

# Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

Many people are affected when a baby(ies) dies. Not only the parents are devastated, but so are relatives, friends, neighbours, co-workers and grandparents. I would like to focus this discussion on the Grandparents. They are often over-looked in the grief scenario and yet they carry a unique burden. Not only have they lost precious, much-wanted grandchildren but they have not been able to protect their own child against this life-altering pain and grief. A double-whammy and burden. As the parents, we would do just about anything for our children to protect them from life's difficulties, and even though we have graduated to being the grandparents, we still want to protect them nevertheless. We live in a world where we can control or impact some of what happens to us, but Mother Nature will have her way and sometimes reminds us that we cannot and will not control every aspect of our lives.

Some grandparents have shared their feelings of helplessness around not being able to protect their child and of losing a precious member(s) of their family. One grandparent noted, "I've had a good life, why couldn't it have been me?" Some have felt marginalized, while family and friends focused on the parents' loss and not the effect the loss has on theirs. Without realizing it, society focuses on the parents' loss, leaving grandparents in a quandary about not wanting to cause a stir about their feelings, pain, perhaps feeling guilty about their own survival and inability to protect their child. Sometimes the marginalization comes from the parents themselves, even inadvertently. One grandmother explained that her daughter and her husband, both doctors, told them when their twins boys died at 5 months gestation to never speak of the babies or pregnancy again. They wanted to get on with their lives and not be reminded of their losses. The grandmother asked, "As doctors wouldn't you think they would know better about grief and be more sympathetic to us? How am I supposed to go through the rest of my life never talking about or mentioning my grandsons?"

Nothing about losing a much-wanted and desired child is easy, not only for the parents but also for grandparents. As a society and as loving family and friends of a bereaved family, it is essential that we remember and also acknowledge the pain which grandparents suffer when their grandchild(ren) dies.

*Thinking of you,  
Lynda*

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## **The Loss of Twins.....**

**To our 2 wonderful sons Darren Jr and Raymond.**

**My hubby and I were planning to have a family. I got pregnant in Oct. 07 and it was confirmed on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> 07, during an ultrasound. A pregnancy test confirmed I was pregnant. Darren was so happy and content. My pregnancy was so tough and I was sick, and at the same time I was so glad and happy that my hubby was there beside me and very supportive. Every day he was messaging my belly and talking to the baby. On Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 08 I had my second ultrasound and we found out we were going to have twins, wow!! At first we were shocked but we were also very happy. We were so happy because we knew that the family would be done. Through my six months, I was able to feel the babies moving and kicking, it was so sweet to feel them alive inside me.**

**We visualized everything with our sons, like going to the park, seeing them take their first steps, hearing their first words, and teaching them our values.**

**On March 28<sup>th</sup> 08 I had an appointment with the doctor, and Darren came with me. I had gained around twelve pounds and the doctor was having difficulty finding the heartbeat of the babies. His reply was "I guess my batteries are weak. At this point I wouldn't worry much". Through the weekend I was very sick and tired.**

**On Sunday March 30<sup>th</sup> 08 in the morning my hubby and I decided to go to the emergency here in New Liskeard to be checked, as we had been worried and concerned. I was admitted immediately while Darren registered me and then came back to see me. 2 nurses came with a portable ultrasound to check the heartbeat of the twins. Then another nurse tried but unfortunately no luck. They were not able to find heartbeats.**

**The Dr. came to explain and prepared us for the worse. Darren and I held each other and cried. I was given another ultrasound (my 3<sup>rd</sup>) which lasted about 20 minutes. The technician was in touch with the doctor on call. The doctor told us our twins had passed away and I needed to be sent to North Bay General Hospital as they were better equipped to deliver the babies and make sure I stayed healthy.**

**An ambulance picked Darren and I up and we stopped at the house to pick up a few things. When we were told our babies had died inside me Darren and I both cried and it seemed the world had stopped. The biggest part of me was gone. Our dreams, hopes and future were gone. I have asked "Why me & Why us?" I can truly say Darren and I supported each through all through this.**

**We arrived in North Bay General Hospital around 2h35 p.m. I was taken to the maternity ward and a nurse was waiting for us. We had a private room. I was glad that Darren was able to stay with me through the process. I was very scared and shaky inside. About half an hour after our arrival, a nurse and the specialist explained how they would proceed. I would have to go through labor. The specialist performed another ultrasound. What a shock! I was able to see our two babies dead inside me and I was full of fluid. I've been asking myself "Why me? What did I do wrong?" I thought I did everything right: taking my vitamins, not smoking and drinking, etc. I felt very empty inside and a big part of myself and husband was gone forever. In a way, I didn't want to go through the labor: 1- for fear; and 2- I didn't want to be separated from my babies. But my health was almost in danger. According to the specialist the babies had died almost 1 week before.**

**Darren and I spoke to the chaplain and a social worker. At 4h30 p.m. on March 30<sup>th</sup>, the nurse gave me a pill to get my contractions started. I was not comfortable. Darren was able to eat and I had something light. Afterward Darren went for a coffee and a croissant for me. The only thing that was going through my mind was that I didn't want to go through the labor. I was afraid to be in pain. But from my heart I wanted to do it "for the sake of our babies." Around 7h00 p.m. the chaplain came to see us. He stayed about 1 hour and discussed what we were going through. He gave us the choice of having him come back if we needed him as he was on call until the next morning. By 8h30 p.m. the nurse gave me another pill so I could have more contractions. Labor was not very pleasant. By 9h00 p.m. I began having contractions on and off. I laid down on the bed while Darren was beside me. I wanted it to be over. The only thing going through my mind was to relax and breath for my babies. I had to give all my strength for Darren and our babies. A nurse asked if I wanted the "needle in my back" [epidural] or a pain killer. I was so scared at that time I refused but at least it was available if I needed it. Every 5-10 minutes the nurse came to check on me. Darren was always beside me, holding my hand. Both of us heard another women going through labor and screaming. We looked at each other and it bothered me because I was going through labor, giving birth to my babies whom had already died! I was angry.**

**About 10h30 p.m. the nurse came and gave me a shot of morphine and gravol. I was soon "floating" and light headed. For a good half hour I had lots of cramps and gas. In a way it made Darren and I laugh. By 11h00 p.m. it seemed I had to go to the washroom. I was sweaty and dizzy. I remember Darren asking me "if I was fine?" While I was in the washroom everything seemed strange and funny. I was pushing it seemed my water broke. I called Darren telling him to get the nurse. The nurse checked and the head of the baby was showing. Calmly Darren brought me back to bed. The nurse and Darren told me to push and breathe and Darren held my hand. Finally by 11h34 p.m. our first son Darren Gregory Jr was born. Wow! I tried to look however I had to concentrate on my second baby. The nurse went to get the doctor.**

**I only thought of delivering my second one. Still Darren was holding my hand. The only thing that was a bit "annoying" was the doctor and nurse telling me push, relax and breathe. Soon Darren was telling me too. I was so frustrated that I replied "I KNOW" in a loud voice. At 12h02 a.m. I give birth to our second son Raymond Joseph. Wow! I was proud, proud of myself and of Darren. We had 2 wonderful sons. Darren had given me 2 beautiful sons.**

**It took about 28 minutes to have Raymond because he was breech. I was shaking inside me and in tears. By 1h00 a.m. I was able to hold Darren Jr & Raymond. As a mother I had to examine every part of them. Darren Jr had his Dad's thumbs, Raymond had the color of my eyes and his Dad's nose. They stayed with us at least 45 minutes. At 2h00 a.m. the chaplain came to see us and the babies. He gave them the names we wanted and said a nice prayer for both of us and our sons. It brought lots of strength and love between Darren and I. I felt relief and in a way that our sons (angels) would be in heaven and protect us forever. The nurse was able to prepare for each a memorial box with their card, bracelet and the little hat they had been wearing.**

After a few hours of sleep, we awoke at about 7h30 a.m. Later the nurse came and told us to consider getting in touch with a funeral home and make arrangements! Wow, I was frustrated and angry! "Why us?" I've ask myself again. We've just loss our sons now we need to go through a funeral. As young parents this was the worst nightmare for us. That Monday afternoon I was scheduled for surgery, an ultrasound revealed a little bit of placenta remained in my belly. It was a half-hour surgery. Darren was waiting for me when I returned to my room. As well, that morning one of the nurses asked us if we wanted to see our sons again so we agreed. We didn't expect to see them in a small box! We were with them for at least 20 minutes and we asked if it was okay to leave a little bunny with the boys which was not a problem. It was the last time we were to see our baby boys and were able to say goodbye in our own way. On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 I was released from hospital and we went to the funeral home to sign papers. I never thought I would be doing this for my babies. No parents deserve to go through this pain. We left North Bay around 2h10 p.m., our arms empty without our sons, sad, shaking, in tears, angry, frustrated, our minds lost. We had to return all the purchases we made. Day by day we've been grieving and it's sad. It's a parent's worst nightmare losing our babies.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April '08 at 11h00 a.m. our little sons Darren Jr. & Raymond (our angels) were buried. Both of you are wanted by loving parents and you will always be remembered. We love you both forever!

I would like to thank my husband Darren, my sweetheart, my best friend for giving me two wonderful sons. I will always treasure them.

Your Mom,

Joanne

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**Courage: not the absence of fear or despair, but the strength to conquer them.** Yoga teaching

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**Do We Still Have Multiples?**

**Letter:** Thank you for this article. I have spent two years grieving my son's death and not being allowed to acknowledge it. I always felt guilty that I couldn't get over my sadness because I have his beautiful twin at home in my arms. I am no where near healed but this article expressed what I have been feeling and haven't had the words to say.

**Response:** Please accept my sincerest sympathy on your loss. It is not easy to have someone in front of you who reminds you of what should have been plus I am sure your heart must ache for your surviving son and what he will miss by way of a special comrade and brother. I'd like to encourage you to take what you need to work through your grief. If someone speaks to you about "be thankful you have one healthy son" or "get on with it," stop them in their tracks and indicate that children are not interchangeable and you really wanted the two sons you were promised. No one has a right to tell another how or when to grieve and you certainly have a right to explain that their comment, while well-intentioned, is inappropriate. You can firmly indicate what you need and let them know how you feel. Don't feel guilty about your sadness. You have lost a child and just because you do have one healthy, loving son doesn't mean you shouldn't mourn the one you lost. Sometimes people think they are doing you a favour by focusing on a live child rather than understanding that your life is altered and the future forever changed. It couldn't be further from the truth. Do what you need to remember your son. Light a special candle; if he is buried, visit his grave; make a donation in his name/honour to a children's facility near you (school, hospital, park, library) and if you feel you need to, get some professional help in handling your loss. Being with others whom understand your pain may be very helpful to you; it could be individual therapy or in a group setting or both. I can promise you the pain will pass to a degree. It remains however in a little part of our heart and lifts its head from time to time throughout our lives, perhaps at your son's school graduation, his wedding, on his birthday. Somehow we manage to live, to put our face to the warm sun, to take pleasure from a son's growth, to reach a hand out to another grieving family. Not every day is easy but it does honour whom we have lost and miss so much. Enclosing peace and comfort.

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*Loss Questionnaire from Australia.....*

**Several Australian Loss support individuals, Murraylands Twin Loss and Multiple Births Canada are exploring the current quality of care hospitals, staff and doctors provide after a multiple birth loss with the hopes of improving care and/or identifying support gaps. We greatly appreciate your taking the time to complete the Questionnaire and forwarding the completed form to Murraylands Twin Loss. If you are aware of a bereaved multiple birth family who may be interested in completing the survey, please feel free to pass these two documents along.**

*When we know better, we can do better. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this project.*

**If you have questions, please be sure and let Lynne Schulz know. Her EM address is on the explanatory letter.**