



BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO  
HALTON/PEEL

### A Mother's Testimony

We all came together in September of 2008. All of us were strangers from different walks of life, with different religious backgrounds and beliefs.

What we did have in common was that we were all parents that had lost a child. One loss was as recent as three months prior, one was almost a year. Some were lost to illness, some to vehicle trauma and one to an act of violence. One was as young as two-and-a-half and the rest were up to the age of 23.

Not one of us wanted to be there and, unbeknownst to each other, we all had an escape plan; go to the washroom never to return; get something from the car and just leave, or just simply don't come to the next meeting. In fact, two did not come back after the first night.

However, the remaining nine were all willing to give 'group' a chance. What could possibly be worse than what we were all going through? On the small possibility that this might actually help, we were willing to go through the first couple of weeks which we had been warned were incredibly painful.

And they were. Some of us sat saying nothing, staring at the floor with tears rolling down our faces. Some couldn't stop talking almost in a frantic way of getting it out. At times, we had to leave the room because we just couldn't take the pain.

The two facilitators gently walked us through talking about the agonizing deaths of our children. We individually described the different types of funerals we had arranged. We brought photographs to show everyone else. We tried to understand the shock and bewilderment that we were all trapped in. We spoke about our worlds that had been shattered and about the people around us; how simply getting out of bed in the morning could be a monumental victory, how utterly hopeless and lost we all felt, how angry we all were that this could have happened to our children and how we felt that we would never be happy again.

Within a couple of weeks an amazing thing happened. We started to look forward to our Wednesday nights. We started to depend on it. It was the one place where no matter what you said; there was at least one person in the room who "got it". We understood each other because we were all going through the same emotional and physical trauma. We started to worry about each other and felt the need to immediately inquire how someone else was coping with whatever issue we were dealing with. We started to feel a little better after each meeting.



BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO  
HALTON/PEEL

We stuck it out and finished the 13 week structured group. At the end we were actually laughing with each other which we had thought would never happen. We have continued to meet on our own at least every two to three weeks because we need each other.

We have supported each other through every terrible holiday. We have almost all been through the dreaded anniversary date of their deaths. We have dealt with their birthdays and the terrible reality that they will never grow older. We have all started a New Year that takes us in time further from them. There has been support for dealing with the Criminal Justice system.

We have celebrated each others small steps in moving forward. We have laughed ourselves to tears at the strange and bizarre things we have done in trying to cope with a different life. We have sympathized with all the downward spirals that are a part of the grieving process. The last time we met, we actually took time to marvel that we're all ok. We're not fine, we'll never be fine but we are coping and breathing. We also took time to thank each other for being there.

As I once posted on my Facebook page:

I depend on my group. When I am sure I'm losing my mind, they assure me I am!

*Crystal Simmons*

*Jon and Petra McKittrick*

*Rick and Wendy Whyte*

*Les and Irene Piasecki*

*Tony and Cristina DiCeglie*

*In loving memory of Drew, Hunter, Brian, Krista, Vanessa and Isabel.*

*Special thanks to Paulette and Sheena who understood and let the group take its own course when it needed to.*