



**Grief &
Bereavement**
L I T E R A C Y S E R I E S

Grief & Bereavement Literacy ECHO Series

SESSION 4, SUMMARY NOTES: "Pregnancy & Infant Loss, A Misunderstood Grief"

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

12:00pm – 1:00pm PST, via Zoom

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	RESOURCES
<p>Introduction & Territory Acknowledgment</p>	<p>Grief & Bereavement Literacy ECHO Series "Pregnancy & Infant Loss, A Misunderstood Grief "</p> <p>Presenter: Nancy Slinn</p> <p>Welcome to all participants, and introduction of the presenter, and presentation outline. Participants are notified the session is being recorded.</p>	
<p>Overview Summary Presentation & Discussion</p>	<p>Goal after session to have clear understanding why this is a misunderstood grief and why a different type of grief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions of things not to say to who have experience this type of loss • Opportunity to learn ways to support <p>Presentation Summary</p> <p>Nancy took us through a guided through imagery experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine being young wanting to have kids one day and planning for baby. Experience at first ultrasound and quiet room and you are not shown pictures of your baby. Doctor then tells you there was no heartbeat and baby has died. All your plans and dreams changed. Doctor tells you statistics of loss but that wasn't going to be you. Question what did I do wrong? This must be my fault. Some tell you to move on, you can have more. The feeling you have of: 'I don't want another baby I want that baby'. Maybe you needed medical intervention to get there and there is no guarantee you could get pregnant again. • Then you find a support group and someone says: I'm sorry for your loss, what happened was not your fault, this was something that happened to you. You were the best parent to that child you could have been under those circumstance. Another baby will not be a replacement for the one you lost. While the grief seems unsurmountable right now you will reach a point that you will be able to smile again. Time puts a buffer between you and the pain. Others will take different amounts of time in grief. This 	

baby will be a part of your life for the rest of your life. Over time as journey toward healing you will grow stronger, be able to carry the grief and can even support others.

- Getting pregnant again can be one of the scariest things you experience. You will never forget everything that happened in your loss(es).
- Those platitudes “you can always get pregnant again” are not helpful. Be gentle and kind instead.
- You may not understand what they are going through, but you are there to support them, let them cry, take their other kids to park so parents can have space to grieve. Give them opportunity to talk if they want to. Never minimize the grief they are experiencing. You never get over the loss but you learn to live with it. People remember all the details of the loss.

Questions/discussion

- **Q:** When you hear others stories it can bring you right back to your own experience of pain. Is there ever a time when it’s too triggering to share? It can be very triggering and emotional to hear other stories.
- **Nancy:** It can be triggering to hear others’ stories and reason why we share stories in empty cradle meetings: 1) give significance to the brief lives of the children we lost 2) a step in the healing journey. It doesn’t necessarily get easier but different. Your feelings however you are feeling are valid. You know yourself best thought and it’s ok to not share when you need to care for yourselves. We encourage sharing in our groups so we don’t sweep grief under the rug. As hard as it is it’s healthier to work through the emotions. Healthy to work through these emotions together with a group, on your own, professional counsellor; whatever works best for you. Choosing to share vs not so much choosing to share (on your own terms). Setting those boundaries is important. Something I found helpful was to pre-plan (rehearse what you want to say for example when people in public ask how many kids do you have?).
- **Q:** What groups does Empty Cradle do?
- **Nancy:** was founded in 1991 by lady who suffered still-birth at term and started small group. By time Nancy and Peter joined in 1995 they had full conference room. When I open a meeting I establish trust and openness and safe space. Sharing stories bring significance to the brief time your child was in the world. In session have time to share, ask questions.
- Often you don’t know someone has gone through this type of loss until you ask. People can often keep this too themselves. Sometimes don’t have space to grieve. Many told to forget and move on.

Lived experience presenters

Lived experience presenters: Nicole Chadwick, Peter Slinn

Nicole: shared story of loss after first healthy baby. 35 weeks felt no movement. Went to get ultrasound and they couldn't find heartbeat. Went numb after I was told this. I was already thinking of getting pregnant again, and I didn't want C-section as the care team was trying to talk me into choosing a C-section instead of going through a traumatic labour. Knowing what I know about his health in the womb he saved me. If I had gone into active labour I may have died. It was the most devastating loss and having to explain that to my toddler was so hard. Dealt with a lot of loss in my family but loss of child is something so different. I had PTSD, anxiety, depression. Functioning was so difficult. I didn't want to go places and explain what happened.

Support: The support of family and friends made a huge difference. My hospital experience was very good thankfully and my family doctor told me about empty cradle. I questioned going: Why would I want to hear others' stories of pain? First time we went it was overwhelming but also was healing. I felt like I belonged somewhere and the thoughts of feelings I had weren't crazy or abnormal but actually never normal for grief. I wanted to move past but I need to process and experience the pain the move through it. It's been 9 years and I am still part of the group. I am on the board and help facilitate events and offer support. I did go to grief counselling as well. I did get pregnant again and health baby. I say 2 living and one who passed away. We do ceremony and birthday party for Tristen every year.

Q: What did you experience through Grief Counselling that was particularly helpful?

Nicole: Hard to find someone willing to see me for counselling on pregnancy and loss. What was helpful for me was allowing the space to share my story and go into detail. Sometimes people who have gone through such a loss worry about traumatizing others. For me at the time but I needed to get it all out and all the memories to share and feel safe to do so. Also worked on boundaries in my counselling – I'm not comfortable sharing or give space for myself when I didn't want to go out and be around other. Also, responding to people when things they said that were not helpful and letting them know it was upsetting.

Peter: Palliative care – can have preparedness for this loss but often times for infant and pregnancy loss there is not preparation. In my role as husband and father I am protector, and I cannot protect her from this and see people how do we deal this? How much do we explain? What do we do with the nursery room and the baby shower gifts? Do we keep the gifts/room for a future potential baby? I had to go back to work the next week after our stillbirth loss. A coworker brings his new baby new while I'm asking for another day off work for the funeral. While you're hurting you don't want everyone else to hurt, I had to explain the bittersweet situation. There will be awkward moments like this. This is a hole people are trying to climb out of and PPD is an equal opportunity condition. I encourage healthcare providers, friends to listen for clues of this and encourage them to get clinical help when needed.

	<p>Q: Does empty cradle have education component in session? Is there a program or drop in?</p> <p>Nancy: Don't have a set program but just ask that people contact us first and then I reply and send info about empty cradle and newsletter that contain education components. Education pieces come out through. My experience is my personal experience and running/facilitating this group. We have had an occasional guest presenter speak at a meeting. A doctor would be so helpful to be part of our community to help with the research piece.</p> <p>Q: Do you know of other groups/programs? Canuck Place perhaps has a group? I believe Abbotsford hospice has a group.</p> <p>Nancy: A counsellor in Vancouver area and a counsellor in Kelowna who offer programs</p>	
<p>Session Materials and Additional Resources</p>	<p>Resources shared in the Zoom Group & Chat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quesnel has a Pregnancy/Infant Loss Support Group • https://www.butterflyrun.ca/couselling - fundraiser to bring supports for programs • Nancy's contact: emptycradlebc@gmail.com • Dr. Joshua Black's podcast's website 	<p>Session Recording is uploaded on the BCCPC's YouTube page:</p> <p>HERE</p>
<p>Closing</p>	<p>Next ECHO Grief & Bereavement Literacy Series: Tuesday, Dec 5th, 12:00pm - 1:00pm (PST) "Grief & Loss During The Holidays" Registration link: https://echo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcud-iqqTotHNQXkg9IRq8Ps6VhOFmpmyqr</p> <p>Past sessions in this series can be found here.</p> <p>Visit the BCCPC ECHO session website page for upcoming sessions in this series and other series currently running.</p> <p>Subscribe: BC Centre for Palliative Care YouTube page</p> <p>Subscribe: BC Centre for Palliative Care Newsletter</p>	<p>Link to post-session Survey:</p> <p>HERE</p>