



THE SEASON OF LIGHT

By Darci Sims, PhD

It's dark outside, and it's only 4:30 p.m. It's cold. Frost traces delicate etchings across the frozen window panes and filters what little light is left of the day. Already the gloom has descended. Tiny flickers of light begin to penetrate the darkness as we try to chase away the night with the warmth of candles and lamps.

But the lights we turn on do not seem to pierce the emptiness of this winter season. We try to find the holiday spirit, but when the family circle has been broken by death, the only things that sparkle this season may be tears. Instead of bringing warmth, love and excitement, the holiday season can be a painful reminder of the terrible hole in the family fabric.

While most of the world seems to be addressing holiday greeting cards and planning holiday menus, the bereaved are struggling with other concerns: How long does grief last? Will the holidays always be this awful? How many stockings do we hang? What do we do with the empty place at the table? What is there to be thankful for this year?

Maybe nothing seems quite right in your house or in your heart this season. Can you ever be happy again? Will the sights and sounds of the holiday season ever touch you again? Will there ever be light again?

We hold our breath and hope the holidays go quickly. We doubt we can endure too long. We sit in the dark because we think we have forgotten the light.

We wish for some sign of hope in this season of icicles – some magical sign that will keep us going until the warmth of spring arrives. We turn on all the lights in an attempt to chase away the grief.

At first, all I could remember were the awful things. I kept track of all the things I didn't have any more and made mental lists of the things I would never know or experience. Joy had been buried one afternoon in late fall and there was to be no light for us – ever again.

But, as I lived through those memories, I discovered that the pain of this darkness could change its intensity and its depth. Slowly, gently, as I allowed them to, those painful memories faded and were replaced, in time, with memories of his smile, his life days, not the death days.

I began to remember that my loved one lived – not just that he died! His light had given birth to our happiness and once I acknowledged the darkness, the light could begin to peek through!

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The Season of Light *continued from Page 1*

So in this season of little light –

Be patient with yourself. Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to bear. Do what you can this season and let it be enough. ✨

Be realistic. It will hurt, but don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go.

Be kind and gentle to yourself. Figure out what you should do, balance it with what you are capable of doing and then compromise.

Plan ahead. Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important to you.

Listen to yourself. As you become aware of your needs, tell family members and friends.

Ask for help when you need it.

Take care of yourself physically. Eat right and exercise. Gift wrap some broccoli. If nothing else, jog your memory!

Change something. Everything has already changed, so don't be afraid to change some traditions. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always stop it if it doesn't feel quite right or doesn't work! But don't toss out everything this year. Keep some traditions. You choose which ones.

Leave the word "ought" out of this holiday season.

Hold on to your wallet and charge card. You can't buy away grief, but you might be tempted to try.

Understand. Understand those heartaches will be unpacked as you sift through the decorations, but so, too, are the warm loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

Share your holidays. With someone, anyone! There are many lonely people who could use your love and caring.

Work at lifting depression. Take responsibility for yourself. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat. (Cookies are often therapeutic!)

Hang the stockings. Place a wreath on the grave. Do whatever feels right for you and your family.

Light a special candle. Not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a loved shared.

Learn to look for joy in the moment. Get a pair of rose-colored glasses and change the way you look at things. Joy happens when we look for it!

Find the gifts of your loved one's life. Think of all the "gifts" that your loved one gave to you – joy, laughter, companionship, etc. List these gifts on strips of paper and keep them somewhere close to you. Some may put them in a gift box while others may decide to place them in the stocking. Some may decorate the tree with them or simply keep them in a memory book or in a secret place. But, wherever you place them, know these small strips of paper hold treasures far beyond our capacity to understand. They hold tangible evidence that someone lived. It is a reminder that we did exchange gifts and that we still have those gifts, even if the giver has gone.

Live through the hurt. So that joy can return to warm your heart. This is the Season of Light – for it is the season when we remember that once we loved and were loved. And that is the greatest light and memory of all. ✨

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| RESEARCH REVIEW

JASON JARZEMBOWSKI, MD, PHD

CONCERNS OVER THE CHEMICAL BISPHENOL A (BPA) ON THE RISE

What parents can do to protect their children

By Jason Jarzembowski, MD, PhD – Dr. Jarzembowski is a pediatric pathologist at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, an assistant professor of Pathology at the Medical College of Wisconsin and serves as the medical advisor to the Infant Death Center of Wisconsin.

What is BPA?

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a synthetic chemical produced by combining two phenol molecules ("bisphenol") with acetone ("A" – the major component of most nail polish removers). It was created in the late 1800s as a synthetic estrogen. Today, BPA is used in the production of plastics, polyesters, epoxy resins and flame retardants. However, its primary use is in polycarbonate plastics, including CDs, DVDs, electronic devices, sporting goods, medical equipment, plastic baby bottles, food containers and wraps. BPA represents a \$6 billion/year investment by chemical and product manufacturers.

The concern

Concerns about the safety of BPA have persisted since shortly after it was created and recently have made headlines due to the efforts of several advocacy groups and media outlets.

Scientists originally believed that only a minute fraction of ingested BPA was actually absorbed into the body, and that those low levels would quickly be excreted in the urine. In fact, BPA has been detected in the urine of 93 percent of randomly tested American adults. Later animal studies have demonstrated that BPA can cross the placenta and is present in umbilical cord blood; thus, fetuses can be exposed to BPA in utero.

The controversy

Initial statements by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as well as the American Chemistry Council, which represents several chemical manufacturers, have claimed there was no substantial evidence of any health risks to children from exposure to BPA. However, the National Toxicology Center issued a report in September warning of just such risks, and the FDA's position was brought into question after the committee chairman was discovered to have received (and

failed to disclose) a \$5 million grant from a medical supply company financially vested in BPA-containing products. Some recommendations may have been based on experiments performed more than 20 years ago, when testing was less sensitive and less sophisticated.

BPA effects

BPA does not cause immediate toxicity at the levels to which most people might reasonably be exposed. However, even extremely low concentrations of BPA appear to mimic natural hormones such as estrogen (hence, its original use). Resulting effects on fetuses and young children may include alteration of male reproductive organs, the start of early puberty, shortened duration of breastfeeding, pancreatic cancer, behavioral problems and delays in brain development. In adults, BPA has been linked to cancer, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic health problems, and may decrease the effectiveness of chemotherapy; the most recent of these studies was published in the September 2008 *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Attorney generals from several states have written a joint letter to 11 product manufacturers requesting a voluntary removal of BPA from their products, and despite the absence of definitive scientific data or legal force, many are beginning to comply under increasing pressure from consumers and retailers. In mid October, the Canadian government announced it was prohibiting the sale or import of infant bottles and food packaging containing BPA, effective in 2009. They also earmarked funds for a three-year study into the possible hazardous effects of the chemical, becoming the first country to enact such a ban. The FDA plans to revisit the issue in the coming weeks.

How can parents protect their children?

First, realize that many BPA-containing products already are being pulled off store shelves and replaced with BPA-free

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| PERSONAL VIEWPOINT

RX FOR GRIEF

by *Stephanie Rapant McIlvaine*

Grieving people often say, "If only I knew what I could do to feel a little better in this grief." The truth is, we do hold many remedies that help in our grief process. While nothing will take our grief away completely, we can reduce anxiety and stress. The key to healing grief is to have love for and patience with ourselves.

No one knows us like we know ourselves, and we are our own worst critics. We tend to beat ourselves up. How many times, while grieving, have we questioned our actions in comparison to others? How many times have we said, "I should have," compared to "He or she should have?" Chances are good that we question ourselves more than we do others. It is a natural tendency to question ourselves instead of giving ourselves credit. However, in our grief we need a lot of support, and who better to give it to us than ourselves – the one we are with every day, all day long?

On an airplane, flight attendants provide direction in case of an emergency. They inform passengers that if an airplane loses cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop down from the overhead compartment. They continue to instruct the passengers to first place the masks over their own mouths before assisting others. The message is, "You cannot be of assistance to others unless you take care of yourself first." The same idea applies to grief.

Your grief prescription is your own personal plan to heal. We may feel discouraged and feel that life may never be the same without our loved one. This generally is true in that our lives have changed in many ways. But we have to continue living, and it is important to allow ourselves to live in a healthy way.

Design your own plan for your grief. Be creative. Pamper yourself a little. You may want to get a massage, take a long bath, or spend a day at the zoo. Often, we spend the day filled with sorrow and we need to balance this with some peaceful time as well. Try to include a few of the following simple principles in your grief prescription:

- Give yourself permission to grieve. Cry if you need to and laugh if it feels good.
- Be realistic. Don't place unnecessary pressures on yourself to do everything you did before you were grieving.
- Release yourself from time constraints. Grief does not have a time limit. Frequently, people feel they should act as if everything is back to normal when "normal" is no longer natural.

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Concerns over Bisphenol A *continued from Page 2*

alternatives, especially for baby bottles, sippy cups and the lining of infant formula cans. Second, limit the use of plastics with the recycling code 7, which have a high probability of harboring BPA. Avoid food or formula packaged in cans that might contain BPA; opt for glass or unlined containers instead. Never microwave infant formula in bottles or these containers, which potentially increases the rate at which BPA leaches out of the plastic. Finally, remember that any risk from BPA remains small and is only one of many factors contributing to the health and well-being of infants and children.

For more information visit the following Web sites:

- American Academy of Pediatrics:
www.aap.org
- National Toxicology Program:
<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/>
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration:
www.fda.gov ↩

TAKE PART IN THE 2008 WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

The 12th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting event is Sunday, Dec. 14. Everyone, in every time zone around the world, is invited to light a candle in honor of all children who have died, that their light may always shine.

As candles go out in one time zone, they will be lit in the next, creating a wave of light that will circle the Earth. Please join in the 24-hour memorial by lighting a candle, wherever you are, at 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14th.



SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Below are some suggestions you may wish to consider for New Year's resolutions to help you as you enter the coming year.

- Try not to imagine the future – take one day at a time.
- Allow yourself time to cry, alone as well as with your loved ones.
- Don't shut family and friends out from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times.
- Make plans firm enough to support you but flexible enough to change if they do not feel right as the day or event gets closer.
- Make sure your plans are your own. Do not worry about what others think. You and your family must be comfortable with them.
- Be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends.
- Relish good days, don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last – it will come again and multiply.
- Take care of your health. Eat nutritious foods, get moderate exercise, drink lots of water and rest. Help your mind and body heal.
- Keep a journal to see your progress through grief.
- Do something to help someone else in memory of your child. In doing this, your child will live through you.
- Be kind to yourself – give yourself permission to have quiet time.
- Reach out to others who are grieving, share your feelings and let them share with you. ↩

Rx for Grief

Continued from Page 4

- Understand that grief is a physical, emotional, social and spiritual process. Grief affects every aspect of our lives.
- Use support systems. Don't feel guilty for accepting help from others. Other people find comfort in helping you.
- Talk with others experiencing similar losses. This helps to normalize your feelings. Sharing your thoughts will help others as well.
- Allow time for remembrance. We will always miss our loved ones. No one can ever take away our relationships or memories.
- Wait at least one year before making any major or unnecessary changes.

Below are more helpful suggestions from the counseling staff from Hospice of the Western Reserve:

- Journal.
- Cook.
- Golf.
- Go on walks and listen to music that suits the mood at the moment.
- Try online support groups.
- Read books and watch movies – sad ones for a good cry and funny ones for a good laugh.
- Work extra hours or temporarily reduce work hours.
- Focus on one task at a time.
- Learn to say 'No!'
- Take short road trips.
- Spend time with supportive family and friends.
- Find a quiet place during the day to meditate. Inhale and visualize forcing out all the negative stress feelings with each exhale.
- Create a memory box to keep significant items that are reminders of your loved one.
- Allow yourself to feel and explore your pain.
- Do something you are good at even if you don't feel like doing it.

You have the right to follow your own healthy grief plan. Don't be afraid to change it around. If it no longer works for you, try something else. You are the one in control of your grief. Prescribe ways to help yourself heal. ↩

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AUGUST 2008 THROUGH DECEMBER 2008

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Sept. 20 – Racine Baby Expo in collaboration with the African American Infant Mortality Coalition of Beloit, Beloit, Wis.
- Sept. 22 – Town hall meeting, in collaboration with African American Infant Mortality Coalition of Beloit, Beloit, Wis.
- Oct. 19 – Giving Bad News to Families, Medical College of Wisconsin, Wauwatosa, Wis.
- Oct. 24 – Community viewing of “Unnatural Causes” with discussion in collaboration with Kenosha Infant Mortality Delegation, Kenosha, Wis.
- Nov. 17 – Grief for Paramedics, Milwaukee.

PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

- SAID (Support After Infant Death) Group – Second Thursday of each month at Aspirus Hospital, Wausau, Wis.
- Oct. 12 – Walk to Remember, Bubholz Gardens, Appleton, Wis.
- Nov. 2 – Memorial Program, Mt. Mary College, Milwaukee

INFORMATIONAL EXHIBITS

- June 24-25 – Women, Infants and Children Conference, Appleton, Wis.
- Aug. 16 – Urban League Back to School Health Fair, Milwaukee
- Oct. 4 – Appleton Youth City Expo, Appleton, Wis.
- Oct. 9 – Rock County Community Baby Shower, Beloit, Wis.
- Oct. 29 – Sherman Park Family Resource Center Fair-Safe Sleep for Your Baby, Milwaukee
- Nov. 6 – John Teggatz Forensic Science Seminar, Milwaukee
- Nov. 13 – Pediatric Nursing Conference, Pewaukee, Wis.

INITIATIVES INFANT DEATH CENTER OF WISCONSIN IS COLLABORATING WITH AT THIS TIME

- Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Program Professionals
- Beloit African American Infant Mortality Coalition
- Black Health Coalition of Kenosha
- Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin
- Center for Grieving Children

- Central Wisconsin NICU Transitions Committee
- Cribs programs in Barron County, Bayfield County, Kenosha County, Lincoln County, Marathon County, Milwaukee County, Taylor County and the cities of Neenah and Racine
- Concordia Metcalfe Community Health Improvement Project
- Dane County Child Fatality Review Team
- Fetal Concerns Program
- Fetal Infant Mortality Healthcare Action Team
- Great Lakes Intertribal Council Honoring our Children Project
- Healthy Babies in Wisconsin Steering Committee and Regional Action Teams
- Healthy Native Babies Consortium (Menominee, Stockbridge-Munsee and Ho-Chunk nations)
- Marathon County Child Fatality Review Team
- Marathon County Start Right Program
- Madison Health Department/Prenatal Care Coordination
- Marathon County Healthy Babies
- March of Dimes
- Milwaukee Birthing Project
- Milwaukee County Child Fatality Review Team
- Milwaukee Fetal Infant Mortality Review Project
- Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
- Northern Wisconsin NICU Transitions Planning Committee
- Racine County Death Review Team
- Racine Fetal Infant Mortality Review Team
- Racine Infant Mortality Coalition
- Safe Kids Wisconsin
- Spanish Center of Kenosha
- State of Wisconsin Bureau of Health Information
- State of Wisconsin Division of Public Health
- Waukesha County Child Fatality Review Team
- Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care
- Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
- Wisconsin Public Health Association

OTHER

Media interviews

- July 21 – Anne Harvieux was interviewed on WITI Ch. 6 (FOX) Milwaukee.
- Aug. 6 – Anne Harvieux was interviewed on WISN Ch. 12 (ABC) Milwaukee regarding disparity in Wisconsin infant deaths.
- Sept. 18 – Anne Harvieux and Vivian Jackson were interviewed on WGLB radio.
- Nov. 9 – Anne Harvieux was interviewed on WTMJ Ch. 4 (NBC) Milwaukee regarding safe sleep environments for infants.

DONORS

Ms. Kathleen Condon

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel C. Haugh

Ms. Tracy M. Jaglinski

Ms. Laurie Misslich

Ms. Nancy Nawarawong

Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Plotz

United Way Fox Cities, Inc.

Ms. Susan M. Vorlob

To make a gift

Children's Hospital and Health System Foundation can assist you if you or your organization would like to donate to the Infant Death Center of Wisconsin. To reach the foundation office, call (414) 266-6100.

Periodically throughout the year, you may receive mailings from the foundation seeking support. Often there is a card enclosed with options for giving. Feel free to check the Infant Death Center as an option, or write in the center if it is not listed on the card.

The center also can be chosen as an option on your United Way designation form. Your support of the program allows us to provide a continuum of services throughout the state.

Many companies provide a match to donations given by their employees. Check with your employer to see if such a program is available to you.

IN MEMORY OF

The Infant Death Center thanks the following individuals for their generous donations in honor of someone or in memory of a special child.

These donations were received between June 1, 2008, and Oct. 31, 2008.

Dorothy Bamberger

Ms. Anne M. Harvieux

Ralph A. Franciosi, MD

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald G. Cromwell

Mr. and Mrs. Byron T. Foster

Ms. Anne M. Harvieux

Dr. Michael C. Kubly

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. Minahan

Dr. Herbert and Mrs. Karen Oechler

Ms. Susan N. Oster

Ms. Peggy Peterson

Layla Susnik

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Wilson

Madeline R. Thorpe

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel N. Burnside

Below is a list of Web site links that may be helpful resources to you:

Infant Death Center of Wisconsin, www.idcw.org

Learn about the Infant Death Center and read online articles from *Wisconsin Perspectives* and information about grief, loss and risk reduction.

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, www.chw.org

This site provides an online magazine, information on health and safety, as well as other pertinent information.

Crisis, Grief and Healing, www.webhealing.com

Find links to a wide range of Web sites including ideas on how to honor your child and articles from grief therapists.

The National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center, www.sidscenter.com

This site provides access to, "The Death of a Child, the Grief of Parents: A Lifetime Journey," to assist families in their grief as well as other information on sudden infant death. It also provides information on safe sleep and SIDS risk reduction.

The Compassionate Friends, www.compassionatefriends.com

The Compassionate Friends assists families in the positive resolution of grief.

M.I.S.S. Foundation, www.misschildren.org

This site provides support to families and seeks to increase public awareness of and decrease infant mortality.

National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, www.nichd.nih.gov

This site provides up-to-date information on the Back to Sleep Campaign, safe sleep environment and federal initiatives to educate the public.

A Place to Remember, www.aplacetoremember.com

This site offers support materials and resources in dealing with a crisis in pregnancy or an infant death.

Safe Kids, www.safekids.org

Safe Kids is dedicated to the prevention of childhood injury. Safety tips are updated regularly.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, www.cpsc.gov

This site provides information on product recalls and ways to reduce the possibility of injury or death from consumer products. It includes information on throwing a baby safety shower. This site also provides an interactive section for children on safety in the home.

WISCONSIN PERSPECTIVES is the newsletter of the Infant Death Center of Wisconsin. The goal of this newsletter is to provide information to help reduce infant deaths and improve infant health.

The Infant Death Center of Wisconsin is funded by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and a MCH Title V Services Block Grant, through the Maternal Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, it is because you have been referred to the center at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Contact us at (414) 266-2743 if you wish to be removed from the mailing list. With any questions or comments about the program or newsletter, contact Anne Harvieux, program administrator, at (414) 266-2746 or aharvieux@chw.org.

To reach the center and the South/Southeastern regional office, contact Anne Harvieux at (414) 266-2746 or aharvieux@chw.org or Vivian Jackson at (414) 266-2745 or vjackson@chw.org. To reach the satellite center in northern/western Wisconsin, contact Dora Gorski at (715) 218-8424 or dora.gorski@cssw.org. To reach the satellite center in northeast Wisconsin, contact Christine Armstrong at (920) 969-7903 or carmstrong@chw.org.

| NEW ARRIVALS

Congratulations to the following family on their new arrival.

Anyiah Danyale Jenkins born Sept. 15, to Erica Jenkins and Arron Piggie.

If you would like your baby's birth announcement in the newsletter, contact the Infant Death Center satellite or central offices.



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