

## Children's Grief Center of New Mexico, Inc.

3020 Morris NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111

Offering Hope and Healing to Grieving Families

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# Heartfelt News



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Children's Grief Center

Offering Hope and Healing to Grieving Families since 2001

## Grief in the Holidays

As the leaves change colors and the weather cools down, it is a good time to start thinking about addressing grief during the holidays. Due to the huge emphasis placed on family togetherness during this time of year, we become even more acutely aware of the void in our lives left by our loved ones who have died. There is no right or wrong way for how things should go during this time, but the more you plan ahead and start thinking about how to manage getting through the impending celebrations and events, the easier it will be.

Individuals and families go through a myriad of emotional, physical and cognitive reactions during the holidays – they may feel guilt, confusion, anger, or the need to withdraw and isolate themselves. Some people may turn to excessive drinking, drug use or aggressive and reckless behavior. Children are often confused about how celebratory they should feel, and worry whether they are taking the situation seriously or somberly enough. Other reactions include trouble sleeping, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, becoming clumsy or forgetful, or even suffering from panic attacks. It is important to recognize that these are normal and common reactions and to focus on self-care and getting as much rest as possible.



The National Alliance for Grieving Children emphasizes the importance of facing the holidays with “intentionality” – meaning you are planning for it beforehand and developing strategies for coping. The idea is that it becomes “manageable if it’s mentionable.” By having conversations and making plans early on, the emotions and energy surrounding the experience are then spread out over a period of time (rather than being concentrated all in one day).

You may wish to create a new tradition or stick to things you have done in the past. Remember that whatever you decide to do the first year, you are not obligated to do the next. Helping others in need could be a great way to take your mind off of the grief that you are feeling yourself. Another idea is to plan a big celebration for New Year’s – it can be helpful to have something fun to look forward to. And if things feel overwhelming, plan to call on all of those people who have said “if you need anything...” and ask them for help.

It is important to try to include children in the holiday plans as much as possible. Assign specific responsibilities to each family member and perhaps even plan projects to do together to remember your loved one or discussion topics to talk about as a family. A list of ideas for activities is below.

There are many books and other resources available here at the Grief Center with additional coping strategies for the holidays. Please contact us or stop by our office if you would like to review them.

### Holiday Projects/Activities for Remembering Your Loved One

- Create a holiday collage – laminate it and use as a placemat
- Create a shadow box using an old cigar box and decorate with trinkets, pictures, etc.
- Decorate a photo frame for the person’s photo
- Create a support chain made of construction paper with memories of loved ones written on it
- Write memories down on scraps of paper– share them with one another – then place in an ornament or decorative jar and leave out during the holidays
- Personalize ceramic plates, cups, etc., and use them during the holidays
- Cook a loved one’s favorite meal to share
- Light a special candle

### Children's Grief Center of New Mexico, Inc.

3020 Morris NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111  
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www.childrengrief.org

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## Children's Grief Center Now in Rio Rancho

Maggie Cordova Elementary School, at 1500 Veranda Rd. SE in Rio Rancho, has opened its doors to the Children's Grief Center of New Mexico's special brand of support groups for grieving kids and their families. Services are now available alternating Thursday evenings for young people ages 5 – 14 and their caregivers.

To join the Rio Rancho groups, families need to call CGC headquarters (323.0478), located at Sunset Mesa School in Albuquerque's northeast heights. Monthly orientations for new families are held at Sunset Mesa, then families can choose to attend either Tuesday or Wednesday night groups on the Sunset Mesa campus, or Thursdays in Rio Rancho.

How can you help support CGC in Rio Rancho? Spread the word! Invite CGC staff to speak at your school, spiritual home, civic group, or class. Volunteer to serve meals, raise money, or distribute flyers. And thank our wonderful facilitators! Without the help and support of CGC volunteer bereavement facilitators, this program as we know it would not exist, and would not be available free of charge to all families, all the time. **Thank you!**



## Family Story: The Garcias

Leslie Garcia was about to turn 7 when her little brother, Daniel, 2 ½, accidentally drowned in a swimming pool in Albuquerque in 2006. Leslie understood that Daniel wasn't coming back, and she knew about heaven, but she was confused and alone without the little brother she called Buddy.

"At first, I thought my brother couldn't have died," Leslie said, "because I always believed that the older people died first."



Her parents, Daniel and Loyola, were trying to navigate their own grief and looked for some sort of counseling for Leslie, whom they wanted to feel free to talk about her brother and her loss.

"I was worried that someday she was going to have resentment toward little Daniel because he took away part of her parents," Loyola said.

Leslie has now been attending groups at the Children's Grief Center for two years. She has made memory boxes devoted to Buddy, drawn pictures of him and his favorite things, and started a scrapbook of pictures and mementos of his short life. She's now got a terror of a little Yorkie puppy. His name: Buddy.

Leslie has made friends at the center, finding a comfortable fit with other children who have lost parents or siblings.

"It helps me to be around other people who have also lost people," Leslie said.

Loyola Garcia has attended the meetings with Leslie and found her own friends, and her own comfort in talking about the death and her anger and guilt in a place where no one pats her on the knee and tells her she'll get over it.

People who have experienced a sudden or violent death of a significant person in their life will tell you that hearing "You'll get over it" or "I know exactly how you feel" does not make anything better.

The children and adults who gather at the Children's Grief Center don't know exactly how one another feels, either, because grief is different for everyone.

(Excerpt taken from *The Albuquerque Journal*, "Center Helps Families Deal With Loss of a Loved One" by Leslie Linthicum, Aug. 30th, 2009)

## Quotes from Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

(From *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart & The Journey Through Grief*):

"Someone you love has died. In your heart, you have come to know your deepest pain. From my own experiences with loss as well as those of thousands of grieving people I have learned that we cannot go around the pain that is the wilderness of our grief. Instead, we must journey all through it, sometimes shuffling along the less strenuous side paths, sometimes plowing directly into the dark center. In opening to the presence of the pain of your loss, in acknowledging the inevitability of the pain, in being willing to gently embrace the pain, you in effect honor the pain."

"I have also learned that the journey requires mourning. There is an important difference, you see. Grief is what you think and feel on the inside after someone you love dies. Mourning is the outward expression of those thoughts and feelings. To mourn is to be an active participant in our grief journeys. We all grieve when someone we love dies, but if we are to heal, we must also mourn."

*Save the Date!*  
**"Helping Children & Teens  
Cope with Grief"**

 Center for Loss & Life Transition

*French Funerals and  
Best Friends Cremation Services*  
present  
**Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.**  
Full day conference  
**Thursday, April 1, 2010**  
Hotel Albuquerque  
CEUs available  
MollieP@FrenchFunerals.com (505) 842-7155

 FRENCH FUNERALS - CREMATIONS   BEST FRIENDS Pet Cremation Services

## Local Civics Groups Support CGC!



Raising money, preparing and serving meals, and sponsoring CGC's "Losing Library" are three ways that the Mesa Grande Civitans, Coronado Kiwanis Club and the young men of Albuquerque's 20/30 Club have stepped up to support grieving families attending support groups at CGC this year.

Dennis Good, president of Mesa Grande Civitans, said of his group, "We heard about CGC through another organization, the Guild at the Risen Savior, and it sounded so great - we called and asked Jade to come speak, the response at the next board meeting was 100% excited! We asked 'What can we do?' and found that the need of meals, library support fit in with our service objectives - we tried to get 3 people to sign up to help each group night but always have more. We're committed to the year but will probably go beyond that because we're excited to do this, we feel there is a great need and we want to be part of the solution."

## ♥ 4th Annual Healing Hearts Luncheon & Silent Auction ♥

Healing Hearts is the only, and therefore absolutely the best, public fundraising event benefiting the Children's Grief Center. It is a time to remember those we love; whether they are still with us, or not! The silent auction is one of the best in town, featuring diverse items and unique packages, which would make fabulous Valentine's Gifts.

We are seeking individuals and businesses to sponsor grief support services over the next year at the Children's Grief Center. It costs \$500.00 to put a child through a year of these unique and important support groups. We would like to honor our sponsors with a table and recognition at the Healing Hearts Event.

Would you, a friend, relative, church group, civic organization, alumni association, or company you know be in a position to provide sponsorships? Please contact Jade Bock, who will happily share the details and benefits of sponsorship. All donations are tax-deductible, and very much appreciated. Regardless - we want you to attend Healing Hearts, and hear the words of the children directly, explaining what the Center, and your support, means to them.

## 4TH ANNUAL HEALING HEARTS LUNCH and SILENT AUCTION TO BENEFIT THE CHILDREN'S GRIEF CENTER OF NEW MEXICO

**Date: Saturday, February 6th**  
**Time: 11:00am - 1:30pm**  
**At Embassy Suites**

1000 Woodward Place NE, west of I-25 and north of Lomas

The Children's Grief Center provides free grief support groups for children who have experienced the death of a sibling or caregiver. These are the only support groups for grieving kids in Central New Mexico. Join us for lunch, compelling speakers, and a unique silent auction with a splended array of items ranging from weekend getaways to homemade treats. Bidding from 11:00am - 12:00pm. Lunch served at 12:00pm.

Please return this information to confirm your reservation prior to January 30th.

mail (3020 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111), FAX (298.6132), or call (323.0478)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Table of 10: \_\_\_\_\_ (\$450.00)  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ # of individual tickets \_\_\_\_\_ (x \$450.00)  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ I would like information on grief group sponsorship  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Cardholder's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Method of payment: \_\_\_\_\_ check enclosed  
Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Please charge my: \_\_\_\_\_ MC \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ AMEX  
Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot attend, but would like to make a direct donation to the Children's Grief Center

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_