



Bereaved Families of Ontario

Ottawa Region

Living Life to the Fullest – Part Two

Last fall we talked about how a bereaved parent finds his or her way through the grief process, to a 'full life'. This month I will attempt to tell you some of the things I've learned from bereaved spouses in our monthly groups.

As with the parent, a person who has lost their life partner, experiences the full range of emotions of grief. The loss of the person who you spend part of every day with, who is both your confidant and your ally is profound. Not only have you lost your mate, your future dreams and plans, but also the other half of the partnership. Now you are left with all the responsibilities formerly shared by the two of you. So often, in those early days of grief and exhaustion, the mere thought of having to mow the lawn when you've never started a mower, or do the laundry when you don't know where the Tide is kept, or manage finances when it was not part of your 'job description'...is overwhelming. For the young spouse who must face bringing up children in a one parent family, there are a whole other set of problems thrust upon the surviving spouse at a difficult time. We don't even realize how much our jobs around a home are divided; often life just fell into place that way and there wasn't even a discussion on who did what. These things are glaringly clear when your husband or wife dies.

Life is also forever changed, and part of the struggle is to find a new life that encompasses activities that were formerly shared with your partner. A whole new identity seems overwhelming. Those who have been part of a couple for some time do not feel comfortable in this new role, and feel out of place with family and friends. Feeling like a "fifth wheel" at dinner parties and social gatherings is common. The single life, when it is thrust upon us without choice, is unwelcome and troubling.

Intensifying the grief experience is the fact that your spouse was the one who helped you cope with life; who listened and supported you, who was your shoulder to lean on. At the time when you need them the most, they are not there to help you through this. It is difficult to learn a new way of coping at this vulnerable and fragile time; the way seems dark and frightening.

The support groups for bereaved spouses are a place to come together in understanding. Often knowing that you are not alone and that others have similar feelings is comforting. Coping strategies are shared, and a network develops that leaves the spouse feeling part of a social system again. Encouragement helps to foster a brave approach. Within the support groups, the spouse knows she can take her own time to deal with each new challenge. Grief has it's own timetable and it is the time of the heart, not the time of the clock. The day to give away his/her clothes, to walk back into that hospital, to look at those videos, to put the house up for sale, to finalize transactions will come when you are ready and able. It can't be forced upon you, or rushed.

In the aftermath of loss, life is always changed. There is a new view of life. It is not what we expected, and will never be the same. Each person who leaves our life changes it, and none more than our spouse who has shared so much of who we are. There may always be the need and comfort to speak to our spouse as if they are still here with us. In this way we communicate with them to show them how we're doing, tell them what we plan, and share our triumphs and mistakes with them. We can almost hear what their reply would be, so much a part of each other, we were.

by Frankie Baird

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Program Coordinator's Report

First a personal thank you to Andrée Jeannotte for all her support in the office.

We have been busy in the office. As of the Board meeting on March 19th, we have funding available for a Loss of Spouse Group and a Loss of Parent/Sibling/Friend Group. A support group for teenagers will begin this spring, a children's group age 8 to 12 has finished their ten weeks, a group for loss by miscarriage/baby born still/infant death under one year of age has begun.

Training of volunteers is set for April 13, 14, 20. I would encourage all people who have been through a closed group to take the training as we are in need of facilitators for all losses. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. Professional training is taking place on May 30, 31. By professionals we mean people who are in a position to counsel bereaved people and would like to learn more about the bereavement process.

We have also signed up for several agency fairs in the city. These are information tables with BFO literature available for the public to pick up and ask questions about our organization. We need volunteers to sit behind tables at these fairs. At the same time you can learn about the other agencies at the fair. Please call the office if you can volunteer some time. Also Management Board positions with a slant toward decision making for a not-for-profit are also available. The fundraising committee needs help with the Golf Tournament on May 17. Many hands make volunteering much more fun than very few people doing a lot of work. This organization needs help now.

Today is the first day of spring and it is snowing outside. Sometimes it snows in the spring, and sometimes I am sad and cry on a very sunny day. It does not always make sense but then grieving is that way.

Hilda Sabadash, Program Coordinator

A Goodbye to Andrée

Andrée Jeannotte is a Social Services Worker student with Algonquin College, and has been doing a placement at Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region since last September. As Andrée prepares to leave us in April, the Board Members wanted to express our gratitude for the exceptional job she has done for BFO. From the beginning, we could see her touches in the Office. I've heard Hilda call Andrée 'our Martha Stewart'. Andrée's skills went far beyond decorative touches. An eagerness to learn enabled Andrée to accomplish much during her placement with BFO. She took on any task assigned, from organizing files and waiting lists, to rearranging meeting room and office space. Her touches are evident everywhere.

Andrée attended Support and Share Nights, the Loss by Suicide Closed Group, co-ordinated and

co-facilitated a Children's Group. She participated in Educational presentations, as well as Training days. It was evident from each task Andrée took on, that she gave everything she did, her very best. She had ideas for Fundraising, helped at the Walk to Remember, the Remembrance Tree and the 67's Game, and put forward new ideas of partnering with the College. Andrée showed enthusiasm, energy and an innovative approach in all she did. As she spoke with clients on the phone and at groups, her sensitive, hopeful approach was an asset.

On behalf of the Management Board of Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region, thank you, Andrée. There will be a big space at BFO that is empty without you. Continued success in all you do.

Frankie Baird

Come check us out at our web site!

Thanks to the great work by Stephen Beneteau, our own web site will enable us to have the newsletter available on the internet as well as support information, up to the minute announcements and valuable links.

Our web site address is:
<http://www.bfo-ottawa.org>

BFO-OR Management Board

Martha Attridge Bufton (Staff)	989-1010
Frankie Baird (PAC, Newsletter)	258-1752
Christine Durocher	825-9343
Gail Christy (PAC)	733-5227
George Kealey (BFO-OR Legal Advise)	745-7345
Barbra Hills-Labonté	738-9128
Lori Parsons (Newsletter)	258-2259
Hilda Sabadash (Staff)	567-4278
Christina Ullett (Book-keeper)	721-3762
Tim Sen	(work) 564-8585

Poems and Submissions

Poem For Us

Here we sit
with the broken pieces of our lives
Trading tales like veterans of some war
fought savagely, lost painfully
We question each other, eye looking into eye,
Are you all right?
Just? Better? Worse?
What worked for you, we ask
What made you smile
drove back the darkness
filled, for a time, the empty rooms in your
house and heart?
What's that you say?
Not much worked for you, either?
What then must we do
To make the world once more familiar,
inviting, safe?

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A "Normal" Day

Normal Day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, bless you before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect
tomorrow.
Let me hold you while I may, for it may not always be so.
One day, I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face
in the pillow, or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the
sky and want, more than all the world, your return.

Submitted by Maggie Brady

It isn't for the moment you are stuck that you need courage,
but for the long uphill climb back to sanity and faith and
security.

Anne Morrow Lindberg

Continuing Bonds...

Featuring stories or ideas from readers about how they include their loved ones in holidays or special events, how they observe anniversaries, or whatever they do to keep their loved ones alive in their hearts.

Keeping my loved one alive with tears of time

Once the normal days do return, tears do still come. With these tears of time, for me, there is a sense of a cherished memory rather than an emptiness.

The loss of my spouse, Mark, has been over 7 years now. To many of you this may seem like a long time, one to which you may often question will it ever end, will I ever feel normal? There is no definite answer to that. Having gone through this journey myself I've come to realize that we all grieve differently and at a different pace.

As my tears of time came upon me today I wanted to write down how they affected me, and how I've come to realize that these tears of time have become a part of keeping my loved one alive in my heart.

On this normal Sunday noon hour I was enjoying listening to my favourite radio show "The Vinyl Café" on CBC Radio 2. A charming host, Stuart McLean, tells stories, reads mail from across the country, and features talented Canadian musicians.

Here I am at home, warm, cozy, feeling happy, and content, then Stuart introduces a singer from Ottawa who has recorded a tribute to Elvis. On comes the song "I can't help falling in love with you". Even as the song was being introduced I was unaware of how it would have an effect on me.

This was the first song that Mark and I danced to as husband and wife. As the song started to play I felt it starting—the emotional wave. There was no stopping it, like the rain must fall, the wave wanted and needed to be released.

First came the memories where you can see it all, feel it and sense it as the day you were there. Then that feeling deep down inside, yes a deep pang of sorrow, followed by the compression of the chest and the shortness of breath. The waterworks follow—the big heavy drops. The song plays to the end, the wave slowly passes, and I am brought back to the present.

Today listening to The Vinyl Café, I cried in sorrow. However with it came a memory and remembering. Those felt like a gift. I was not left with an emotional hangover, one of which I was often left with during my journey of grief. I was left with a sense of warmth, of how special Mark was, how special he was to me, and how much of an impact he has made in my life.

There will never be a forgetting of Mark, he is part of me. With these tears of time I know how much of a gift I was given in life. I was given true love and the love was returned in kind.

Thank you Mark.

Doris Rose Audet

Sharing Experiences

I learned so much

Bereaved Families has made a difference in my life—both personally and professionally. This year, I finished the Social Service Worker program at Algonquin College. To do so, I had to complete a volunteer placement with a social service agency and I chose Bereaved Families. BFO is really well known for its excellent programming and I knew that I would learn a lot about bereavement as well as have the opportunity to really improve my peer supporting skills.

Since I've been volunteering at BFO, I have had the chance to coordinate and facilitate a support group for children 8 – 12 years old. What amazing kids—the group is there to fill a void in their lives and yet they are able to give so much to each other and to us. I learned a lot about the grief process from them. I was also able to participate in a survivor of suicide group that really helped me. I had lost a friend to suicide when I was a teenager and had never fully grieved the loss. Now, I have some closure and feel so much better.

I know that my peer supporting skills are better because of the opportunity to work with Bereaved Families. I also know that I have processed some of my own grief too. BFO is a wonderful resource for our community that really helps individuals and professionals alike.

Andrée Jeannotte

I'm not the only one

Christmas Eve of 1999 was an exceptionally hard time. I was 15 and, after just under a year, my Dad died of cancer. I missed him dearly and was going through a lot of emotional pain. It was hard for me to talk about it with my friends as they had never lost a loved one and could not really understand what I was going through. That's when I decided to go to Bereaved Families.

At first I went to Support and Share Night. I wanted to get into a closed group but there wasn't a facilitator available at that point, so I had to wait. Support and Share Night helped, but talking with adults isn't the same as talking with other teens. Finally, though, my group started. I found that I had lots in common with the other kids in the group and that I am not the only one suffering from grief. Our facilitators had similar experiences so they could relate to us plus being a bit older, they were really good role models. We talked about all kinds of things, especially our feelings and how they were affecting us. It was a relief for me to get my emotions out, even those feelings that I didn't even know I had.

I still have hard days but it's easier now. I can recognize my feelings and I am no longer afraid to share them with others. I would definitely recommend a group to other bereaved teens.

Kaighley Brett

The Circle of Support and Supporting

I lost my wife of 27 years to cancer in March of 2001. She struggled with the disease for 8½ months. As happens to many couples, we never got to say good bye. She had a seizure on Valentine's Day while waiting for another chemotherapy treatment and we did not communicate prior to her death in the Elizabeth Bruyere Centre.

When she died, I was in the early stages of adjusting to retirement so I had neither the distraction/support of work nor the irritation of co-workers offering inappropriate comments such as, "Isn't it about time you got on with your life," a mixed blessing. In addition, we had moved out of the city and into the home where we planned to spend our "golden years" of retirement. My two grown sons have been a tremendous help.

When I first began attending the monthly BFO meetings I found everyone's grief so raw, emotions running high, everyone sobbing (me, too) as they told their stories. I did not sleep well after these meetings,

they were upsetting but at the same time, strangely comforting. To be in a room full of people who genuinely understood what I felt was a huge help. Then we were offered the closed group meeting, a gathering of ten people who would come together weekly for ten weeks, gently and skillfully guided by two facilitators. No one could tell us what to expect. "More intense grief work" they said. And it surely was, but as a "graduate" of a closed group, I can add some detail that might help you discover if the closed group is for you.

At the first two or three meetings we were struggling to tell our stories. At one meeting we brought photos of our lost loved ones, a tearful, painful, wonderful evening because it put a face to those that others had lost and helped us to know our partners in grief better. We traded solutions to common problems and helped each other over rough places such as first holidays without the loved one.

Soon our level of mutual trust was such that we began to talk on the phone with each other and to exchange email. At the end of the ten weekly sessions, something truly wonderful happened. We discovered we had become friends, linked by the powerful experience of loss. As a result we now meet on our own, either for a social evening, or to discuss where we are on our journey. Someone says grief rewrites your address book. If that's true, then grief added a marvellous collection of new friends to my book.

Remembrance Tree 2001

On December 9, 2001 the Celebration of Remembrance was held at Ottawa City Hall. The Remembrance Tree became a family of trees in 2000, instead of one large Christmas Tree. This year the analogy of the person in our family who is missing was further represented by one sparkling white tree, glowing among the family of green trees.

Our thank you to all those who volunteered their time: to Carolyn Cote, Bonnie Duncan, and Sharon McGarry whose leadership made the event possible this year, and to Tom Flood who worked behind the scenes, as well as acting as M.C. for the Celebration of Remembrance. The event was financially possible by the sponsorship of Hulse, Playfair & McGarry Music was provided by The Central Childrens' Choir, directed by Yvonne Navratil and by local singing artist, Robin Moir. The Speaker, Senator Marjorie Lebreton gave us a candid account of her grief journey, as a bereaved parent and grandparent. The reading of hundreds of names was done by Stephen Beneteau and Frankie Baird; always a reminder of how powerful it is to hear our loved one's name said aloud. Hilda Sabadash, Program Coordinator, helped the children dedicate the roses and seemed to be everywhere making sure no detail was forgotten. Martha Attridge Bufton, Fund Development Coordinator, talked to us about Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region and gave us the benefit of her experience and understanding. Marie Tilk and Jean Davis lead the committee for refreshments and volunteer help in the kitchen. Gail Christy and Tim Sen offered their professional ear to anyone who wished to talk to them after the event.

This year, as always, volunteers tree sat, greeted, took donations, handed out programs, and helped with media; there were extra volunteer hours in the office, and many more.

THANK YOU EVERYONE!

Frankie Baird

There was a time when I wasn't sure if I would ever have a good day. Now, some of them are pretty good. I am becoming a facilitator now to give something back and, in the process, gaining purpose for the new life I must now build. Comfort, understanding, and purpose, priceless gifts, all. Thank you, Bereaved Families.

William C. Drake

Goodbyes / Welcomes

A long time friend and Volunteer of Bereaved Families, Wayne Casselman, has resigned from the Management Board after many years of planning and decision meetings to make space for new people with fresh ideas. He continues to volunteer many hours facilitating at Support and Share Night, co-facilitating closed groups and helping at fundraising activities. The Board will miss Wayne's clear thinking, humour, and knowledge with regard to the past history of BFO-OR. The Board will wonder what Wayne will do on the third Tuesday of each month since that evening has become free after being booked for so many years. Thank you Wayne for all your past support.

We have a new Board member, Christine Durocher. Already Christine is giving the Board new energy with her willingness to help, new ideas and leadership skills. Welcome, Christine.

The Management Board and Staff

Support and Share Night Sponsors

A new initiative to help BFO continue our Monthly Support and Share Night is being developed.

If you would like to have your business featured one month, or would like to sponsor "an evening in memory" of a loved one, there will be a framed display to announce the Sponsor of the Month at the entrance to Support and Share Night. For more information or to become a Support and Share Night Sponsor, please call the office at 567-4278.

Sponsors:

March – RBC Royal Bank staff members, Bank and Queen Street, Ottawa, ON

April – S.I.T. (Stay in Touch) Club which is organized by Tom Kealey and Russell Cuggy

May – Deborah MacDonald, NIKKEN Independent Wellness Consultant, Solutions for Balanced Living
613-841-5601 or 1-888-779-4443
www.5pillars.com/jdmacgroup

Support and Share Night

- April 2** – Melanie Hess
May 7 – Judi Paterson
June 4 – Videos
July 2 – To be announced
August 6 – To be announced
September 3 – To be announced

First Tuesday of each month – 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church,
 2400 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa (downstairs hall).

Closed Support Groups

- Group for a Loss of a Spouse
 Group for a Loss of Parent/Sibling/Friend
 Group for teenagers – this spring

Other Supporting Events

Golf Tournament – Dinner & Auction

Friday May 17th, 2002 – Rain or Shine!

Pineview Golf Course

1471 Blair Rd., Ottawa [417 - Blair Rd. south bound]

12 noon tee off time – Dinner & Auction at 6:00 p.m.

Enjoy golf? Can't wait for spring to get out on the course? Why not grab three friends and make it a foursome? Cost: \$85 each, which includes cart, green fees, steak dinner, and auction, a portion of which will be tax deductible.

Don't golf? Can't join us for the day? Dinner & auction tickets are also available for \$25.

To register please call the office at 567-4278; fax 237-4874; or obtain registration form on-line at www.bfo-ottawa.org. Please make all cheques payable to: Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region. All proceeds go to continuing our support groups and programs at BFO-OR.

Fall Speaker

A wonderful partnership has developed between Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region and The Dr. Bea Wickett Fund. Together we will host an evening at the Embassy West Hotel this Fall, featuring Dr. Stephen Fleming as Speaker. Dr. Fleming was one of the original founders of Bereaved Families in the Province of Ontario.

Watch for more details as plans are finalized. Volunteers are required to help make this event a success.

Training

Facilitator Training April 13, 14, 20

April 2 is the deadline to register.
 \$35 registration fee due by April 2,
 cancellation fee \$35 after April 2.
 Hours: 9:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m.

Please call the office at 567-4278 for questions regarding the office locations, services and support offered through BFO. Reserve a space for the Closed Groups and Training offered, volunteer and register for the Supporting Events.

Fund Development Committee Update

The Fund Development Committee is working on a number of projects for 2002 in order to help ensure that BFO-OR is able to maintain and improve on the services that it offers to the Ottawa community. We have lots of ideas and plans and are hoping that you can help.

Golf Tournament on May 17th, 2002 at Pineview Golf Course. We are currently looking for:

- Golfers
- Volunteers to help solicit donations for the auction
- Volunteers to help the day of the event
- Volunteers to assist with the planning and organizing of this event
- Donations of auction items and prizes

Do you have a special skill or service that you would be willing to donate to BFO-OR for the auction? Do you own a business and are you willing to donate a prize/auction item? Would you be willing to approach just four people/businesses to request donations? We have a form letter available for those of you willing to assist us in this way.

Our committee is small but energetic! We always welcome new members. We meet once per month (for apx. 2 hours) and encourage you to participate even if it is just for one event.

If you are able to help out in any of these ways please e-mail Stephanie at beneteau@rogers.com or call 596-3876 (home). Alternately, contact the office at 567-4278.

Looking forward to hearing from you and seeing you on the course!

Stephanie Burgetz
 Committee Member

Sponsorship

We'd like to say thank you

Many wonderful individuals and corporations have helped bereaved families in our community by supporting the programs of Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region.

In order to respect the privacy of our individual donors, we will not list any here. However, we want you to know that your contributions are important to the families that you help.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the corporations, foundations and other charitable organizations who have also helped us help the healing begin:

- Brophy Financial Planning
- Community Foundation of Ottawa
- Community Initiatives Program
- Dunning-Foubert School Advisory Council
- Gloucester Nepean Professional Firefighters Association
- Hulse Playfair and McGarry Funeral Homes
- Kelly Funeral Homes
- Pinecrest Cemetery
- The Beechwood Cemetery
- The Civitan Club of Smiths Falls Inc.
- Tippet-Richardson Residential and Office Moving
- Studio 2 Framing Gallery

The skills to go on

This past holiday season I co-chaired the Bereaved Families' Remembrance Tree Celebration. My employer, Hulse Playfair and McGarry, stepped forward with me to sponsor the event. Their staff and resources were an invaluable asset.

My involvement was for purely personal satisfaction. I am a bereaved parent. Our son Tim died in a tragic car accident on June 1, 1991. BFO Support and Share, my life long friends from my closed group and memorial events like the Remembrance Tree and the Walk to Remember have given me the coping skills to go on with my life without him. I know how BFO benefits those of us on our grief journey.

My hope this year was that by having a sponsor, there would be more community awareness of how BFO helps grieving people. I also wanted to plant the seed with other employers and corporations—they too can come forward to help the bereaved by sponsoring other BFO events and projects. The work that BFO does to help families in our community is absolutely needed so that other people learn to go on as I have.

Carolyn Coté

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In an ongoing commitment to providing the best support and services where they are most needed, we are revising the method we communicate our news to the public. Have access to computers? Please visit our web site at <http://www.bfo-ottawa.org> to obtain up-to-date BFO-OR information and this quarterly newsletter.

Please take a moment to revise your information with the selections listed below.

Mail this slip, with your donation, to Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa Region, 308-211 Bronson Ave., Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5.

- To reduce overhead cost to BFO, please remove my name from the mailing list. I will be accessing your web site at: <http://www.bfo-ottawa.org>**
- I would like to receive the newsletter by regular mail.**
- I would like to make a donation in the amount of:**
\$15.00 _____ \$25.00 _____ \$50.00 _____ \$100.00 _____ Other _____.

Donations over \$15.00 will receive a Charitable Donation Receipt.

Name

Mailing Address

City

Postal code