Greetings Air Force Families,

We are now entering the beauty of Fall’s foliage, saying farewell to Summer’s sun. This is our 2nd Fall Newsletter, which means it has been 1-year since we have started the Air Force Family Support Network. We hope the support network has been a valuable resource, and that you are finding comfort amongst each other. Thank you for allowing us into your lives during a very private time.

Your Fall 2011 Newsletter is titled “Understanding Grief.” As I am sure most of you already know, grief is a journey that can be complicated. Grief is a powerful and painful emotion; we believe it’s important to know that these deep, dark waters are a normal reaction to loss. It can affect you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically.

Many questions may arise throughout your grief journey, such as, “Should I feel better by now?” “Are my reactions normal?” or “Why do I feel so much anger?” What you are discovering is that grief has many faces; there is no one way to grieve and everyone’s experience with it is truly their own. The newsletter addresses the different factors that affect the intensity and duration of grief, the symptoms of grief, the myths about grief, how to help children cope with grief, and ways for you to cope with grief.

We hope the information provided in this newsletter will help you better understand what you are experiencing and give you a continued foundation for healing.

Air Force Families Forever
“Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support.”

Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.
Variables in Grief

Everyone’s grieving process is unique ~ it is their own internal progression. There are many reasons for the differences in how individuals grieve... Some of the influencing factors are:

* **Age** - Age can affect our ability to understand death or have the coping resources to deal with it.

* **Gender** - Men may grieve differently due to the stereotypical roles and rules of society… the “Men don’t cry” misconception.

* **Relationship to the deceased** - Was the survivor’s relationship with the deceased a good one? What was the survivor’s last experience with their loved one?

  ~**Parent’s experience:** Parents often feel it’s a disruption in natural order of things when they outlive their children. Experiences can include feelings of failure because they couldn’t protect their children from harm, feeling the pressures of keeping their family together due to the breakdown of the family structure, and the feeling of having nothing to live for since their life may have revolved around the child, may all compound the grief experience.

  ~**Spouse’s experience:** Many widows/widowers feel they have lost “half” of themselves. Other complications include social isolation due to the difficulty of adjusting to the new identity of being solo, as well as the difficulty of having added responsibilities (most couples have a division of “tasks” or “labor,” so when one dies, the other has to take on dual responsibilities) and having to parent alone.

  ~**Sibling’s experience:** Often overlooked, siblings suffer the loss of a unique bond. Survivors guilt is common, and a loss of the future relationship brothers/sisters expect to share in life’s journey is often acutely felt. Siblings expect to be each other’s support through possible future losses, especially the loss of their parents when their time comes.
Variables in Grief, cont’d

* **Cause of death** - Illness, accidental, suicide, or homicide… a sudden, unexpected or traumatic death shatters the world as we know it. It’s often a loss that does not make sense, leaving us feeling shaken to the core and vulnerable.

* **Preparedness for the death** - Did the survivor have time to say, “I love you,” “Please forgive me” or “Goodbye?” Even when one is mentally prepared for the death of the loved one, the emotional reaction cannot be rehearsed.

* **Amount of social support or isolation** - Having a healthy level of social support can make a world of difference, even if you’re feeling like closing yourself off.

* **Personality traits** - The ability to cope and adjust to a new way of life varies greatly from person to person. No one way is wrong or right, but knowing what assists with being resilient after a great loss can help a lot. Are you willing to ask for help when you need it?

* **Cultural Background** - Different cultures grieve in different ways. Every culture has their way of explaining the purpose of life and what a person should expect after they die.

* **Available Resources** - Support groups, grief counseling, books and other resource materials, journaling, can all help one work through their grief and find ways to cope.

* **Presence of other stressors** - the death of a loved one may have a bigger impact if it occurs at a time when the survivor is dealing with other stresses of life.

* **The layering of losses** - One can experience bereavement overload when dealing with multiple losses or change in big doses. It can complicate the mourning process if there is no time to deal with each loss individually.
Symptoms of Grief

There are many symptoms associated with grief. The symptoms can be physical, behavioral, or emotional. You may experience different symptoms each time you experience a significant loss. You may also experience different symptoms throughout grieving an individual loss. Symptoms of grief often fluctuate, you may feel you are on an emotional rollercoaster.

**Physical Symptoms of Grief:**
- Appetite changes
- Crying
- Insomnia
- Shortness of breath
- Digestion problems
- Sighing
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Change in sexual desire
- Trembling
- Lowered immunity
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Menstrual difficulties
- Change in activity level
- Muscle spasms

**Behavioral Symptoms of Grief:**
- Disorganized
- Forgetful
- Apathetic
- Disoriented
- Withdrawn
- Unable to Concentrate
- Regression
- Critical
- Day dreaming
- Substance abuse
- Preoccupied with deceased
- Isolating
- Wearing deceased’s belongings

**Emotional Symptoms of Grief:**
- Shock
- Numbness
- Shame
- Loneliness
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Anger
- Hopeless
- Anguish
Myths About Grief

There are several myths surrounding coping with grief. The myths make grief out to be an orderly and predictable process, when in fact it can be quite chaotic... one has no way of knowing how they will grieve nor how someone else will grieve...

Common Myths About Grief

*Grief lasts only a few weeks, or several months, at most

*Time heals all wounds

“It has been said, ‘time heals all wounds.’ I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and pain lessens. But it is never gone.” -Rose Kennedy

*If you have strong faith, you shouldn't grieve

*Expressions of grief have no place in the public eye

*Keeping busy is the best way to handle grief

*You should see the body in order to heal your grief

*You need to move on with your life in order to get over grief

*Dwelling on the death and the deceased makes grief worse

*Children, especially young children, do not understand death and therefore, don't grieve

*Children under the age of 6 should not participate in the funeral rituals

*A grieving person should be left alone

*A person can cope with loss by ignoring or repressing the pain
How to Talk With Children About Loss

When a loved one dies, it can be difficult to know how to help kids cope with the loss, particularly as you work through your own grief. How much kids can understand about death depends largely on their age, life experiences, and personality, much like adults. There are, however, a few important points to keep in mind...

Explaining Death in a Child's Terms
Be honest with kids and encourage questions. This can be hard because you may not have all of the answers. But it's important to create an atmosphere of comfort and openness, and send the message that there's no one right or wrong way to feel. You might also share any spiritual beliefs you have about death.

Mourning the Loss
Is it right to take kids to funerals? It's up to you and your child. It's appropriate to let kids take part in any mourning ritual — if they want to. First explain what happens at a funeral or memorial and give kids the choice of whether to go. If you think your own grief might prevent you from helping your child at this difficult time, ask a friend or family member to care for and focus on your child during the service.

Many parents worry about letting their kids witness their own grief, pain, and tears about a death. Don't — allowing your child to see your pain shows that crying is a natural reaction to emotional pain and loss. And it can make kids more comfortable sharing their feelings. But it's also important to convey that no matter how sad you may feel, you'll still be able to care for your family and make your child feel

Getting More Help
As kids learn how to deal with death, they need space, understanding, and patience to grieve in their own way. They might not show grief as an adult would. A young child might not cry or might react to the news by acting out or becoming hyperactive. A teen might act annoyed and might feel more comfortable confiding in peers. Whatever their reaction, don't take it personally. Remember that learning how to deal with grief is like coping with other physical, mental, and emotional tasks — it's a process.

Nevertheless, watch for any signs that kids need help coping with a loss. If a child's behavior changes radically — for example, a gregarious and easygoing child becomes angry, withdrawn, or extremely anxious; or goes from having straight A's to D's in school — seek help.

A doctor, school guidance counselor, or mental health organization can provide assistance and recommendations. Also look for books, websites, support groups, and other resources that help people manage grief.

Parents can't always shield kids from sadness and losses. But helping them learn to cope with them builds emotional resources they can rely on throughout life. ~Kidshealth.org
Ways to Cope with Grief

*Turn to friends and family members* - This is the time to lean on people who care about you, even if you take pride in being strong and self-sufficient.

*Draw comfort from your faith* - Spiritual activities that are meaningful to you such as praying, meditating, or going to church or taking a walk in nature can offer solace.

*Join a support group* - Sharing sorrow with others who have experienced similar losses can be immensely comforting.

*Talk to a therapist of grief counselor* - An experienced therapist can help you work through intense emotions and overcome obstacles to your grieving.

*Face your feelings* - Trying to avoid feelings of sadness and loss only prolongs the grieving process.

*Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way* - Write in a personal journal, write a letter to your loved one (saying the things you never had a chance to say), or make a scrapbook or photo album celebrating the person’s life and/or your life together.

*Take care of your physical health* - Get enough sleep, eat right, and exercise regularly. Guard against the overuse of drugs and alcohol.

*Do not allow anyone to dictate how you should feel* - Your grief is your own; no one else can tell you how it should go.

*Plan ahead for grief triggers* - Special occasions and milestones can reawaken memories or feelings. Be prepared for emotional regression - this is very normal.
A Space for Sharing

This area of the newsletter is designated for you to share your stories, photos, special dates, or anything memorable related to your loved one with the rest of the support network. We appreciate your willingness to let us into your hearts....

A special thanks to Mountain Home AFB

My son is Airman First Class Jamie Burroughs who was killed in vehicle accident near his stationed base on January 22, 2011. I would like to thank the entire Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho for the support and compassion and respect shown to me and my family during this most difficult time. I would also like to thank the Casualty Department as well as all who assisted us. I understand now why my son Jamie was so proud to be part of the Air Force Family. May God Bless and guide each and everyone of you. I will forever keep you in my prayers.

Rose Burroughs and Family

Major Jeff Ausborn – My Angel

I recently asked an Air Force Chaplain what he thought about the concept that when our loved ones die they go to heaven and become angels; some with small wings and some with large. He eloquently answered with the belief that angels are “helpers” that assist in heaven; our loved ones do not actually become angels when they go to heaven. My husband, Major Jeff Ausborn (538 AEAS C-27 Chief of Current Operations) was killed (along with 8 other American trainers) at Kabul International Airport on April 27, 2011 by an Afghan pilot. Although the chaplain’s answer to my question confuses me more, I am now more resolute in the theory that my husband was “my angel” while he was alive. Although I never saw his halo, he had an ethereal presence whenever he walked into a room. I cannot begin to understand why he was killed because I know he made the world a better place while he was alive. He was kind, gentle, and loving to me, his children his family and friends; he enjoyed instructing Afghan pilots and believed he was making a difference for their country and ultimately ours.

Submitted by: Suzanna Ausborn (Major Ausborn’s wife)
Air Force Marathon
(17 September 2011)

Team “United for 9,” ran in honor of 9 Airmen killed at Kabul International Airport on 27 April 2011 in Afghanistan

Submitted by Linda Ambard (red shorts), wife of one of the 9 fallen Airmen, Maj Philip D. Ambard
“I run on.”

Dates to Remember...

SrA James A. Hansen
killed in Iraq 15 September 2010
Submitted by James’ mom, Emily Hansen

A Happy Birthday Wish for Jermode Pharr from his mom, Jacqueline Pharr
October 30, 1972
My Son Dave

TSgt. David Garland Roberson II
July 11, 1974 - December 27, 2009
"Drop the Fairy Wand and Pick Up the Big Stick"

I wanted to share this picture of my son, TSgt. David G. Roberson II. He loved the Air Force, his 3 dogs - Orso, Dea, and Lola but his true passion was fishing as you can tell by the smile on his face. He created a "swim-bait" to catch bass and his company was called "Orso Swimbaits". He made these baits by hand for 4 years and in November, 2009, created a business plan so his baits could be manufactured with the help of investors. If you Google Orso Swimbaits, you can still find pictures of his "works of art" on line. You can also find him on YouTube. He wore a headcam and videoed fishing with his swimbaits.

Dave coined a phrase when he started making the baits - "Drop the Fairy Wand and Pick Up the Big Stick" - in other words, he wasn't going to wait for magic to happen to get his swimbait company off the ground, HE was going to make it happen. He had a dream and only Dave, hard work and determination could make it come true. Dave also worked very hard at his jobs in the Air Force and was rewarded accordingly. He was stationed in Italy, Alaska, California and Texas. He also went to Japan for special training and spent time in Iraq. At the time of his death, he had been in the Air Force for 15 years. He planned to retire after 22 years and live out the dream he was making come true for himself. A life revolving around his passion, fishing.

On December 27, 2009, my handsome, 6'4", 190 pound, 34 inch waist son was struck down by a cardiac arrest while walking across his dining room in San Angelo, Texas. He had bought a house in June, 2009 when the Air Force stationed him at Goodfellow AFB. He had two roommates. They were both home at the time Dave collapsed and did what they could. The hospital administrator that called to break the news to me, told me that they never got him back. He was 35 years old.

No one is really clear why he had a cardiac arrest because of his good physical condition. I have to believe that his Dad and I got a really great son that lived "out loud" and got more and gave more in 35 years than most folks get in 70. I have to believe that God needed a "take charge" person in heaven and I have to believe that he is with his Great-grandfather Porter and they are fishing together. “AND, I am so glad that I got to be his Mom, even if it was for only 35 years.”

Submitted by Dave’s mom, Gail Taylor
Upcoming Events

Gold Star Mother’s Day
Sunday, September 25, 2011

This day is a tribute to all parents whose children died as a result of their service with the United States Armed Forces. It commemorates the contributions, commitments and sacrifices made by those parents individually and through the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.

Fort Gordon Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp
Friday, September 30 2011 - Sunday, October 2 2011
Location: Fort Gordon, GA

National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar
Friday, October 21 2011 - Sunday, October 23 2011
Location: Colorado Springs, CO

Northern California Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp
Friday, November 18 2011 - Saturday, November 19
Location: Santa Rosa, CA
Note: These resources provide additional information that may be useful or interesting and are provided consistent with the intended purpose of the Air Force Families Forever Program Newsletter. However, Air Force Families Forever Program cannot attest to the accuracy of information provided by these resources or any other linked resources. Air Force Families Forever Program providing resources does not constitute an endorsement by our program or any of the sponsors of the resources or the information presented.

http://webpages.charter.net/ps4fs/Shawls/
Access the above website if you would like to request a prayer shawl. The prayer shawls are handmade and sent to the families of fallen service men and women.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
Toll-free: 877-969-0010
PH: 630-990-0010
Website: www.compassionatefriends.org
Local chapters in your area

http://www.americanwidowproject.org/

http://www.journeyofhearts.org/grief/accident2.html

http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/
Air Force Families Forever
Contact Information:
Sadiqa Moore, Family Support Coordinator,
302-677-2393
sadiqa.moore@us.af.mil

Scholarship Links
- www.afcrossroads.com
- www.military.com
- www.militaryscholar.org
- www.finaid.org
- www.afsahq.org
- www.fastweb.com

References used for newsletter:
http://helpguide.org/mental/grief_loss.htm
http://www.webmd.com/balance/tc/grief-and-grieving-symptoms
http://www.journeyofhearts.org/grief/accident2.html
“Lighting The Candle of Hope” by Darcie D. Sims, PhD, Grief Inc.

Air Force Families Forever
Mailing Address:
116 Purple Heart Drive
Dover AFB, DE 19902