**ISA ISPID  
  
Abstract Submission  
  
Nº: 219**

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| Topics: **Implementing best practices** |
| Type: **Thematic Panel** |
| **Relationships after the Sudden Death of a Baby or Child. Strategies to Manage this and the Possibility of Growth** |
| **den Hartog, Petra N.**1 *1 - SIDSandKids, Australia.* |
| **Objectives of the session** To provide bereavement practitioners/ social workers/health professionals with strategies to assist bereaved parents to understand how the grief affects their key relationships and to manage this so that relationships do not break down, particularly that between the parents of the deceased child. Parents can grow both in terms of their relationship and personally. Knowledge, strategies and support give hope to parents who fear their key relationship will break down.  **Content of the session** Presenting key findings from bereaved parents themselves as to what assisted them in maintaining and strengthening their key relationships - especially with their partner, children, parents, other family members, friends and colleagues.  **Method and extent of audience participation** Power-point presentation and invitation to participants to ask questions, enhancing dialogue during the session.  **Proposed content area and why it is important to participants** **ABSTRACT   Conference  2016** In the experience of counsellors at SIDS and Kids most relationships of bereaved couples do not break down, nor are they more likely to do so than in non- bereaved couples. It takes time for bereaved parents to work out how to grieve, how much space to give each other, express feelings, communicate needs and be truly supportive.  This paper will explore the new perspectives and strategies parents have used to strengthen their relationships. Approximately fifty parents were interviewed and focus groups were held, resulting in a self-help booklet “When Relationships Hurt, Too.” What helped? Reading resources, counselling (both individual and couple), contact with other bereaved individuals (especially those trained to be supporters), support groups. Developing increased understanding of the range of grief responses and ways of grieving, heightened emotions such as guilt, anger and shame, having less energy for self and others is crucial. Accepting how individual differences challenge relationships and why sexuality is impacted. Deciding to survive and face adversity and a new reality together, being determined to stay together.  Developing positive attitudes, keeping memories alive – ‘continuing the bonds’, looking after one’s self and keeping fit as well as acknowledging the grief- not masking it or avoiding it- all are crucial. Counsellors need to be proactive and support multifaceted. It is not inevitable that bereaved parents will break up after the death of their child. |
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