

Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

The last issue of Forever Angels solicited lots of feedback. Loss of a child or children is extremely painful and there are no hard and fast rules for handling the situation. Where the hard and fast rules exist, in my mind, is with the adults in charge. It is true the parents are grief stricken, but what they decide to do with their pain and how they choose to handle it can have a lasting effect on those around them, sometimes for a lifetime. Unfortunately sometimes the affected others are also their children whom pay a price, on several levels:

- ~the death is not explained, let alone in age-appropriate language;*
- ~survivor(s) can experience confusion around withdrawal of affection and comfort (was I a bad boy and that's why my parents are sad?);*
- ~perceived belief of the need to live up to the potential of the deceased sibling, competing with a ghost;*
- ~burden of ensuring the parents are/remain happy;*
- ~need to live a life for two or three;*
- ~loss of their own needs, wants and desires; or*
- ~living "on the edge," e.g. fearful of causing more pain, difficulty in fending for oneself.*

I'm not saying it is easy to focus on, provide support for, love a survivor(s), and there may be moments when one fails miserably. But having a genuine heart-to-heart talk, perhaps more than once, with our child(ren) goes a long way to letting them know that while we are feeling very low at the moment, we love them, we continue to be there for them and it is not their fault that we are unhappy. If one thinks for one moment that kids do not recognize that something is dreadfully wrong, we are fooling only ourselves. Kids are wired to know when their parents are very unhappy and unavailable as a result. Even young kids know - they don't have the ability to put it into words, but they do know when something is amiss. Only by facing the tragedy head on with honesty, truth, tears and lots of hugs and kisses, can healing hope to begin. Our living children should not have to pay the price for something that was completely beyond their control.

*Thinking of you,
Lynda*

The rose will cease to blow,
The eagle turn a dove,
The stream will cease to flow,
Ere I will cease to love.
The sun will cease to shine,
The world will cease to move,
The stars their light resign,
Ere I will cease to love.
From a mid-nineteenth century Valentine

Letters to the Editor.....

RE: #09-01 - Forever Angels

Dear Lynda,

I was touched by your kind and insightful answers--good newsletter! It reminded me of my friend who had twin sisters. At first they were fine, but then one of them died -- they did not tell my friend who was about six years old at the time. Almost immediately the family moved away from that house. As they got into the car, the mother brought out the surviving baby and put her into the car seat. My friend said, "What about the other one?" but no one would answer her and just drove away. She was stunned at first but then started crying and screaming -- telling them over and over that they had forgotten one of the babies. They were then forced to tell her in a way she could understand that one of them had gone to heaven. She never forgot that event.

P. Gill White
Director, The Sibling Connection

Editor: This is a sad and unfortunate handling of the situation. And the parents in charge are called "Grown Ups." Tch! There is not a moment's doubt that she was scarred by the manner this event was handled.

~~~~~

Thank you for sharing these 2 letters with us. It's been 6 months since Nicky died and as a mother, I'm so grateful that his brother Graeme has joined The Twinless Twins Association. Graeme had Nicky for 22 years and lots of good memories, no bad ones. It must be just as painful no matter how long or short twins have each other for.

All the best in 2009,

Ray (Mom of twin boys, Nick and Graeme & a singleton son. Nick died July, 2008 due to complications from surgery at age 22 years)

~~~~~

Thank you Lynda for the work you do to support those who are grieving such deep loss.

Many Blessings for the new year.
Bev Swanson, Grief Connection, B.C.

*The world may never notice
If a Snowdrop doesn't bloom,
Or even pause to wonder
If the petals fall too soon.
But every life that ever forms,
Or ever comes to be,
Touches the world in some small way
For all eternity.
The little one we longed for
Was swiftly here and gone..
But the love that was then planted
Is a light that still shines on.
And though our arms are empty,
Our hearts know what to do.
Every beating of our hearts
Says that we love you.*

~Poem from the Internet in loving Memory of Fiona Karen, infant daughter of Jason and Casey. Fiona died in Dec. 2008 aged 1 month, 5 days as a result of an undeveloped cerebellum. Fiona has a 4-year old brother, Colby.

Vanishing Twin Syndrome (VTS).....

Ques: Hi. My friend was told at her 12 week scan that there was one baby and one empty sac, at her 20 week scan she was told that there were still remnants of the empty sac visible, is this normal? Is the empty sac absorbed later in pregnancy? Thank you very much.

Response: It would depend upon exactly when the embryo died as to how much would remain at birth. For example, if the embryo died at 6 or 12 weeks gestation, there would be more to reabsorb by the later date as the embryo would be more fully formed. To complicate matters, every pregnancy is different, even for the same woman. Some woman have had a fairly early VT, say 10 weeks, and when they gave birth at 32-35 weeks, there remained a "thickening" of the remaining twin's placenta wall thought to be left from the baby's womb-mate. And some women will have nothing remaining at all at delivery. I am sorry I can't offer you a definitive answer, but I would say not to worry too much. If the remaining baby continues to be healthy and develop, then the pregnancy is definitely a success. What a caring friend you are to do this research for your friend. Best wishes.

~~~~~

**Ques:** I am 16 weeks pregnant and 2 days ago I went to get my level 2 ultrasound to check out my twins. Well, as soon as I laid on the table the tech said, "there is only one baby," as if I already knew. I was in shock and started crying because at my 7 week ultrasound there were 2 sacs and 2 heartbeats, I was in shock but thrilled. I started seeing my doctor every 2 weeks because of hyperemesis. My doctor measured me at 4 weeks ahead of what my original due date was but when I went in for my ultrasound at 16 weeks they said that the twin died early on in my pregnancy. She couldn't determine when and didn't take much time with me to answer many questions, which was kind of upsetting. The good news is that I am expecting a baby boy and he looks healthy. I am going back and forth with emotions because I was already reading and preparing for the nursery, it just makes me so sad.

**Response:** Hello, I am so sorry for your loss. It is exciting to get your mind around having twins and then devastating when everything changes so dramatically. I am sorry that the information came to you so insensitively. People don't mean to be inconsiderate but it does happen. It doesn't make things any easier and as the parents, you are left with the fallout of the news plus the way that news was delivered. If you think it would be helpful, give the feedback to the head of the department where the tech works. It might change things for someone else and everyone needs to be aware of sharing information sensitively or it should be left to the professional to deliver.

Your feelings are normal as you go back and forth, like a roller coaster, trying to make sense of an upside down world. There can also be worry for your little son. As he sounds healthy, there is no reason at all that he should be affected by the loss of his womb-mate. If you think it would be helpful, find someone safe to talk to about what you are feeling, friend, relative, professional. It is OK to reach out for the help you need at this time.

My sincere condolences on your loss.