way to help them restore some balance, replenish themselves and keep going. Through the evening Janet observed that there are many “misconceptions and myths about meditation” and what it means. She said sometimes the community may view meditation as something for “monks and vegetarians”. Much of her work has been to “break down some of the barriers related to meditation”. While meditation is a feature of some particular religions, at its heart it’s about “kindness to yourself”- a very important disposition to have.

Janet has provided us with a reading list for those who wish to find out more about the history, theory and practice of meditation. She commented that she recommends “the thinnest books as this fits much more with peoples’ reality”. This may be especially relevant for people who are bereaved as they often say how their concentration and attention span has been lessened by their grief. Janet recommended Thich Nhatanh’s work called *Touching Peace* as a good introduction as well as Bob Sharples’ *Calming the Mind*. In her time with the group Janet was to emphasize that she was “bringing suggestions not answers to the group. No one is a better expert than you about you” she reflected.

Janet said that she hoped the evening would be a time for parents to “tune into your needs and to experiences small moments of meditation”. Janet told the group that although she had brought a “*lesson plan for the evening*” (a souvenir of her teaching days) she really wanted parents “to use the time in ways you feel helpful”.

Early in the evening Janet drew our attention to a lectern that she had brought with her. It was a beautiful butterfly which came from and impoverished village in Africa and had been made out of junk. Intended to be used as a garden stake, Janet includes it in her work because “it’s beautiful” and evokes “feelings of inspiration”. “The butterfly” Janet continued is also “a symbol of transformation” and it is important to be able to “dip in to transformative feelings”.

In conversation with the group, Janet would liken the parents’ experience to being “*a tsunami of life*”. A child’s death is a “huge challenge” for those who love them. Given their loss Janet, observed, the significance for parents of finding “inspiration for the spirit”. Janet suggested to the parents that with the pain they had from the death of their child “you need

a friend”. As she spoke these words she touched her heart. Through the group’s time together, Janet drew on the analogy of balancing on a surfboard to illustrate the process of grieving. “You need to keep moving and not standing still” she reflected. Several parents in the group were surfers or skaters and so could particularly relate to this analogy. “Navigating the intense challenges of grief requires all our resources to regain balance and stay afloat”. There is “a yin and yang of hardship you need to keep moving and using your senses...to not to fall, to stay up”, Janet observed.

“In our society” Janet continued “intellect is seen as a way of solving problems...we are thought of as thinking beings”. Janet then asked people to consider the human intellect and how it can be used as an inner resource. For example as Janet hypothesized when faced with a significant life event people may talk about what’s happening and through talking work out how to respond. Or as a father suggested they may use “**past experiences**” to problem solve. To this a mother commented that “**thinking puts it out there... it’s not feeling it’s at arm’s length** Another mother added that “**we rationalize**”, while another said “**we problem solve without solving the problem**”.

Other options for responding to life issues, Janet proposed, may be that “as thinking beings we might theorize, analyze and compare”. As well as “thinking beings” Janet observed we are “sensing beings”. Although the senses, Janet explained, are often “diminished in our work and busy lives”. However, through the senses during intense personal experiences can come comfort. With the group Janet noted what senses we as humans, possess. Human senses include sight, smell, taste, hearing, and intuition. Calling on the senses can help to deal with the “waves of grief” Janet observed. For example, “things that please the senses”, Janet said “lift your spirit, they can offer a great deal”.

Janet commented during the group that in the *Power of Now*, Eckhardt Tolle says “your outer journey may contain a million steps but the inner journey has only one step you’re taking right now”. “What can you do now, today, this week, this month to keep you going? Throughout her time with the group Janet encouraged parents to think about the steps that they could use that are “manageable, doable” and offer “hope and healing”. She suggested that meditation may be one of these *self supporting, caring steps*. Meditation can happen with the eyes open or walking. It’s something that’s “little and doable with no side effects” Janet remarked. You have heaps within you, you have incredible courage, stamina and resourcefulness”. These are what Kevin Bailey has called, Janet said, “*neck down components*”. They come from the heart rather than the head.

These, Janet noted, included the parent's "courage to get up everyday and keep going, compassion and their commitment".

As mentioned earlier a profound life experience such as the death of a loved one, brings with it its own stresses and challenges. Parents who are bereaved often experience a number of unwelcome and unfamiliar stresses. Janet drew the group's attention to the fact that that the *word stressed spelt backwards is desserts*. She went on to say that when people are stressed they often resort to *treats* to support themselves. The group looked at some of the *c words* associated with treats- chocolate, champagne, coffee, cakes, chips, candy, cookies, chardonnay and cigarettes. There was also as Janet pointed the Chadstone (retail therapy) which then led to thinking about *credit card* which in term can generate its own stress! All these are responses and stress breakers outside the self.

Within the body, Janet reflected, however, there can be "opportunities for comfort and for strength". There are ways to access these personal inner resources Janet had brought along an array of material with her to help explore some of these possibilities. Janet's resources mostly come from large supermarkets, discount and \$2 shops. (We hope we can capture with words some of what was tried in the group. This may take some imagination. If trying anything out at home please be careful and don't physically push or hurt yourself)

Before sampling various *techniques* Janet described how when people are encountering intense emotional issues "they often curve over, the body becomes defensive, protective of itself... there's less space for internal organs...they're all *squashed up*...muscles physically contract become tight,...tension can be held in the muscles. Under stress muscles contract and may go into spasm....it can be painful" for people.

Janet then showed the group a foam cylinder, the swimming pool spaghetti and demonstrated how it can be used as a lumbar roll to release muscular tension. The piece of pool spaghetti can be placed downwards from just below the neck to the base of the spine and positioned between the person and a wall coupled with gentle swaying and moving, the cylinder can be helpful to release stress and tension. A beach towel rolled into a cylinder and held by rubber bands can be used to make an effective device. The lumbar roll be very helpful for parents who are experiencing physical pain or feel exhausted. It can be placed under the back for a "good night's sleep".

Janet had brought with her a large collection of balls. There were large dimpled balls and smaller ones. Placing a ball at the lower part of the back against the

wall, leaning with the legs slightly apart and roll back with the ball around up and down the spine towards the shoulders. This can be done while sitting in a chair as we were to discover! Much tension, which many parents in the group had found, was held around the shoulders and this exercise can reduce the tension. Smaller balls can also be used to massage the hand. We often "forget this miraculous body we have". Changing positions or engaging in movement can make a big difference in how we feel. Janet remarked and how if treated with care the body can help to nurture us".

Amongst her resources Janet had with her some Chinese massage balls and explained how points of the external body, such as parts of the hand relate to internal organs. For example the nerve endings in the fingers *connect* with the brain. "Their chimes are calming, they feel cool, ... rolling balls can be very calming". Janet says a set by the bed can be very relaxing.

During the evening Janet commented how slowing breathing down can lessen the rate of heartbeat and reduce blood pressure. This makes for a healthier body. Under stress breathing can become faster and or shallower. Our breathing needs to be attended to and no equipment is needed. It can be very simple for example taking deeper slower breaths. Breathing can also help to oxygenate the body which has a number of good effects such as feeling less tired and more clearheaded. A simple mantra is breathe in on *let* and out on *go*.

Once more Janet referred to the importance of the senses in grief. She said having such things around you "can lift your senses". "Music", Janet observed, can be particularly "good for the spirit". One instrument playing can be "simple and clearing... Music is calming". The choice is very personal. Some music we agreed can raise the blood pressure!



Central to Janet's work are the concepts of awareness and being in the present. She recounted a story about the Buddha. *When asked Are you a prophet? Buddha said no. At being asked are you an angel, he said no. And finally What are you ? I'm awake.*

Being in the present can be particularly challenging for parents who are grieving. For those who grieve the present is often lonely and painful. As Janet said the past may be full of *if onlys* and the *future what ifs*. "Both states", she remarked, "can be stressful". In our community we often push out "the present focus" Janet reflected. She shared with parents this quotation-"Yesterday's history, tomorrow's mystery,

today's a gift that's why it's called the present". Later a mother would ask **"is it always good to be in the present?"** She was finding that well intentioned friends were keeping her busy. Whereas her feeling was she wanted to spend some time in the past and with her memories. **"I want to be in the past...it's good to be there"**. In response Janet said that "it's not always" (good to be solely present focused) and referred back to the notion of balance. In thinking about the notions of past, present and future another parent said that she had **"anxiety in both the past and the future"**. To this was the comment was added later by another parent **"the present is full of the past, what's happened and what's been lost"**.

As the evening continued, Janet explored some possibilities or suggestions for external expression. These may also be restorative. She gave two current examples of people who are bereaved who have been in the media recently and the activities they have undertaken. One was the artist Wendy Whitely who after the deaths of her former husband and her daughter created a beautiful garden in a space of public land. The other was the actor Billy Crystal who found emotional release in writing following the unexpected deaths of his parents. "When we engage in outward forms of activities such as these there is a timeless experience, a complete absorption in the present moment" Janet reflected. Janet asked parents if they had external means of expression. One parent explained how she was using **"movement and dancing"**. Janet replied that dancing "opens up the body and you have to have a complete focus... a balance or you'd fall". "Gardening, painting, journals, albums, shrines- a project to be completely absorbed in. I'm throwing around some ideas they may not mean anything to you they're suggestions". One of these ideas was a *blessing book*. Janet described this as a journal in which before *you* go to sleep you write in it one thing that lifted the spirits during the day or made you thankful or was special. The blessing book may be kept by the bed.

Janet uses simple and affordable ideas and she gave a list of suggestions which is included in the newsletter. "Easy and cheap ways" that feel good. For example soaking the feet in a nappy bucket while watching the T.V. some oil could be added to have some aromatherapy at the same time. Pebbles in the bucket which the foot could roll over could add to the sensation!

There often needs to be small steps to help "keep living and to regain some sort of equilibrium" Janet commented. To reinforce this message Janet drew on the Chinese proverb: The journey of 1000 miles begins with the first step. Having things around the house "which are tangible, sensing things such as the fragrance of flowers can help people to remember and find solace". She went on to describe how at Ian Gawler's retreats there are dishes of *words* on paper on each table. They form a "lucky dip, a thought for

the day". "Silly little reminders" she said "can help to raise a smile or a laugh". With the process of laughing there is oxygenation a sort of an internal smile. This can be replenishing. It takes more muscles and energy to frown Janet pointed out.

Janet had brought to the group some miraculous sparkling pens. There were pens to place in across your mouth sideways "to make you smile"...smiling feels good". A parent in the group commented how it was **"hard to find anything humourous"**. She went on to say that she felt **"you need some intellectualizing to get to the senses ...it takes some time your out of touch you are to go through the theory and then say well here I go"**. Janet responded that you need both and that they compliment each other.

A sense of humour, Janet thought, should also be added to the list of sense made earlier by the group. Hugh Grant the British actor from reviewing his experiences through his mother's illness and dying was quoted by Janet as saying "sad doesn't always have to mean solemn". "Cherishing the funny memories" of the child who died has its place.

In this context with tongue in cheek Janet shared with the group a new psychological condition called deferred happiness syndrome. The symptoms of which are *When I retire I'll, when I'm older I'll, when I have more time, maybe I'll.....but the time for happiness is now*. Happiness needs "to be grabbed where and when it can".

In his book *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness and Peace*, author Jack Kornfield explores how people need to be kind to themselves, to nurture themselves. Janet emphasized how this is particularly important for parents who are grieving. She encouraged parents to think of themselves as being a guardian angel to themselves. The guardian angel helps to **"navigate through the day"**. Janet offered parents a feather as a reminder a "jolt to the memory". She said **"angels fly because they take themselves lightly"**.



Janet reminded parents that it was “important for them to feel the ways that are right for you”. Janet once more encouraged parents to “trust your intuition” As Janet was to say “I don’t know more than you do about you. There is no one answer but there are styles of learning for each person”. Continuing on from this she wondered whether well intentioned people had said to parents – *you ought you should, you must*. “Everyone has opinions and judgments” Janet summarised “but when you’re dealing with life events it is important to be authentic and appropriate” (to yourself).

During the group Janet guided parents through a total body meditation. It can be a way to scan where tension is held and then release it. After this one parent reflected “**it’s initially harder to do but as we went on it got easier to be still**”. One member of the group commented that she appreciated “**the physicality of the body ...there’s the real physicality of grief, I feel the pain in my chest straight through to my back ...I’m stuck with the feelings... tied up with tension ...a heavy feeling in my legs and arms**”. Janet reflected that emotional and physical pain are just as great and said Jack Kornfield has a chapter on grief in his book. Janet explained that “it’s natural to avoid pain but this can lead to building it up”.

A group member asked Janet how much time should meditation take each day. Janet explained that she was “not prescriptive” as some who teach meditation may be. But said that she thought that it could be “ a few minutes each day ...ideally twice a day... the important thing is to commit yourself daily to the practice.

She has concluded that often *what you put into something is what you get out*. Daily practice means it becomes “embedded”. Meditation, Janet believes, does “get easier”. She *advised* parents to find a certain chair or room that they felt comfortable and safe in or music they enjoyed.

Again Janet encouraged parents to use their inner intuition to find ways of living with their loss. Herman Hess, Janet noted says “within you there is a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself”. From her personal and professional experiences, through the use of meditation, Janet has found how “being face to face to with feelings you can gain some feeling of resolution and acceptance in a beautiful way. It is a labour of love not a quick fix it’s a long term solution which goes with you”.

As we moved towards the end of this part of the evening and before supper, a group member asked whether Janet would use meditation with brothers and sisters who are bereaved. Janet replied that she would certainly do this and recounted some of her experiences in working with primary schools.

She has seen children have engaged with the creativity and imagination of the processes. It seems easy and natural to them

Janet concluded that in the midst of grief parents need “an ally, this ally can be self awareness and can be supported through meditative ways”.

We are very appreciative of the care Janet took with tonight’s presentation and for letting us glimpse and try some the possibilities for comfort and support that can be gained through using “capsules of meditation”. For those who were able to stay there was catching up, conversation and supper.

For Janet’s resources please see page 7.

Dear Parents,

Thank-you to those who contacted me with suggestions for a way of marking the importance of this Hospital to some families whose child spent some of their life here. It is some years before the Hospital is to be demolished so we will continue to think about this and ask for your involvement in a focus group closer to the time.

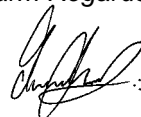
On 17th October, the chaplains and social workers involved in planning and conducting the Annual Memorial Service this year received a Team Award at the Hospital’s Annual General Meeting. This was a great honour and a reflection of the Hospital’s commitment to the continued support of families who have experienced the death of their child. A number of members of the executive who attended this year’s Memorial Service commented on how moved they were by the experience and referred to in particular the precious displays parents had placed on the memory tables.

The award was presented by the Executive Director for Clinical Support Services, Mr John Stanway who commented on the importance of our continuing care and connection with families whose child has died. The chaplains and social workers dedicated this award to the children and their families.

In the next month we will be running a new training day for nursing staff which will include a workshop with our clinical ethicist, a presentation from a funeral director and another from the Hospital’s pain team and a workshop on cultural diversity in palliative care.

Thanks again for your thoughts and feedback.

Warm Regards



Maree O’Toole
Bereavement Services Coordinator
9345 6111





***DAILY ACTS OF SELF-CARE AND AWARENESS
.....From head to toe***

- *Be aware of your self-talk and thought process. You are the master of yourself*
- *Give your eyes opportunities to look at pleasing, inspiring sights*
- *Reduce 'white noise' and replace it with soothing music or silence*
- *Check in with your breath.....everything depends on it*
- *Notice what enters (water & food) and leaves your mouth (remember the power of your words)*
- *Raise your shoulders and roll them back with a sigh*
- *Connect regularly with your spine and stretch, flex and bend to keep it pliable*
- *Deepen your breath to your abdominal muscles throughout the day*
- *Stretch your fingers, roll your wrists and apply gentle reflexology to your hands*
- *Use a massage ball to release your lower back....in the chair, car or wherever you are*
- *Choose the stairs for a good leg/cardiovascular workout*
- *Reward yourself at day's end with a soothing foot soak*
- *Regularly scan your mind through your body to detect and release excess tension*

BOOK LIST

- *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness and Peace, Jack Kornfield (I think this one has the most to offer grieving people)*
- *Practicing the Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle*
- *The Miracle of Mindfulness, and Touching Peace, Thich Nhat Hanh*
- *The Calm Technique, Paul Wilson*
- *Meditation: Pure and Simple, Ian Gawler*
- *Meditation: Calming the Mind, Bob Sharples*

And for some light relief: Ageing Disgracefully: A Grown-up Girl's Guide to Her Best Years, Joan Sauers

FOUND AT THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

A pair of brown, almost half framed glasses were left behind at this years Memorial Service. Please call the Social Work Department if you think they could be yours or a family members - (03) 9345 6111

A Matter of the Heart and Mind: An Exploration of Bereaved Parents' Perceptions of the Autopsy Examination of their Child

Summary of study

In February 2005, parents were invited to contribute their thoughts and experiences to a study about autopsy examination. The study aimed at understanding more about the meaning of a child's autopsy examination for their parents, the needs parents may have in relation to their child's examination and how health professionals may support parents whose child has had an autopsy examination. It was hoped that the study's findings may contribute to the ways in which the Hospital responds to parents. While there are many studies about autopsy examination, there are few that explore parents' experiences and views. There are even fewer that draw on the reflections of parents of children of all ages- from babies to adolescents and children who have died from a range of causes. The medical literature mostly suggests that an autopsy examination is helpful for the family of the person who has died.

The study was conducted by Jane Sullivan, Senior Social Worker and Co-ordinator Family Bereavement Support Programme Royal Children's Hospital, with the approval of Ethics in Human Research Committees of the Hospital and The University of Melbourne.

To participate in the study parents whose child had an autopsy examination and who had died at least three months earlier were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire or if they preferred to complete the questionnaire by telephone or in an interview. There was also an opportunity for parents not to complete the questionnaire but to make anonymous comments.

Sixty-six parents contributed to the study. They included 50 mothers and three fathers whose child had an autopsy examination, 11 parents whose child did not have an autopsy completed or partially completed the questionnaire and made comments and 2 parents who made comments only. A large amount of important qualitative and quantitative material came from the parents.

The generosity of spirit and good will of the parents who participated in the study is acknowledged and is greatly appreciated. The time, care and thoughtfulness of response that they gave to the study are valued. Their responses will add to our understanding of the impact of a child's death and help to inform practices in various ways.

To broadly summarize the findings of the study:

Parents' responses related to several significant matters. These included the nature of their child's death, the support and care they received at the time their child died, beliefs about death and the care of the body in death, their experiences of grief, perceptions of the autopsy procedure, media portrayal of autopsy examination, organ retention and communication with health professionals. This is very valuable knowledge for Hospital staff and health professionals.

Parents in this study were grieving intensely for their child. For most parents, their child's autopsy examination is a significant and sensitive matter. Consequently reflection on their child's autopsy examination brought an array of recollections, thoughts and emotions. Parents' perceptions of their child's examination varied in intensity and meaning.

The subject of autopsy for the majority of parents had been raised very close in time to the child's death. This was often a time of shock and confusion. Mention was made of how difficult it can be to make decisions at such a time. The discussion was commonly thought of as sad yet informative. For several parents it seemed their spiritual beliefs shaped their decision to consent to the autopsy. Some parents also noted that the decision had not been theirs to make as a coronial autopsy was required.

A critical and not unexpected learning from the study is that parents remain concerned for the wellbeing of their child beyond their death. They want to be told what is happening to their child and why and to be reassured their child is carefully looked after. All parents wanted to know the outcomes of the examination. How often parents thought about their child's autopsy varied. Mostly parents thought about the examination a few times a year or once a year. More than half the parents thought less frequently about the examination as time passed.

Parents hold a range of views about the autopsy examination report. Parents understood that as a scientific document, the report uses particular language and wording. However, a plain language summary or report also would be useful for parents. It was also noted how later there are few people with whom parents can talk about their child's examination. Several parents explained that they made a deliberate decision not to think about the physical processes involved in the examination as this caused them distress. Health professionals need to be respectful sensitive and honest towards parents when talking about any aspect of the autopsy process.

Parents expressed a range of views about whether their child's autopsy examination was helpful to them in their grief. Often parental view was evenly divided over questions of the positive consequences that had come from their child's examination. A sense of uncertainty was also expressed by numbers of parents when responding to the questions about the benefits of their child's autopsy to them as they grieve. Very few parents, however said they regretted now that their child had had an autopsy examination.

Generally helpfulness of a child's autopsy examination seems to relate to the capacity of the autopsy to answer *why a child died, contribute to medical knowledge and to helping others*. Altruism was a strong theme throughout the parents' responses.

Overall the benefit of their child's examination for parents seems to relate to providing information rather than being a means of emotional support for them. However, of particular relevance is that some parents noted that the information gained from an autopsy examination or the examination itself may not always bring comfort or reassurance to parents. Regardless of the nature of the information, parents supported the importance of honesty in communications. While several families noted that findings from the autopsy had health implications for other family members which they could attend to and the information was of assistance for future pregnancies. Although for the majority of parents in this study planning for the future was not assisted through the results of the examination.

Parents' perceptions of their child's autopsy examination are very personal, complex and multi dimensional. In essence a child's autopsy examination is a matter of the heart and mind of their parent.

The detailed material that the parents so generously contributed will be used in a variety of ways to help inform staff and to improve the care offered to families who are grieving.

Please call Jane Sullivan (9345 6111) if you would want to talk about the study.

Jane Sullivan
Senior Social Worker / Coordinator Family Bereavement Support Programme

Straight from the Heart

We thank Mr. & Mrs. Phillip and Carol Gibbons, Luke's parents, for sharing with us this inspirational piece written by Rupert McCall. Dedicated to those who live with Cystic Fibrosis, the poem speaks of the daily tribulations this condition brings and pays tribute to the strength and hope which marks their lives.

*We are honoured to include 'The Real Heroes' in the newsletter,
in memory of Luke William Gibbons 30/01/1983 - 31/01/1999*

The Real Heroes

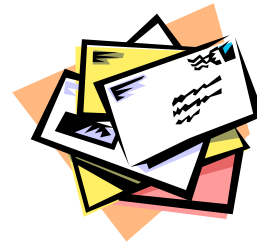
**The world revolves once again. another day has passed.
Another week. another month. the year is going fast.
We rush through busy schedules in pursuit of some objective?
For somewhere in the universe. a child cries in despair.
His lungs are trying hard to find another breath of air.
The sun is very bright outside. as other children play.
But she cannot stop her coughing. so inside is where she'll stay.
For another day of tablets that her body needs to eat.
Another day of physio to keep him on his feet.
The mailman has a letter which is very hard to face.
Another brave companion has been taken from the race.
Life is hard to understand when news of this type calls.
But he knows he must accept it. as a tear of courage falls.
She knows each day is precious. he knows what Cf means.
They know that they were born with a different pair of genes.
But you won't hear them complaining of their trouble and
their strife.
As they battle hard to make the most of every day in life.
And you only have to feel the warmth that's shining in their
smiles.
To know their bravery is measured not in inches. but in miles.
Doctors search for cures and so the seeds of hope are planted.**



Contributions such as poems, letters, songs, quotations from parents, grandparents and friends are most welcome in the Newsletters. Share your thoughts, experiences, perceptions 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



Families want to hear from other families!

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

Thursday 16th November
7:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Seminar Room 2, 4th Floor
Front Entry Building
Royal Children's Hospital

Our guest for the evening will be Mr. Garrett O'Dowd, Bereavement Counsellor at Mercy Western Grief Services. Garrett will explore with the group the topic:

“The Ripples of Grief: the impact of grief on parents and their relationships”.

Please come and be part of the November group

The newsletter is always a team effort. Thank you to the parents of the Parents' Bereavement Support Group, Janet ETTY-Leal, Carol Quayle, Jane Miller (Chief Social Worker), and to our able, dedicated Administration Team: Aleisha Desmond, Carly Burnett and Rebecca Welsh for their enormous assistance with the creation of the newsletter.



Jane Sullivan
Author & Editor