



Helping Us Grieve

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CHILDHOOD GRIEF • NEWSLETTER



WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT BEREAVED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

SUMMER EDITION 2021



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Re-Entry: Experiencing the World Differently

DR ELIZABETH MANN –
CLINICAL DIRECTOR

As we in NSW emerge from more than 100 days of lockdown, we are re-entering a different world.

Many, myself included, will have mixed emotions – a kind of 'cautious optimism' as politicians are wont to say, relief and excitement fluctuating with concern. When we see people throw caution to the wind and ignore or rebel against health guidelines, anxiety about a possible surge in Covid numbers may result. At least we know that our mixed reactions are normal.

Many years ago, one of my sons went on an extended school trip to Kenya. He spent several weeks in a very poor community, working with children and families who literally owned nothing. When he came home to Australia, he found it very distressing being back in our materialistic society. He found the noise and bustle of shopping centres unbearable for quite some time. It took

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time for him to readjust to what had always been his normal life.

As I remember my son's difficulties re-adjusting, I find myself wondering how long it may take all of us to adjust to our changed world – to find a new 'normal', a way of living with the virus that has had such a profound effect on every aspect of our lives. Covid feels like the unseen enemy in our midst, creating a kind of

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low-level anxiety that is necessary to keep us safe, but alertness that is too intense or too prolonged can have a concerning impact on our health and well-being.

Finding the right balance between heightened awareness and relaxation is likely to be difficult for us as adults, and probably more so for children. The language we use around them will continue to be important. For example, how will we help them maintain important preventive health practices without making them so anxious that they have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, or going to sleep at night? Maybe we need to find creative ways of tempering serious messages with humour?

My reflections also include concern for our bereaved families who are not only adjusting to the new Covid world like everyone else but are also grappling with a far bigger challenge- a world without someone special that they love.

Bereaved people often talk about the difficulty of re-entering society after the funeral and a period of compassionate leave, their descriptions suggesting that it's like walking into a blinding light

“ BEREAVED PEOPLE OFTEN TALK ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF RE-ENTERING SOCIETY AFTER THE FUNERAL AND A PERIOD OF COMPASSIONATE LEAVE, THEIR DESCRIPTIONS SUGGESTING THAT IT'S LIKE WALKING INTO A BLINDING LIGHT WITHOUT PROTECTIVE SUNGLASSES. ”

without protective sunglasses. Many feel changed in a way that affects their perceptions of people, places, events and possessions, and the meaning they give to life itself.

This pandemic is like a double whammy for our bereaved families. They have changed and the whole world has changed, most people grieving for life as it was before, bereaved people also grieving for the person who died and the way they themselves were before both events. Navigating the painful and unfamiliar world of grief is difficult at the best of times, doubly so when the whole world is struggling to navigate a pathway through a pandemic.

Life has been difficult for most people during lock down, and much more difficult for people who are grieving, lonely, physically or mentally unwell, or struggling to survive financially. Those who would normally provide support have been struggling with their own issues or geographically prevented from providing practical or emotional help. Survival and safety have been the key issues, life devoid of the occasional

luxuries that tend to keep our emotional tanks 'topped up'.

Here at the NCCG, we have been very busy providing online and telephone counselling for many families from all over Australia. I want to say a huge thank-you to our wonderful team who have embraced new ways of working with children online, and who have gone above and beyond to ensure families could access the support they need in their times of distress.

It hasn't been easy, but everyone from the Board to the admin staff, the counsellors, and Mal and Di, our founders.... has worked tirelessly as a

cohesive team to ensure we continue to provide much needed support and care for bereaved families.

As we emerge from lockdown as an organisation, we also have mixed feelings. We want to emerge from lockdown in the safest and most effective way possible for everyone. We know the NCCG has changed forever, and in many ways that are positive. We are now supporting families across the whole of Australia, and our online services will expand and continue permanently. Those changes are exciting, almost as exciting as welcoming families as they reconnect with the Centre for face-to-face counselling.

Similar to the situation experienced by many organisations, this has been a difficult time financially for the NCCG. I particularly want to thank Annette, our Development Manager, who has worked under extraordinary conditions to ensure we could stay afloat financially. We know it will be a slow and gradual transition back to some sort of normality and our sincere thanks goes out to all of the generous sponsors and donors who have helped us stay 'afloat', and without whose continued support we would not be able to continue.

Finally, for those of you who are grieving, and struggling to adjust to this strange new world, help is available when you contact us on 1300 654 556. You are not alone.



Message from our chairman

ROBERT McROBBIE



As you read this newsletter many of us are adapting to working, studying or looking after our families under some sort of hybrid lifestyle, which is very different to how, and where, we spent our time just two years ago. We've been through this before, but who would have thought that we'd be approaching another Christmas still in a state of transition?

Recently, the NCCG's Board held workshops hosted by director Emmanuelle Delannoy. The open discussion was timely and was very focused on the subject of transition.

Financially, the NCCG has faced challenges since COVID-19 first emerged, although the government's pandemic support initiatives and generous donations from our long-term benefactors and friends has enabled us to carry on. Our counsellors and office staff have adjusted to delivering services online, and sadly, the number of bereaved families seeking the NCCG's support appears to grow exponentially each year. In that context, the Board decided that it was time to refresh the NCCG's strategic plan, which focusses on "big picture" ideas to guide the NCCG's financial and operational future. While we continue that process, we welcome comments and suggestions from the NCCG's extended family, so please provide thoughts and suggestions about how you see the NCCG's future as we re-enter the post-pandemic world (Email info@childhoodgrief.org.au).

“ WE WELCOME COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE NCCG'S EXTENDED FAMILY, SO PLEASE PROVIDE THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU SEE THE NCCG'S FUTURE AS WE RE-ENTER THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD. ”

Finally, one of our beloved directors, Heidi Coupland, will shortly be leaving the Board. With her extensive experience in empirical research and program evaluation, Heidi's contribution to the NCCG has been invaluable. This isn't a goodbye to Heidi as she will always be a close friend of 'A Friend's Place', but on behalf of the NCCG, I would like to thank Heidi for her time on the Board and wish her well for what comes next.

specialist courses 2022

Core Course in Bereavement Counselling

Course Duration
2 half days online plus
1 day in Centre

Course Cost
\$640

Course Dates

Term 1: 22 & 23 Feb / 1 Mar
Term 2: 3 & 4 May / 10 May
Term 3: 26 & 27 Jul / 28 Jul
Term 4: 18 & 19 Oct / 25 Oct

Working with Bereaved Children

Course Duration
3 days in Centre

Course Cost
\$875

Course Dates

Term 1: 22 - 24 Mar

Kids Grief in the School Setting

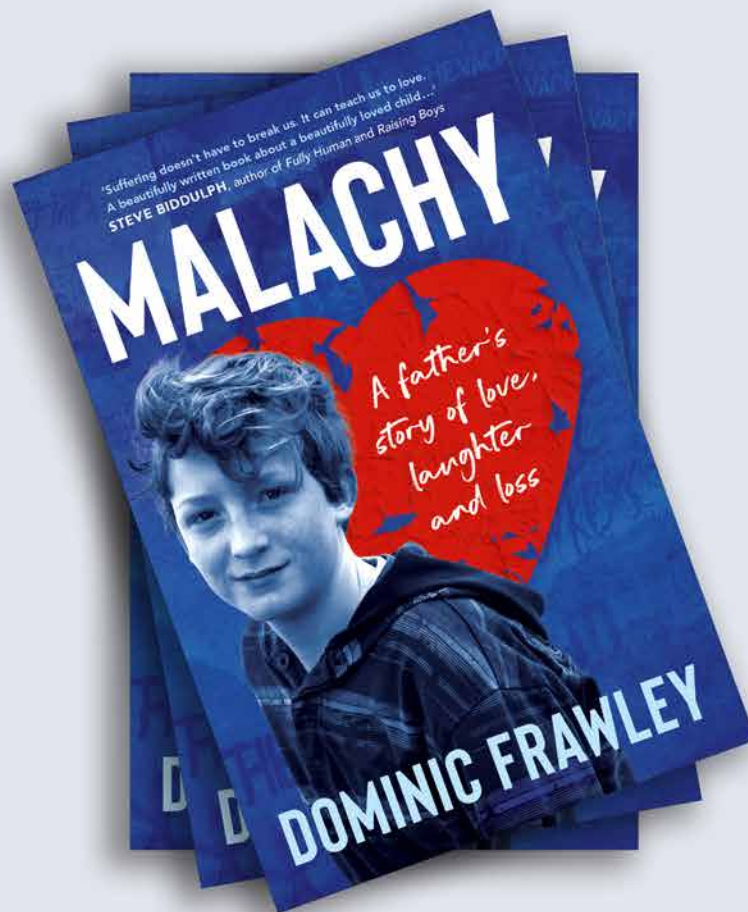
Course Duration
1 half day online

Course Cost
\$160

Course Dates

Term 2: 31 May
Term 3: 16 Aug
Term 4: 8 Nov

for enrolment details go to our website
childhoodgrief.org.au/education/



BOOK REVIEW

Malachy – A Father's Story of Love, Laughter and Loss

BY DOMINIC FRAWLEY IS AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

A book for Parents and everyone who cares for a family grieving the death of a beloved child.

Dom's sensitive and gifted writing style engaged me from the very beginning so that I felt as if I was involved heart and soul in the journey of Malachy's lifetime. The family dynamic that was created by six intelligent, creative, generous, loving and adventurous people enabled Malachy to achieve his potential as a human being for fourteen plus years, to pack into those years more quality of life than many folk do if they live to be a hundred. Dom enables the reader to experience his son undefended, to see the world through his eyes, so I feel as if I know him, and as if I know his beautiful family.

'Words are our tools of resurrection' is a quote I love from a character in a book by Pip Williams - 'The Dictionary of Lost Words'. Dom has used his words of love, loss and grief beautifully to do just that – to bring Malachy back into life again, into his life, and into the lives of everyone who has the courage to fully experience this touching tribute to a precious son.

Dianne McKissock OAM
Co-Founder and Patron
Bereavement Care Centre and
National Centre for Childhood Grief

ORDER A COPY



<https://wilddingopress.com.au/product/malachy>



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Kids Share

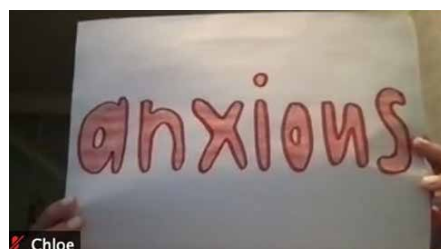
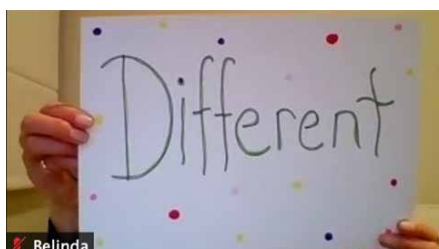
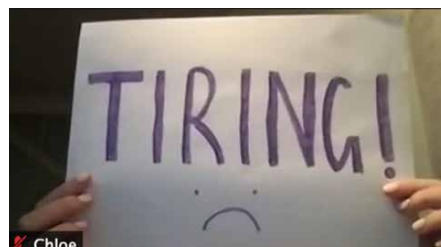
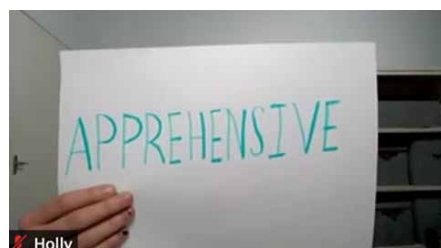
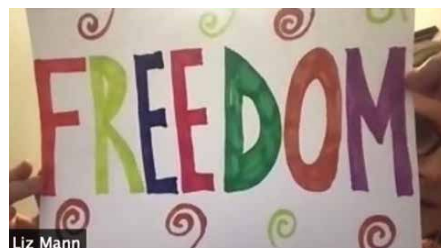
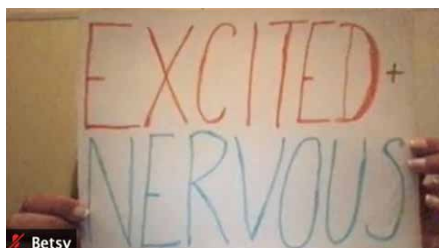
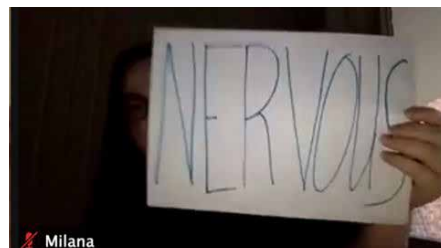
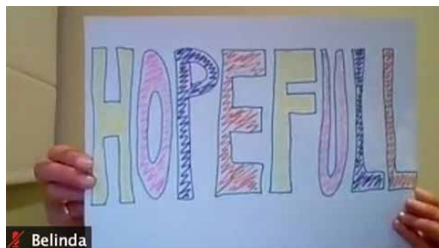
Sometimes one word from many is all that is required to tell a meaningful story. As Sydney transitioned out of lockdown in October, our group facilitators took the opportunity to check in with our bereaved kids to see where they were at with this latest adjustment to daily life.

It's easy at times to potentially underestimate or miss the depth of the impact that our children and young ones may be experiencing with all the change, especially when we are all learning to navigate life differently. Children may show their feelings in ways that we do not expect and through behaviours that may seem unusual, or regress back to previously outgrown behaviours.

“ CHILDREN MAY SHOW THEIR FEELINGS IN WAYS THAT WE DO NOT EXPECT AND THROUGH BEHAVIOURS THAT MAY SEEM UNUSUAL. ”

All very normal reactions when faced with big life changes. In times like this, 'keep it simple' is a powerful motto to follow. And the kids did just that when they were asked to choose one word that best describes 'Lockdown' and then one word that best describes 'Freedom'. One word from many generated a lot of talk about nerves, anxiety and worry about coming out of lockdown, more so than there was excitement. Being able to hear other kids expressing similar feelings, normalised these feelings for everyone.

The activity was timely and as Mal McKissock OAM said "A wonderful, powerful, insightful cross-section of reactions. Single words which tell a story".



It's been a virtual time...

ANNETTE GURR, DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The digital expansions made to our service delivery in 2020, enabled the NCCG to easily embrace the virtual environment for the many months of Sydney's lockdown this year. While our counsellors had begun practicing counselling online last year, the length of this latest one ensured they became incredibly savvy with this new way of delivering care. Our individual and group counselling continued with little interruption to these programs.

"I feel more comfortable speaking about my mum dying."

"I don't feel so bad since I've been coming."

"It's helped in the sense of having another place other than my mum to talk to."

"It has taught me that I'm not alone and I'm not the only one."

"It has helped me by talking about dad – because I know I am listened to."

"It has helped me to know what to do with my grief."

In having experienced another term of needing to cancel our education programs, a specialist team, led by our Clinical Director, Liz, came together to redevelop our 3 day in person 'Core Course in Bereavement Counselling' to be delivered partially online. The first teaching was received extremely well and as a result, the Core Course will now primarily be undertaken this way moving forward as 2 half days online and 1 day of face-to-face teaching at the Centre.

"DESPITE SOME OF THE CHALLENGERS OF ONLINE WORK, I FOUND THE COURSE WAS FACILITATED EXTREMELY WELL, THE BREAK INTERVALS WERE JUST RIGHT AND THERE WAS NO OVERLOADING OF INFORMATION. THE FACILITATORS CHECKED IN REGULARLY WITH EVERYONE. MY HONEST OPINION IS THAT I FEEL IT WAS THE BEST COURSE I HAVE EVER ATTENDED IN MY PROFESSIONAL LINE OF WORK."

Courtney



The team also developed a new ½ day online program, 'Kid's grief in the school setting'. This course will cover grief at different developmental stages, ways to best support both the child, their family and peers; appropriate ways of communicating difficult and sensitive information within the school setting; common issues that arise in the school setting and how to best manage these. See our website for more details and 2022 course dates.

During this time we even managed a virtual team bonding evening when the NCCG team had the pleasure of all coming together to find our inner "Van Gogh" in a Cocktails and Canvas workshop facilitated online by Julie Peadar Art. Thankfully no experience was necessary and any level of artistic ability welcomed.

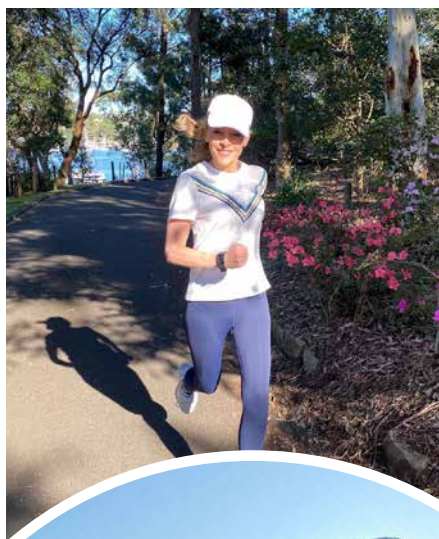
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Our fundraising also went virtual, with supporters undertaking many working from home campaigns, including trivia events, raffles and the Blackmore's Sydney Running Festival. It is without a

“ YOUR COMMITMENT TO HELP OUR BEREAVED FAMILIES IS BEYOND WORDS AND WE REMAIN THANKFUL ALWAYS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT. ”

doubt that the service we provide would simply not be possible without all of our wonderful supporters. Your commitment to help our bereaved families is beyond words and we remain thankful always for your continued support. To endure one of life's most painful experiences as a child or young person has a profound and life-long impact. Your contribution ensures that these children have the opportunity to learn how to accommodate their grief and in doing so, live their best life possible.



With the Centre now starting to slowly reopen to families again, 'A Friend's Place' was definitely in need of some love following such a long lock down. Recently, we were blessed with a team of gardeners, cleaners, organisers and passionate supporters of the NCCG. The team from Turks certainly had their work cut out for them, especially in the garden. The Centre has now been filled with much laughter and music and undergone a major spring clean. The fairies are especially happy again their garden has been loved up and the kids are loving it too.



Angela's Christmas Fundraiser

NATALIE HARTLEY,
COUNSELLING COORDINATOR

Angela first came to the NCCG in 2017, following the death of her husband, Colin. It was so very important for her that she found the right support for her son, Felix. While we have been able to provide the help she hoped for, Angela has also generously reciprocated with fundraising for the NCCG. She previously raised an incredible \$8k in the 2018 BSRF ½ marathon and this year she is spoiling many with her delicious homemade pickles and preserves fundraiser. The latest update being \$2700 raised and 315 jars sold with more being made as



you read this. To see Angela's delights and make an order go to her Instagram link @crystalpicklesandpreserves. We are so very thankful for Angela's ongoing efforts to help the NCCG and her beautiful community of friends and family that passionately support her fundraising ventures.



“ 100% OF EVERYTHING I SELL GOES TO THE NCCG WHICH IS A FABULOUS ORGANISATION REALLY MAKING A DIFFERENCE, AND WHO HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE TO FELIX AND ME. ”

Turks.

thirdlink

MERCK



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FOUNDATION

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Foundation



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Rotary
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