

Two Kinds of  
Parenting

Children's  
Books on  
Grief

Special Edition!

# Different Kind of Parenting:

A 'zine for Parents  
whose children have died

Moms'  
Study

And  
Much  
More!

Jizo Remembrance  
Ceremony  
at Great Vow

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## Notes from the Editor

Many thanks to all our subscribers for your patience on this latest issue of Different Kind of Parenting. It has been a difficult ending to 2003, difficult beginning to 2004. In December, we moved, then my husband and I both got very sick, then it was the holidays, then my mother-in-law passed away. By the time 2004 arrived, I was down-right depressed. So it has taken us several weeks to get back to any sort of rhythm and paced production for our print and online projects.

This issue is longer than normal because we are combining the 1st quarter and 2nd quarter 2004 issues — in an effort to make up for lost time! It is packed with information, articles, and good ideas. I hope you find something that is interesting, helpful, just a small bit comforting. If you read something here that really affects you or helps to effect some change in your perspective, we encourage you to be in touch and share your story.

Also, a big thanks to each of the contributors who sent content to me for this issue!! Your words and work helped me to have enough content to get this issue out to our readers. I could not have done it this time around without your help and support.

And lastly, just a note about our KotaPress.com website: We made a decision back in December 2003 to totally re-design and update the site. At the time, we thought we'd have lots of time during the holidays to do that and launch for the New Year. But as I mentioned above, many things interrupted our process. So we spent January and February working on the re-design, and hope to have a new issue layout done for sometime in March or beginning of April. Stick with us, please! We promise that when it is back full-swing, it will have been worth the wait. Thank you!!!

Miracles to you,

Kara L.C. Jones  
editor@kotapress.com

## Contents This Issue

Two Different Kinds of Parenting by Jen Mountney.....	2-3
When you just miss your child.....	3
On Film .....	4
Seeking Support .....	5
Jizo Remembrance Ceremony at Great Vow.....	5
I Guess You Have To Be A Celebrity .....	6
Moms' Study .....	6
Children's Books on Grief .....	7
When It Has Been Five Years .....	8-9
Memorials.....	10
Submission Guidelines .....	10
Subscription Information .....	10
KotaPress Mission & Updates .....	back cover

## ***Two Different Kinds of Parenting***

**By Jen Mountney**

I am the mother of two beautiful girls, Amy Dawn and Hope Sarah. Amy Dawn was stillborn four years ago. Hope Sarah is thirteen months old.

I am a parent of two girls and yet often only one of my children is recognized. People are afraid to say my baby's name, afraid to 'bring up the pain', a pain that will never go away for me. My daughter, Amy Dawn, would be four now. Every day I think of her and wonder what she would be doing. Every day I miss her. Every day I long for her and wish that I could somehow go back in time and bring her home and make it right. Most people don't like to remember my baby because she died.

And yet Hope, how people love to talk about Hope! How she's doing, how she's growing and ask questions about all she's learning and doing now. And I love it too. And as much as I love it I find it so difficult that only one of my two children is remembered, talked about and loved by others.

I hate the questions I get like 'How many kids do you have?' or hints that it's time Hope had a sibling. Hope does have a sibling. A big sister. I wish people could get that even though my Amy Dawn isn't here that that doesn't make her any less real! I wish they could get that she is still my child. That she will always be my child, now and forever.

The way I parent my girls is so different. With Hope, I can say her name, tell others about how she is doing, send out her pictures even. People are excited to hear about her and see her progress. With Amy Dawn, people are afraid to mention her. There are so few I can talk to about my baby girl. I can't send out her pictures, I can't tell people how she is growing, all I can do is remember her and teach her sister about her. All I can do is hope that she knows how much I miss her, how much I long for her and how much I love her.

Hope's birthday was a celebration of who she is and all that she has accomplished in her first year of life. Amy Dawn's birthday was a day of longing and aching for her, a day of remembering our time with her four years ago.

It's so hard to be a parent to two girls when only one is recognized. Hope has given me such joy and life. She has truly given me hope and a reason to live again. Having her here is wonderful and yet seeing her grow brings pain because I see all that I've missed with her sister.

It's so hard to blend these two kinds of parenting. To remember on my own. To teach Hope about her sister. I long to know that others remember her, that she is missed. Not only by her mother but by those who would have been close to her, her grandparents, her aunts and uncles, her cousins, our friends and their children.

I love my girls so much. I want to do what is best for them, I need to show them how much I love them. Making memorials for Amy Dawn is not how I envisioned caring for my firstborn child. Collecting Precious Moments figurines in her memory, raising awareness on pregnancy loss and trying to support other bereaved parents is not what I dreamed of doing for my baby and yet it is all I have.

*Continued on next page...*

## ***Two Different Kinds of Parenting...con't.***

I am torn with longing. Longing to be with Amy Dawn again, longing for our family to once again be complete, longing for Hope to know her sister in more than an abstract way.

I wish it wasn't this way. I wanted to give so much more to my children. I had so many dreams. And while Hope will get to live out those dreams Amy Dawn never will. All I can ever do for Amy Dawn is to remember her and try to let her know how much I love her. Hope will grow up knowing her sister, not in the way I'd wanted, but nevertheless she will know her sister. She will know how much her sister is missed and loved. She will know that her sister is watching over her from above. And Hope will know how very cherished she is and how very special she is. I always thank her for coming home to Mommy and Daddy. She is our hope and our joy. Without her we would have no hope.

My parenting isn't what I ever expected or dreamed it would be. I never dreamed I would be raising one child while remembering the other. It is not easy living without one daughter while caring for the other. I feel so torn between the two of them. I do my utmost to be all that my girls needs me to be, to show them all my love and to do what I can for them. For Hope I do my best to teach her and to show her all the things I can, all the things I wanted to show her sister. For Amy Dawn I do my best to remember her and to honour her life.

### **About the Author**

Jen Mountney is the parent of two girls, Amy Dawn, stillborn on February 5, 2000 and Hope Sarah born alive and well on December 22, 2002. Jen longs to honour both her children and make a difference in the lives of others because of Amy Dawn.

Visit Jen's site, Hello, Goodbye., in memory of sweet Amy Dawn.

<http://www.crosswinds.net/~hellogoodbye>

Read Jen's Subsequent Pregnancy and Baby Journal

<http://www.xanga.com/amydawnsmommy>

## ***When you just miss your child...***

### **Ideas from Kara L.C. Jones**

- Go to a water front and throw flower petals. Talk to your child as the petals float out.
- If you are feeling angry, throw rocks out into the water or snowballs against a tree.
- Write a letter to your child. Put it in a keepsake place or your child's memory book.
- Find out how you can plant a tree at a local park and get a memorial plaque for it.
- Consider writing a "children's book version" of your child's story — share it with others!

## On Film

By Kara L.C. Jones

There seem to be so many representations of grief on film recently!! Maybe it's that I can identify with these films now because of my own experience as a bereaved parent? But whatever the case may be, I wanted to share a few films with you here. Maybe you'll find the sense of identification comforting or helpful or interesting. Maybe not. I just know that I feel a sense of empowerment when I see my grief experience gaining voice on the screen. Maybe you will, too.

- One really obvious film for me was ***Whale Rider***. The opening scenes where the boy twin is stillborn and the mother dies in childbirth — well, let's just say that my husband and I weren't exactly prepared for how real it was. The balance of the film shows how the life of a surviving sibling is affected/effected. My only disappointment was maybe that there weren't too many explicit words spoken about how this little girl, her father, her grandparents, her community are affected, long-term, by the loss of the boy and mother. Though my interpretation of the story is that all the characters bare the marks of a loss that is denied or silenced — so that there are explosive expressions the play around speaking the basic truth of grief — I think it may not be obvious if the watcher isn't a bereaved parent themselves. I could be wrong on that. I don't know. But that's how I saw it and just wished there had been more explicit talk in the film, between characters, about it. Even without that, it is an awesome, powerful story.
- The next film to really hit home for me was ***Two Towers***, the second in the ***Lord of the Ring*** series. The Rohan prince is mortally wounded in battle. The king is not really conscious when his son then dies from those wounds. When the king is healed and learns of his son's death, we see a few moments on film of how the bereaved parent is affected. First the funeral song is one of those pieces that hits you to the bone. Then you see the king talking to a white wizard (a bit like a counselor in this film). The king laments, falls to his knees, expresses a grief that makes complete sense. Of course the counselor-wizard says something like (paraphrasing), "Your son will find his way to the hall of your fathers," which seems just like the kind of stupid platitude people in real life would give! So they even got that right. The only disappointment I had was in the third film, ***Return of the King***, when the Rohan king lay dying, he does not mention his son at all. He says something about joining his ancestors or those who have gone before, etc. And if a bereaved parent had written the scene, they certainly would have known to include something where the king would say not to mourn him because he would soon be seeing his child. But that aside, it is powerful to see the representation of a bereaved parent in ***Two Towers***.
- The last film I'll mention here is one called ***Big Bad Love***. But this recommendation comes second-hand from Nancy Grayson over at MISS Idaho chapter. (I have yet to find this film through our lame library system!) Nancy says the scene of the father's grief expressions when his son dies seem to be very real. She was so moved by this film, and those scenes in particular, that she showed a clip of the film at a recent support group meeting. The discussion that ensued was so interesting and intense that the group ended up extending the meeting by a full hour longer than normal! Now that's how films affect people!

Take these recommendations for what they are — one point of view. And if you find a film that affects you, let us know about it! Maybe we can publish your review here!

## ***Seeking Support***

**By Kara L.C. Jones**

After the death of a child, we all have very individual experiences of grief and its aftermath in our lives. So seeking support for living “life-after-the-death-of-a-child” is a very individual experience, too. Some of us may find that support groups are helpful. Some may find one-on-one sessions with a therapist or spiritual counselor are better. Some may use the internet to find online forums and boards that are available 24/7. And many, many people find that some combination of all these, and more, are helpful.

When you are exploring options, keep several things in mind for your best self-care:

- You have the right to try something, decide it does not work, and try something else!
- You have the right to interview therapists before committing to long-term goals with them! A good therapist will give you 15 minutes free on the phone to interview them!
- You have the right to ask for help. If the first person you ask doesn't help, ask someone else! If the second person isn't helpful, ask yet another person. Don't give up!
- You have the right to speak your truth. If you think grief is more about integration than “closure” and “getting over it”, then you have the right to say so!
- You have the right to seek help and support today. Then to not feel the need for support for many months or years. Then suddenly find you need support again some time in the future. It's your life — live it in ways that give you the best self-care!!

## ***Jizo Remembrance Ceremony at Great Vow***

**From Great Vow Zen Monastery**

### **Remembrance Ceremonies for Children Who Have Died**

When: May 29, 2004 and August 28, 2004; Saturday, 2 pm

Where: Great Vow Zen Monastery, which is approximately 90 minutes driving distance northwest of Portland.

What: The purpose of the ceremony is to help families and friends with their grief by honoring their lost children and allowing them to leave a remembrance in our Jizo Bodhisattva garden. The ceremony is very simple, and done in silence. People can participate in the Jizo ceremonies as often as they wish. Ceremonies are usually held two or three times a year. This ceremony is free and open to anyone who has lost a child. Ceremony officiated by Chozen Bays.

For more information contact the Registrar at [registrar@greatvow.org](mailto:registrar@greatvow.org) or 503-728-0654. Visit [www.greatvow.org](http://www.greatvow.org) to learn more about the monastery and its teachers, and for driving directions.

## ***I Guess You Have To Be a Celebrity***

Cynically brought to you from Kara L.C. Jones

Will someone please explain this to me???!!!!

Elvis died - how long ago? And how many people still gather each year and mourn publicly with TV coverage and rituals and tears?

Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers Neighborhood fame died when? And there is continued news coverage of how his widow is coping, books of his words, requiems to honor his life.

And so what is wrong with bereaved parents who continue to remember their children? Why is it a problem for those parents to have rituals each year on the child's birth and death days? Why is it a big deal for those parents to want to remember their dead children and do good deeds in their memory each holiday season? Why do those parents have to "get help" and "get over it" in order to make friends and family happy? Why are there therapists who continue to suggest that parents who keep doing things in honor of their children are "stuck" and need to find "closure"?

I guess it is only healthy to express grief over dead celebrities? Our children would have had to have been famous in order for bereaved parents to be consider "healthy" as they continue to express their ever-changing grief during life-after-the-death-of-a-child!? Is that it? Arg.

## ***Moms' Study***

While this study will be researching for trends in stillbirth, it is for ***any woman who has given birth***—regardless of outcome. They need at least 5,000 people to respond, so please check it out!!!

<http://www.momstudy.com>

From their website:

The study of Maternal Observations and Memories of Stillbirth (MOMS) is being done to provide researchers, medical professionals, and women with a better understanding of stillbirths and how they can be prevented. The results will also provide insight to professionals on compassionate care and support to families experiencing this tragedy. Every year, more than four million women worldwide experience the stillbirth of a child, and the vast majority are preventable.

All women throughout the world who have experienced pregnancy and birth, whether it ended with a stillborn baby or a live baby, are invited to share their story with the researchers by completing an interactive questionnaire. Women who have not experienced a stillbirth can contribute by helping researchers identify possible risk factors that could contribute to stillbirth.

Your participation is sincerely appreciated.

## **Children's Books on Grief**

We'd like to thank Carolyn and everyone over at Children's Literature Listserve for helping us to generate this list of books. If you read one of them and find it particularly helpful, please be in touch with your review. We are always looking for reviews to publish here and online at the Kota Loss Journal.

Jenny Angel by Margaret Wild

Morgan's Baby Sister by Patricia Polin Johnson (Resource Publications, 1993)

Stacy Had Little Sister by Wende C. Old ( Albert Whitman, 1995) **(About SIDS)**

When I Die, Will I Get Better? By Joeri Breebaart (Peter Bedrick, 1993)

You and a Death in Your Family by Antoine Wilson (Rosen, 2001)

Healing the Hurt, Restoring the Hope: How to guide Children and Teens Through Times of Divorce, Death and Crisis with the RAINBOWS Approach by Suzy Yehl Marta (Rainbows Inc.)

Molly's Rosebush by Janice Cohn **(Stillborn infant)**

The Empty Place by Roberta Temes

Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children by Doris Stickney

Never Too Young to Know by Phyllis Silverman

Handbooks of Childhood Death and Bereavement by Charles A. Corr

Recovering from the Loss of a Sibling by Katherine F. Donnelly

That Summer by Tony Johnston

Rudi's Pond by Eve Bunting

This Book is for All Kids, but Especially My Sister Libby. Libby Died by Jack Simon

Today My Sister Died by Ronee Christy Domske

Let's Talk about Going to a Funeral by Johnston

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss by Michaelene Mundy

## ***When It Has Been Five Years***

**By Kara L.C. Jones**

We recently moved. In our new bedroom, there is a skylight. And as Winter moves into Spring, I often wake to blue sky and sunshine coming through the ceiling, pouring over my sleepy eyes. It feels like a luxury.

But one morning this past week, I woke to the sunshine and my heart ached. The first thoughts in my head were about how hard it would be to have to get out of bed and rush off to school, instead of lolly-gagging a bit and enjoying the morning. Then I remembered. I don't have to worry about a new morning routine for school days. I don't have to worry because though I should have my son here, about to turn five years old, getting ready for kindergarten — he is not here. He was born five years ago. And he died five years ago. Stillborn.

And yet in some sleepy, alternate reality, I woke five years later with thoughts in my head of how our household would soon be getting ready for school. And was crushed again by the waking realization of grief and the fact that my son is dead.

It seems that this is a reality of grief, a long-term affect/effect, that most people do not understand. People seem to understand it only if they themselves have lost someone very close to them. Only if they have accepted the reality of grief and let themselves feel it as it evolves in life-after-the-death-of-a-loved-one. Only if they have cast off the foolish ideas of "closure" and "getting over it" that simply lead to denial and a repressed kind of living — and instead have embraced the integration of loss with the rest of everyday life that brings joy, laughter, tears, sadness, and every other experience of a \*feeling\* life.

It is a reality that is even surprising to me — and I'm in the middle of living it. So I suppose I should be less cynical about "professionals" or family/friends who don't get it. None of them could have told me when I was pregnant back in 1998/99 that this would be my life today. And very few of them understand today that this is my life in 2004.

When trying to explain what this 5th anniversary date is like, it seems that words are unable to fully express it. But I'll do the best I can to try and share it here.

Basically, things have just never been the same since that day my son was born and died. It is like there is a constant "pull" in the very cells of my body. It isn't like the people around us don't love us. They do. We have a nice life. We are grateful for my husband's kids (from his first marriage) and his grandson, and their health. We love the island on which we live. And we are always trying to do things to help other bereaved people. But still there is a "pull" in my heart and body. I can laugh again, yes. But even when I laugh or feel joy, there is the "pull" — a knowing that I'm not sharing this life with someone who should be here.

I simply have days, like birthdays or holidays — or just whenever a new flower is popping out for the beginning of Spring — when I turn to share the day and its details with my son, but he isn't there. He will never be there again. It stinks.

## ***When It Has Been Five Years...con't.***

Don't get me wrong. I'm grateful that my husband is here to share those moments with me. I'm grateful that my mom or step-grandson or my friend Heather is there – but none of them replace my son. Nothing can. And so there is the “pull” in my heart.

Several years ago, my favorite uncle past away. I called him “Unkie” and he was more like a grandfather to me. He was very much a part of my life and growth and heart. Recently, his wife wrote me saying she hoped Unkie and my son were together in Heaven. And I wrote back to her:

*“I know Kota and Unkie are together. Sometimes I picture them – out in the back yard, Unkie putting up a tire swing for Dakota's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday – them playing and laughing out there – Kota yelling, “Higher, Unkie! Push me so it goes higher!” And them both giggling and laughing. I miss him so much for his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday – when we should be getting ready for kindergarten next fall and all that would come with it. Well, so, my only comfort some days is to picture Kota with Unkie for his 5<sup>th</sup> bday.*

*Arg. I just wish they were here instead.”*

And I think that says everything about my reality — the reality that there is no closure for any bereaved person — but only integration of loss, right along side everything else of life. My sense of grief and loss for my son and my Unkie are never-ending. Just like my ability to laugh at something funny is never-ending. It's all part of being human.

So here we are. Five years later. My son's 5th birthday. And I wake in my bed, to the luxury of sun pouring into my eyes and warming my body. While at the very same time, there is a “pull” my body, the ache of empty arms, the lack of balloons, cupcakes, noisy children playing games at a birthday party. And **that**, for me, is how I define living a fully integrated life where I don't deny any feeling or experience that comes for me.

So when you are a year out from the date of death — or two years, or five years, or twenty-seven years — and someone tells you that you should “be over it by now” or that you should “have closure” or that you need help because you are “stuck” — well, you have my permission to tell them to go fly a kite!! Maybe flying a kite way, way, way high up in the sky will give them some sense of perspective. At the very least, it will keep them busy and distract them away from bothering you as you feel and express whatever comes up for you in your experiences of this “Different Kind of Parenting”!!

If nothing else, just know that you aren't alone. I, too, wake to beautiful blue skies and bright sunshine — I, too, am grateful for it — and I, too, ache for my son who is five years gone.

*This issue is dedicated to Dakota Jones  
Five years old on March 11, 2004*

## **Memorials**

For Dakota Jones, born & died March 11, 1999 at 4:47 p.m.  
For Joel Albert Grayson, August 27 - October 8, 1999, Son of Nancy & Peter Grayson  
For Charles Christopher Irby, born & died November 6, 1999, Son of Katie  
For Nora Elizabeth, born & died June 3, 2001, Daughter of Christine & Bear  
For Andrew Joseph, born & died October 22, 2001 and his sister Ally, miscarried on  
March 15, 2002, Children of Mike & Angie  
For Adam, born & died March 13, 2000, Son of Nisa & Eric  
For Peanut and for Allen Robert, January 19 - February 4, 2002, Children of Laura & James

We miss you all so very much...

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Make a memorial sponsorship of \$5 or more to this zine, and we'll place a dedication and/or photo in these memorial listings for you. Feel free to call 206-251-6706 or email [info@kotapress.com](mailto:info@kotapress.com) with questions. Send memorial sponsorships to: A Different Kind of Parenting, c/o KotaPress, PO Box 514, Vashon Island, WA 98070

## **Submission Guidelines**

If you know of a grief resource for parents, a quote that inspires you on those dark, painful nights, or have a one page article about grief & healing, or a short poem you've written in memory of your child, write to us. We'd like to hear from you. Send your work via email—cut and paste directly into the email, please. No attachments will be opened. Include a few lines of a bio along with your submission, too. And in the subject line of you're your email, please type, "Different Kind of Parenting Submission."

Email: [info@kotapress.com](mailto:info@kotapress.com) URL: [www.KotaPress.com](http://www.KotaPress.com) Phone: 206-251-6706

## **Subscription Information**

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Vashon Island, WA 98070

## **KotaPress Mission Statement**

This press was started as a safe haven where we could publish our grief and healing artworks. Since its inception, KotaPress has extended this safe haven to other bereaved parents, artists, and poets around the world. We aim to continue offering a home for artworks created by artists who are on a healing path regardless of the tragedy that put them on the path in the first place.

## **Mrs. Duck Project Update**

Our Mrs. Duck & The Woman book has been in print since 1999. Over 1,000 print copies have reached the hands of bereaved parents, and the ebook version has been viewed thousands of times on our website.

Now we are excited to tell you that Mrs. Duck is about to become a 3D animated short film along with a documentary which will feature interviews with bereaved parents who are using Mrs. Duck ideas for coping with their own grief journey. We'll be talking with families who are anywhere from one year to 30 years out from the date of death, which we hope will show how grief changes and effects us all over the course of time. Along with the release of animation & film, the book will be expanded to offer hands-on ideas and resources in conjunction with the story.

This comprehensive grief tool will be made available for use in a few ways: 1) Some copies will be made available to bereaved families directly through the peer-to-peer support network of the MISS Foundation. 2) Copies will also be available as an educational training tool for caregivers including hospice workers taking REACH trainings through the MISS Foundation. 3) We hope to open the topic of loss & healing to another audience via film festivals and theatrical release.

We are grateful for all the support you have given us in the past, and we hope you will want to continue your support as we work on this Mrs. Duck Film Project. Please be in touch!

**KotaPress PO Box 514, Vashon Island, WA 98070 [www.KotaPress.com](http://www.KotaPress.com)**

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**You will always be a parent.  
Nothing, not even death can change that.  
-Nanna Memoo  
Dakota's Grandma**

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