

## Bereavement Support Service

Newsletter Nov 2011

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the first Bereavement Support Service Newsletter, providing information about services for bereaved families. I hope that this newsletter will also be a way for you to share your experiences of loss, coping strategies and significant events. This newsletter will be distributed three times a year.

It is my role to organise the support groups and information sessions held throughout the year and to put this newsletter together. Please email me any feedback or contributions you might have [natashas@chw.edu.au](mailto:natashas@chw.edu.au) or phone me on (02) 9845 2641.

So far this year, we have offered a number of opportunities for bereaved families to connect with each other. We have had two information sessions for newly bereaved families who received information on normal grief reactions and had the opportunity to be part of two deeply personal and moving discussions led by our guest speakers, Karen and Fiona. Karen and Fiona are both bereaved parents who gave us a great insight into some of the experiences they and their families had in the immediate months after their



children died. There was some time at the end for families to speak with each other informally and this time will be increased at the next session.

The Telephone Support Group has just wrapped up, involving families from regional NSW. Families from rural areas have been given first priority but the group is also open to all families who have other difficulties in attending face-to-face sessions. Please contact me if you would like more information.

The Hospital's Service of Remembrance was held on Saturday 8 October. This was an important day

of reflection for both families and staff. Parents and siblings groups were held in the morning and the service in the afternoon. I hope that families had the opportunity to be involved in this significant event.

**Natasha Samy**  
**Bereavement Coordinator**  
**Pain and Palliative Care Team**



## Upcoming events

The four-week support groups are still being offered throughout the year. The next sessions will be held on Friday mornings in November. The groups are held in community rooms in Westmead, away from the Hospital.

In the new year we will be offering support groups for siblings, grandparents and parents. We hope to offer information sessions online as well, to enable families who can't come to the hospital to take part in this process.

## What is Grief?

Grief means different things for different people. It can be different for parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings or carers. Feelings and grief reactions will also differ within the friendship group, the school or church community. Grief is also experienced differently by men and women. It is important to know that many grief reactions are normal. Some are listed below:

- Appetite disturbance
- Helplessness
- Dreaming of your child
- Shock
- Confusion
- Chest tightness
- Muscle weakness
- Sleep disturbance
- Relief
- Yearning

(McKissock, 1995)

While these feelings are normal, sometimes they can be difficult to cope with. At this time it may be useful to become involved with some of the services available through the Palliative Care Bereavement Support Service.

## This can include:

**Parent Groups** – Face-to-face groups are held away from the Hospital for bereaved parents, providing a time for parents to share their feelings about the death of their child and explore ways of coping together. Topics of discussion include normal grief, supporting siblings and extended family and coping with birthdays and anniversaries. Groups are held regularly throughout the year and are facilitated by social workers.

**Telephone Support Groups** – These groups have similar content as the face-to-face group, but are held over the telephone so that families from rural or remote areas can participate.

**Siblings Group** – Groups for brothers and sisters of children who have died are held. Children are given an opportunity to share their experiences of loss and grief, as well as realise that they are not alone in their grief. Groups are held throughout the year.

Support groups can also be provided for grandparents or other carers, dependent upon interest. To register,

**Grief Counselling** – Counselling can be provided either face-to-face or via phone or email through the Bereavement Coordinator, Ward Social Worker or a referral can be provided for counselling closer to home.

Contributing to the Bereavement Newsletter – Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, whether it be a story or poem you have written or an artwork created by you or your child.

## Useful Websites

These websites contain information about grief and some provide an outlet to express your grief or find grief counselling in your area.

[www.sands.org.au](http://www.sands.org.au)

[www.chw.edu.au/directory/painman](http://www.chw.edu.au/directory/painman)

[www.sidsandkids.org.au](http://www.sidsandkids.org.au)

[www.bereavementcare.com.au](http://www.bereavementcare.com.au)

[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)

[www.childhoodgrief.com.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.com.au)

Have you found any other websites to be helpful? Please email through your suggestions.

Thank you for taking the time to look through this newsletter. If you have any questions or suggestions for future editions, please contact Natasha Samy via phone (02) 9845 2641 or email [natashas@chw.edu.au](mailto:natashas@chw.edu.au)

This newsletter is sent out to the families of children who have died while in the care of The Children's Hospital at Westmead. If you would like to stop receiving the newsletter, please contact Natasha on 9845 2617 or [natashas@chw.edu.au](mailto:natashas@chw.edu.au)

**the children's hospital** at Westmead

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