



Launch of the Good Grief Project

NCPC West
Midlands - EOLC
Cradle to Grave

Digital Access to
End of Life Care
Charter

Photography
Competition

The Good Grief Project

The Good Grief Project is a newly formed bereavement charity dedicated to an understanding grief as an active and creative process – we discover how it came about.

In 2011, Josh Harris Edmonds was killed in a traffic accident in Vietnam.

His parents, Jane, a qualified psychological therapist and supervisor and her husband Jimmy Edmonds, a film editor, photographer and Winston Churchill Fellow, decided to develop The Good Grief Project which aims to raise awareness of what it means to grieve for a child in a society that often still sees death, dying and bereavement as taboo.



‘While we may fear death we need not fear those who grieve’ - Jane Harris (Josh’s mum)

There is sadly still a culture of fear in our society that permeates much of our conversations with those that are dying and those that are grieving. The Good Grief Project aims to counter this by offering comfort and support to grieving parents and by raising awareness about the needs of bereaved families. Its mission is to encourage an active and creative response to grief and to find ways of expressing the pain of loss with various art forms and media.

“We believe that in telling our story of trauma or loss we help ourselves to more fully acknowledge that loss and to bring the reality more into the center of our lives.” Jimmy Edmonds (Josh’s Dad)

The Good Grief Project consists of many elements, including A Love That Never Dies a feature length documentary film to be released in Spring 2017, a website that hosts a number of video clips in which bereaved parents share their stories of grief, and a soon to be announced programme of courses workshops and retreats which they call Active Grief.

The Active Grief courses are designed to help you manage and express your grief in ways that are both active and true to you. They will introduce you to many creative practices including, photography, basic filmmaking, drama and singing, textile and fabric work, and importantly exercise and personal training.

“We believe grief is about doing “

Jane and Jimmy learnt this from a bereaved sibling and one of the contributors to Say Their Name the film they produced for bereavement charity The Compassionate Friends,

“It’s not just feeling dreadful in a dark room” says Rachel Claye “If you do stuff, you express stuff and it’s active, that’s when you move forward in grief; and no one can tell you what you need to do because it is about love and it’s about your unique relationship with that person who’s died and only you can possibly find the right symbols or metaphors or things that express that. No-one can lecture you, you can’t read a book that tells you. It comes from within that stuff”.

This work is based on ideas that flow from the concept of ‘continuing the bond’ with your dead child – of not wanting to cut off from them but of building a new kind of relationship with them. Jane and Jimmy don’t pretend that this is easy, but their courses are designed to guide you gently as you struggle to find the symbols and metaphors that will give meaning to your life without your child.

All the workshops that they offer use mindfulness, a technique that is defined as a state of being aware of yourself, your feelings and surroundings and living in the present moment. Jane has successfully used these techniques as a staff and student counsellor in a university setting and is now developing them to help people with their grief. Mindfulness is said to help with anxiety and mood disorders and is quickly finding a place alongside more traditional medical treatments.

“Bereavement and loss are transformative experiences and as such are extremely fertile ground for creative expression whether this ties in with an attempt to challenge the silence that often accompanies death, or a purely personal catharsis.” (Jane Harris – Josh’s Mum)

Jane and Jimmy will be running a taster workshop as part of the Building on the Best programme’s Community of Practice day on December 6th for the ten acute hospital sites chosen for the project. They will be reflecting on their own experience of grief over the last five years since their son died and how they have used creative processes including photography and film to record their journey.

Loss is part of the human experience and you don’t have to be bereaved to get involved or experience the benefits of The Good Grief Project. Even though bereaved families will be the principle constituency, the non-bereaved, the wider community and healthcare professionals can all benefit from what it has to offer.

“We see The Good Grief Project as a really inspiring, innovative and important way of promoting changes as to how people are supported and enabled to come to terms with bereavement and grief.” (Clare Henry MBE, Chief Executive, National Council for Palliative Care / Dying Matters Coalition)

“We are confident that The Good Grief Project will have a major impact across a wide range of professionals and people working with the bereaved, bringing much comfort to those families in Britain who have suffered the worst loss of all, the death of a son, daughter, sister or brother.” **(Margaret Brearley , CEO, The Compassionate Friends UK)**

You can find more information about **The Good Grief Project** and other work Jane and Jimmy have produced by visiting www.thegoodgriefproject.co.uk



Jane Harris



Jimmy Edmonds