
HANDPRINTS

Volume 3 Issue 3

Summer 2002

Inside this Issue:

What's New @ HAND

Helping Siblings Come to Terms with Grief

Children's Poems

Editor's Column:
Parenting While Grieving

Internet Resources

Helping Siblings Grieve:
Little Byron's Story

Sharing Comments:
Sibling to Sibling

Suggested Reading

Memorial Donations



Helping After Neonatal Death
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(408) 995-6102

Surviving Sibling Loss

By Joan Thornwall, MSW

When my nine-month-old sister Frances died of pneumonia in 1942, the accepted wisdom was that at four years old, I was too young to grieve, or even to miss or remember her. It's hard now to imagine everyone expected me not to miss the baby I had been so proud to help my mother to feed and bathe, the baby I held on my lap for the picture of us that is on my mother's dresser to this day? Actually, her death shaped my life. I was not even told of her death by my parents, but rather, by my pre-school teacher, who cautioned me not to bother my parents with questions. There was a brief funeral for her, but I wasn't present. I didn't even know there had been one until I was a fifty-year-old graduate-degreed social worker, about to begin work at an agency for seriously ill children and their families. At that point, I finally got up the nerve to ask my mother what happened when Franny died. Finally, the practically taboo subject of her death was opened up for discussion and shared tears.

My childhood was tremendously affected by the death of this child I supposedly didn't remember. It was hard to forget Franny's death a few months later when I was ill myself. My

parents and grandparents were so obviously worried about me that I thought perhaps I would die too. Even after I was well, my frightened mother placed overly protective limits on my play, my activities and exploring, even my school attendance, putting me at a disadvantage in social, learning, and physical skill development compared to my peers. While my classmates played in the snow at recess, I sat inside; when other children were learning to swim, I could only watch because my mother feared I would catch colds if I got wet. After years of restrictions, I seemed always to feel angry with her, and then guilty for feeling that way.

Today we know that children who lose a sibling do grieve. We advise parents that children who are old enough to love are old enough to grieve. And we not only counsel parents in how to assist their children in this grieving process, but also in ways to help siblings of a child who is living with serious illness, or dying. Yet, in my work with these families over the past 12 years, I've come to believe that there is no way even the best of parents, pediatricians, or teachers can keep this experience from having a profound effect on surviving children. All par-

Surviving continued on page 2

HAND

Helping After Neonatal Death is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that helps parents, their families, and their healthcare providers cope with the loss of a baby before, during, or after birth.

Business Contact Information:

Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(408) 995-6102

Services Contact Information:

Alameda & Contra Costa County
Central Valley
Santa Clara County
(408) 995-6102
(888) 908-HAND (4263)

Visit our Website:

<http://www.handonline.org>

HANDPRINTS

A publication of Helping After Neonatal Death © 2002. Material contained in this newsletter may only be reprinted with written permission and credit to the source.

HAND welcomes letters and other contributions to our newsletter. If you choose to submit materials to HAND, you agree that HAND and its designees may reproduce, modify and otherwise use the submitted materials without compensation or attribution to you both in this publication and in other forms or media as further detailed in our publication guidelines. Please direct all submissions to:

Handprints Editor
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341

Editor: Darla Harmon
handprints@handonline.org

Surviving continued from page 1

ents or professionals can do is to make it as positive as possible, to make this a time when children cope and learn, rather than get stuck in fear, guilt, loneliness, resentment, embarrassment, or sadness.

Individuals interviewed years after a sibling's death remember being the "forgotten" children left with neighbors while parents spent days at a hospital bedside. They especially recall not knowing what was the matter with the ill child, imagining that they themselves had caused the illness by yelling, "I wish you'd drop dead!" I thought for many years that Franny might have caught the cold that became pneumonia from me. Other siblings spend too much time parked in waiting rooms at clinics, or providing care for the sick child. They recall, as I do, not feeling safe: if parents and doctors couldn't keep their sibling from dying, how might they keep surviving children alive? And of course, there are genetically related illnesses where more than one child in a family may be at risk.

Lack of information seems to be the biggest stumbling block for siblings; in my own family it certainly was. Today we know siblings will do better if encouraged to ask questions and given honest age-appropriate information. They need to be prepared for whatever's coming, especially if it's known a child won't make it.

In my role as a hospice social worker, I'm often asked if small children should attend funerals and memorials, and my answer is always a qualified "yes": if the child wants to be there; if the child had a relationship with whoever died; if adults will prepare the child for the ceremony; and if someone will take the child out to play if things get too long or too upsetting. Even young children can be included creatively in family mourning rituals; clergy and funeral directors often suggest meaningful ways.

Surviving children will need to talk about what has happened, will have questions like "Am I still a sister?" Parents can model healthy grieving with many means of remembering the child who died, like photographs, helping children make memory boxes, remembering the birthday each year, or planting a tree. They must reassure healthy siblings that they will remain healthy, that infants or children rarely are so sick that they die.

If children are born into the family subsequently, it will be good for them to hear, as part of the family story told repeatedly, some simple facts about the life and death of the child they'll never know. If the child becomes a secret, he or she becomes almost the "family ghost", as I think Franny was to our two younger sisters until they were able, in middle age, to talk openly with our mother about her.

Along with more realistic understanding of what siblings experience, we now have ways to intervene helpfully. There may be Child

Surviving continued on page 3

WHAT'S NEW @ HAND

We have been improving the business side of HAND with the help of Deloitte Consulting, soon to become Braxton, an internationally recognized consulting firm. They have graciously granted HAND some professional consulting expertise to help pull together a three-year business plan and review our organizational structure. Consultants Jennifer Linstroth, Isavane Samanne, and Michelle Stills, and Senior Partner David Lambert have been working with the Board on this project, and their efforts have already borne fruit in uncovering some key opportunities for HAND and helping the Board focus on success factors influencing our service delivery and growth.

We have also been fortunate to have Morrison & Foerster LLP, one of the world's largest law firms, give HAND valuable help in the area of legal advice. Lawyers from the firm have given advice on how to respond to grant terms and conditions and addressing copyright terminology for our newsletter and other publications.

HAND recently benefited from a successful Walk-a-thon organized by Chuck and Cherisse White in memory of their daughter, Montana Lafayette White. The Walk-a-thon was a great event and benefited both the California AIDS Alliance and HAND. Thank you for your generous efforts, Chuck & Cherisse, and thanks to all who participated!

More successful barbecues to benefit HAND were held on May 8, 2002. We would like to thank Safeway and the volunteers Paul Cole, Alicia Santiago, Margarita Chavez, Vicki Chavez, Patricia Galvan, Pam Galvan, Chris Galvan, Gina Galvan, Isaac Chan-Kai, Taraneh Sarrafzadeh, Rosana Rojas, David Coleman, Becca Coleman, Britnie Coleman, Austin Coleman, Kirstin Coleman, Jace Coleman, and Wahid Kazem who worked at four Safeway stores to barbeque and sell hotdogs and sodas to raise funds for HAND. A special thanks goes to Becca Coleman, Central Valley Area Coordinator, for organizing and running this event. ❖

Surviving continued from page 2

Life Specialists or trained volunteers at hospitals and clinics who are there just for the siblings of sick children. Not all the effects of having an ill sibling are negative; children learn compassion, tolerance, and nurturing attitudes as they help with care, and need recognition so they can be proud of their participation. Families and teachers can make this an experience of growth as well as sadness.

The Bay Area is blessed with numerous support groups for grieving children of all ages, based at hospitals, hospices, churches, schools, or in the community. Many times, there will be an associated supportive discussion group for parents at the same time. Self-help groups like HAND can usually suggest good resources for families. As I work now with families who have lost children, I often ponder how my own family might have been helped to cope better had this wealth of knowledge and support been available when Franny died. ❖

Butterfly

I remember as a child
trying to catch a butterfly.
Get so close,
then off it would fly.
I wondered where it went,
now I know it was heaven sent.

On the day you were born, I felt
I had caught that butterfly.
My heart filled with love,
tears filled my eyes.
Such beauty
I tried to hold in vain,
knowing when you left
there would be so much pain.

Now you are gone,
I had to set you free.
A butterfly
could not belong to me.
Returned to heaven,
you flew away.
But in my heart, my butterfly,
you will always stay.

By Marianne Bullock

HAND's Annual
Service of Remembrance
is scheduled for
Sunday, October 6, 1pm
at Palmdale Estates
in Fremont.
Watch for more
information in the mail.

Helping Siblings Come to Terms with Grief

From *Unsung Lullabies* - Available from HAND

Honesty is the Best Policy

Especially in the case of very young children, our initial instinct may be to “protect” or “shelter” our offspring from a tragedy with which we, as adults, are barely able to cope. We tell ourselves that they are “too young to understand.” We may leave them out of the discussions and rituals associated with the death. This can be a serious mistake. Whether we talk about it or not, our children will certainly become aware of our own feelings of sadness.

Failure on our part to be open and honest about those feelings leaves our children feeling anxious, bewildered, and alone. They will be left on their own to look for answers to their questions at a time when they most need the help and reassurance of those around them, and may end up coming to the conclusion that they are personally responsible for Mommy and Daddy’s tears. Sharing grief as a family can be a meaningful experience for everyone involved and an important opportunity for growth.

Talking to Children About Death

You should try to inform the other children of the baby’s death as soon as possible after it happens. It is important that you do this yourself and that you let your children know right away that nothing is so scary or painful that you cannot talk about it together.

Use simple, straightforward language, and try to avoid euphemisms such as “passed away”, “asleep”, “lost”, or “gone”. If your children are too young to know what the word “dead” means, help them to understand by using images drawn from the world they are familiar with - fading flowers, a dead animal seen in the road or yard, the death of a family pet.

Remind them that being alive means breathing, talking, walking, eating, etc., and tell them that being dead means that all of these things stop. Do not compare death to sleeping, since this may lead to sleep disturbances. It is also best to avoid linking death too closely with illness. Doing so may cause children to panic the next time a family member catches a cold. Reassure children that they are well and be aware that the first time they are sick following the death may be especially stressful for them.

Answering Children’s Questions

Children need to know that their questions are valid and welcome. The questions may not necessarily come all at once. Instead they will reflect a child’s individual progress in understanding and assimilating a powerful experience.

Encouraging your children to ask questions can do much to reduce their anxiety. Many children will ask what will happen to the body of the infant. In simple terms, explain the necessity of burial, cremation, etc., because of decomposition.

If you are planning a funeral, let children know what to expect and include them in deciding how they will participate. Being left out of the family rituals surrounding death is not helpful to children and may, in fact, leave them feeling even more confused by the death. Under no circumstances should they be forced to attend or to do anything they don’t feel comfortable doing.

Children will also want to know why the death occurred. Again, simple, honest statements will be the most helpful. If the reasons are unclear, it is all right to say you don’t know. If you believe in a hereafter, you will of course want to share this belief with your children.

It is best, however, to be cautious about using statements such as “God took the baby to heaven” or “God loved the baby more than we did.” Such statements can also cause resentment against God or a conflict in children’s minds about what it means to be “loved by God.”

It is important to stress that no family member could have caused or prevented the death by their actions or thoughts. Young children believe that wishes are powerful, and may decide that the baby was harmed by their own thoughts or by those of another family member.

Helping Siblings continued on page 5

Helping Siblings continued from page 4

Recognizing Children's Responses to Grief

The reaction of your children to the death of a sibling depends to some extent on their age. Even within the same age group, a wide range of responses is normal. One child may talk incessantly about what has happened while another behaves as if he or she has not been affected at all.

Preschoolers tend to view death as temporary because the concept of permanency is beyond their level of sophistication. For children of this age, it is sufficient to gently indicate that no, the baby will not come back - understanding will come naturally as the child grows older. Because dealing openly with strong emotions is difficult for this age group, they may deal with them piecemeal over a long time in their questions, in dreams, and in their play. Play is the primary mode of expression for children up to the age of 12.

Regression to an earlier stage of development is also common for children in this age group. For example, thumb-sucking or bed-wetting may reappear (or appear for the first time), and a child who has been toilet-trained may need to go back into diapers. Parents should remain tolerant and supportive, keeping in mind that these regressions are only temporary. It is important to let your child express a wide range of feelings while mourning. Limits must be set, of course, when children are at risk of harming themselves or others or of destroying property.

Preteens and teenagers will have a somewhat more adult view of death and will grieve much the way you will. They understand the permanency of death, but they may need to deal with the issues of why and of fault. Because of their stage of psychological development, adolescent girls may have an especially difficult time dealing with the death of an infant.

Children of all ages will grieve and must be allowed to do so to relieve the feelings generated by the loss. On the other hand, grieving should not be a requirement. Children should be given room to feel what they feel and to work through their feelings at their own pace.

Experts say that 6 months after a significant death in a child's life, normal routine should be resuming. If the child's reaction seems to be prolonged, seeking professional advice from those who are familiar with the child (teachers, pediatricians, clergy, etc.) may be helpful. Be aware that most children need to rethink the event months or even years afterwards and begin asking more questions.

Ways to Help

- * As soon as possible after the death, explain what has happened in a simple and direct manner.
- * Listen to the child and try to understand both what is being said and what is not said.
- * Encourage questions. Keep answers brief, straightforward, and to the point.
- * Let children know that death is an open subject and that it is okay to feel sadness and to talk about it.
- * Maintain normal routines as much as possible. Children crave and are reassured by regularity and structure.
- * Show affection.
- * Reassure children about the cause of death.
- * Be tolerant of regression and other behavior changes.
- * Let your child attend the funeral or memorial service. ❖



Disneyland is offering the public an opportunity to sponsor a 10-inch hexagonal brick along Disney's Walk of Magical Memories" located between the entrances to Disneyland Park and Disney's California Adventure Park. Each brick can be inscribed with name(s), hometown, state or a special date to commemorate and extraordinary occasion such as a wedding or birthday. Each brick may contain 3 lines of script with up to 16 characters per line. Spaces and punctuation are counted as characters. All names must be separated by a space, comma or hyphen. Bricks may include proper names, a single date and a place (ex: city or state). No other information, including slogans, memorials, messages or group names may be included on the brick. The cost is \$150. You can also order a small wooden or acrylic replica of the stone for \$30. The number of available stones is limited. For more information, or to request an application, call: 1-800-760-3566. ❖

*Children's Poems:*Heaven

In Heaven you can eat candy canes...
And walk down Heavenly lanes.

You can eat all the chocolate and ice cream and cake...
And you can see beautiful lakes.

There's no pollution but angels instead.
You don't get aches in your stomach or head.

I bet Jaime's having the time of her life.
You know I think that's right!

By Jackie Lauro - Age 12

To Ryan,

When you were born,
I thought you were
perfect and I could
do lots of things with
you. Then one night I
heard you were gone.
It made me want to
cry. I prayed for you
and I still do.

From your big sister,
Laura Bullock - Age 9

Rachel's Cry

My sister where are you?
Why did you have to go
and leave me and mommy?
Please tell me so I can know.

We kicked and we struggled
just to make some room.
So we could have some comfort
inside mommy's womb.

We were so close,
you were my best friend.
Me and mommy loved you.
Why did your life have to end.

We miss you my sister,
but with all this grief,
we believe you are with God,
which gives us relief.

And we pray that the Lord
will help us bear all this pain,
while we live in this world
until we see you again.

Your sister, Rachel and mother Sharon Rader

Baby Jacob

Baby Jacob died and we miss him more and more.
We never got to see him pretend to be a dinosaur.
We never got to see him as he played for hours and hours.
We never got to see him using blocks to build big towers.
Jacob, Baby Jacob, we wish you didn't go.
Jacob, sweet sweet Jacob, we will always love you so.

By Sarah Javandel - Age 6

He Is Sleeping

I was looking at the baby in my father's arms. The baby looked so peaceful and cute in his white cozy blanket. I touched his smooth dark skin. I looked at his curly hair and then at his cute face and wondered what color his eyes would be. For a minute he seemed to move and there was a sweet expression on his face. I looked harder, hardly believing I would never see what color his eyes would be or a sweet expression on his face, for my sweet baby brother was dead. But to me his sleeping on a white fluffy cloud in heaven and he still hasn't waken.

By Diana Barraza

From My Heart

Editor's Column

Parenting While Grieving

Sibling loss was not something I had to deal with when I lost my daughter. She was my only child and I didn't have to anguish over how the loss would affect other children. But instead, I was faced with the silence...the awful silence that screamed out to me, "You have no purpose in life! You are not needed!" How could I go on? Why should I go on? My life seemed to be drained of all meaning and only filled with pain. As I grieved, I searched to discover that I was someone worthwhile before I had a child and that someday my life would again have purpose. During the many lonely days sometimes I wished for another child to focus on, just as parents, who lose a child and have surviving children, wish for time to grieve alone. These parents do their grieving in front of an intuitive audience. Their children are watching and learning about grief and the value of life. Children are deeply touched by grief and should be allowed to express their feelings, but not expected to grieve the same as an adult or other sibling. Sometimes children are more affected by the changes they see in their parents than the actual loss. I've heard children say they felt like their mother and father had suffered a loss and they were on the outside looking in. Others say they felt like they had to be the perfect child to make up for the loss but in the end only bad behavior gained their parent's attention. Parents who allow open communication can be assured that their children are displaying their own feelings and not those superimposed by their parents. More parents are learning that they should not spend energy fretting about how they will protect their children because a simple, honest approach is what benefits both children and parents alike. Going through the loss of a child is hard enough, but to do so while raising a child is an additional challenge. Using the same skills that are used to cope with other parenting challenges can help a family through this crisis. I hope this newsletter offers some insights and remember, take it one day at a time, set a good example, follow your heart and your children will learn the lessons they need for life.

*By Darla Harmon ❖***Internet Resources on Sibling Grief**

Helping After Neonatal Death (HAND)
<http://www.handonline.org/parents/siblings.html>

The National Center for Grieving Children and Their Families
 The Dougy Center
 P.O. Box 86852
 Portland, Oregon 97286
<http://www.dougy.org>

Fernside, A Center for Grieving Children
 2303 Indian Mound Avenue
 Cincinnati, Ohio 45212
 (513) 841-1012
<http://www.fernside.org>

Compassionate Friends Inc.
 National Headquarters
 P.O. Box 3696
 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

Twinless Twins Support Group, International
<http://www.twinlesstwins.org/>

Teen Age Grief, Inc.
 P.O. Box 220034
 Newhall, CA 91322-0034
<http://www.smartlink.net/~tag/>

National SHARE Office, Infant & Pregnancy Loss
 St. Joseph Health Center
 300 First Capitol Drive
 St. Charles, Missouri 63301-2893
 1-800-821-6819
<http://www.nationalshareoffice.com>

Center for Loss and Life Transition
 3735 Broken Bow Road
 Fort Collins, CO 80526
<http://www.centerforloss.com> ❖

Do not tell me I am strong
 You only see my days
 Filled with details and work

You have never shared my nights
 Long evenings empty
 Except for memories and tears

My despair is sacrificed to responsibility
 You would be strong too
 If you had no other choice

By Kim Knapp

Helping Siblings Grieve - Little Byron's Story

By **Rebekah Mitchell, President of MEND** (Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death) <http://www.mend.org>

Shortly after hearing the heartwrenching news that my little Jonathan was dead, I was overcome with the horror of knowing we were going to have to tell Little Byron (then age 3 1/2) that his little brother died. We weren't sure how to explain this to him nor did we know if we should even let him see Jonathan. Thankfully, our pastor strongly advised us to let him see the baby and he wisely counseled us with, "after all, it is his brother."

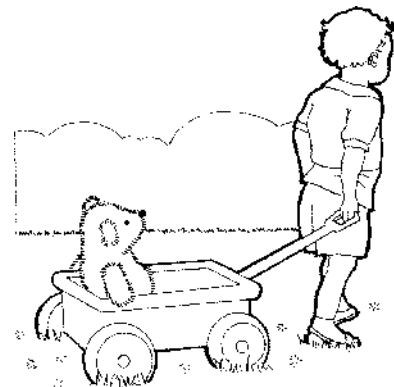
I will never forget the day following Jonathan's stillbirth when someone brought Little Byron to my hospital room. We had Jonathan with us and Byron and I debated if we should have Jonathan in our arms when we told Little Byron or if we should put the baby in the isolette. We decided that if we were holding the baby when Little Byron came in that he would get too excited about his birth before we were able to break the news to him that the baby was not alive. So, we opted to put Jonathan in his little crib. When Little Byron came into the room, his Daddy and I were overcome with deep emotion and began sobbing uncontrollably. I finally was able to say, "our baby 'popped out' last night" (the term we had used throughout the pregnancy). His little face filled with delight then quickly changed to a look of confusion as his Daddy and I continued to sob. I wasn't sure what to tell him next so I told him that Jonathan was too little to live. We pointed to the isolette and told him Jonathan was in it and asked him if he wanted to hold his little brother. He chose not to hold him, but he did kiss his little head and we took pictures of them together.

A few weeks later I realized I was not being truthful with Little Byron about the cause of Jonathan's death. I didn't think he would comprehend what a "cord accident" meant so at the time, I really thought I was doing the right thing by telling him that Jonathan was just too little. But that just was not the truth - he wasn't too little. So, I began explaining to him about a water hose and how if you bend it, the water will not continue to flow and that's what happens to the cord if it gets bent. He understood this example quite well and I think it helped answer some questions that he hadn't known how to ask.

During our first year of grief, Little Byron saw his Daddy and me cry a lot. I read that it was better to let your surviving child(ren) see their parents grieve. The books suggested that if children are not included in the grieving process, they will not be able to fully understand what happened and can begin to blame themselves for the trouble and sadness in the home. Many times when Little Byron saw me crying he would ask if I was "crying about Jonathan again." I would tell him yes and ask him if it was okay. Sometimes he would say yes and try to comfort me with his little hugs and soft kisses and at other times he would say no and walk out of the room. I was deeply pained that my three year old had to deal with the harshness of death at such a tender age. But, now I'm glad that he knows the reality and finality of death and has an incredibly realistic view of life - and death - at seven years old.

Although it's been 3 1/2 years since we lost Jonathan, Little Byron has recently realized a cruel reality. Since Jonathan's death, Little Byron has thought of Jonathan as a "baby". It never occurred to him until about four months ago that Jonathan would now be a "kid" with whom he could play. A few weeks ago, he literally cried himself to sleep because Jonathan wasn't here. It broke my heart to see him so upset and I felt helpless knowing there was nothing I could do to change his being an "only child". Never did I dream at the time of Jonathan's death that we would still have to deal with such raw emotions three years later. All I could do is pray for God's "peace that passes all understanding" over my seven year old and ask that someday the desire of our hearts would be met with the blessing of another baby.

If you have a child at home and you are not "sharing" your grief with him, I encourage you to do so. On occasion, you might want to ask your child what he thinks about the baby you lost; if he has any questions or wants to talk about it. And, I hope as you read this issue, you will gain insight on how to deal with your child as you read the stories of other families and their children in grief. ❖



Sibling to Sibling What helped you deal with losing you baby brother or sister?

Going to the funeral in a special black car, with Chad's casket on the front seat. Looking through "Chad box" at all his special stuff, and pictures. It helped me to go to the HUG group at Hospice, we drew pictures, played games, made collages and popsicle dolls. — *Kirstin Age 10*

Having time alone helped. It helped me ponder what just happened in my life. — *Austin Age 14*

There are a lot of things that come to mind but probably the most helpful were my parents. We didn't have HAND then and something like this was completely unheard of... I mean I had never heard of it. I wanted to hold him, but there was no one there to reassure my parents that it was a healthy thing for kids. Things would have been so different if we had HAND then. I can still remember hearing the horrid news over the phone. It was pretty devastating. My parents helped us to know that our pain was *real* even though the rest of the world would have us think that we had no reason to mourn... after all, we still had one baby left...right? My parents were definitely the most helpful. We also got into this little support group called HUG Hanging Up Grief, through Hospice of Modesto. It helped us to meet other kids who were going through death also. For me, it really opened my eyes to the fact that death wasn't just in movies, and that it was a very real thing. Another thing that helped me was the constant love of my family... immediate and extended... there is nothing more comforting than the love and kindness of your family. A lot of friends were lost through that experience because of weird feelings (I guess they thought we turned into aliens over the experience) but all we really needed was their friendship and solidity. It gets like that though... you never know who will act what way when put under a very straining situation. Even though these things have helped me in the past, they still help me now. The mourning and pain never leave, just somehow we get strong enough to bear it more effectively. I am grateful for HAND...now that it is a part of my life... it helps a lot... and I see it helping my other family members. — *Britnie Age 17*

Having mommy and Daddy hold me and rock me while I cried and missed my Chaddy. I like to look at his pictures, and share my happy birthdays at his grave. I still miss him every day. — *Jace Age 5*

I think it's important for parents to understand that an older brother or sister may or may not grieve and that whatever they're feeling is okay. Sometimes I felt people expected me to be more sad or upset than I was. I was six when my little brother died and the hardest part for me wasn't his death, it was the watching all the grown-ups around me in terrible pain. I lost my brother, but I lost my mother (emotionally) for a long, long time and that was much harder for me. What helped was being reassured that I was loved and an important part of my family. It also helped to have a place to go (my grandparents) every once in awhile where things felt 'normal'. — *Sarah Age 16*

I was 3 years old when my brother Nathan died. He was stillborn. I didn't understand why everyone was sad about the new baby. I just wanted to see him. I am glad I got to see him and sit with him. We have pictures of me with my baby brother. These are very special. My Mom made a special Nathan bag for me. It has blankets, books and toys that remind me of him. When I miss him I bring it out and think of him. It really helped to have my Grammy, Grandma, Auntie and Sissy around for the times that my Mommy and Daddy were really sad. — *Jessica Age 6*

I was five when my brother died. I asked that Mom and Dad take me to the store and buy a Batman set. I left one of the Batman's in the casket with my brother and kept the other one. Batman was a special thing to me. I wanted to send him with a gift. Something we both could share. — *Kenneth Age 10*

HAND SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Pregnancy and Infant Loss

Central Valley:

The first, third and fifth Sunday of the month. 7-9 pm.

Fremont:

The first and third Wednesday of the month. 7-9 pm

Pleasanton:

The second Thursday of each month. 7-8:30 pm

Santa Clara:

The first and third Thursday of the month. 7:30-9 pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy

Fremont:

The second Saturday of each month. 1:30-3:30 pm.

Santa Clara:

The second Thursday of each month. 7:30-9:30pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Groups are available on an "as needed" basis. Please contact HAND for specific information on a group in your area.

For more information on any of the support groups, please call (408) 995-6102 or if you are calling outside the 408 area code, call toll-free (888) 908-HAND (4263)

Poetry Anyone?

The next issue of Handprints will feature poetry about infant loss. If you have any to share please contact Darla Harmon at handprints@handonline.org

Suggested Reading on Sibling Grief

Am I Still A Big Sister?, by Audrey Bernheimer Weir, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross calls this "a wonderful book for siblings who have lost a brother or sister."

Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley

Dancing on the Moon, by Janice Roper, Recommended for children age 3-8. A young girl has a dream that she journeyed to find her infant brother who has died. In the end, she realizes, he will be with her always, in her heart.

For Those Who Live: Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Brother or Sister, by Kathy LaTour, A book to help children cope with the death of a sibling.

Heaven's Not a Crying Place: Teaching Your Child About Funerals, Death, and the Life Beyond, by Joey O'Connor

Helping Children Cope With the Loss of a Loved One, by William C. Kroen, The offers advice on what can we say to a child who has lost a sibling, parent, or other loved one and how can we be sure to say and do the right things without adding to the child's confusion and grief. He explains how children from infancy through age 18 perceive and react to death, and offers suggestions on how we can respond to children at the different ages and stages.

Life & Loss: A Guide To Help Grieving Children, by Linda Goldman, A guide for adults, including teachers and social workers, to give them information to support children in grief. Chapters include Children's Loss and Grief, Myths of Grief, Techniques for Grief, Preparing a Goodbye Visit.

Molly's Rosebush, Janice Cohn, Certainly one of the nicest children's books available on the topic of miscarriage. The story is told in a straightforward manner and openly confronts the fears that might confront siblings after a miscarriage. It is fully illustrated and recommended for children aged pre-school to second grade.

My Always Sister, Available from A Place to Remember, (800) 631-0973. In this 16-pg coloring book, Callie remembers back to when her baby sister, Laura, was born and died. Through her story, other children experiencing the death of an infant sibling will be able to relate to the feelings of fear, anger, sadness and eventually acceptance that Callie tells about. The large, easy to color pictures provide another outlet for children to express their own emotions as they process their grief.

No New Baby, by Marilyn Bryte, For children whose new baby brother or sister dies through miscarriage. A Grandmother explains how they are not to blame, and how there are not always answers for tough questions. Also affirms the normalcy of play during grief.

Our Baby Died. Why?, by Jake Erling, Seven-year-old Jake Erling tells the story of his dreams for a new brother and devastation when Jesse is stillborn. He shares his grief experience from a child's perspective, and relates an accounting of the subsequent pregnancy and birth of his twin siblings. The booklet is a place for children who have had a baby brother or sister die, to journal their thoughts and feelings. Questions are posed throughout the book and space is provided for children to write or draw their response.

Suggested Reading continued on page 11

Donations Made By...

Kat Collins Sabrina Hanae Lund
 Katie Freeman in honor of HAND
 Chris and Pam Galvan Noah Christopher Galvan
 William Ross Sabrina Hanae Lund
 Jay & Anna Shah Tara Maria Cherian Borchers
 Mike Smith wife Lynn and son Samuel Smith
 Chuck & Cherisse White Montana Lafayette White

In Memory of...

Please accept our warmest thanks to those who have made donations to HAND.

Even your Pets can support HAND through eScrip!!

Pet Food Express has registered with eScrip. There are stores in Castro Valley, Concord, Fremont, Livermore, Redwood City, San Jose, San Leandro, San Ramon and Walnut Creek (to name a few). Register your favorite credit cards, ATM cards, debit cards and/or grocery loyalty cards with Electronic Scrip, Inc. A contribution is automatically made to HAND *in your name* each time you shop using your registered cards at eScrip merchants (such as Safeway or Big 5) at no additional cost to you! You can go to www.escrip.com for more information and/or to register online. When registering, eScrip will ask you for HAND's ID: **6079995**
 Thank you for your support!

Suggested Reading *continued from page 10*

Sibling Grief, by Marcia G. Scherago. A small, well put together pamphlet written by a clinical social worker who is also a bereaved parent that provides excellent information to help children following the death of a sibling.

Stacy Had A Little Sister, by Wendie C. Old, This book is beautifully illustrated and speaks to the issues and concerns of many siblings who have lost a baby brother or sister. Recommended for preschoolers through the third grade.

Tell Me, Papa, by Joy and Marvin Johnson. This is a family book for answering children's questions about death and funerals.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf, by Leo Buscaglia, A touching story describing the cycle of life. The portrayal of Daniel as the wise old leaf that explains life and death to Freddie is very well done. The photographs add a special warmth to the book.

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child, by Dougy Center Staff (Editor)

Thumpy's Story: The Story of Grief and Loss Shared by Thumpy the Bunny, by Nancy Dodge, Thumpy's sister has died because she is not strong enough to go on living. A story for ages 5-10.

Unsung Lullabies, Booklet available through HAND (888)908-4263.

Where's Jess?, by Ray and Jody Goldstein, A booklet for siblings whose baby brother or sister dies through miscarriage, stillbirth or newborn death. Softly introduces the changes that come in a family. Gently presented for youngsters 2-5 years of age.

If you would like to purchase a book you can do so and benefit HAND too!
 Go to our website <http://www.handonline.org> and click on our Amazon.com link and Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase to HAND.

Many of the above books are available from A Place to Remember, (800) 631-0973 <http://www.aplacetoremember.com>

RESOURCES

HAND of the Peninsula
 Post Office Box 3693
 Redwood City, CA 94064
 (650) 692-6655 crisis line
 (650) 367-6993 business office
Provides services to the San Mateo and Santa Cruz County areas.

Community Hospice, Inc.
 601 McHenry Avenue
 Modesto, CA 95350-5443
 (209) 577-0615
Provides support groups including "HUG" Hanging Up Grief - Childrens Support Group for ages 5-12.

Be sure to visit the Resource pages @ handonline.org for other grief-related support groups in Northern California.

Subsequent Babies

Darwin Jack Allisany
 Stephanie Ellis and
 Atarbes Gorman
 April 6th, 2002

Isabelle Grace Yu
 Rose and Ross Yu
 July 19, 2002

Please note that the above parents have experienced a loss prior to the birth of these new babies.



Handprints is a quarterly newsletter for bereaved parents. Contributions or donations made in memory of your special baby are always welcome.



Your Little Brother

Oh little Hayley in the sky so blue,
You have a brother that we wish you knew.

His big toothless grin would make you smile,
This beautiful boy we call Kyle.

Your things are now his, we didn't think you'd mind.
Oh so much you left behind.

A room fixed up just for you.
A dog to play with, and a cat, too.

Your unused clothes were finally worn.
One of the many reminders you were born.

One day we will tell him you were here
and how we keep your memory dear.

We will say you live in the heavens above
and that his big sister sends her love.

By Anne Stenehjem

Handprints Newsletter

Helping After Neonatal Death
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031

NON - PROFIT
U.S. Postage

PAID

Los Gatos, CA
Permit No. 214

