

To Our Donor Families

We welcome stories, poems, pictures, or ideas for future editions. It is essential to us that this newsletter grows from the hearts and minds of our donor families. Please submit your input by mail or email to the address listed below. Thank you for your participation. Your thoughts may play a vital role in another family's grief journey.



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Reflections and Hope Newsletter

A quarterly newsletter honoring organ and tissue donors and their families.
Summer 2013

We are so pleased to share with you the summer issue of Reflections and Hope Newsletter, a publication dedicated to grief education and support, intended to give hope to those who have experienced a loss.

You have endured the winter, spring has arrived, and summer is approaching. Some who have experienced a death may feel as though they should be as enthusiastic as those around them for the approaching activity of summer, but in fact feel indifferent to the activities summer brings and may even experience feelings of dread. While the beginning of summer is creating hope and revival for others, it can also leave those who are bereaved feeling

isolated and more deeply entrenched in their grief. Please be kind to yourself during this transition and we hope that even though you may not be able to embrace the activities and pleasure of summer just yet, you may find small glimmers of comfort and joy in the warmth, new life, and community the season brings. We hope knowing your loved one's legacy lives on through donation can offer you some comfort and peace. Perhaps their gifts may allow someone to once again hike the mountain trails or teach their children how to swim this summer.

If you would like to learn more about your loved one's gifts and how they may have helped someone in need, please call the Aftercare Coordinator at 303-370-2737.

The Gift of Tissue

Often tissue donation is less well understood than organ donation despite the life-enhancing and life-saving impact it can have on recipients. When a family learns their loved one may be able to give the gift of his or her tissues, it might feel surprising and even confusing. Families are often unaware that a single tissue donor can change the lives of more than 50 people through the gift of bone, tendons, cartilage, ligaments, skin and cardiovascular tissues. The following is more detailed information about specific tissues people can donate and how they help those in need.

The gift of bone tissue can aid with limb-saving procedures, thereby restoring mobility and agility. Bone can also be used in spine, joint and limb procedures as well as facial reconstruction and dental surgery.

Soft tissue, such as tendons, ligaments, and cartilage can help by restoring

mobility to orthopedic patients and can aid in joint replacement. Soft tissues are often used in sports medicine to repair injuries, and allow recipients to once again live active, healthy lives.

Skin grafts provide temporary protection from infection and fluid loss following a severe burn. Skin can also aid in post-mastectomy reconstruction, provide wound care to diabetic patients, and repair facial scars and cleft palates.

Heart valves and vein tissue are lifesaving gifts for those who receive them. Vein tissue is provided to those who have weakened or degenerated vein tissue caused by illness or injury. Heart valve tissue is often provided to young individuals who are born with heart defects. Heart valves are a lifesaving graft for those who are at risk of heart failure due to the defect.

Taking Care You and Your Family Following a Community Crisis



Donor Alliance Aftercare Program

The mission of the Donor Alliance Aftercare Program is to provide bereavement services as well as education surrounding organ and tissue donation to our donor families. Whether you have just experience the loss of a love one or years have passed since your loss, the Aftercare Program aims to serve you and your family as a source of information and tools throughout your grief journey. Some of the tools provided by the Aftercare Program include:

- Books and pamphlets on grief and loss
- Donor family memorial events
- Referrals to support groups in your community
- Referrals to online support groups for specific relationship loss
- Specific information about organ and tissue donation
- Memory Cards honoring an individual's gift of life
- Online grief information through donoralliance.org
- Donor Alliance quilt program honor an individual's gift of life

The recent traumatic events in Boston, Newtown, and in our own community of Aurora, have left communities mourning the senseless loss of life and left many asking why. Those who have recently lost a loved one can be greatly impacted by such events. Exposure to violence and death through the media can leave a newly bereaved family feeling their loss more intensely or even cause a family to re-experience the events that occurred immediately after the loss. A newly bereaved family may also feel as though their own loss has been minimized due to the attention being focused on the crisis leading to feelings of isolation and loss of support. Families, whose loss is less recent, may feel like old wounds have suddenly been reopened.

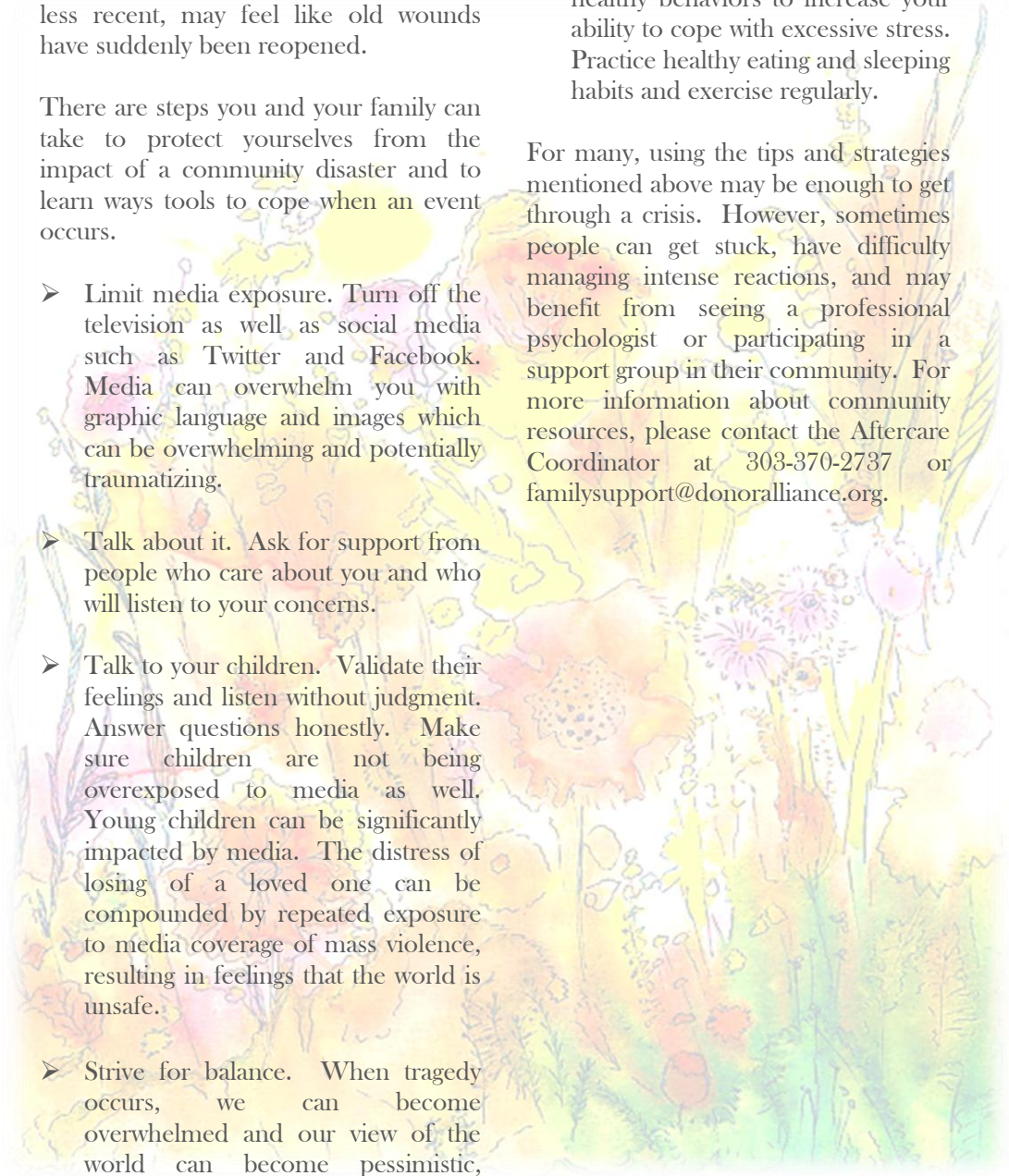
There are steps you and your family can take to protect yourselves from the impact of a community disaster and to learn ways tools to cope when an event occurs.

- Limit media exposure. Turn off the television as well as social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Media can overwhelm you with graphic language and images which can be overwhelming and potentially traumatizing.
- Talk about it. Ask for support from people who care about you and who will listen to your concerns.
- Talk to your children. Validate their feelings and listen without judgment. Answer questions honestly. Make sure children are not being overexposed to media as well. Young children can be significantly impacted by media. The distress of losing of a loved one can be compounded by repeated exposure to media coverage of mass violence, resulting in feelings that the world is unsafe.
- Strive for balance. When tragedy occurs, we can become overwhelmed and our view of the world can become pessimistic,

particularly if you have experienced a recent loss and may already be experiencing these feelings. Remind yourself of people and events which offer meaning and comfort.

- Honor your feelings. Respect that you may have a range of emotions and you may experience intense stress similar to the effects of physical injury. You may feel as though you are experiencing your own loss all over again and feel the raw pain of new grief.
- Take care of yourself. Engage in healthy behaviors to increase your ability to cope with excessive stress. Practice healthy eating and sleeping habits and exercise regularly.

For many, using the tips and strategies mentioned above may be enough to get through a crisis. However, sometimes people can get stuck, have difficulty managing intense reactions, and may benefit from seeing a professional psychologist or participating in a support group in their community. For more information about community resources, please contact the Aftercare Coordinator at 303-370-2737 or familysupport@donoralliance.org.



I Miss You

By Kaila

I miss the way you smelt of pine

I miss the way you held your hand in mine

I miss the way you held me tight

I miss the way you said goodnight

I miss the way you kissed my forehead

I miss the way you put me to bed

I miss the way your hugs felt

I miss the way your clothes smelt

I miss you day and night

I miss you when I shut my eyes tight

I miss you when you're not here

I miss you when I'm in fear

I miss the times you threw me in the air

I miss the times you always cared

I miss the way you held me tight

I miss the way we said goodnight.

Recommended Readings

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley; A gentle message for children through a story of loss and memories left behind

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst; Written to address a child's fear of being apart from the ones they love.

Talking about Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Child by Earl A. Grollman; A guide for parents including do and don'ts, and illustrated read-along dialogue, and a guide to explaining death.

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins by Enid Samuel Traisman; A journal for teens allowing them to use creativity to work through the grieving process.

For additional recommended readings, support group information, and online resources, please contact the Aftercare Coordinator at 303-370-2737 or familysupport@donoralliance.org

The Grieving Child

It can be difficult for us as adults to understand a child's reaction to a death, and as a result, it can feel like we are not well equipped to help them navigate their emotions in the midst of our own pain. Dr. Alan Wolfelt states "Anyone old enough to love is old enough to grieve" therefore every child, even an infant who is not yet to be able to talk, grieves when someone loved dies. Dr. Wolfelt goes on to say that the feelings a child has about the death will become a part of their lives forever and if adults are open, honest, and loving, the experience of loss can be a chance for children to learn and grow from the joy and pain that comes from loving another person. It is important for adults to understand that children grieve differently based on age and development; an infant's response to a loss will look a lot different from that of a toddler and much different than a grieving teen. Dr. Wolfelt provides the following information regarding bereaved children at all ages. He states that, although common, not all children will show each of these changes and they may show them in diverse ways.

Newborn Infant: A very young child will respond to the fact that something is different with symptoms of general distress, possible sleeplessness, restlessness, and irritability. They will often respond with cries and distress as a result of the separation which can be soothed by someone constant and caring.

Pre-school Child: Children of this age are not able to understand the permanence of death. As a result, a child at this age may believe that their loved one will return and death is reversible. Grief reactions may include confusion, anxiety resulting in behaviors such as difficulty sleeping and concentrating. Children at this age often repeatedly ask questions about the death which can be difficult for a parent who is trying to comprehend the reality of their loss as well. Common behaviors can be confusing to the observer; children at this age can be playing happily one moment as though nothing has happened and the next moment become greatly distressed. In addition, it is not unusual for a child at this age to regress to earlier behaviors such as whining, clinging, or bed wetting. Ways to help children at this age include answering questions simply and honestly as often as the

child asks. Reassuring the child's safety may lessen anxiety and help reduce regression. Assuring the child that the surviving family is not also going to die can be helpful to in reducing anxiety as well.

The Grade-School Child: A child at this age may have a better understanding of death but does not have the adequate skills to cope with grief. Children at this age may participate in fantasy and make-believe and as a result may use denial to cope with the loss. A child this age may also be afraid that he or she is acting like a baby and therefore refrain from crying in front of others and feel as though it is their responsibility to protect their family. Children at this age may need help identifying the feelings they are experiencing and need the help of a parent to express their grief readily. Again, as with pre-school age children, it is helpful to answer questions honestly and openly and assure them that they are safe and secure. Some children at this age will become little mother or the man of the house. In addition, they may develop problems with school work due to sadness or poor ability to

Adolescence: An adolescent is somewhat independent but this independence tends to be fragile; therefore when someone dies, they may feel very childish and scared. They may become angry in order to hide their childlike emotions, the anger often being directed towards others such as doctors, God, surviving parents, etc. An adolescent's outbursts are often frustrated attempts to make sense of his or her own overwhelming pain. In addition to their responses to a loss, the problems typical of adolescence must also be dealt with, such as fear of rejection by friends, uncertainty of what society expects, distancing themselves from adults, and confusion about separation and dependence.

For additional information from Dr. Wolfelt about helping children cope with grief please visit the following link
<http://www.donoralliance.org/donor-families/local-grief-support/>

