

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Social Work Department

NEWSLETTER JULY 2020



To all those parents who have attended or were planning to attend the RCH Parent Bereavement Group, those who read our newsletters or who have been recently bereaved:

We're sorry that the group has had to be temporarily suspended at this time due to the pressing need for social distancing measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. We extend our thoughts and best wishes to you at this difficult time which for some of you may be exacerbating the grief you are already feeling. Our newsletter usually constitutes a summary of the discussion in the monthly group. However given the current circumstances, we are using this edition to make contact as well as provide some ideas about how you might care for yourselves and your loved ones in this more than usually uncertain and highly stressful environment.

GRIEF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

In these difficult times we are very aware that we have been unable to continue to provide our usual bereavement support program. The group program has been suspended and our usual newsletter is therefore not being produced. However we have been keeping you all in mind and carefully monitoring the situation to see what may be possible going forward. We have considered electronic options but this poses various challenges and to date we have not been able to find a suitable option for this format.

Grief is in itself a very difficult time, so grief in difficult societal times may be even more challenging. We would be interested to hear about how this pandemic has been impacting on you, your family and your experience of grief. If you are happy to send us something about your experiences we would like to publish these stories, anecdotes, poems or reflections in a special newsletter. It may be that your usual supports are now caught up in their own anxiety about COVID and are unable to provide the support and empathy they usually do, it may be that you feel the world is so focused on COVID that how difficult it can be living with ongoing grief gets forgotten. Perhaps if you are newly bereaved you have been having trouble accessing support services. Anyone who has had the challenge of organising a funeral through these times would have had a very different experience to

usual funeral planning and ritual. However it may also be that you now have permission to step back and avoid social gatherings and can spend time alone or with those closest to you to be able to find space for yourself and the memory of your child. Please email your stories to: Bereavement.Services@rch.org.au

If you find you are struggling at present please remember there are various places you can reach out to. Below are some suggestions published in the last letter we sent which I will include again here (see below). I have added a few extra websites you may like to look at. You can also call and ask to speak to Robyn or Helen if you are finding you cannot access support and need to talk. To get in touch please call RCH allied health on 03 9345 6111 and ask for Helen Stewart or Robyn Clark.

We will keep in touch and let you know as soon as we are able to resume the groups, with details of any changes to format and conditions around group attendance that may be required for physical distancing/infection control purposes.



The Annual Memorial Service:

Due to the Australian COVID19 response this year's Annual Memorial Service planned for August has been postponed.

The planning committee will advise when the Memorial Service will be able to go ahead once we have the appropriate information and it is safe to do so.

Over the coming months we hope to be able to bring updates to keep you informed of any changes that impact our planning so keep an eye out for any updates in future newsletters.

We hope that you are staying safe and negotiating the changed circumstances that the current restrictions place upon us all. Blessings—Paul Hammat and the RCH Annual Memorial Service Planning Committee

We look forward to receiving your thoughts/writings so that we can share these with other bereaved parents and we hope we can recommence groups in the not too distant future.

Helen Stewart and Robyn Clark

Australian Centre for Grief and bereavement:

https://www.grief.org.au/ACGB/Bereavement_Support/MyGrief/ACGB/Bereavement_Support/MyGrief.aspx?hkey=aa58a004-82f0-408e-8ce5-7f0d0624df87b

What's Your Grief website:

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/>

Modern Loss:

<https://modernloss.com/tag/child-loss/>

Beyond Blue

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/grief-and-loss>

Websites to help during COVID

Mindfulness exercises:

<https://mindfulnessexercisecom/free-mindfulness-worksheets/>

Kids Health information sheets:

https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Supporting_children_and_young_people_to_cope_with_the_coronavirus_COVID-19_pandemic/?fbclid=IwAR1Cotwc9upm_HAE-gXFpDz0O1lm1ZJSMVYrNMCsIW0tBbp5yTfiKqvX5Q

Help for teenagers:

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Our letter box is Waiting!



Contributions such as responses and reflections on the groups' themes, poems, letters, songs, reviews of books that you may have found helpful, quotations from parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters and friends, feedback about this newsletter are most welcome. Share your thoughts, experiences, questions with others who are bereaved. Please forward them to:

Family Bereavement Support Programme
Social Work Department
Royal Children's Hospital
50 Flemington Road
PARKVILLE VIC 3052
Phone: 03 9345 6111
Or email: Bereavement.Services@rch.org.au

The next meeting of the
Family Bereavement Support Evening Group

Will be advised by email



Social Work Department, RCH

