

LINDA DORSETT SPEAKER PROFILE



Help through the darkness of losing a loved one

"There are people who can help guide you through the darkness until you can stand on your own again."

Linda Dorsett learned that first-hand, and it's the message she brings to the 2011 Day of Mourning ceremony in Victoria, honouring men and women who died trying to earn a living in B.C.

For Dorsett, the knock at the door brought the news that, Sean, her 40-year-old husband was dead. He was using scuba gear, trying to untangle an anchor in 25 feet of water, and never surfaced.

"It was a moment that nothing can prepare you for," she says, "when everything you worked for disappears in the blink of an eye, and reality becomes your worst nightmare."

The mother of two refused to believe it. She tried reaching her husband's boat by satellite phone, and calling the RCMP on Haida Gwaii and the Transportation Safety Board.

"There must have been a mistake. I wanted different news. "I've been over it a million times in my head, and one reason I couldn't believe Sean was dead is that we hadn't said good bye," Dorsett explains. "Denial was how I tried to protect myself, but it didn't last."

But what remains, more than six years later, "is the deep feeling of grief. The loss was, and is, tremendous."

For a time, she was "crying so much that I didn't realize it was upsetting my children, and how worried they were about me."

A therapist told Dorsett that her sons — now 12 and 16 years old — would take their cues from her. "Then I knew it was time to step into the future, without Sean."

Help came from family, friends, and an unexpected source. WorkSafeBC's Family Program offers ongoing support to families of deceased workers, including Family Peer Support volunteers.

"The idea is that people suffering tragic loss can gain from others who've already gone through it," she says. Two years ago, Dorsett volunteered, was trained in grief support, and has been working with other family survivors.

One was a widow left to raise two sons the same age as Dorsett's. "She worried about being a single parent, and thought nobody had ever lived through this before.

"When it happens, you think you're the first and only one to feel such pain. Sadly, you're not."

Dorsett says the Day of Mourning is important, not only because it memorializes workers who died on the job, but for the hope it gives those left behind.

For more information please contact:

Heather Young
Public Affairs Manager, WorkSafeBC
Tel: 604 214-5441
Cell: 604 818-0020