

## Just Those Few Weeks

By Susan Erlin

For those few weeks -  
I had you to myself  
And that seems so short of time  
To be changed so profoundly

In those few weeks-  
I came to know you...  
And to love you.  
You came to trust me with your life.  
Oh, what a life I had planned for you!

Just those few weeks -  
When I lost you,  
I lost a lifetime of hopes,  
plans, dreams, and aspirations...  
A slice of my future simply  
vanished overnight

Just those few weeks -  
It wasn't enough time to convince others  
How special and important you were.  
How odd, a truly unique person  
has recently died  
And no one is morning the passing.

Just a mere few weeks -  
And no "normal" person would cry all night  
Over a tiny unfinished baby,  
Or get depressed and withdraw  
day after endless day  
No one would, so why am I?

You were just those few weeks my little one  
You darted in and out of my life too quickly  
But it seems that all the time you needed  
To make my life so much richer  
And give me a glimpse of eternity.



## 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. Call us or email us if you no longer want to receive a newsletter.

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.

Please contact the editor, Joni Cutshaw at [jcutshaw@eCommunity.com](mailto:jcutshaw@eCommunity.com) or (317) 621-5275.

## 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

Community Health Network

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SPRING 2009  
**OpenArms**  
Pregnancy Loss Support Newsletter

## A Poem

By: Shannon Stephenson



*I wrote this just as much for myself as I did for others. It is to remind myself that life will always be happening around me no matter what; so to remind me not to dwell in the past and on all the pain and hurt.*

*The hurt will always be there because it isn't something we can ignore or forget, nor should we.*

*But to allow ourselves to feel the hurt, honor the lost and keep a place for them always. But then, remember the living, and continue to live life, welcoming all the blessings and healings that are out there waiting for us!*

There will always be silent whispers  
Like those upon butterflies wings  
And in our hearts a gentle flutter  
Where sacred memories are kept alive

But alas the dawn brings forth new days  
Where reassurance and hope are waiting  
From under dark clouds our feet must step  
Away from tears that fall like rain

Welcome then the turning tide  
Keep focused on days to come  
As seasons never cease to change  
And butterflies wings will always hum.

NEWSLETTER PHOTOS COURTESY OF JONI CUTSHAW

"A butterfly lights beside us like  
a sunbeam. And for a brief  
moment its glory and  
beauty belong to  
our world. But  
then it  
flies on again,  
and though we wish  
it could have stayed, we  
feel so lucky to have seen it!"

- Author unknown



## I Have Experienced A Pregnancy Loss, What About My Other Children?

By Joni Cutshaw, RN

It may be difficult to think about the grief of your surviving children when your grief is so overwhelming. It seems to be a difficult decision for parents to tell siblings about the loss of a miscarriage, stillborn or newborn death. Experts in the field of grief concerning children agree that there are benefits to sharing the loss with your children. As soon as a child can love they can experience loss. Parents who do not tell their children about the loss may withdrawal from their surviving children to protect them for the loss. Children may interpret this with fear. They may fear they are losing their parent. They may sense that something is very wrong but they don't know what it is. Everyone around them may be whispering about something which may cause confusion.

### How to tell children about a loss

- Be honest and simple
- Phrases like "God needed an angel" or "the baby went to sleep" can cause fear
- Begin with the baby has died
- Answer the questions that are asked in an honest way
- Talking about your feelings and how you may react could be helpful
- Talk with each child separately if possible
- Share: in time the pain will not be so hard

### Children may wonder:

- Did I cause the death  
(because of a negative thought)
- Will this happen to me

Tears are OK. Allowing children to watch their parents grieve will teach them how to grieve their future losses. If feelings are hidden children will learn to hide their feelings. Children may work through their grief with play. They may play out situations that they have recently experienced (the funeral). This is normal exploration of a child's world. Children may have tears one moment and the next they

are off playing. This does not mean they have forgotten the loss or that they have gotten over the loss. Playing brings back normalcy to their life.

Creating memories can be healing for parents and children. You might plant a living memory together. Write poems or letters to the baby or about the baby. Light candles or place a special ornament on the Christmas tree. Some families remember the baby's birth date by giving gifts to a special charity.

Grief is not an illness; it is a normal response to a loss. Make sure you are taking care of yourself so you can be there for your other children.

### AGE APPROPRIATE behaviors

#### Ages 2-6

- Do not understand that death is permanent
- May ask questions about the baby repeatedly
- May show signs of regression (potty training, thumb sucking, being very clinging)
- May be helpful to provide play time with puppets or dolls. Allowing time for expression of feelings through art (coloring, clay, paint)

#### Ages 6-10

- Understand death is permanent
- May ask questions about baby. Be honest and only give the amount of information they require.
- May need time to process the information
- May be helpful to allow child to express feelings through art or journaling
- Encourage child to tell you stories. You may learn a great deal about feelings.

#### Teens

- May take questions and feelings to peers, teachers, or pastor
- May express feelings by acting out or risk taking behaviors
- May become the model child
- Watch for guilt feelings. Reassure they did nothing to cause the loss.



**Babylove Moments Jewelry** features the unique and precious footprints of your child, presented in the form of solid fourteen karat gold pendants, charms, cufflinks, and tie tacs. Each and every piece of Babylove Moments Jewelry is handmade by local Indiana artist Christine Timberlake, who considers it an honor and privilege to create unique and lasting pieces of wearable art, inspired by the beautiful footprints of each precious child. To learn more about Babylove Moments, please visit [www.buybabylove.com](http://www.buybabylove.com).

## Grief That Seems Beyond Repair

Grief is defined as a multi-faceted response to a loss. It can include an emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral, social or philosophical dimension. Grief has been studied by many researchers for several years. Kubler-Ross is well known for her work in staging the grieving process. We often reference her in discussing a person's grief by what stage he is experiencing: denial, anger, bargaining, depression or acceptance. It is normal to grieve the loss of a loved one. But when experiencing a loss, reading about grief can't always pinpoint the words that would describe the ache that one feels in his heart.

Grieving the loss of a baby can be a lifelong process. One does not "get over" the loss, but instead must assimilate and live with the death. Feelings of guilt might enter the heart of a parent trying to regain some "normalcy" of life. This is also a very normal part of grieving and acceptance. But what happens to one or both parents that may be so overwhelmed by grief that they become "stuck" in a stage? Their empty arms remind them that their baby died. They bargained until they felt as if no one was listening and it didn't change the fact that their baby had died. Acceptance seems unrealistic and unattainable. What they are left with is anger and depression. In order to move forward, it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of depression and find constructive ways to work on anger. Failure to do so can cause a strain in relationships between loved ones and even lead to isolation. Finding consolation from family members and friends along the journey is important. There will be moments that you feel completely alone, and that is when you need to reach out to others and allow them to help.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, making decisions
- Decreased energy
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Changes in sleep and psychomotor activity
- Feeling worthlessness or guilt
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation, plans or attempts

*These symptoms have been quoted from the Indiana Perinatal Mood Disorder Guide as written by the Perinatal Network.*

**If you are experiencing some of the above symptoms it is important to seek out help! Yes, some of these are a normal part of the grief cycle, but if these signs and symptoms are persistent, it is very important to seek help. Often it is a loved one that will suggest that you speak with someone, take this as good advice not that they are telling you to "move on" or "forget."**

## Open Arms Open Chat

*Bulletin Board of news to know and share!*

- **April 26th 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. Planner and Buchanan Funeral Centers donates 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 7p.m.
- You can keep in contact with other families who have experienced a pregnancy loss on our bereavement blog from our website [www.ecommunity.com/openarms](http://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@ecommunity.com](mailto:jcutshaw@ecommunity.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: <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/offmailinglist.html>

*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](http://www.missfoundation.org); *Support for the whole family!*

**Subsequent Pregnancy After A Loss** - SPALS [www.spals.com](http://www.spals.com) - *A discussion list for persons considering a subsequent pregnancy after a loss*

**Compassionate Friends** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
*Support for families that have lost a child at any age*

**Grieving the Child I Never Knew: a Devotional Companion for Comfort in the Loss of Your Unborn or Newly Born Child** by Kathe Wunnenberg

**Handling the Holidays** by Bruce Conley

**No New Baby** (For siblings who have a brother or sister die before birth) by Marilyn Gryte

**Losing Malcolm** by Carol Henderson  
*The author's stark portrayal of the time of her son Malcolm's short life and the grief that followed are sure to captivate your attention. The path of her grieving is one that may or may not feel familiar but the reader can relate to some part of her pain and will be moved by the choices she makes to move forward in life.*

**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 [www.ecommunity.com/openarms](http://www.ecommunity.com/openarms).*

Books and resources available online at [www.ecommunity.com/openarms](http://www.ecommunity.com/openarms)



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