

MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

together we remember... together we heal...

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com



Please join us for our next monthly meeting

All in-person meetings have been canceled until further notice. In the meantime, we will meet via zoom on the first Thursday of every month.

For more information, please email Kathy kjcorrigan5@gmail.com or call her at (845) 462-2825



A WARM WELCOME TO NEWCOMERS

We understand how difficult it is to attend your first meeting. Feelings can be overwhelming; we have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Our stories may be different but we are alike in that we all hurt deeply. We cannot take your pain away but we can offer friendship and support. Bring a friend or relative to lean on if you wish.

IN GRIEF: SEARCHING FOR MEANING

By Marty Tousley www.griefhealing.com

Never stop just because you feel defeated. The journey to the other side is attainable only after great suffering. ~ Santosh Kalwar

A reader writes: What's the point in life when it's too often filled with more pain than joy?

My response: You've asked a very important question, my dear. At various points in my own life, I've found myself asking much the same question, which I suppose is what calls me to keep searching for answers (not unlike yourself).

In my reading, whenever I happen upon pieces of wisdom from other authors who speak to my questions about the meaning of life and loss, I like to gather and share them on my website's [Comfort for Grieving Hearts](#) page.

I'm especially drawn to the works and writings of [Elisabeth Kübler-Ross](#), whose ground-breaking work with the dying has had a profound influence on the course of my own career. She speaks from her own experience, both professionally and personally, and I have enormous respect for her and the integrity of her work. Here is some of what she has to say about suffering and loss ~ which is an inevitable part of life ~ and what she thinks we can learn from it:

"If you truly want to grow as a person and learn, you should realize that the universe has enrolled you in the graduate program of life, called loss." ~ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in [Life Lessons: How Our Mortality Can Teach Us about Life and Living](#)

"When a loss hits us, we have not only the particular loss to mourn, but also the shattered beliefs and assumptions of what life should be. These life beliefs must be mourned separately. Sometimes we must grieve for them first. We can't grieve the loss if we are in the midst of "It's not supposed to happen this way"... We intellectually know that bad things happen ~ but to other people, not us, and certainly not in the world we assumed we were living in... Your belief system needs to heal and regroup as much as your soul does. You must start to rebuild a new belief system from the foundation up, one that has room for the realities of life and still offers safety and hope for a different life: a belief system that will ultimately have a beauty of its own to be discovered with life and loss... Think of a lifeless forest in which a small plant pushes its head

upward, out of the ruin. In our grief process, we are moving into life from death, without denying the devastation that came before.” ~ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, in [On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss](#)

“All the hardships that you face in life, all the tests and tribulations, all the nightmares, and all the losses, most people still view as curses, as punishment by God, as something negative. If you would only know that nothing that comes to you is negative. I mean nothing. All the trials and tribulations, and the biggest losses that you ever experience, things that make you say, “If I had known about this, I would never have been able to make it through,” are gifts to you, opportunities that you are given to grow. That is the sole purpose of existence on this planet Earth. You will not grow if you sit in a beautiful flower garden and somebody brings you gorgeous food on a silver platter. But you will grow if you are sick, if you are in pain, if you experience losses, and if you do not put your head in the sand, but take the pain and learn to accept it, not as a curse or punishment, but as a gift to you with a very, very specific purpose.” ~ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in [Death Is of Vital Importance: On Life, Death, and Life After Death](#)

And from [Lama Surya Das](#), learned author, teacher and spiritual leader in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition:

“We must learn the hard lesson that without the pain of inner irritation, the pearls of wisdom will not be produced in us. I lovingly call this The Pearl Principle: no pain, no transformative gain. Inside an oyster, it takes an irritant – like a grain of sand or a bit of shell – to produce the mucous juices that engulf and surround the irritant, eventually hardening into a precious pearl. It is the same for us, regardless of how much we wish it to be otherwise. Difficulties and suffering produce the aspiration for spiritual enlightenment, and it is this aspiration which is needed to motivate us along the path of awakening and liberation. There is no growth without growing pains – and the labor pains of giving birth to a new world and a new way of being can be the most painful yet rewarding of all.” ~ Lama Surya Das, in [Letting Go of the Person You Used to Be: Lessons on Change, Loss, and Spiritual Transformation](#)



FINDING MEANING IN YOUR LOSS

By Marty Tousley www.griefhealing.com

“To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.” ~ Friedrich Nietzsche

It is difficult to imagine surviving grief much less transcending it. How do we triumph over sorrow when it seems as if our pain will never end?

When we confront the lessons of grief, we opt for surviving and transcending the pain. If we choose to do so, we can look at the pain of loss as having a specific purpose. Turning crisis into opportunity, we can find emotional and spiritual peace. We have a choice: we can either give up and withdraw into our tragedy or we can grow from the experience. We can either succumb to the pain or decide to transform ourselves. The choice to grow, to transform the self is not an easy one. It requires work, perseverance and endurance. Like everything else in grief, it is a process, but it is what makes loss worth surviving.

Chances are that you would trade everything you could ever gain in a heartbeat, if only that would bring your loved one back. But that is not an option. The only viable alternative is to make this pain count for something.

All that happens to us in life is material for our own growth. The death of a loved one can be a turning point that alters our perspective on life. It is a chance to re-think, to question, to doubt who we were, what we thought we believed, how we used to live, and how we ordered our priorities. It is an opportunity to find meaning in our loss.



There are many lessons to be learned from grief. Losing someone you love teaches you to

- Stop, examine and appreciate what really matters, what's important, what's truly valuable in life.
- Live fully in the present, knowing that the past is gone and the future is not yet.
- Appreciate the value and wonder of every precious moment, without taking them for granted.
- Accept the freedom and joy of spontaneity, to play, to relax and to have fun.
- Find valuable insights buried in the give and take of daily life, to slow down, daydream and fantasize.
- Simplify your life, so you have more time and energy to share with those you love.
- Accept what's happened to you, roll with the changes and keep on growing, believing that you'll make it.
- Be patient with yourself, allowing the grieving process to happen in whatever way it will.
- Keep and develop your connections with others, knowing that you are not alone.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with others openly and honestly, and sooner rather than later.
- Rethink your attitude toward death as a natural part of the cycle of life.
- Be grateful for the love you shared, however briefly, and appreciate what you have left.
- Define yourself as a survivor rather than a victim.
- Share what you've learned with others.

At some point in your grieving process, you may feel the need to channel your pain, as well as the time and energy once devoted to your relationship with your loved one, into something productive and meaningful. As one who truly understands the grieving process, you may feel ready to reach out to others who are suffering the pain of loss. Once you've found your own way through grief, you will have a great deal to share with other grievers: you can identify with their struggles, empathize with their sorrows and doubts, and offer valuable information and support.

AFTER

After you left the light altered, it shifted somehow from its place
The sun does not shine quite so clearly, now that there is an empty space
People ask me how I'm doing, but how can I express how I ache
A film sheets my eyes at your mention, and your name makes my voice start to break
My head hurts from copious crying, everything just feels like pain
I don't want the mantle of adult, can't I be a child again
Disquiet, it is my companion, that feeling that something is wrong
Days they seem endlessly taxing, and nights seem exceedingly long
I'm tired but sleep it evades me, I function, but with leaden rote
And when memories threaten to surface, I swallow them back in my throat
Though when I concede to exhaustion, I trick you back inside my dreams
To then lose you again in the daylight, where nothing is quite as it seems
Things seem so inconsequential, people sometimes make me mad
Their problems do not seem important, for I am so screamingly sad
I cannot yet look at your photo, without feeling my panic rise
And the most dreaded realization, I'll not again look in your eyes
My anchor is gone, I am drifting, consumed with no seeming relief
As archingly over my person, lays
the burdensome blanket of grief.

~Belinda Davies

She would have been 27 years old this month had my little girl not died as a newborn. I really don't know when 27 years passed and I don't know how I lived 27 years without her. But here I am.

There are so many aspects of life that have unfurled because of her absence, some beautiful and some excruciating.

Amongst those aspects is watching how my own grief and the grief of so many others, when fully inhabited, eventually blesses the world, humans and animals and the earth and the sky and our past and our future, both directly and indirectly.

While I will always wish for her instead- always- this is what I have now.

Every day I live, I am one day closer to the blessing of being with her again, whatever that realm shall be.

And so, I keep living the blessing of grief and waiting in the moment between worlds, making inadequate attempts to bring compassion to this broken planet. Whatever blessings come are not in spite of grief. They are because of grief.

My love and compassion to all Others who grieve, remembering there exists no Other. We are One.

Because I cannot hold you in my arms,
I will envelope you in my heart.
Because I cannot hear your song,
I will whisper your love into the world.
Because I cannot gaze into your eyes,
I will tender your vision of compassion
where it's most needed.
In every moment without you,
I will do all I can to grace others with
the beauty in your wake.

-Dr. Joanne Cacciatore



Please Join us in St. Louis for the National Gathering Conference!



Announcing Our Keynote Speakers

Jena Kirkpatrick ♥ Bobby Morton ♥ Susan Casey ♥ Cindy Magee

To learn more about the conference **CLICK HERE:** [2021 Gathering Registration Packet](#)

To register for the Gathering **CLICK HERE:** [2021 Gathering Registration Form](#)

To register for the hotel, **CLICK HERE:** [Le Meridien St. Louis Clayton Hotel](#)

Join us for a weekend of hope, healing, support and understanding as we remember our children, siblings and grandchildren together.

The Gathering Conference is a three-day event with keynote speakers, workshops, shared meals, entertainment and memorial ceremonies all designed to help bereaved parents and their families realize that they are not alone in their grief. Our annual Gatherings have been praised as wonderfully meaningful experiences, life-changing in many ways. Participants come away feeling refreshed and revitalized, better informed about the grieving process, more aware of hope and promise and affirmed by meeting new friends who travel the same path.

Le Meridien is a newly renovated, 4-star hotel designed to accommodate gatherings like ours, including clean, comfortable rooms, spacious conference facilities, a modern fitness center, a roof-top pool and a first-class restaurant. The hotel is offering special room rates to Gathering attendees. Visit our website to book your hotel room at the discounted rate and to register for the Gathering Conference. www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Known for its iconic arch, a must-see attraction, St. Louis is a vacation destination of national prominence, with many sightseeing adventures to enjoy. Consider planning a family vacation in conjunction with the Gathering. After spending special time honoring and remembering your loved one, treat yourself to a mini get-away and explore life on the Mississippi in this bustling, modern "Gateway to the West."

Sneak Peek at the Gathering Workshop Offerings

2021 BPUSA GATHERING CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS “HEALING ON THE HORIZON”

Transformative Healing on Our Grief Journey

A Hero's Journey: A Path After Child Loss - Bobby Morton
Grief, Grace and Gratitude - Beth D'Angelo
The Unplanned Road Trip - Jill Theriault
**The Self: Inside the Good/the Bad/& the Ugly* - Nina Norstrom
Even Rocks Transform - Julie Blackburn
When Tragedy Strikes:— Laura Diehl
A Journey Through a Faith Crisis - Brenda Daly

Healing Through Collage and Art

SoulCollage® - Vickie Lundy
Grief Infusion with Clay – Julie Blackburn
More than a Silhouette – Julie Blackburn
Your “Many Colored Days of Grief” - Julie Blackburn

Coping Strategies for Our Healing

Writing for Your Health - Jena Kirkpatrick
The Story Behind the Story- Jena Kirkpatrick
Grief Coaching Workshop -Cindy Magee
Struggling to Reclaim My Faith – Dennis Apple
The Enneagram and Grieving Part 1 & 2 - Laura Diehl
Weave Your Stories Forward - Dr. Mary Welsh
Business Beyond Bereavement - Sadija Smiley

Healing Through the Body

Grief Release Yoga - Beth D'Angelo
Qigong for Grief – Pat Sheveland
Sacred Sound Journey – Beth D'Angelo

Healing with Our Spiritual Connections

Co-Existing With Our Children in Grief & Spirit-
Bobby Morton, Beth D'Angelo
Connections of the Hearts: Finding Hellos From Our Loved Ones - Lynn Belanger

Family Issues and Healing

Growing Through Grief in a Relationship – Richard and Barbara Pryor
Men's Grief, It's Different Than Women's! – Paul Balasic
Managing Your Child's Presence Online - Roger Moroney
**Estate Planning After Loss* – Lorraine Cavataio

Honoring Our Unique Experiences

Loss Following Overdose or Other Drug Related Causes - Justin Phillips
Suicide Markers – Suicide Recovery - Vanessa Pentz
**Loss of a Younger Child* - Gwen Rice
**Finding Meaning in your Loss (Loss of Only/All children)* – Crystal Webster
**Making Memories Where There Are None (Pregnancy/Infant Loss)* – Crystal Webster

Healing for Sibling Grief

Therapeutic Benefits of Writing Through Grief - Susan Casey
Phantom Limb: Living with the Loss of a Sibling – Sarah Kravits
Parents and Siblings Idea Exchange - Sarah Kravits, Susan Casey
Qigong for Sibling Grief – Pat Sheveland
Grief Coaching for Sibling Grief – Cindy Magee

Healing for Those Who Have No Surviving Children

Loss of a Younger Child - Gwen Rice
Finding Meaning in your Loss (Loss of Only/All children) – Crystal Webster
Making Memories Where There Are None (Pregnancy/Infant Loss) – Crystal Webster
Managing Your Child's Presence Online - Roger Moroney
Estate Planning After Loss – Lorraine Cavataio
The Self: Inside the Good/the Bad/& the Ugly - Nina Norstrom

*Of special interest for those who have no surviving children

**BEREAVED
PARENTS
of the USA**



Visit our Facebook page for up to the minute Gathering news and information: <https://www.facebook.com/BPUSAFamily>

Mid Hudson Bereaved Parents of the USA

*Please join us for a
Memorial Butterfly
Release & Picnic*

*Saturday
August 28, 2021
12:00 noon*

*Bowdoin Park
Wappingers Falls, NY
Pavilion 2*

*To reserve a butterfly, please RSVP to
KJCORRIGAN5@GMAIL.COM
or call (845) 462-2825*

*We need to know how many people will attend
so we can order enough butterflies.*



*A butterfly to remind me
even though we are apart
Your spirit is always with me
forever in my heart....*

*A butterfly lights beside us, like a sunbeam...and
for a brief moment it's glory and beauty belong
to our world...but then it flies on again, and
although we wish it could have stayed, we are
so thankful to have seen it at all.*

Anonymous



WHY ARE GARDENS SO GOOD FOR THE SOUL?

Seven ways of finding comfort and healing in a garden.

By Seth J. Gillihan, Ph.D.

When we're wounded in body, mind, or spirit, we're often drawn to the natural world as a place to heal. For some, it's a walk in the woods or along the shore. For many of us, a garden is our place of healing.

"Gardens can aid in physical, mental, and emotional healing in myriad ways," says Chris Fehlhaber, assistant horticulturist at Chanticleer Garden in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

I was surprised by these healing effects when I constructed my own garden a year ago. I was in the middle of a long bout with then-undiagnosed toxic mold illness and felt drawn to build a vegetable garden in my backyard—not because I expected it to fix what ailed me, but because I enjoyed gardening and needed more hobbies. There was something about being outside that felt deeply life-giving, even in the dry 20-degree February air as I built the raised beds. I found myself easily letting go of my constant preoccupation with the mysterious symptoms that had limited my activities. As I filled the beds and knelt on the ground with my hands in the soil, my mind cleared and my spirit was refreshed.

Writer Margo Rabb experienced her own form of healing from prolonged grief in the garden that Fehlhaber tends, which she shared in her *New York Times* article, "Garden of Solace." I spoke with the two of them on the *Think Act Be* podcast as we explored what gives gardens their healing power. Here are seven themes that emerged from our discussion.

You Can Be Yourself

In a world that encourages us to put on a façade, a garden is a refreshingly honest place. "One of the things we really like about plants is that they're totally honest with us," Fehlhaber said. "A plant will tell you if it's not getting enough sun or it's getting too much water."

The honesty we find in a garden encourages our own honesty and authenticity. "If everything around you is being honest and presenting themselves as they are, you let your own guard down," Fehlhaber said. "As you drop your defenses, that can lead to healing."

Part of being yourself is being free to feel what you feel. "For me, it was a place where sadness didn't feel like something to be 'fixed,'" Rabb said. "We want to believe that grief is something you get over, but you don't really. It changes forms and it's cyclical and it comes and goes, but you don't 'get over it.' This was a place where you could feel sadness in all its complexity. I could feel those complicated feelings and just let them be." As we allow our defenses to drop and let ourselves be honest, we open to the truth of our experience and of who we are. What is a sanctuary if not a place to be yourself?

You Can Slow Down

When you enter a garden, time tends to slow down. Your mind and body relax as you step away from the daily bustle, and you can connect with your spirit. Gardens invite us to drop the constant doing and allow ourselves to just be. "There's a gentleness to gardens," Rabb said, "and it's an escape from the news and the violence that we're constantly confronted with. It's not a gentle world out there." She found that Chanticleer Garden offered the space she needed to feel the grief of losing her mother 25 years earlier. The unhurried pace of being in a garden offers us the time that grieving requires. "We don't have many of these gentle spaces anymore," Rabb said. "To come here where things are peaceful and gentle—it's a sacred space." I felt that sense of consecration as I knelt in my own garden one day. What began as a posture to pull weeds was transformed into a sacred act, as though I were genuflecting to something greater than myself.

You Can Connect With Others, Including the Departed

Gardens can also serve as a conduit between us and other people. Even though we often don't know the hands that built a garden, we feel the touch of humanity all around us through life in a garden. A garden may bear the mark of those who designed it and placed the plants and trees in the soil, even long after they're gone.

Fehlhaber shared a personal account of how gardens can connect us with those who are no longer living. “My grandfather used to raise me up on his shoulders to smell the blossoms on a crabapple tree,” he said. “To this day I make a point of smelling them as often as I can every spring because they’re so ephemeral. And I feel as though I’m back up on his shoulders.”

You Can Receive Love

When you imagine a garden, you may not think of love, but it’s a powerful healing force that gardens offer. A garden is built on love—not the cliché of pink and red hearts, but the fundamental life force that’s in every living thing. Connecting with that form of love can be a powerful part of healing.

Love in a garden comes through our sensory experiences rather than through words. “Plants are communicating with you in the language of the senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell,” Fehlhaber said. “All plants have a lot to say if we take the time to understand them. They lack the ability to say it verbally, but isn’t love really just an expression of health and happiness?”

Love also emerges from the care that goes into a garden. “Any time you put your heart and soul into something, the love that underlies it can help with the healing process. That love and spirit are what resonate with people in a garden,” Fehlhaber said.

Rabb concurred. “You see how much has been poured into a garden, and then you receive that,” she said. “It’s like a relationship, almost like receiving a love letter.”

You Can Get Out of Your Own Head

One of the best parts of a garden is the welcome change of scenery, whether from being lost in thought or being glued to a screen. “Our worlds become small and insular when we’re dealing with something like grief,” Fehlhaber said, “and it’s easy to get lost in our own narratives. When you can let go of those thoughts and simply be present and engage with what’s around you, you notice how much life is happening that honestly has nothing to do with you.”

Life and death continually surround us in a garden. We can find comfort in knowing that these cycles continue, no matter what’s happening in our personal lives. “All the life you find in a garden will live and it will die, it will have good days and bad days just like we do,” Fehlhaber said. “A plant that looks fabulous one day will be dead the next. That’s life—that’s what happens. And that realization helps you know that it’s going to be okay.”

You Can Open to Change

Change is hard, especially when it’s unwelcome—the loss of a loved one, for example, or a decline in our health. These changes can feel like a departure from the way things “should be,” as we resist anything that upsets our world as we know it. “Gardening is an affirmation that change is inevitable and okay,” Fehlhaber said. “It’s neither good nor bad—it simply is. With change comes the confirmation that life is finite, and will end as all seasons do.” As we accept the cycles of life and death in a garden, we can move toward acceptance of those cycles in ourselves and in those we love.

In the process, gardens remind us that change is not the end of the story. “Gardening affirms that life goes on, and will continue after and without us,” Fehlhaber said.

You Can Find Life in Death

Death is perhaps the hardest change to accept. Death feels so final and can seem like the opposite of life. But gardens can show us that death not only is a part of life but enables life. Dead plants and other organic matter are broken down by microorganisms and become the compost that gives life to the next season’s growth.

“The thing about gardens is that they’re quite literally built on death and decay,” Fehlhaber said. “That’s what helps form the soil that makes everything around us possible. So, something that seems quite grim is actually providing the opportunities for all this life and enjoyment.”

Fehlhaber gave the example of late autumn, which is typically seen as a time of death and decay. “As gardeners we see this as the start of the new season because everything that’s happening now is what’s going to allow this garden to rise and be reborn next year. Death is everywhere in a garden, and it’s okay.” “It’s a work of art that’s constantly living and dying in front of you,” Rabb added. “There’s something so beautiful and comforting in that.”