



PRESS RELEASE
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CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY, NOVEMBER 17, OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON BEREAVEMENT'S IMPACT

Interregnum Inc., *Finding life after loss*, New Jersey Grief Support Nonprofit
Organization Provides Resources To Help Guide Parents, Kids Through Loss

Parents who have had a spouse or partner die find it challenging to know how best to support their grieving children, a challenge complicated by a lack of community awareness about bereavement as well as resources that respond to the needs of those in grief, according to the results of a nationwide survey of bereaved parents released here today by Interregnum Inc., *Finding life after loss*.

Grief's impact is both lasting and profound, the survey indicates. Nine of 10 parents say the death of their spouse/partner is "the worst thing that has ever happened" to them. Nearly eight of 10 say they think about their deceased spouse/partner every day and 70% indicate they would "give up a year of my life for one more day with my departed spouse."

Survey of Surviving Parents Finds:

- Three-quarters of parents say not enough resources to help grieving kids
 - 43% worry daily about how their children are coping
 - Nearly 6 of 10 say "hard to know what my child needs from me"
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Friends/Community Can Make All the Difference:

- A key "grief resource": Societal understanding/support

- Yet, many parents say friends, co-workers reluctant to discuss loss
- Three-quarters of parents say support of friends/family has “major impact” on ability of grieving kids to cope

At the same time that they are striving to cope with their own grief, parents also are beset by worry about their children, with nearly half reporting their kids are having more trouble in school and nearly six of 10 indicating “I find it hard to know what my child needs from me.”

The poll of 548 parents who had a spouse/partner die and who still had children under the age of 19 living at home was conducted nationwide via the Internet between July 6 and October 5, 2011, by the national polling firm Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc. The research was conducted under the auspices of the National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC), the nation's leading organization of bereavement centers, and was underwritten by a grant from the New York Life Foundation.

“Bereavement is a universal experience a burden that inevitably each of us will shoulder at some point in our lives,” said Judith Pedersen, Executive Director of Interregnum Inc. “The irony is that as a society and as individuals, all too often we shy away from confronting the grief phenomenon, and therefore neglect the urgent need to help those struggling with grief in particular, children who have suffered the death of a parent.”

“Children's Grief Awareness Day, November 17, represents a unique opportunity to focus on this under-appreciated and poorly understood issue and highlight the role we all can play in helping to support families along the ‘grief journey,’” said Ms. Pedersen. Interregnum’s **Moving Forward**[™] bereavement support program, which is offered in a variety of locations, features an 8-week group model that helps family members with this journey. We also offer an array of online support, and a hands-on Hearts of Hope program that engages the whole family in creating and painting ceramic hearts that we gift to those experiencing a variety of forms of loss.

Death of Parent in Childhood a Widespread Phenomenon

More families may be struggling with the death of a family member than may be commonly thought. In late 2009, a survey of 1,006 adults conducted by New York Life with Comfort Zone Camp, a leading provider of bereavement support services for children, found that one of nine Americans had lost a parent before age 20.

“We believe that it is time to shine a brighter light on grief, to better understand its impact on both kids and parents, and to resolve to do more to help families along their grief journey,” Ms. Pedersen said.

For Parents, Concern for Kids Intensifies Grief's Burden

For parents, bereavement's burden is exacerbated by unrelenting worry regarding how their kids are dealing with life following their loss, the survey indicates.

Many parents concede that they don't truly understand what their children are going through in managing their grief: More than three-quarters of parents say it's "hard to know what is 'normal' kid behavior vs. what is grief related."

At the same time, parents are concerned about the worry that their kids are themselves experiencing. About two-thirds say their kids worry at least sometimes about their surviving parent going through life alone, and nearly four in 10 think their child worries frequently about them getting sick or dying.

How their kids are faring in school is a particular source of worry for many parents. About a third say their kids don't do as well in school as they did before and are getting in more trouble than they used to.

Indeed, about four in 10 parents say their children's school was not well prepared to help their children deal with their loss.

Reluctance of Friends, Relatives to Discuss Death Creates Feelings of 'Difference'

Dealing with the grief burden is complicated by the lack of community discussion.

More than half 56% -- of parents agreed that "most adults don't know how to talk to me or my kids when we run into them." At the same time, nearly 90% wished people understood that "it's better to say something and risk upsetting me than to ignore my loss altogether."

Reticence about discussing death and grief seems to engender in the bereaved feelings of "difference" from those in the community.

In fact, 63% of parents strongly agree that after their spouse/partner died, they felt like they were "different" from other adults in the community.

"Creating opportunities for the bereaved, kids first and foremost, to connect with peers who are going through the very same thing does wonders in banishing these feelings of 'difference' and is one of the most valuable ways to support bereaved families," said Andy McNiel, executive director of the National Alliance for Grieving Children.

What's Needed? Society's Understanding and Support

Bereaved spouses/partners and their children need support across a broad range of areas, the poll suggests. About three-quarters of parents agree that there are not enough

resources to help kids who have had a parent die. When asked, however, which grief resources they wish were available, for both their kids and themselves, parents cite “greater general societal understanding and support” most often of the options offered. Parents also believe that such support is the most valuable grief resource for both themselves and their kids.

Three-quarters of parents also agree that the amount of support bereaved kids receive from friends and family has a major impact on how a child copes with grief.

“As bereaved families work through their loss, what they really need is to feel connected to caring communities of friends, co-workers and professionals who acknowledge their bereavement without hesitation or discomfort, offer an occasional helping hand, and encourage those experiencing grief to share their feelings about this all too common experience,” said Chris Park, president of the New York Life Foundation.

The New York Life Foundation has created a Website, www.AChildInGrief.com, which offers a broad range of informational and educational resources for parents, kids, educators and the public regarding loss. Support also is available at www.ChildrenGrieve.org, offered by the National Alliance for Grieving Children, including guides for parents and educators.

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Interregnum Inc., Finding life after loss, is a New Jersey nonprofit organization founded to help those experiencing grief and loss learn effective ways to move forward with their lives. Interregnum's Moving Forward□ bereavement support program features an 8-week group model that helps family members process their loss. Its Hearts of Hope program engages family and community members in creating and painting ceramic hearts that Interregnum gifts to those experiencing a variety of forms of loss. Judith Pedersen is available as a speaker on the topic of grief and loss, and offers accredited seminars for nurses and social workers. Interregnum also offers an array of helpful resources on its web site, Facebook, and Twitter pages

To learn more, visit www.interregnum.org or call (973) 224-6900.

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