

Healing With Art

By Joni Cutshaw, RN, Open Arms
Bereavement Coordinator

Chaya sent me an email and wrote "I will be the first to admit, I am no Van Gogh but I found painting to be a great resource for releasing energy, whether it is good or bad energy." How freeing, now she can just enjoy the beautiful paintings she has created. How moving to share her emotion through art. Families at support group were inspired. I also forwarded her email to help inspire other families who could not be at support group. I was inspired to find out more about healing through art. The first step is to let go of the "I have to be Van Gogh to paint or Robert Frost to write poetry" mind set. No rules and no limits are the guidelines.

The second step is to find a quiet private uninterrupted place to work and gather the necessary supplies. Some people find lighting candles, burning incense or playing music with no words inspiring. If painting or sketching is the right media for you try closing your eyes and clearing your mind to help you get started. Pick a topic, like anger, and picture the colors and shapes in your mind's eye. Open your eyes, and create through your grief. When you are done, sign the work and title it on the back. You may also want to include some thoughts about your work. Finding uninterrupted time may be hard to manage if you have other children. They could be included, or could work on a project of their own.

Remember, healing comes through the doing and the expressing of the grief not necessarily in the finished project.

EMOTIONS THAT MIGHT INSPIRE:

Fear • Despair • Guilt
Anger • Loneliness • Pain
Sadness • Hope • Happy
Memories • Peace • Healing

OTHER AVENUES TO EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

Poetry • Stories • Drawing
Collage • Journaling • Photography
Clay Sculpture • Scrape-booking
Write songs or lyrics
Painting family art projects

Your Precious Name

Dedicated to all our babies, forever loved. By Jane Heustis, Abby and Becky's Mom, June 17, 2009

What is in a name? Surely it is more than letters put together to define you. Surely, it is something special, a unique and lasting imprint that marks your place on earth.

Your name was picked intentionally for you, chosen with love and filled with anticipation of who you were going to be. We did not pick that name because of the strength of the one who had it before you or because we have always liked that name. No, we knew you were meant to be called by that name. Your name was perfectly picked, just for you.

When I hear your name spoken, my heart jumps a beat. Its sound tugs at my grieving heart, yet, in some odd way, it is still comforting. Your name tells me you were real, your name tells me you were important enough not to be forgotten.

How could something so carefully chosen, so dear, so precious, be taboo? Somehow in all the mess of grief, saying your name aloud got mixed with the 'better-not-tos.' Do they think the mention of you will bring the grief rushing back? I guess they don't know that I think about you everyday. They don't understand the magnitude of my love for you: They don't know I will never forget.

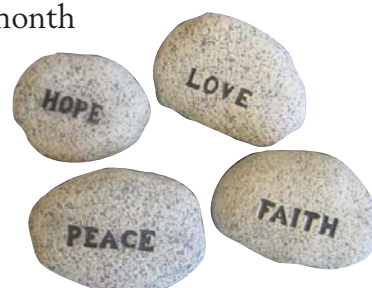
So I will quietly sing your name to my heart, embedding it in the memory of each cell. Your precious name will continue to heal the hurt. Your precious name will be forever.

Indianapolis Pregnancy Loss Support Groups

Reservations are not required. There is no fee.

Community Health Network, North Campus
7250 Clearvista Parkway
Professional Building Conference Room A
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
3rd Thursday of every month
Contact: Joni Cutshaw at (317) 621-5275

St. Vincent Hospital, North West Campus
New Hope, 8450 N. Payne Road
7:00 to 10:00 p.m.
First Thursday of every month
Contact: Sharon Mason
or Cathy Carroll
at (317) 415-7494



St. Francis Hospital, South Campus
3145 E. Thomson Road
Carson Square Community Relations Room
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Second Tuesday of every month
Contact: Marcia Jenkins at (317) 865-5199

Heart Prints Support Group

An invitation has been extended to all bereaved parents to join a bereavement support group called "Heart Prints" at Holy Spirit at Geist Church. The group meets every last Tuesday of every month at 7pm. For more information, please call Kristy at (317) 823-5603 or Sandy at (317) 570-2397.

Maternity Services/Open Arms
7150 Clearvista Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46256

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FALL 2009

Open Arms

Pregnancy Loss Support Newsletter

Experiencing Grief With Art

By Chaya Hathaway, Mother of Braylon and Myles

After the death of my identical twin sons, Braylon and Myles, on January 22, 2009, my husband encouraged me to pick up a new hobby. I decided to try painting and off to the craft store we went to pick up the essentials for a "beginner painter." I had not painted since elementary school but I was willing to try it. I am a very private person but painting provides an outlet for my emotions and feelings that I might not express verbally. Then, I am able to share them with my husband, family and friends and that gives them a better understanding of me and how I am feeling.

Tears was my first painting. Every color represents a different emotion and the two yellow dots inside each tear represent my sons because every tear I cry is for them. In the spring, everything around was in full bloom, growing and living despite the fact that I felt so empty. Nature and everyone else started to go on with their normal routines while I felt like I was in a black hole. That is how *Spring Emerges Through The Darkness* was created. I painted *Easter Eggs* because that is something that I was looking forward to doing with my sons every year. *I Held You Every Second Of Your Life* is exactly how I feel when I think of my sons and their brief life. That was the special bond that I, as their mother, had with my sons.

I was surprised at how good I felt after completing a painting. The heaviness of the emotion I was feeling seemed to be lighter. I don't think it matters what your painting looks

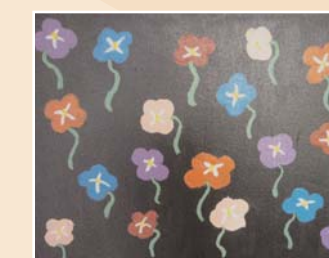
like as long as you benefited by creating it. It's one thing that I have found that I can do without worrying about what someone is going to think or say. It's me, expressing any and every emotion about my two sons, who I wanted so badly but only got to keep for a short time. My goal is not to make great art but to express myself.



"I Held You
Every Second
Of My Life"



"Tears"



"Spring Emerges
Through The
Darkness"



"Happy Easter Braylon"



"Happy Easter Myles"

When Grandparents Grieve: National Grandparents Day is September 13, 2009

By Joni Cutshaw, RN, Open Arms Bereavement Coordinator

When you have experienced the loss of a grandchild to miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death, your grief may be compounded because you hurt for your adult child as well. You may experience some of the same feelings your son or daughter is expressing. These may include shock, disbelief, anger and sadness. Your son or daughter may not realize you are also grieving, or you may feel you can not let your feelings out because you want to be strong for your family. The loss of a grandchild may resurface feelings from pregnancy losses you may have experienced. You may have feelings of "it should have been me." The death may feel out of order in the life cycle.

You may feel you want to take a major lead in your adult child's activities of daily life. You may avoid potential hard feelings if you have open conversations with them and find out what would be most helpful in their life. Be cautious about moving baby items or putting away nursery items. This can be very hurtful for the parents after the death of their baby.

Many older adults dream about being a grandparent some day. Old toys and children's books may have been put away for that someday grandchild, and now your heart is broken. Feelings may move from sadness and anger, to hopelessness, emptiness, or lack of interest which may make concentrating on life hard. It may help to find someone you trust, and spend time with them talking about your feelings. Journaling, artwork, exercise, and gardening are other great ways to get feelings out.

Your son or daughter will need time and love to work through their grief. You may have a difficult journey ahead of you to walk with your son or daughter. It may feel foreign to you to take pictures and spend time looking at them and other memory items. Many parents have taught the hospital team that this is very helpful. Try to respect your son or daughter's feelings and allow them to talk. Try to participate in rituals and incorporate memorials into your family plans. Your son or daughter

may need to take one or two years maybe longer to work through the grief process. But, if your son or daughter does not seem to be making some progress and is having more good moments than bad after about three months, you may need to suggest they call their doctor.

When other pregnancies come into the family this may be an especially hard time for your son or daughter. Remember to keep room in your heart for the baby who has died. Parents often worry they may forget the baby. You can be a safe haven for them to remember their baby.

Don't forget to take care of yourself so you can be there for your family by eating a well balanced diet, exercising and getting a good night's sleep.

NOTES FROM OPEN ARMS

Community Health Network offers a support group every 3rd Thursday of each month from 7 to 9 pm. You may join us in the Professional Building Conference Room A located at 7250 Clearvista Pkwy. Please contact Joni Cutshaw at (317) 621-5275 with any questions or additional needs.

This newsletter is a support group in print offering resources, articles, stories and poems from caregivers, grief educators, authors and most importantly, from the community. You will find information that has been requested by your peers and information that others would like to share. If you have any questions, comments or news to share, we encourage you to do so. Call us or email us if you no longer want to receive a newsletter. Please contact the editor, Joni Cutshaw at jcutshaw@ecomcommunity.com or (317) 621-5275.

The Sharing Space: Stories of Hope and Inspiration From Our Patients

By Traci Taylor

I woke up on Saturday, June 2, 2001 spotting and cramping at about ten weeks along. I called the doctor on call and was told to take it easy. I went to my son's baseball game and it was getting worse. I called the doctor back and was told to come to the hospital. He did an ultrasound and I had miscarried. He wanted to do a D&C, so I had to stay there for a few hours. Then the nurse asked me about funeral arrangements. I was stunned and I had no idea what to do. We went with the hospital service they do a couple of times a year. I went to a support group once at St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital and at Community Hospital North after my loss. I read a few books to try to understand why I miscarried. Unfortunately, there is no answer.

We waited a few months and I was pregnant with our next child. My pregnancy started out with a weak heartbeat and I was told to take it as easy as I could. I did the test at 18 weeks and was told my child could have Down syndrome and to come in for an amniocentesis. I stressed and asked do I want these results? Should I just have the baby without knowing? After reading more books I decided it was best to know so the hospital could be prepared. Two weeks after the procedure I found out I was having a healthy baby girl who we were naming Paige Renee. I went to my monthly doctor visit on a Friday and we found no heartbeat. I couldn't accept this. The doctor wanted to deliver on that Sunday, February 17, 2002. I called my high risk doctor and she brought me in the same day to do another ultrasound. It was official, I had lost my baby girl at 20 weeks. My family went with me on Saturday to make funeral arrangements. I went to the hospital Sunday morning and delivered Paige. She was too little to get footprints, so the nurses took a picture for me. Volunteers made tiny doll clothes and a blanket for her. The emotions were running rampant within me. I believe I cursed God out for taking

another child from me. I wanted answers where there were none. I cried for a straight week.

I decided to try support groups once more. I ended up with a group of three other couples who lost their children at about the same time frame I did. The nurses were great. We talked about how we were doing; the different steps to grieving, and how there sometimes are no answers. I went to support group for a year. The other three couples were now pregnant again and I was getting upset because I had been trying for six months. I finally had a baby girl, Madison Grace, and I literally drove my doctor insane with my worry until she told me to chill out. Every thing was fine when I heard Madison cry at delivery.

Nothing is as bad as losing a child. I now have Madison, but Baby Taylor and Paige will forever be in my heart. We have traditions such as taking pumpkins at Halloween, basket with bunny and eggs at Easter, Christmas wreath, balloons at birthday time and flowers. My family attends the Christmas service held every year by Community Health Network. Support group definitely helped me through my worst time as well as books. Thank you for letting me share my story.

WATCH A VIDEO
about how nurses help families
through our Open Arms program at
<http://media.ecommunity.com/openarms>

Open Arms Chat *Bulletin Board of news to know*

- **October is National Perinatal Bereavement Month**
- **Walk to Remember October 3rd** - St. Francis Hospital in Beech Grove, 1600 Albany Street at 11:00. Come early to write a message on your balloon or buy a T-shirt if you would like. Some families bring a blanket or a chair to sit on while their baby's name is read.
- **October 18th Miscarriage Burial** - Community Health Network offers a graveside ceremony and burial of ashes for families who have experienced a pregnancy loss prior to 20 weeks and who wish to come together to honor their baby's memory during a communal burial. These services are held at Washington Park East Cemetery. Flanner and Buchanan Funeral Centers donate their services for the cremation, holding of ashes, the gravesite and services for the graveside ceremony. There is no charge for this service. For more information please call 621-5275.
- Please consider coming to at least one Open Arms Support Group to see if it might benefit you. Support Group is on the third Thursday of each month at 7pm.
- You can keep in contact with other families who have experienced a pregnancy loss on our bereavement blog at www.ecommunity.com/openarms
- **Share Your Story** - We are looking for stories or poems that you have created in memory of your baby to print in the newsletter. It is the hope of Open Arms that this newsletter becomes the voice of the community. As a community, we would like to hear of your "safe arrivals." Please contact us with your news so that we can celebrate with you and your new baby. If you have news to share, comments or resources that you have found helpful, please contact Joni at jcutshaw@ecomcommunity.com or at (317) 621-5275
- **Mail Preference Service** - Some companies may be able to learn that a household is beginning to plan a pregnancy. They can send many baby-related materials to the house which can be upsetting if the pregnancy has been lost. To remove yourself from such mailing lists, you can contact the Mail Preference Service.

*To electronically submit a request, go to www.dmaconsumers.org/offmailinglist
Mail requests to: Mail Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association,
PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008.*

Book Review and Online Resources

Mothers in Sympathy and Support - Miss www.missfoundation.org; *Support for the whole family!*

Subsequent Pregnancy After A Loss - SPALS www.spals.com - *A discussion list for persons considering a subsequent pregnancy after a loss*

Compassionate Friends www.compassionatefriends.org
Support for families that have lost a child at any age

Support for Grandparents: Alliance of Grandparents, A Support in Tragedy (AGAST) www.agast.org

Forgotten Tears, a Grandmothers Journey Through Grief by Nina Bennett

Grieving Grandparents by Sherokee Isle and Lori Leininger

Help, Comfort, & Hope After Losing Your Baby in Pregnancy or the First Year by Hannah Lothrop

For those who have lost a baby and the professionals who provide support to them, the book is a valuable resource. Readers can find questions for self-reflection as well as specific suggestions for working through grief. The author, a psychologist and national lecturer on prenatal-bereavement counseling, includes tools to help comfort the bereaved including non-traditional options such as aromatherapy, essential oils and Bach Flower remedies.

Aromatherapy: *Clinical Aromatherapy can be used to promote wellbeing and relieve anxiety, emotional stress, and aid coping with grief through the use of essential oils. If you would like to learn more about our clinical aromatherapy services, please contact Pam Conrad, RN, Clinical Aromatherapist at Wellspring Pharmacy, located in the gallery of Community Hospital North. Pam can be reached at (317) 621-9006.*

Books and resources available online at www.ecommunity.com/openarms.



Community Health Network Foundation is proud to provide financial support for Open Arms. The Foundation is the not-for-profit philanthropic organization of Community Health Network. Proceeds support programs and services that benefit patients, families and employees of the network, while ensuring the exceptional experience. The foundation's philanthropic efforts, scholarship programs and promotion of healthy lifestyles inspire a culture of philanthropy throughout central Indiana. For more information about the foundation, or ways you can get involved, call 317-355-5261 or visit ecomcommunity.org/foundation.



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