



# JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario  
Toronto  
Founded in 1978



## WHAT'S INSIDE

02

- Surviving the Seasons... continued

03

- After the Death of a Child

04

- New in the Library
- Just Published

05

- In Memoriam
- Poems

06

- Tree of Light
- She Can't Begin
- Congratulations

07

- Colourful Journey's
- Widowed Parents

08

- BFO-Toronto News

Please Note our Email address & Website:  
**info@bfotoronto.ca**  
**bfotoronto.ca**  
**soul2soul.ca**

**Next Issue:**

Nov/Dec 2007

**Submission Deadline:**

October 19, 2007

**Mailing:**

November 2, 2007

*You shall ask  
 What good are dead leaves?  
 And I will tell you  
 They nourish the sore earth.  
 You shall ask  
 What reason is there for winter?  
 And I will tell you  
 To bring about new leaves.  
 You shall ask  
 Why are the leaves so green?  
 And I will tell you  
 Because they are rich with life.  
 You shall ask  
 Why must summer end?  
 And I will tell you  
 So that the leaves can die.*  
 -Nancy Wood

## Surviving the Seasons of Grief

By: Betty Ann Rutledge

I woke up feeling a little sad this morning. (Kind of unusual for me, as I'm a real morning person and usually start the day from a more hopeful place. I see the day stretching before me ripe with possibility). But today for some reason, as I moved through my morning routine, that little tickle of sadness in my belly grew as the lump in my throat persisted in reminding me that "something was up".

It wasn't until a couple of hours later, as I was walking to work, casting about in my mind and heart for the cause of this unsettled feeling, that it hit me: *Labour Day Weekend is coming. And I'm missing my mom.* You see, when I was a little girl, this long weekend meant time with mom watching the Jerry Lewis Telethon. It was a sweet ritual we shared: eating in front of the TV, laughing, listening to all the great music, being moved by the stories of the children and families, making our annual donation phone call and ultimately shedding collective tears at the end when Jerry sang "You'll Never Walk Alone".

*Continued on pg. 2*

So as I was walking, I let those old memories form pictures in my mind and when the inevitable tears began to flow, I welcomed them. This little moment of grief and realization was painful, but also comforting. I was even grateful for it - because in a way, in that moment, I felt connected to my mom. And by the time I got to work, it had moved through me.

My friend and grief mentor Yvette calls these moments **STUGS: Sudden Temporary Upsurges of Grief**. What I've learned about STUGS is that:

- They can seemingly come out of nowhere, without warning, and in moments bring us to our knees
- It's scary when they happen unexpectedly
- I dread them happening in inconvenient places (like riding the subway or at a dinner party!)
- I get panicky sometimes that it means I'm "not doing okay" or am "falling apart"

I've also learned that STUGS can be brought on by many things: a smell, a sound, a simple phrase all can remind us of our lost loved ones and ignite a fresh moment of grief. The change of seasons is also a powerful and provocative reminder of the passage of time and the cycle of life and death.

All of us have our unique "triggers". Whether you are a bereaved parent facing the pain of Labour Day and the beginning of the school year, or a family preparing to mark the first Rosh Hashanah, Ramadan or other high holydays without a beloved parent, or a young widow trying to find a way to make Halloween and Christmas bearable for yourself and your grieving children - you may want to prepare yourself for the inevitable appearance of STUGS.

I find it's helpful to remind myself, when I feel swept away by a moment of grief, that: *"This is a normal, natural part of the grief process"* *"This moment will pass"* *"I have the skills, knowledge and tools to take care of myself"*.

It's important to remember to be gentle with ourselves - especially in the first couple of years following our loss. Though it is true that facing the first of anything without our loved one is the most difficult - this series of anniversaries, family, faith and community celebrations and observances that often intensify our feelings of loss, missing and yearning - the subsequent years are no picnic either. That's why, no matter where we are at on our journey, we may be susceptible to those unnerving moments of vulnerability - moments that can make us feel "thrown back in time" to that fresh grief that I wrote about in the last Journeys newsletter.

I can tell you with some certainty that we do learn to remember our loved ones with more than just pain and sadness - as with the sweet memory of my mom and the Jerry Lewis Telethon. But when the STUG hits, the intensity often feels the same regardless of how much time has passed - it's just that mercifully, the time in between those painful moments does seem to grow.

So we encourage you during this season of change, remembrance and markings of the passage of time to **listen to yourself**. Grief affects all parts of our beings - emotional, physical, mental and spiritual - and it's normal to feel stress and strain in all these areas. It is important to pay attention to the signals from your body, mind, heart and spirit: get enough rest, stop when you need to, find sources of comfort and tenderness and ask for help if and when you need it.

Remember, we are all on this journey together - of *learning to live with* our grief.

I wish you peace, strength and serenity as you weather whatever season of loss that you currently find yourself in.

## After the Death of a Child

Can a mother become whole again?

*“No.”*

But why not?

*“The mother has lost a part of herself.”*

Then what will happen after?

*“She will begin the long journey of healing herself.”*

“Healing herself”, you say?

*“Yes, healing herself.”*

How does one do that?

*“Simple - talk to others who have been walking the same long journey.”*

But what will they tell me about the death of my child?

*“They have also lost a part of themselves.”*

So what makes them whole again?

*“Simply talk to others who have been walking the same way home to healing!”*

Healing is a process to get well, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If I am emotionally, mentally and spiritually well, then and only then, can I be physically whole.

A mother is not able to sustain her physical body when she is broken down by grief. Three examples from my own experience include:

You start to get weak.

You start feeling pain in your body.

Your mind starts playing tricks on you.

Losing a child, my child, my son, his brother, their brother, their grandson/child, their nephew/niece - this paper the words are written on cannot understand the meaning of such loss - and such a long journey a mother must take not by her choice but one that has been chosen for her. “Death”. Oh so final is the sting of death.

*“Help me to feel my pain. Because I alone cannot bear it and to carry, it is too heavy for me, I will get some help!”*

*What’s that? Are you going to walk the long journey too?*

*“Yes, of course, we are in it together. Didn’t you know I lost my son, my daughter too?”*

Oh, so you understand what it is for a mother to want to be whole again?

Yes but, how can I!

My child is not coming home again

Oh Lord my child is not coming home again

My brother is not coming home again

My sister is not coming home again

My niece is not coming home again

My nephew is not coming home again

Our grandchild is not coming home again

Our friend is not coming home again

Lord, make this be not so, tell me I am in a dream and I will wake up from this fog I am walking into.

Lord, create a better understanding in me about my child’s death so that I can be whole again.

## NEW IN THE LIBRARY

If you've never visited our library, make a plan to stop by sometime! (just call first to make sure it's open). An extensive collection of books – something for everyone – from personal accounts of loss and healing, to grief-themed fiction. There is a section specifically for bereaved parents, a section on spirituality and grief and many titles that would appeal to a broad audience of bereaved people who have experienced all kinds of losses. New titles are always being added, the most recent including:

### **Spirit Journey, From Grief to Peace: by Theresa & Tim Miller**

A beautiful, compelling and ultimately hopeful account of a London, Ontario family devastated by the loss of 17-year old Dan in 2003. Parents Tim and Theresa's story of their journey of healing will comfort and inspire other bereaved parents and siblings – and anyone who has suffered, survived and found a way to learn to live with grief.

### **Swallowed by a Snake, The gift of the masculine side of healing: by Tom Golden**

An exploration of the masculine side of grieving – this book will appeal to both men and women as we all have both masculine and feminine expressions of grief. Easy to read, practical, interesting, insightful.

### **Good Grief (a novel): by Lolly Winston**

The story of a 36-year old widow is both a poignant, honest and at times funny account of the early days of grief and one woman's attempt to rebuild her life following the tragic death of her husband. Explores, in an easily accessible way, the myriad ways we respond to grief.

### **Blue Water (a novel): by A. Manette Ansay**

A complex and insightful story of a parent's journey following the death of their six-year old son who is killed by a drunk driver.

### **Dear Sam: Grieving the Death of my Son: by Janet Torge**

Written as a series of letters to her son Sam, and his imagined replies, this compelling book is eloquent, honest, painful, insightful and full of hope for any bereaved parent – or anyone struggling to learn how to live with the many difficult questions, thoughts and feelings experienced after the loss of someone we love.

## Just Published...



### **Dear Sam**

Grieving the Death of My Son

### **Janet Torge**

Heartbreaking yet uplifting letters between a mother and her son chronicle a final and unforgettable farewell after his untimely death.

Call 1-800-AUTHORS to order, or visit [iUniverse.com](http://iUniverse.com)



Also available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca), [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com) and at Chapters and Nicholas Hoare in Montreal

I hope you will all buy a copy... or two... or three. It can be ordered on-line from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca) and [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com). If you are not keen on internet purchases, order from your local bookstore: it's listed in Books In Print.

This book, as you will see, has been quite a journey for me. I hope it can lend a supportive hand to those who have lost a loved one and their friends and family who wonder what they are going through.

Please let me know what you think.

If you like it, write a review on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and keep the word going.

## And if I go

And if I go,  
While you're still here  
Know that I live on,  
Vibrating to a different measure  
behind a thin veil you cannot see through.

You will not see me,  
So you must have faith.  
I wait for the time when we can soar together again  
both aware of each other.

Until then,  
Live your life to the fullest.  
And when you need me,  
Just whisper my name in your heart,  
...and I will be there.

- *Colleen Hitchcock*

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If I should die and leave you here awhile,  
Be not like others, sore undone who keep  
Long vigils by the silent dust, and weep.  
For my sake – turn again to life and smile,  
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do  
Something to comfort others hearts than thine  
Complete those dear unfinished tasks of mine  
And I, perchance, may therein comfort you.

- *Price Hughes*  
*Read at Princess Diana's funeral by her sister*  
*Lady Sarah McCorquodale*

## Moving On

Time roars on, but I rear back,  
resisting, afraid to move on and  
leave you behind.

I was safe with you, unafraid in my  
own realm. If I heal,  
will you be gone forever?

You leaving opened new worlds.  
I have time now and my days and  
energies no longer revolve around  
your needs.

I want you to come with me  
into the future.

Your youth protected my youth,  
but now new beginnings eclipse the past.  
My eyes strain as they search my  
heart for distant memories.  
But your face fades as I reach  
out to you.

All that remains are warm feelings,  
smiles, tears, and glimpses of your love  
left in the wake of your parting.

Will you forgive me if I go on?

If you can't make this earthly  
journey through time with me,  
Will you then come along in my heart  
and wish me well?

- *Betty Johnson*

*This poem may have been published originally in a  
newsletter for the group Bereaved Parents of the USA.  
We regretfully cannot give full credit as we were unable  
to locate the original source.*

## IN MEMORIAM

*Liza S. Barbie*  
*Frank & Emma Breen*  
*Nicole Anna Galli*  
*Morgan Goldberg*  
*Teresa Mancini*  
*Carol Martin*  
*Lynda Rose*  
*Michael Volpe*

## EARLY NOTICE FOR TREE OF LIGHT

BFO-Toronto's dedication and lighting ceremony for the **Tree of Light** will take place at Toronto City Hall on Thursday, December 6th. The deadline for submitting names to be added to the Tree is **Friday, November 16th**. (Please note that we cannot guarantee names submitted after that date will appear on the scroll or list).

You will receive the form in the next Journeys newsletter at the end of October. Or, if you prefer, you can submit your name(s) and make a donation online through our website [www.bfotoronto.ca](http://www.bfotoronto.ca). Click on Tree of Light, under Programs and fill out the form to submit your name (s). Then click on the Donate Now button to make your donation and under Fund Designation, choose "Tree of Light".

Any questions or concerns about this event can be directed to Larry at 416 440 0290 ext 10 or via email at [lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca](mailto:lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca).

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## SHE CAN'T BEGIN

**Nov 7 - 17, 2007 | Red Head Gallery | 401 Richmond Street West, Toronto**

Artist Linda Duvall lost her beloved son Jesse to suicide at the age of 23 in January of this year. She Can't Begin is a very personal, introspective look at sorrow. Linda addresses the state of inertia in which she finds herself. A video installation reflects the confusion and guilt that comes with grief. Linda will be present on Saturday, November 10th and Saturday, November 17th.

*"She can't begin. She knows she has this show coming up, but she is stuck, unable to even think about art. Nothing seems right."*

*"She wanders around the land every day, walks down the hill to the bluff of poplars. For some reason, she has no memory when she walks, only sensation."*

*"She is now marked. Some gravitate to the mark, to tell her their experiences. Others flee, including close friends."*

She Can't Begin is the second part in a three part series looking at trauma and loss. For more information, please visit BFO-Toronto's website at [bfotoronto.ca](http://bfotoronto.ca) or for information about Linda's other projects [www.lindaduvall.com](http://www.lindaduvall.com).

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## CONGRATULATIONS

Our best wishes to longtime Young Adult volunteer and Noah Thorek Award recipient Ally Amery and husband Paul Baeumler on the birth of their first child, son Jackson Alyn, on July 28th! Despite arriving a surprising three weeks early, he weighed in at 6 lbs. 15 oz. Much love to the new arrival.

More good news from library volunteer India Asplundh and husband Michael Morton on the arrival of their daughter Melissa Phoenix Morton. Melissa was born on July 26 and weighed 8 lbs. 8 oz. Many blessings to the whole family.

Congratulations also to Mandeep Kaur who was a student placement with BFO last year. She and her husband Rominder welcomed their first child, a baby girl, on August 17th.

And belated good wishes go out to Children's Program Advisor Naomi Breido and husband Jonathan on the birth of their daughter Yael Aliza Breido on April 9th.

*BFO Toronto is pleased to welcome  
Cher Curshen - expressive arts therapist – Hospice Toronto*

*Special Expressive Arts Workshop for Bereaved Adults*

## “Colourful Journeys”

**Saturday October 27th, 2007**

**10:00am – 3:00pm**

Connect with others as you explore and follow your healing journey through creative processes using various art modalities such as painting, clay and poetry. No art experience necessary.

**Where:** BFO-Toronto offices 28 Madison Avenue (Bloor & Spadina)

**Cost:** NO fee, materials provided

**Facilitated by:**

Cher Curshen has been practicing and supervising Expressive Arts Therapy both privately and in community agencies such as Toronto’s Ronald McDonald House, Gilda’s Club, BFO-Toronto and BFO-Halton/Peel, Native Child and Family Services and Casey House Hospice for over 6 years.

**RSVP:** For more information, please contact Cher at 416 888 8852 and to register, please contact Betty Ann at 416 440 0290 ext 11 or [barutledge@bfotoronto.ca](mailto:barutledge@bfotoronto.ca).

## WIDOWED PARENTS

My name is Donna Rowe and I organize the group **Widowed Parents of the GTA**.

Our group is for parents/families that have lost a parent/spouse and have children under 15 years of age. The goal of our group is to help people get out and get going socially after the loss of a spouse/partner.

We meet once a month alternating events with children and events for adults only.

On September 9th, we will be having our **annual picnic and barbeque** in Thompson Park in Scarborough for parents and their kids.

In our group you can learn to laugh and have fun again without feeling self conscious about being the only widow or a widower in the crowd. Rebuilding ones life after the loss of a spouse is an arduous task. It is comforting to be in the company - in a social setting -with people that have also suffered the same loss and understand the hurdles that you and your family are trying to overcome.

If you are interested in attending any of Widowed Parents of the GTA’s experiences (including an annual event around the holiday season) please contact me at 416 693 7836

I must warn you. You may be in danger of laughing again and feeling completely at ease when attending our events.

Yours so very truly,

Donna Rowe

## BFO-TORONTO NEWS

This summer has been a much different summer than any other, here at BFO. We have been very busy with programs. In addition to telephone and one to one support for bereaved individuals, we also held Adult Grief Drop-ins and for the first time we embarked upon a new project for bereaved youth - a *Soul II Soul Program* for youth who live in underserved and racialized communities in Toronto, funded by the Youth Challenge Fund.

*Soul II Soul* began as a website created by youth for youth in support of young people whose family member or friend had died. Information is provided throughout the site on many topics including: the grieving process, healing rituals and how to support a grieving friend. Space is also provided for youth to share their stories, send e-cards, and connect with others via discussion boards. In September 2006 we applied to the Youth Challenge Fund for funding to expand this program and we were approved in January 2007.

The expanded program provided an opportunity for youth to explore their grief, obtain transferable skills in video production and work as a team with other like-minded youth from different parts of the city. For three days a week, over an eight-week period, youth learned all aspects of producing and shooting a webcast, which are now available to view on [www.soul2soul.ca](http://www.soul2soul.ca). They also had time to share their stories, learn how grief impacts on youth and participate in a mutual support group. The feedback from the youth was quite remarkable. Youth stated that: they felt more understood in their grief; sharing and working with other youth from different parts of the city was a great experience and one youth wrote the following...

*Its programs like this that are more efficient than any other solution to help youth, such as bigger jails for us, more jail time etc...These programs cost less and are more efficient because it occupies our time positively- having fun at doing what we do... and healing our problems we encounter in disadvantaged communities.*

Looking forward to the Fall, we are planning an additional Volunteer Training. To diversify our volunteer pool, we decided that this training would be specifically for people who identify as Black and racialized. No doubt there will be more learning for everyone, both for the participants and the training team!

*Big Night Out*, our annual auction/fundraiser, will take place on October 18th (see the insert for more details). **We would appreciate any help we can get from our members, in terms of auction items, such as art, spa items, jewellery, dinner vouchers etc., and if anyone has contacts with the restaurant, hotel or travel industries for weekend getaway packages that would be awesome.** Revenue from this event is critical to BFO-Toronto's financial stability. We welcome a new Special Event Coordinator - her name is Marlisa Budihardjo, and she is determined to make this year's *Big Night Out* a huge success. Please contact her, at 416 440 0290 ext 16 if you have any questions.

Take care everyone,

*Janet Wilson, Executive Director*

This newsletter is produced for our members and supporters and is available by mail and on our website. We welcome submissions, please forward to [info@bfotoronto.ca](mailto:info@bfotoronto.ca). We reserve the right to edit items submitted for publication.

The opinions and ideas expressed by our members and other authors in this newsletter, represent their own unique experiences of grief and do not necessarily reflect the views of BFO-Toronto

BFO-Toronto website design by Joli Design, [jolidesign.ca](http://jolidesign.ca)  
Journey's Newsletter design by: Jenn Lawrence, [jennlawrence.ca](http://jennlawrence.ca)

### **BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO-TORONTO**

28 Madison Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M5R 1S2  
Phone: 416 440 0290 • Fax: 416 440 0304  
[bfotoronto.ca](http://bfotoronto.ca) • [soul2soul.ca](http://soul2soul.ca)

# BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO – TORONTO INVITES YOU TO OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISING / AUCTION EVENT

## “BIG NIGHT OUT”

Thursday October 18, 2007  
doors open at 6:00pm

*This year, we are hosting our event at the UP COUNTRY FURNITURE STORE at 310 King Street East in downtown Toronto (King & Parliament). Please visit the website [www.bno.adbeast.com](http://www.bno.adbeast.com) for more information.*

This community get together is a great evening of fun with friends, colleagues and family. This year enjoy a CASINO NIGHT with a poker tournament and more games, dancing, cocktails & delicious hors d'oeuvres and of course a silent & live auction.

Big Night out is a very important event for BFO Toronto, the revenue we raise from this event will help us continue our services and programs to our community of bereaved families, youths and individuals.

## WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION AND THIS IS HOW YOU CAN HELP US ...

### Attend this event

tickets are \$40 per person purchased in advance or \$45 at the door. Buy tickets online on our site [www.bno.adbeast.com](http://www.bno.adbeast.com) or call 416 440 0290 ext.16

### Sponsor this event

for instance we still need a cocktail/beverage sponsor for this event.

### Donate items or services for our silent and live auction

Silent auction items such as dinner tickets, gift certificates, sport event tickets or paraphernalia , jewellery , fashion accessories and clothing items, spa vouchers, day tours , theatre tickets , movie tickets , TV's , DVD's , DVD player  
Live auction items such as art pieces, travel package, weekend getaway, ipods, blackberries, shopping sprees at a high-end retail store.

### Volunteer at this event

For more information please call 416 440 0290 ext.16 or  
Check our Big Night Out website [www.bno.adbeast.com](http://www.bno.adbeast.com)  
for updates.



Bereaved Families of Ontario  
Toronto  
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# Self-Help Awareness Week

## **Sept. 23rd - Sept. 29th, 2007 is Self-Help Awareness Week across Ontario.**

Thousands of people have benefited from participating in self-help and mutual aid groups. To support self-help/mutual aid groups, the Ontario Self-Help Network (OSHNET) provides resources, consultation, and training across the Province.

In Ontario, you can reach us by calling toll free 1 888 283 8806 or by emailing [oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca](mailto:oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca). This year's theme is "**Empowerment Through Self-Help**", so join us for events across the province.

In Toronto, the week's events include: the launch of a new resource package; our Annual General Meeting with guest speaker; a day-long training on Facilitating a Self-Help Group and a listing of other events as the information becomes available.

In addition, meet the staff, examine our reference library, discuss database referral and pick up copies of our free materials. For more information call 416 487 4355 or visit [www.selfhelp.on.ca](http://www.selfhelp.on.ca)



### **I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT BFO-TORONTO**

I wish to support the work of **Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto**.

Please accept my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help the organization provide free services to bereaved families in the Greater Toronto Area.

Payment Type:     Cheque     VISA     M/C     Amex     Cash

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail your donation to:** Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto. 28 Madison Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1S1

**or call the BFO-Toronto Office** at 416.440.0290 to make a donation over the phone or go to our website [www.bfotoronto.ca](http://www.bfotoronto.ca) where you can make a donation online.