



MISS Foundation

A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION AND HOPE FOR GRIEVING FAMILIES

MISS Foundation Selah Retreat Us! – Full of Remembrance and Rejuvenation by Gina Metcalfe, Los Angeles, Ca in memory of baby James

When my son passed away, I didn't understand how I could ever experience joy and happiness again without compromising my due grief and sadness for him. How was I supposed to survive and what would this look like? Had anyone ever experienced this? I felt so utterly alone and just wanted him back.



Missing them ...

MISS Foundation Selah Retreat Us!

Remembering Those We Love - Kindness Walks

ASU School of Nutrition & Health Promotion

Seamstress

Pieces of Our Hearts

Brona: A Memoir

Fathers Reflect of Grief

Thank you Sarah!

Compassionate Bereavement Care

International Kindness Project Day is July 27

Contact Us

submission guidelines

Want to contribute to the MISSing newsletter?
Send submissions to info@missfoundation.org for
consideration. Thank you.

Fast forward about 3 years from that time. I still want my son back and always will. It's never okay that he's not here the way he should be. My life has moved forward and many things have changed but many things have stayed the same. My rocky and sacred grief journey continues to be shaped and defined daily.

When the opportunity for the MISS Foundation Selah Retreat came about, I knew it was something I wanted to do. I just wanted to get away and really be with my grief and give it the time and attention I then felt it needed. There was also a desire to really learn how to be with someone else and their grief while remaining present, mindful, and respectful even if it was something vastly different from my own grief process. Additionally, by being with people who were different than me, it would help me define and solidify the unbreakable 'force field' around my soul and my heart that protects my beautiful boy and the fact that he is forever my child. Not even death can destroy this truth and this fact and bond cannot be shattered by anyone or anything. Ever.

Admittedly, that first night around the fire sharing (if one wanted to) and listening to the many children who have died for so many different reasons was overwhelming and intense. But it was also a great honor to be in the presence of such love. After all, we are in such pain because we love, and continue to love, deeply.

We all laughed. We cried. We joked around and it just flowed. We had many shared emotional experiences. But above all, we were not judged. None of us. We were in a safe place where we could all learn, just be, and continue growing. There was never any expectation to talk, to not talk. I learned something from every single person there and I recall this being a common experience among many of us. And even though I was around people who were both similar and strongly dissimilar to me, I discovered some universal concepts. We all miss our beloved child(ren) and we wish things were different. We want them back and we would have given anything and everything to make it okay.

While I wish this was different for us all, and that we didn't know each other in this way, there is more clarity for me on how I can live my life authentically and with meaning, while celebrating my beautiful boy in a way that doesn't compromise my just pain. To all the parents of this retreat, please know your dear children hold a special place in my heart.

Remembering Those We Love - Kindness Walks 2014

The MISS Foundation's Phoenix Chapter raised nearly \$20,000 with our first 5K Run & Memorial walk on May 17 at Midwestern University in Glendale AZ. In addition to the run/walk, there was an obstacle course, informational booths, kindness projects, the unveiling of the second part of our MISS Memorial Wall, along with presentations of awards and recognitions of our wonderful volunteers and MISS supporters. Thank you Phoenix for your hard work and ongoing efforts that support so many bereaved families nationwide.

The LA Chapter of the MISS Foundation raised \$7,229 in their second annual Kindness Walk at Elysian Park on May 18th. In addition to the walk, the special event included kindness projects and a remembrance ceremony. Thank you LA!

The Richmond VA Chapter of the MISS Foundation raised \$7646 in their second annual Kindness Walk on May 18th at the Innsbrook Picnic Area in Richmond, VA. The group not only raised funds and awareness for the MISS Foundation, they also made prayer flags for their Remembrance Project and organized a Kindness Project to collect supplies for care packages for families with a loved one in the hospital or for when they return home from the hospital. Thank you Richmond Chapter for all you do!



MISS Foundation's Illinois Chapter held a Kindness Walk on May 17th at Robert T. Jackson Clearwater Park in Mt. Prospect, Illinois. They raised \$4313. Parents brought mementos for the special memory table set up at the event. Thank you Illinois Chapter for your continued efforts.

Our Iowa Chapters also held Kindness Walks in Iowa City and Clarinda Iowa. Iowa City raised \$2040 and collected items to be donated to the Crisis Center of Johnson City. The families decorated the box for the items with the names of all of their children and messages of love. The Clarinda Chapter's event on May 10th included a butterfly release, a remembrance ceremony, poetry and music. Thank you Iowa Chapters!

The next [Kindness Walk](#) will take place in Tucson on October 4, 2014 at Children's Memorial Park.

<http://www.firstgiving.com/missfoundation/tucson-2nd-annual-kindness-walk-2014>

ASU School of Nutrition & Health Promotion

Seeking women who have experienced perinatal loss to participate in a yoga research study. Have you experienced perinatal loss within the year? You may be eligible to participate in a 12-week study.

You will be asked to:

Attend an in-person OR at-home yoga session
Attend 60 minutes of yoga per week
Wear a physical activity monitor for the duration of the study
Complete an interview at the end of the study

All participants will receive a FREE yoga mat and yoga blocks. To sign up, visit: bit.ly/EligibilityPLY

Participation is voluntary. Questions or concerns, email PLYogaASU@gmail.com or call 602-827-2314



Seamstress

By Audrey Cardany

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*Yesterday, I read stories
Sang stories, and songs too
And after singing love
To children with wide eyes
Their little arms
Spontaneously wrapped around me*

*Hugs
From children who aren't mine*

*Today, I pour cereal
Standing in the kitchen
Six-year-old Caitlin Anne
In her pink jammies and sleepy eyes
Hugs me around my legs*

*"Mama," I hear
From a child who is mine*

*A precious, sacred, imagined
And real moment
Grief, now Seamstress,
desperately stitches me
To this morning's fabric
A needle with numinous thread pulls together
Textiles of "how life should be" and
How life is*

*Alas, my sobs unsew Her work
Ripping the newly fastened seams
When convulsions subside
I find no denouement
"How," I wonder
"Can hope prevail, when Grief labors before
noon?"*

*The sorrow She embroidered upon my heart
Would not be unknotted
And I lay my head upon Her pillow
Adorned with Love's thread*

Pieces Of Our Hearts

My husband and I are struggling with our grief after the death of our newborn son. He never talks to me about him. I want to talk about him all the time. Are we headed for divorce? I keep hearing that from everyone.

Help!

*M.L.
San Francisco, Ca*

Dear M.L.,

We are so very sorry for your tragic loss of your precious son.

Grief is something that we each experience in unique ways: you and your husband both grieve your baby's death, and you may feel and express that grief differently. It isn't unusual for women and men to experience and express grief differently because of gender roles and cultural prohibitions. For example, mothers are more often encouraged to cry while fathers, from the time that they were small boys, may be discouraged from expressing their pain. Similarly, women tend to talk out their pain while men may be more task oriented, for example building or tearing down something or doing chores. These basic differences can make it hard to communicate, and sometimes increase interpersonal conflict, around your baby's death. However, these difference do not mean you are headed for divorce or that divorce naturally follows a child's death. Research suggests that the death of a child brings some couples closer (Cacciatore, DeFrain, & Jones, 2009) while some may drift apart (Shreffler, Hill, & Cacciatore, 2012). Mutual respect, good communication, quality time together, support groups, and good counseling may help.

A bereaved parent's support group is one place where many parents can explore how they feel about their child's death. A grief counselor also can walk the grief journey with you, helping you to understand your many emotions by listening and offering support, teaching effective couples communication, cultivating intimacy, and guiding you toward deepened respect and understanding for the other's journey. It's possible that your husband would be willing to attend a support group with you (even though he may not talk much there, either) or visit a grief counselor. But even if he doesn't want to go, you can attend on your

own and share some of the pain that you're feeling. By taking care of yourself in this way, you will be enabling your own sense of hope and his, too. Over time, you two may find a pace that works as a couple.

Please remember that time is relative in grief. Your job is not to move through grief quickly or to forget your baby but to remember him in any and all ways that are precious to you. Your husband's silence most likely means that he experiences his son's death differently--not indifferently!

And you are not alone. The MISS Foundation has support groups in person and online at www.missfoundation.org And you are not alone. The MISS Foundation has support groups in person and online at www.missfoundation.org and also HOPE mentors available to you. Other groups may be helpful too, like Compassionate Friends. If you're seeking a counselor, you might look for one of our certified providers near you at certification.missfoundation.org.

Our whole broken hearts to yours,
Dr Beth and Dr Jo



Dr. Beth Hewett is a Compassionate Bereavement Care Certified Provider®, grief coach, and the author of *More Good Words* and other grief-focused books.



Dr Joanne Cacciatore is an Associate Professor at Arizona State University and the founder of the MISS Foundation. Her newborn daughter, Cheyenne, died in 1994.

Brona: a memoir

The following piece is excerpted from Brona: a memoir, published by the MISS Foundation and available at the MISS Foundation store at <http://www.missfoundation.org/book/brona>. Fifty percent of the proceeds go to MISS Foundation, and 25% go to Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep.

**Excerpting from the moment Mara Hill delivers her stillborn son...*



Time froze.

One moment I was on a downward spiraling plane accelerating faster and faster as it approached the surface below, and in the next there was the crash breaking through the floor of water into a vast and suspending ocean. All chaos was drenched with overwhelming water, causing all force to slow. Things may have still been moving fast, but I was only focused on one thing.

In that one halted instant, I finally saw my baby. I could see and feel my child all at once, everything I'd been waiting for. I burst with love. I transformed through the space of one breath into a new kind of mother. I felt a tingling rush of heat, filling me with a kind of tenderness I'd never known, one that was bigger and stronger than anything I'd ever experienced. It was also heavier. It was soaked through to the core—laden, with sorrow; a dripping, drenched woe. Because I wasn't really seeing or feeling Brona. He wasn't really there.

Eli and I scooped up his slippery body from my lower midriff and pulled him up onto my chest. I bent my head down to his neck and inhaled the lightest, most delicious scent. He smelled of lilies, peaches and vanilla. I glimpsed his face, beatific and sublime. It was peaceful.

That first moment of my external motherhood would become my strongest memory. For years I would be able to close my eyes and smell his perfume, glow from his warmth, and smile at his beauty. But that was later, so much later.

Dr. Slate was speaking to Tom and Sarah to get ready to cut the cord, and Eli snapped out of his own reverie for a moment long enough to become indignant. "No, you're not cutting it now."

I looked at him in pity at the same time Dr. Slate looked at him like he was an idiot.

I said to him, in the sweetest voice I could, "Sweetheart, it doesn't matter. Honey, it doesn't matter." He looked at me without comprehension and I shook my head and repeated, "It doesn't matter."

For, in his attempt to keep any small resemblance to the birth we had planned and dreamed for, he was helpless. We had always planned on leaving the cord attached for hours afterward in order for our baby to keep all of his blood.

Through Eli's own shock and trauma, it didn't sink in that our baby was dead and that cutting the cord at any time wouldn't matter. There was no pulse of life, no flow of blood. Dr. Slate handed him the scissors and Eli, quieting his manner, cut the cord.

"Oh, Brona." I cried. He was gone. He was in my arms, but he was gone.

I was up against Eli's chest. He held us both then, Brona and me. And we gazed down together at our son in splendor and awe.

In those first moments of holding him, I pushed the sorrow away and allowed myself to feel my son. I felt his naked skin against my bare chest. There was nothing but warmth and impossible softness between us. It was a short glimpse of the bliss I missed.

I held him and at long last, I got to see what he looked like. I relished the experience. For the first time, just to make sure, I looked between his legs. Of course, Brona was a boy. Then I slowly looked at every other part of him—searching. I was aware that a piece of me was hoping that he would have some visual explanation for his death, some malformation that would have been incompatible with life.

I would have loved him just the same, but I would have understood. But he didn't. He looked like a beautiful, perfect, baby boy, my baby boy, who I had been waiting for, forever. He was breathtaking, just that. I was surprised to find I had any air in my lungs at all when looking at him. I smiled at his large hands, his double chin, his wrinkly ears and his gorgeous, full, crimson lips. I moved my eyes over his adorable, scrawny legs and then to his feet, when I burst out laughing. His feet were huge, gargantuan. I'd never seen feet so big on a newborn. They were as long as his foreleg. I grinned and laughed fully, a strange sensation, and then cried at his funny feet. I touched him gently with my finger tips, unfolding us both slowly in wonderment as any new mother would. I traced down to his small, little nipples, then his soft, round cheeks. His brown, slightly curled hair, slick and stuck to his head. His head was very molded, but, as he was dead, the bones were very movable, and I could place them just so his head was perfect and round. I could tell right away by the full creases on his feet and hands that he was truly late, definitely forty-two weeks.

I felt awful then as I could see the wrinkling of his skin, showing that he had lost weight, which can happen in late pregnancies. A guilty heaviness plunged in my belly at the knowledge. And I moaned, "I'm so sorry, Brona." I beheld his face through a haze of freely falling tears and repeated, "I-I-m-m-m s-s-o-o-o, so-o-ry. I-m so-o so-or[r]y." Fatalistically, I hoped he could hear me.

Save the Date: April 30-May 3, 2015 - MISS Foundation's Selah Retreat

Mark your calendars. The next MISS Foundation Selah Retreat for bereaved parents will be held at Sedona Mago in beautiful Sedona Arizona, April 30-May 3, 2015. We hope you will join us. Details on registration coming soon.



Birthdays & Death Days

Bi-monthly Birthdays and Death Days are now online on the MISS website.

See the Birth Days

<http://www.missfoundation.org/newsevents/birthdaysthis-month>

See the Death Days

<http://www.missfoundation.org/newsevents/deathdaysthis-month>

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Fathers Reflect on Grief

Three years later, a growing family

By Mary Ann Bashaw

Photo by Daniel Friedman

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Mary Ann Bashaw wrote her award-winning 2011 series about losing a child ("Finding Purpose in Grief"), she interviewed several fathers-including Jacob Blain Christen-for that year's June issue. Here is an update on one of the dads who bravely opened up to her to share the male perspective on grieving. Read the series at raisingarizonakids.com.

When I met Jacob Blain Christen, a software engineer, back in 2011, he was a dad in the depths of grief. That April marked the first anniversary of the loss of his infant son, Leonidis "Leo" Lucien, who succumbed to a heart defect 17 days after birth.

At the time, his wife Jennifer, a professor of electrical engineering at Arizona State University, was pregnant with their second child. She was on bed rest because her pregnancy was considered high risk. The couple was mourning Leo. The anticipation of a newborn after such a tragedy produced no small mix of emotions-what Jacob described then as feeling "happy and terrified at the same time."

Daughter Leandra Lucille, "Leelu," who celebrates her third birthday this month, was born nine weeks early, on June 9, 2011.

After the Blain Christens lost Leo, they found solace and support at the Phoenix-based MISS Foundation, a volunteer-driven organization committed to providing crisis and long-term support to families after the death of a baby or child. I often saw the couple, with Leandra on mom's or dad's hip, at various MISS events Raising Arizona Kids covered over the years.

When Jacob agreed to meet with me again, I wanted to get his perspective on family life with Leandra, without Leo.

Jacob was glad to share the news that his brood had grown to include another son Live Logan, now nine months old.

While Jacob assessed the difficulty of reliving Leo's birthday and the anniversary of his death each year-not to mention Mother's Day-he also described ways that Leo's presence endures in his family. They have honored him by releasing balloons on his birthday (he would have been 4 years old this past April). They try to include Leo's photo any time the family gathers for pictures. If anyone asks Jacob how many kids he has, he always says "three."

Jacob and Jennifer speak to Leandra and Liev about big brother Leo, though "this is an in-between time," says Jacob. The kids are still too young to grasp who Leo is and how he is still very much a member of the family.

The Blain Christens seem like a typical family-working parents busy managing the day-to-day challenges of raising small children. But their loss is anything but typical. There have been countless moments of reflection and "lots to wonder about," says Jacob. What kind of boy would Leo be today? What PBS shows would he like? How would this big brother get along with his siblings? What would be the differences, the similarities, among the three children?

Despite family demands, Jennifer tries to maintain a tie to MISS. After all, parents who have lived through the unspeakable loss of a child understand best how to support other grieving parents. The Blain Christens also attend the MISS Candlelight Memorial Celebration to honor lost children on National Children's Day, always the second Sunday in December.

This Father's Day, Jacob will remember Leo with feelings that most dads can only try to imagine. But he will also have Leandra and Liev to remind him of the joys of fatherhood.

Happy Father's Day to Jacob-father of three.

Managing editor Mary Ann Bashaw has two daughters: Claire (23) and Hannah (20).



Compassionate Bereavement Care® — Changing How Bereaved Families Are Treated Worldwide

With so few providers who understand the depth and breadth of the death of a child, the MISS Foundation, Center for Loss & Trauma and the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation have partnered to present one of the most significant, timely, intensive training programs in traumatic grief to providers around the world.

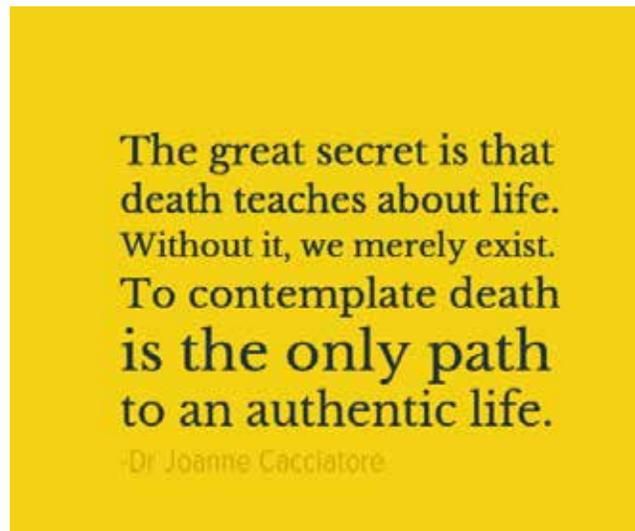
Thirty-seven providers were carefully selected from a large pool of applicants to attend the first cohort of the Compassionate Bereavement Care Training and Certification Program in beautiful Sedona, AZ, June 5-8th. Attendees included, among others, therapists, counselors, first responders, clergy, medical staff, hospice workers and bereavement specialists. Dr. Joanne Cacciatore taught the 4-day, 30-hour course specializing in a mindfulness-based, non-medicalized approach to working with families suffering a traumatic loss such as the death of a child. The training was transformative and compelling, according to attendees.

"I just completed this life changing certification program. I have attended many many conferences over the years as a Registered Nurse but this was my first since my traumatic loss. A profound experience on a personal as well as professional level." – Registered Nurse from Boston, MA

"The training was so profound; I am still processing it. Thank you for all you do to facilitate this worthwhile training." – Counselor, State of AZ

"The conference was the best conference I have ever attended and I feel very honored to be among those that were there to receive this certification!" – Counselor, State of AZ

"Thank you for all of your hard work. The training was amazing!" – First Responder



<http://certification.missfoundation.org>

Next CBC Training & Certification Program is January 8-15, 2015 at the Amara Resort in Sedona AZ. Applications currently being accepted.

Thank You Sarah!

The MISS Foundation is sad to lose our wonderful assistant Sarah Henderson as she starts her full-time position with A New Leaf in August. She graduated in May from ASU with her masters degree in social work. She was accepted and completed training in the Compassionate Bereavement Care® Training & Certification Program in June. We are so grateful for her dedication, many talents, unparalleled compassion and hard work since she began helping MISS in December of 2012. She will continue to be involved with the MISS Foundation and our programs in the future. We look forward to her ongoing success and wish her the best of luck. Thank you Sarah!



International Kindness Project Day is July 27th - Please Join

What if there was an opportunity to administer a simple dose of genuine goodness into the life of any given person, on any given day? And, what if this opportunity also offered a glimpse into the true meaning of life, love and loss, while honoring the lives of loved ones who died?

On July 27th, 2014, The MISS Foundation's International Kindness

Project Day will provide just this opportunity. The Kindness Project was established in 1996 as a way for families to honor and remember their children who have died, sharing their stories with others who never had a chance to know them. Since its creation, nearly 2 million Kindness Project cards have been used internationally, to remember children, grandchildren, siblings, and spouses.

So, how does it work? It is simple! Visit www.kindnessprojectday.org to print FREE Kindness Project cards in both English and Spanish that read, "This Random Act of Kindness Done in Loving Memory of _____". Your child or loved one's life, will be shared with the recipient as they hold a free balloon, sip a purchased cup of coffee, or a child discovers a toy at his front door. The ideas are endless!

In addition to the impact left on the recipient, The Kindness Project also opens the door to healing for those doing the kindness. Dr. Cacciatore, "The grief for our loved ones will always be there, and the Kindness Project is a tangible way to bring their love into the world too. This project changes lives of the both the giver and the receiver."

The KindnessProjectDay.org site hosts an entire page of Kindness Project ideas if you need a little spark of inspiration, and the MISS Foundation wants to hear all your Kindness Project stories during this year's events. Stories are shared forward in our newsletters and on our Facebook pages to keep inspiring others to participate in the Kindness Project all year.

For more information, please contact info@missfoundation.org. Visit our website at www.KindnessProjectDay.org and our IKPD Facebook page for our current projects at <https://www.facebook.com/MISSFoundationKindnessProject>. Those who use twitter can use #kindnessproject, when posting your kindnesses.

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