

# Forever Angels



*Hello Everyone,*

*We just buried my father-in-law, Mel, and while he lived a long and wonderful life (just 6 weeks shy of 93), he had few regrets. One major regret was losing his first love at the age of 69 years to bone cancer. He travelled much and lived in his home of 28 years until the end. He was still driving, though less and less. He knew when he could or if he needed a lift. My husband was at his side when he passed and while Arthur struggled to breath for two for a much-loved father, it was all in vain. He was a wonderful, involved and loving grandparent and he will be sorely missed. It was an honour these past 30 years watching a father and son whom loved each other dearly, even when they disagreed. We cannot always choose when we will die but we can choose how we will live.*

*While Forever Angels is a shared communication for parents losing children, it is recognized that the loss of a child cannot be compared with the loss of an adult whom has lived a full and rich life. Nevertheless each loss has similarities: the permanence of separation; fear of being alone; emptiness; being left with things unsaid; being aware of never enough time in which to express our love; helplessness; an aching heart. For our family losing Mel is very difficult but the order is how it should be and represents the Circle of Life. It is not an unfair loss in which a young someone never has a chance to fully explore or contribute to that Circle.*

*The Jewish way of death and dying has some comforting rituals and they make a lot of sense for a grieving family. I will share some of those rituals with you. It is a mitzvah (good deed) to be with a person at the time of their death. After death someone remains with the body until burial. This is to honour the deceased by not abandoning him. It is against Jewish beliefs to cremate a body or treat it with chemical preservatives. If an individual wishes to donate organs, it can be done but if the organs are not used, they must be buried not cremated. Burial occurs in a simple shroud and in an ordinary wooden box. A young man above the age of 13 years would, however, also be buried in his prayer shawl. If at all possible, a body is buried on the day of death but not on the Jewish Sabbath, from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night. A quick burial shows respect for and honours the deceased.*

*After the funeral, the family is given time to grieve alone. Close friends bring food to the mourners as a gesture of the continuance of life. For seven days, Shiva (meaning "seven"), is sat and the family receives friends and relatives in their homes. Mirrors in the home are covered so that the grieving do not think of themselves but of the deceased. In Orthodox homes, the men do not shave and the women do not put on make-up or fuss with their hair. Daily attendance at synagogue is encouraged for a year to say a prayer for the deceased.*

*Jewish events are lunar and the synagogue will let the family know on an annual basis when Kadish (the mourner's prayer) is to be said for the deceased. A special candle is lit and it burns for 24 hours.*

*One of my favorite traditions is that when babies are born into the family each is named for a deceased loved one. The parents can either use the same name, or a derivative from the first initial of the deceased. As a result, every Jewish person is named for a deceased loved one and their memory is therefore kept alive.*

*If you would like to share your religious traditions for death and burial, please write in. No matter which religion we are, we must all face death at some point and we must all eventually travel the same difficult path. While there is commonality in our differences, also much solace and comfort can be found within the traditions we are each accustomed to.*

*As always,  
Thinking of you,  
Lynda*

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***Death leaves a heartache, no one can heal.  
Love leaves a memory no one can steal.***

~from an obituary

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***The following is reprinted with permission from Bev Swanson's Grief Connection Letter, August & September, 2007, #32, [www.copingwithgrief.com](http://www.copingwithgrief.com)***

### **Some Concrete Ways to Flow With the Shifts And Changes in the Grieving Process**

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Grieving changes us. We are never the same after a deep loss. Often folks are deeper and stronger and more understanding. But for some sadly grief leaves them bitter and hard.

None the less, I do believe that we have a some choice in which happens. We can choose to grow through the pain and become better people (not easy work at all mind you, but rewarding). As you enter into the huge change and shift in your world, there are some ways to enter into the process and cope with the changes. I shall list some of these here to help to focus your process.

- \* Breathe into each moment. Do not try to do it all at once or even think about the whole thing at once. It will may serve to paralyze you and make it feel even harder than it is.
- \* Take companions with you along the way who are gracious, loving and understanding of where you are in the process.
- \* Don't force things. Allow yourself to move through this process in whatever way you can at that moment. If you are not ready for a particular change yet, then wait. Allow the process to unfold. It will in ways you cannot imagine.
- \* Don't try to change too many things all at once. Some people think they have to move things out or change things right away. In fact it is not considered to be wise to do this too quickly as we sometimes make decisions that are not clear when our minds and hearts are muddled with the pain of our grief.
- \* Keep doors open. Even if you are not ready to enter into the new way of being, wait and allow your heart to catch up with your feet. It is not necessary to close doors. This is the time to feel and heal.

- \* Be gentle with yourself. This is not an easy process and the shifts take time to learn to be with and to live with.
- \* Don't let other rush you or your process or force yourself to hurry things along. Sometimes very well meaning people who love us may want us to move forward before it is time. Allow yourself the time to make the changes you need to make.
- \* Trust your process. At first when you look at all the changes you may need to make, it can feel more than you can take. Things have ways of working themselves out as time moves forward. Be in this moment...and let the next moment come when it comes.
- \* Find something that you love and that brings you some sense of sameness to continue to be who you still are.
- \* Spend time doing things that help you to feel secure as the world around you is shifting and your reality is no longer the same. This will help to ground your experiences.
- \* Above all remember there is no right way to grieve or to enter into all the changes that come with the loss of your precious loved one.
- \* Allow yourself to come to the healing place and as you do, the ground beneath you will not feel as overwhelming and the hope will come back to your soul.
- \* Shifts in grieving are inevitable and many. Life simply changes when a loved one dies. It will never look the same again. These shifts are often devastating but they do not have to be life threatening.
- \* Sometimes shifts even move us to places of even greater health. But not by skipping around the pain. Go through your pain honestly and at a pace you can handle.

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*Please feel free to write into us about anything at all. We appreciate hearing your stories, poems, thoughts and more. If you would like a Pen Pal Connection, please let me know and I will do my best to hook you up with another grieving family. I can be reached at [loss@multiplebirthscanada.org](mailto:loss@multiplebirthscanada.org)*

**NOW ON LINE.....**

Back issues of *Forever Angels*. If you would like to read some back issues of *Forever Angels*, please check them out at the Loss Support Network section of MBC's WS at [www.multiplebirthscanada.org](http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org) or click here <http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org/english/ForeverAngels.php>.