Contradictions of a Grieving Heart
by Melissa Russell
from Still Standing Magazine

Our son Aiden would have turned five years old this month. It was a hard birthday for me this year. Not only is five years a big milestone, but I also felt a lot of emotional turmoil this year. Knowing that grieving is not a linear process and “grief bursts” are a normal part of the process, I shouldn’t be surprised by the fact that this birthday was harder than some have been. But there was something different this year that took some time and reflection to come to understand. I felt a lot of turmoil, as if the feelings and emotions I was experiencing were contradicting each other. I felt a lot of tension mentally and emotionally, as I experienced multiple conflicting emotions at the same time.

The biggest contradiction I faced was the conflicting emotions in my heart. We are so fortunate to have two healthy, wonderful children that were born since we lost Aiden. This year I noticed that my heart felt full of love, happiness and gratitude for these wonderful little people I have been given the privilege of calling mine. My days are filled with so much love, I am the center of these precious beings’ worlds, and they are the center of mine. I feel fortunate beyond belief that I get to spend my days with them. But at the same time my heart feels so sad and broken as I am missing our sweet Aiden. Only two of my babies are here with me, one will always be missing, and I will always feel a deep sadness from that loss. How can my heart be full of these conflicting emotions at the same time?

Grief doesn’t make sense. Neither does my heart.

I always struggle with the need to do something special to celebrate, remember and commemorate Aiden’s life on his birthday. It was a happy day after all. We didn’t know anything was wrong with him until two days after his birth, so his birthday really was a joyful day. I want to find a way to celebrate his birthday that will honour the joy we felt. But at the same time it is hard for me to think of ways to celebrate, let alone act upon those ideas when I don’t feel like celebrating in the least. How do I balance these conflicting emotions, the need to celebrate with no desire to celebrate?

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Another contradiction I face is my sense of time around his life and death. To me it feels as though he was born and died just yesterday. It seems impossible that it could really be five years ago already. It still feels so fresh to me. But at the same time it also feels like it was a lifetime ago. It feels like a nightmare that happened in another lifetime because it certainly couldn’t have happened in this same life that I am living now. It seems impossible that I could survive something so horrendous and still go on living. How can something feel like yesterday and a lifetime ago all at the same time?

_Grief doesn’t make sense. Neither does my heart._

And finally, when I think about Aiden’s life and death and the horror of it all, I feel strong. I survived the horrific death of my precious child. I survived something I never imagined myself being able to survive, and I have come out the other side of that deep, dark bottomless pit of grief. Not to say that my grief journey is over by any means, but I feel like I have survived the very worst of it. I am scarred and scathed, but here none the less. If I can survive that, I can survive anything. But then it also serves as a constant reminder of how fragile and precious life is. Our sweet child was taken from us, we watched his body wither before our eyes and held him as he took his final breath. There is no guarantee in life, for anyone, no matter how precious or loved. This makes me feel so vulnerable and anything but strong. How can I feel strong and fragile at the same time?

_Grief doesn’t make sense. Neither does my heart._

This year, Aiden’s fifth birthday taught me to accept that these seemingly contradictory feelings and emotions can coexist. I know this because I am living proof. Nothing about Aiden’s death makes sense, it never will. But I can learn to accept and respect what I feel. Rather than fight against the contradictory feelings, I can accept that it doesn’t make sense to feel such opposites at the same time, but that is what I feel and it doesn’t always have to make sense. Giving myself permission not to have to try to make sense of these conflicting emotions takes a burden off of my shoulders. I feel what I feel. It is only my job to acknowledge and accept that, not analyze and make sense of it.

After all, grief doesn’t always make sense and hearts don’t always make sense either.

Author Melissa Russell lost her first child, Aiden, at 19 days old after a normal pregnancy and delivery. Fourteen months later Melissa and her husband joyfully welcomed their rainbow baby Emily. Melissa hopes that sharing her journey through grief will not only help her continue to heal her own heart, but also help other bereaved parents know that they are not alone. Connect with Melissa via email at melissa.russell383@gmail.com http://stillstandingmag.com/2015/01/contradictions-grieving-heart/

_Dress DOWN to fight SIDS!_

Does your company have a “dress down for charity” program? If so, SIDS Resources would love to be included on their list of recipients. We will be happy to supply informational material to all who participate. _Please contact Lori at 800-421-3511 or lbehrens@sidsresources.org for more information._
**Dragonfly Memorial Poem**

A thousand tears or more these eyes have cried  
and a thousand more lay in wait  
I am bathed with them  
and yet my heart is still broken,  
and all that is within me aches  
with the loss of you, the wanting of you.

There is never a time for this that is right-  
ever a way that can prepare the heart  
for this reft -you have passed through  
my arms too soon, like sand flowing through fingers  
I could not hold you here, though  
I would try.

I know that your spirit flies free  
and in the quiet depths of my heart, I can see you still  
in the rhythm of the waves upon the shore  
in the crisp fall air that fills my chest,  
in the iridescent gleam of each dragonfly  
skimming the surface between heaven and earth.

~Kimberly McIntyre – de Montbrun (La Belle Dame.com)

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**Monthly Infant Loss Groups**

Listed below are regular meeting times in each region. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. Please call to confirm time and location. Family members and friends are encouraged and welcome to attend.

**Eastern Region**  
**St. Louis**

3rd Monday of the month  
at 7pm

SIDS Resources’ office  
1120 S. 6th Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104  
Call Dawn at 314-241-7437 or  
1-800-421-3511

**Western Region**  
**Kansas City**

4th Wednesday of the month  
at 6pm

Call Pete at 816-569-6956  
for group location

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**South Central/SWest Region – Springfield area**

Call Sara at 573-364-5900

If you want to connect with others who have experienced the sudden death of a baby, please consider joining our Facebook group. This internet support group is open only to families involved with SIDS Resources – no one else has access to this discussion board. You may share something about your child, your experience, or ask questions. Please email Sara at stamburrino@sidsresources.org and request to participate in the Facebook group.
Thank You

to all who hosted 3rd party events to benefit SIDS Resources in 2014

Ava Brown Memorial 5K
Sarah and Robby Brown
In memory of Ava Brown

Smiling Angel Foundation Gold Tournament
Nadine and Mike Freedline
In memory of Sydney Freedline

A Divine Run
Kathy and Kirk Hance
In memory of Devon Hance

Marshall Dean Keller Memorial Golf Tournament
Chris and Jamie Keller
In memory of Marshall Dean Keller

Jake’s Chicken and Beer Dance
Sara and Craig Koopman
In memory of Jake Koopman

Olivia Schultz Memorial Golf Tournament
Debbie and Steve Schultz
In memory of Olivia Schultz

Lola’s IDEA Foundation Golf Tournament
Kevin and Dionne Terrell
In memory of Lola Terrell

Party with a Purpose
Colleen and Bob Weber
In memory of Christopher Weber

Swing Away SIDS Softball Tournament
Kurt Dunn
In memory of all babies lost too soon
Regional Activities
for SIDS Resources’ detailed event information, visit www.sidsresources.org
and click on “get involved”, then “upcoming events”

**Eastern Region**
*St. Louis*

**GO St. Louis, Because One is too many**
Sat. & Sun., April 11th & 12th
Family Fitness Weekend
SIDS Resources is one of the charity recipients. Please join our team! Click for more info.: http://www.sidsresources.org/?page_id=1654

**Save the Dates:**
*Trivia in Paradise*
July 11th

*Strides for SIDS*
Aug. 15th

**Western Region**
*Kansas City*

**Rock and Remember**
Saturday, March 7th
The SAM MONTGOMERY Memorial Dance. For details and to register – https://www.firstgiving.com/23244/rock-and-remember

**South Central/SWest Region**
– *Springfield*

**SIDS Fundraiser Fair and 5K**
Saturday, April 18th
in memory of Cassandra Young. Please contact Sara Tamburrino at 573-364-5900 or stamburrino@sidsresources.org

**North Central**
*Jefferson City/Columbia*

**8th Annual Tee it up for SIDS**
Sunday, May 17th
Swope Memorial Golf Course
Kansas City, MO

If you wish to host any events, please contact Lori Behrens at 314-241-SIDS or lbehrens@sidsresources.org

If you are interested in participating or volunteering in one of our events, please call 1-800-421-3511.

Quarterly Update
Winter 2015
This publication is published quarterly—Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We won’t be mailing the updates, however all updates are available on-line, or we can email it to you, which helps us realize significant cost savings.

If you don’t have internet access or email, please contact your Program Coordinator and we’ll work to make other arrangements. We appreciate your understanding.

If for any reason you would like to be removed from this mailing, please call 1-800-421-3511 or email Lori at lbehrens@sidsresources.org

To access support services for bereaved families, or to schedule a SIDS training for professional and community groups, please call 1-800-421-3511 or contact your regional SIDS Resources’ office.

www.sidsresources.org