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Helping Hands

Fall 2009

Finding emotional harmony

By Sherry Russell

Have you ever said, "that won't ever happen to me"? Research shows that 95 percent of the people in this country believe just that. Nothing will happen to them. It is also reported that at least 60 percent of the population has indeed been affected by tragedy.

Constantly trying to make sense out of the senseless is one way we try to gain control back into our lives. It provides a way to feel safe and comfortable in our own skins again. If we can connect the dots finding reason to what has happened we feel better. We strive for control of our emotional balance to enable ourselves to go on to a life filled with everyday purpose. It seems that one disaster is out-shocking the last one. Oozing heart wounds are opened up once again and shadow grief creeps in. Shadow grief is defined as being the part of the grieving process that is triggered by various times, smells, places and/or events that remind us of a past grief. Signs of shadow grief include a loss of energy, focus and interest. That feeling of "powerless to make a difference" pounces on us invading our self-esteem. One way we have learned to deal with shadow grief is by remembering anniversary dates of our losses by coming together ceremoniously sharing sorrow and opening up healing.

These crises lead us to some painful aftereffects. Our family and friends yearn for time to stand still. These losses force us to dig deep seeking our internal compass -- a compass that leads us in the direction for gaining back control in our life and directs us to the actions we will take in finding harmony.

Conquering life's hurtles requires concerted effort in gaining back control and finding emotional harmony. Constantly being forced to rethink our values and to stir up our spirits puts us in the mode of exploration -- of ourselves. This exploration will reveal to us how to crystallize our thinking. We discover the importance of taking responsibility for our emotions. We recognize what we can change and control about ourselves. We find and muster up courage to face our fears. Finally we clear our minds of junk speak which is the negative thinking rooted in our fear of being out of control. Negative junk speak includes seeing things as extremes. It is the "all or nothing" kind of thinking. Self-defacing comments in which we label ourselves or in which we blame ourselves prove to be an example of our unyielding perfectionist expectation of situations. This continues on as the junk speak makes us feel helpless and completely out of control. By using posi-

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HAND of the Peninsula

Ways to support HAND parents

Among the many ways one may honor the memory of their children is to give back to the organization and ensure that HAND of the Peninsula will continue to provide the caring support and other vital services for which it has become well known over nearly three decades in existence.

As a 501c3 non profit, HAND of the Peninsula is governed by a Board of Directors which welcomes new members who bring fresh ideas, talent and energy to our common endeavor. The Board meetings are held quarterly in the evenings on the fourth Wednesday of the month. HAND of the Peninsula is run exclusively by parents who have experienced a loss and financed entirely with donations from parents, family and friends. Without their support, HAND would cease to exist. Consider getting involved in any of the following ways:

- * **Schedule and/or facilitate inservice trainings where a sharing parent tells their personal story to healthcare providers interested in learning how to be more sensitive and helpful to parents experiencing a loss.**
- * **Library organization and management.**
- * **Write and edit the quarterly newsletter, *Helping Hands*, get it to the printer and post office.**
- * **Distribute brochures to area hospitals which in turn give these to parents experiencing a loss.**
- * **Bookkeeping and accounting**
- * **Fundraising (donations are our sole support)**
- * **Special event coordination such as annual Service of Remembrance, Volunteer Appreciation, Scrapbooking or other creative activity workshop, etc.**
- * **Anniversary and Special Dates remembrance**
- * **Schedule meeting facilitators**
- * **Attend training and become a meeting facilitator or phone support volunteer.**

If you have a talent you wish to share or would like to learn more about ways to get involved and support parents please email: volunteers@HANDsupport.org or call (650) 367-6993.

Helping After Neonatal Death

Chapters:

HAND of the Peninsula

HAND of Santa Cruz County

HAND of Antioch

HAND of San Francisco

**P.O. Box 3693
Redwood City, CA 94064
(650) 579-0350 crisis line
(650) 367-6993 office
<http://www.HANDsupport.org>**

**HAND of Santa Clara,
Contra Costa, Alameda
Counties, Central Valley
(408) 955-6102
1-888-908-HAND**

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Helping Hands

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tive speak we will find harmony. Concentrate on what we did "good" today and give a "pat on the back" credit. Balance the scales on situations. By finding the pros and the cons we can filter out what we can not change and focus in on what we can change. Look to the future. By opening up our minds to see the big picture we can rise above and not get stuck in the details. Work on being flexible. Not everything can go or will go our way, staying flexible ignites our ability to find alternate resources.

How we respond to loss is the key factor to our emotional harmony. Each tragedy becomes a formidable opponent to our coping skills and to our ability for leading a normal life. The following are helpful ways to develop good coping skills:

Talking is an incredible healing instrument. When we communicate our feelings we can better understand our thought processes. As we listen to ourselves, we need to check our words for junk speak or positive speak. Talk with a friend, family member, clergy, or with a professional. Some people find it comfortable to talk to groups or in a group setting. Some have a much harder time. For those of us who find it difficult to share inner most feelings, try a video camera and play it back to witness your words. Talking and sharing our stories fosters others as well as ourselves. Lending an ear to others for sharing their stories of emotional peaks and valleys helps us restore our own emotional harmony.

Stinging tragedies do leave us feeling injured and defenseless, however when we keep our internal compass always heading towards emotional harmony we do come

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Emotional Harmony

- **Stay connected with people**
- **Maintain your regular routine**
- **Make sure you take time to laugh and relax**
- **Volunteer, send donations, give blood, take a first aid class**
- **Take vitamin C. It supports the immune system**
- **Take B-complex. It supports the body's ability to handle stress**
- **Get your body moving. Even light exercise helps with the stress level**
- **Get plenty of rest and eat well**
- **Spend time with those you love**
- **Recall how you have handled intense emotions in the past**
- **Channel energy into something creative. Write in a journal. Try art or music therapy**
- **Reconnect with nature**
- **Don't cover up your feelings with overeating, over drinking, or over medicating**
- **Focus on your spiritual beliefs**
- **Redirect anger into a passion for a positive cause**
- **Drink lots of water with lemon for balancing the body's pH level**
- **Plan your time well**
- **Take time out to get perspective**
- **Get active in a hobby**
- **Learn to ask for help**
- **Communicate how you feel**
- **Say "no" when you need to**
- **Talk and then talk some more**

Support Meetings

Support meetings are informal gatherings where parents can receive and give support by sharing common experiences as we work through and resolve our loss. We cordially invite you to attend.

Meetings may start out with a topic of discussion, but everyone is free to bring up any questions or aspects of their loss which may concern them.

Attending your first meeting does take courage, but parents who attend find a comforting network of support, encouragement, friendship and understanding.

Nothing is required of you. There are no dues or fees. You need not speak one word. Even if you no longer need the meetings for yourself, come and share your experiences with someone who has recently suffered a loss.

HAND of the Peninsula

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

Contact: (650) 367-6993

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 2 and 16
Oct. 7 and 21
Nov. 4 and 11
Dec. 2 and 16

NEW Location: Follow signs to Palm Room at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., San Mateo

HAND of Santa Cruz Co.

Support meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 16
Oct. 21
Nov. 18
Dec. 16

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel

New Chapters

HAND of Antioch

Support meetings are held on the first and third Thursday of the month. Contact Elham Raoufian, (925) 437-3406 for location.

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 3 and 17
Oct. 8 and 22
Nov. 5 and 19
Dec. 3 and 17

HAND of San Francisco

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Chris Lehr, LCSW (415) 282-7330

Time: 6:30-8:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 2 and 16
Oct. 7 and 21
Nov. 4 and 18
Dec. 2 and 16

Location: Davies Campus California Pacific Medical Center, Support Service Conference Room, Level B, Castro at Duboce Streets, San Francisco

Pregnancy Support Meetings

Parents who are pregnant again after a loss have special emotional and psychological needs. Pregnancy Support Group meetings address the concerns of bereaved parents who have started or are thinking about starting another pregnancy. Fathers are especially encouraged to attend.

HAND of the Peninsula holds subsequent pregnancy support meetings on the second Wednesday of the month at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., in San Mateo. Contact: (650) 367-6993.

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 9
Oct. 14
Nov. 11
Dec. 9

HAND of Santa Cruz subsequent pregnancy meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact: Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Sept. 2
Oct. 7
Nov. 4
Dec. 2

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel

Births

Raya Marie Hannoush — April 15, 2009, to Rami and Rana Hannoush

Miles Benjamin Hoppe — June 11, 2009, to Carlen and Jennifer Hoppe and big brother Ellis

Donations

Our warmest thanks to those who have sent donations to HAND of the Peninsula. It is through your support that HAND is able to grow and help others.

Anna and Rob Strong

Clara Perez

Cynthia Johnson and Allen Perry

Ellen and Stephen Hill

Emily Mockett and Phil

Hutcherson, in honor of Julia Unitarian Universalist

Fellowship

Linda and Scott Harrison, in memory of Miles Harrison on his 3rd birthday

Genentech Givingstation, matching gift for donation by

Piyush and Deepti Jain

Rose and Max Fonda, in loving memory of Laura Rose Fonda on her 21st birthday, March 25, 2009

Michele and Mark Hollar, in memory of William Adam Hollar

HAND of the Peninsula

Invites you to our annual
SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Huddart Park's Miwok Shelter in Woodside

10 a.m. Saturday, October 17, 2009

All parents, relatives and friends are invited to join others to remember their babies. Infants' names and dates submitted by October 12 to fandl@muenn.net will be read at the service, along with personal readings, music and reflections.

Breakfast beverages and snacks will be served and wildflower seeds to scatter will be provided. To volunteer and for any other information, please email info@HANDsupport.org or call (650) 367-6993.

Huddart Park parking is \$5.

From highways 280 or 101, take the Woodside Road exit. Drive 1.5 miles west past the Woodside Road/Highway 280 intersection to Kings Mountain Road, turn right. Drive 2.3 miles to park entrance on the right. Ranger will direct you to the Miwok shelter area.

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back to center. Each experience springs forth positive growth. We stop taking our loved ones for granted. We no longer have to be woodenly professional in expressing ourselves. We can cry and we can reach out for help and it is not conceived as weakness. We understand more and more that the most important time is "now". Yesterday is gone and tomorrow hasn't arrived so live in the moment while preparing for the future. By understanding that we are not singled out in tragedies we can except the idea that "things happen". We can't control when they happen or to whom they happen, but they will happen.

Reaching out and supporting others acts as a healing wand for the soul. Tragedies unite us in

sadness and weariness. We may get weary of our weariness but we can never turn a blind heart to others. The shock and pain must be dealt with as each tragedy blasts us out of our comfort zone. Tragedy can bring out the seamy underbelly of human nature or it can weave us together in support of the immediately affected people. Let's choose not to "waste" suffering. Let's choose to use heartache as a stepping stone to finding greater strength, courage, and respect for all life. Living life to the fullest with dignity and grace is achievable though emotional harmony.

Sherry Russell is a grief management specialist, speaker and author. She writes a monthly column coping with loss at <http://www.the-bright-side.org/site/thebrightside/>