



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

Central Family Forum

September 27-29, 2024

Cambridge Hotel & Conference Centre, Cambridge, Ontario

Program as of March 25, 2024. Program subject to change.

Day 1 – Friday September 27th

3:00-5:00 pm

Room Check-in
Forum Registration

5:45 pm

Welcome Dinner

7:30 pm

Reflections Ceremony: Honouring our Families - Past and Present

Day 2 – Saturday September 28th

7:30-8:30 am

Breakfast

8:45 am

Opening Session: Welcome

9:00-9:30 am

Keynote Speaker: The View from Here

9:30-9:45 am

Coffee Break

The 2024 Central Family Forum has been generously supported by:



Day 2 – Saturday September 28th

Workshops

9:45 am-12:15 pm

Masks of grief and loss for new participants

Karen Lapierre Pitts, Family Support Manager, Threads of Life

In this session, you'll understand how we wear various masks to get through our daily lives and what we can do to safely take off those masks to deal with our journey. Whether your situation involves the loss of life, a traumatic injury or occupational disease, you will benefit from the insights gained in this session. You'll have a short period of time to share with the other participants a piece of your family story and what brought you here. This session will help you develop a connection to other family members attending the family forum and give you a more meaningful experience.

Please note: this workshop is highly recommended for family members attending their first family forum. Members of one family are strongly encouraged to attend different sessions so that each is able to share their own story. **The session will be limited to a maximum of 14 participants.**

Family Dynamics and Grief

Mark Shelvock, Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Thanatologist, Adjunct Professor, Author, PhD Student

Family dynamics can complicate the natural and instinctive process of grief for an individual. While different people grieve differently, this can result in major relational tensions among family members. As such, this workshop provides psychoeducation on the intersections between grief, relationships, and attachment theory [the science behind connection/love]. The presentation is facilitated by a registered psychotherapist who specializes in trauma, grief, and complicated relationships. Practical tips for surviving your least favourite family members included.

Learning To Walk The Path That Life Has Given Us

Jodi Gorham, Founding and Managing Director J.A.G Village, Registered Social Worker

What happens when we are down the path a few months or years after our initial loss? We will facilitate a brave space, where we honour the sacredness of our stories, learning, unlearning and reclaiming who we are now.

Listening to Signs - Mixed media art- making

Suzi Dwor, M.A. Arts Educator

In this workshop, you will explore the excitement of creating a mixed-media collage from a buffet of art media, including paint, Japanese papers, and plaster of Paris. Self-expression and healing become intertwined as you find joy in the act of painting, using brush strokes to express your innermost emotions. And most importantly, worries fade while having fun. Guided by your facilitator, you will open your heart and mind to receive messages from loved ones, both past and present. Look and feel for signs in any form—words, objects, nature, winged creatures, animals, colours, or symbols that hold personal significance. Let these messages guide your creative journey and infuse your artwork with love and meaning. Bring your art to life by sculpting tiny plaster sculptures to adorn your collage. Whether your tiny sculpture is a delicate feather, a playful animal, or a symbol of hope, trust in your intuition as you create. Allow yourself to fully enjoy the process, embracing the joy and inner peace of creating art from the heart.

12:15-1:15 pm

Networking Lunch

Day 2 – Saturday September 28th

Workshops
1:30-4:00 pm

Finding The Power In Our Stories

Susan Haldane, Manager, Marketing & Communications

Storytelling is in our human DNA, and in the DNA of Threads of Life too. We believe sharing our losses will lead to healing and contribute to prevention. But how do we find the power in our stories? In this session, we'll examine why stories are powerful and how your grief story fits into your bigger story. With a focus on both telling and listening, we will tap into oral storytelling, writing, and even a little artmaking.

Living with Chronic Pain

Eunice Gorman, Associate Professor

Pain is complex. We tend to think only of how challenging it is to live with chronic physical pain, but in fact, pain assessment includes emotional, social, economic, spiritual, cognitive, psychological, and other types of pain. These all intertwine to make coping with pain more demanding and all-encompassing than we have been led to believe. This talk will examine the concept of total pain (coined by Dame Cicely Saunders) and how pain can contribute to mental health struggles. We will leave the session with concrete ways to address pain and promote wellness following a workplace injury or death.

Reflecting on Nature's Restorative Benefits of Landscapes & Patterns

Sue Morling, Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner

In this workshop, we will explore the attributes that different landscapes have on our well-being, such as oceans, mountains, forests and city parks. In all of these landscapes, we can find calming patterns and shapes that can be incorporated into a mindfulness practice.

Each participant will have the opportunity to create their own "moment in time" mandala using objects from nature.

FAIR Partnership

Jules Arntz-Gray, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, Skills Development of Ontario; TBD, Office of the Worker Advisor; Michelle Mraz, WSIB; and Shirley Hickman, Threads of Life

Responding to families who have experienced a workplace life-altering injury, occupational illness or a death of a worker requires the most caring and well-thought-out response. The FAIR Partnership is an example of cooperation in the occupational health and safety system to help families faced with this life-altering situation. Find out how the Office of the Worker Adviser, the Ontario Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board and Threads of Life respond to the individual needs of families and survivors. The enforcement, prosecution and inquest process are briefly discussed, as well as how the family can obtain a copy of the MOL investigation report. Questions are welcome; however, no specific case issues will be discussed.

2:45-3:00 pm

Coffee Break

4:00-6:00 pm

Free Time

6:00-8:00 pm

Dinner followed by Volunteer Recognition Presentation

Join us in celebrating our amazing volunteers & learn some of the many opportunities you could have as a volunteer to support families and work together towards prevention.

Day 3 – Sunday September 29th

7:30-8:45 am

Breakfast

8:45-9:00 am

Please check out of your room. The Front Desk can hold your luggage if needed

Workshops

9:15-11:30 am

Mystical Experiences

Mark Shelvock, Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Thanatologist, Adjunct Professor, Author, PhD Student

Everyone knows that death ends a person. Or does it? This presentation explores the extraordinary experience of after-death communications for those who have suffered a death-related loss. Experiences range significantly, but in all cases, the bereaved feel that a specific deceased person is around. This presentation is facilitated by a registered psychotherapist who specializes in trauma and grief. The workshop also incorporates an exercise where participants can learn from each other and share stories in a unique 'speed-dating' format.

Journey to Self: Healing the Mind and Body through Yoga and Sound Healing

Morgan Story, Certified Yoga Instructor

In this workshop, you will learn techniques to release emotional tension and unwanted energies from the mind and body. Through yoga and sound healing, we will work with the energetic body to heal. This workshop will also include a group reiki healing session.

Caring For Yourself While Caring For Others

Joanne Wade, Threads of Life Family Member

We have heard it said, "To care for others effectively, you must care for yourself." The question is, how do you do that, especially if you are a caregiver of a loved one suffering from a life-altering injury or occupational disease? Caring for others also includes those who offer emotional support as a Volunteer Family Guide (VFG). By sharing experiences and challenges, hopefully, you will be guided to a healthier you, of body, mind and soul. The demands on caregivers are great. Join me in this very important workshop. Your knowledge, perspective and participation are of great value. Sharing is Caring.

10:30-10:45 am

Coffee break

11:30-1:00 pm

Closing Lunch and departure at 1:00 pm

Safe travels home and hope to see you again next year!

Save the date: September 26 - 28, 2025

Each worker and family member who has been affected by a workplace tragedy is a thread in the quilt of life. Each thread, by itself, cannot stand alone, but when woven together provides strength. Although we are individuals, we are also connected in the fabric of life.