



# MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

*Bereaved Parents of the USA*

## Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

[www.mhbpusa.com](http://www.mhbpusa.com)

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017**



### *Please join us for our next meetings*

Thursday, January 5<sup>th</sup> -- Topic: **Forgiveness & New Beginnings**

Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> – Topic: **Pot Luck Supper & Sharings from the Heart**

7:00 at The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie, 10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information



### 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.

### LOVING MY SON, AFTER HIS DEATH

By Nora Wong

I can feel their unasked questions. People wonder how I can still stand, still walk, still laugh. But they don't ask. You can't ask that of a mother who has lost her child. My son, Daniel, died three years ago at the age of 22. When people ask me, "How... are you?," that pause, that inflection, tells me that's really what they want to know.

I am tempted to tell them that it is I who am lost, not he. I am lost in my search for him, knowing he is nowhere on this earth. And still, it would not surprise me if he were to appear by my side wearing only his jersey boxers eating a snack at the kitchen counter. At times I can almost smell his warm cheesy breath and his still-boyish sweat. But when I look over my shoulder, he is not there.



My mind invents stories. Daniel is not dead; he is lamenting the performance of his fantasy football team with high school buddies while they wait on line for ice cream at Magic Fountain. He is in his dorm room at Stanford, talking deep into the night with his friends. Daniel is lingering with new friends on the rooftop of his investment firm in Boston where he just started working.

"Where are you, Daniel?" I shout the question to the sky when I am strong enough to bear the silence that follows. "Why did you die?" Even that has no real answer. His doctors think Daniel died of new onset refractory status epilepticus, or Norse, a rare seizure disorder in which healthy people with no history of epilepsy suddenly begin to seize uncontrollably. The majority of patients die or survive with significant brain damage. There is no identified cause or established treatment for Norse. This cloud of uncertainty does not obscure what I know: My child is dead.

The instinct to protect one's offspring runs through mothers of virtually all species. I violated the basic canon of motherhood. I failed to protect my child. That my child is dead while I still live defies the natural order.

I love my husband and our two surviving children, but I couldn't simply transfer my love for Daniel to them. It was for him alone. And so, for the longest time after his death, my love for Daniel bruised me.

So unbearable was my occluded heart that I called out to him in desperation one day: "What will I do with my love for you, Daniel?"

My eyes were closed in grief when suddenly I seemed to see him before me, his arms bent and lifted upward in supplication. In my mind's eye, his face was suffused with love and tinged with exasperation, a common look for Daniel.

"Just love me, Mom," he says.

"But where are you?" I ask.

"I'm here!" he answers with frustration. And then he is gone.

I had not heard his voice since the day before he suddenly fell ill. I spoke to him while he lay unseeing and unmoving in the hospital bed. I told him I loved him. I begged him to speak to me. I begged him to come back to me. He never answered or moved to squeeze my hand. The only flicker from him over his 79 days of hospitalization was a single tear. One day a tear slid from his left eye down his cheek and disappeared beneath his chin.

And now, months after he had died, I felt him before me.

"Just love me, Mom. I'm here!"

His words unleashed a torrent. I fell forward, my tears streaming. I felt breathless with release. I could continue to love him. I would love him in a new way.

It was harder to do than I expected. I would see him everywhere, in every full moon, in each brilliant day. My spirits would soar. But there were days when a weight in my heart made each breath shallow and every step an effort.

On the worst days I sit before my laptop and pour out my feelings to the only person who can take in my sorrow and remain unbowed. The keyboard is damp when the final refrain leaves my fingertips: I love you, Daniel, I love you. I miss you. I miss you. And then I press "send."

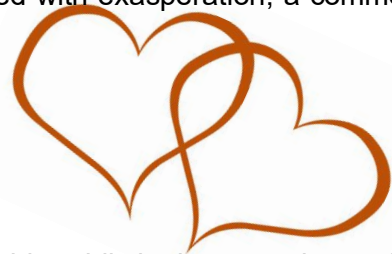
Daniel's friends continue to visit us. It is a pilgrimage of sorts. My heart tightens when I see them. Their presence illuminates our immeasurable loss.

His friends reveal to me how much Daniel meant to them. Now there will be a missing groomsman at the wedding and empty air in the place of a steadfast friend. At the end of one visit, a young man asks, "Recognize this sweater?" I don't. "It's Daniel's," he explains. I suddenly recognize Daniel's old cotton sweater stretched to fit his friend. The young man folds forward to touch the sleeves of the sweater, hugging himself. He is tall and blond and athletic. He and Daniel were opposites in looks and temperament, best friends since nursery school. He had just returned from Moscow where he was working. "I wear this when I travel," he says, touching the arm of the sweater again. "It's so soft."

I encourage Daniel's friends to tell me about their work and their plans for the future. At first they are self-conscious, and their voices are tender. They don't want to hurt me with their future plans when there is no future for Daniel. But as they speak of the things they will do and the places they will go, their excitement breaks free. I smile into the glow of their unlined, earnest faces and I feel my son. I think they feel him too. For a moment we are all reunited.

I will carry this child for the rest of my life. He lives within me, forever a young man of 22. Others will carry him as they move forward in their lives. He will be with them when they look out to the world with compassion, when they act with determination and kindness, when they are brave enough to contemplate all the things in life that remain unknown.

I still search for him, but without desperation. I look for him in others. My search is lifted by his words: "Just love me. I'm here."



*Bereaved Parents of the USA – where grief meets hope and healing...*

# WHAT DO I DO WITH HIS BELONGINGS?

BY SHELLEY RAMSEY

A question I am often asked by other grieving parents is, “What do I do with his belongings?” Yeah, that’s such a hard one. I wish there were a pat answer. There isn’t. But I can give you a little insight as to how we dealt with our son’s belongings—what we did right and what we did wrong.

Upon arriving home from the hospital where my boys and I learned of Joseph’s death, twelve-year-old Wyatt went straight to his brother’s room, grabbed Joseph’s Bible, a framed baseball card, and a few other trinkets that were uniquely Joseph’s. He then took them to his own room and found them a new home on his bookshelf. It was necessary to my youngest son to hold onto those particular items. He needed that part of his brother close to him, instantly.

We left our son’s other belongings exactly as they were for a while. We each have unique personalities and our needs varied. It was crucial the needs of each of the four of us were considered and compromise made before deciding what to do with Joseph’s clothes, books, and other things purchased by, or just for, him.

But soon after my husband went back to work and my sons back to school and sports, I was home alone quite often, and it began to upset me to see Joseph’s belongings sitting there as thou they were waiting for his return. There were some things I just wanted out of sight so I could survive another hour.

## His toothbrush.

Our boy was only seventeen lay at our bathroom as that blue toothbrush held tossed it out my first day they felt about it. I should it in half and stomped on desperately wanted it to.



and still living at home. His toothbrush sink. And something as insignificant the power of rendering me helpless. I home alone. I didn’t ask anyone how have, but I didn’t. Truth be told, I broke it. That brought me no healing like I

## His clothes.

Joseph was even more of a three pairs of jeans, five sports jerseys. His one months. He detested dirty or arrived via UPS, the old ones work. And the old ones in the his favorite black sweatshirt bed for as long as I could Joseph’s jeans shorter so later, the only clothes we still cap. It’s important to Phil and Wyatt that we keep those. They’re packed in a box and are stored in our basement where we can get to them as quickly as any of us might need.

minimalist than I am. He wanted only sweatshirts, five T-shirts, and a few extravagance: new sneakers every six worn sneakers. When the new ones went into the garage for outside garage went into the trash. I removed from the dirty laundry and kept it in my smell him in it. A dear friend cut Curt could wear them. Fourteen years have are his three favorite jerseys and a

## His baseball card collection.

Curt and Wyatt divided their brother’s baseball collection and gave a couple of the valuable cards to Joseph’s best friend, Jon. They were sports fanatics and baseball card collecting buddies.

## His books and music.

Books stacked high on Joseph’s shelves. We still can’t think of Joseph without thinking of books. I read many of his books and listened to most of his music. I needed to be inside his brain, to experience him every way I possibly could. I needed to know what made him the extraordinary person he was. So that summer after he died, I went home from work at 1:00, crawled into his bed and listened to his music, read his books, and cried the evening away.

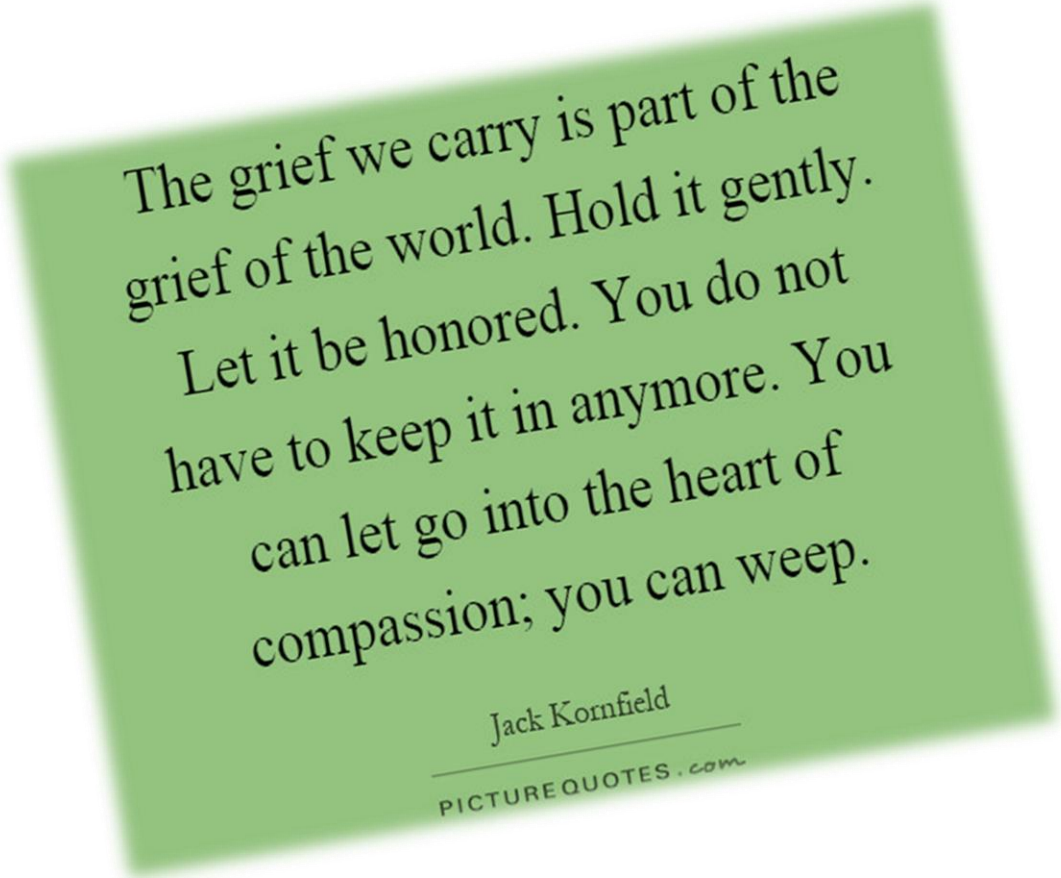
I know that sounds depressing and even as I write this, I am bawling, but I found a bit of healing in those hours—in that music and those books.

What should you do with your child’s belongings? What each of you needs. That which will bring the most healing to your newly defined family. And know this friend: I’m praying for you every step of the way.






*Grief*  
is itself a medicine.  
~William Cowper



The grief we carry is part of the  
grief of the world. Hold it gently.  
Let it be honored. You do not  
have to keep it in anymore. You  
can let go into the heart of  
compassion; you can weep.

Jack Kornfield

PICTUREQUOTES.COM



**Another year without you...**

# WHAT DOES LOSS TEACH US?

By Kate Polley



Until the moment of Sam's death, I had led a 'sheltered', even enviable life. I had grown up in a loving family, travelled the world, married the guy of my dreams and brought two beautiful daughters into the world.

Sure, life had thrown a few minor curveballs along the way, but on the whole, it had been a rather seamless ride!

Even when the fetal specialist termed my twin pregnancy high risk (due to a shared placenta), I never allowed the notion that something might go wrong to permeate my conscience. Bad things didn't happen to me. I truly believed my boys would be born healthy, without complication, completing the picture-perfect life I had created.

Sometimes now I marvel at my past innocence, at the somewhat naive notion of life I enjoyed for almost 35 years. If only my inexperienced self, had known what I know now – Child loss does not discriminate, it can happen to anyone.

This is the truth I found myself living on that dreadful Sunday morning after Sam had died. I was no longer a proud mother expecting twins but shrouded with a new and unwelcome identity – A bereaved parent.

In the instant that Sam's heart stopped beating, my innocence was shattered. Shock and disbelief led to unbearable heartbreak. It was a searing pain which tore through me and ripped my very being to shreds. Soon after, a deep and unmoving heaviness settled over me as I grudgingly assumed my role as grieving mother – starring in a movie I didn't want to perform in.

Days turned to weeks and months into years. Slowly, very slowly I came to terms with my new reality. I learned to accommodate the unwelcome guest of grief which had taken up residence in my heart, and I learned to live, laugh and be joyful again, despite the pain of my loss.

Despite all this 'learning' and adaptations I had to make in my new self, there were still more lessons to be learned along the way:

- I learned true empathy and compassion for other people's sufferings.
- I learned to never judge someone unless you have walked in their shoes.
- I learned and accepted that bad things happen to those least deserving.
- I learned that life isn't fair, and no one enjoys special privileges.
- I learned the beauty of the human spirit's power, which allows strangers across miles, united in loss only, to reach out and lift you up when you need it most.

**Editor's Note: Find some paper or take out your journal, grab your favorite pen and write down what you have learned about grief. Journaling can be very healing... Try it!**



# MID HUDSON BEREAVED PARENTS of the USA CANDLE LIGHTING



RIGHT HERE IN MY HEART By Lori Canter

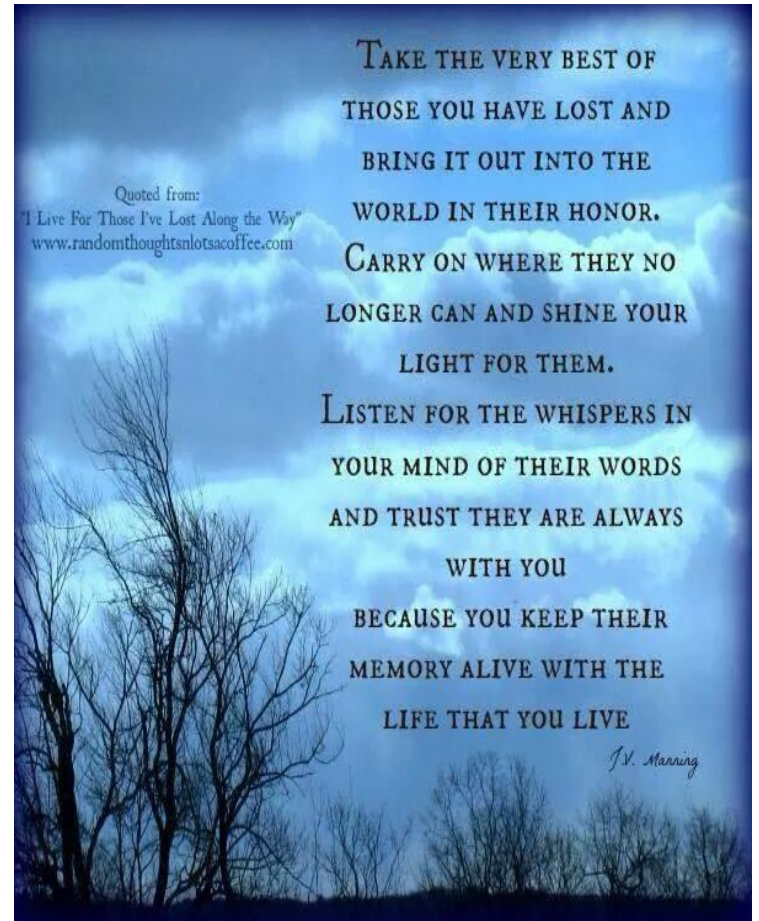
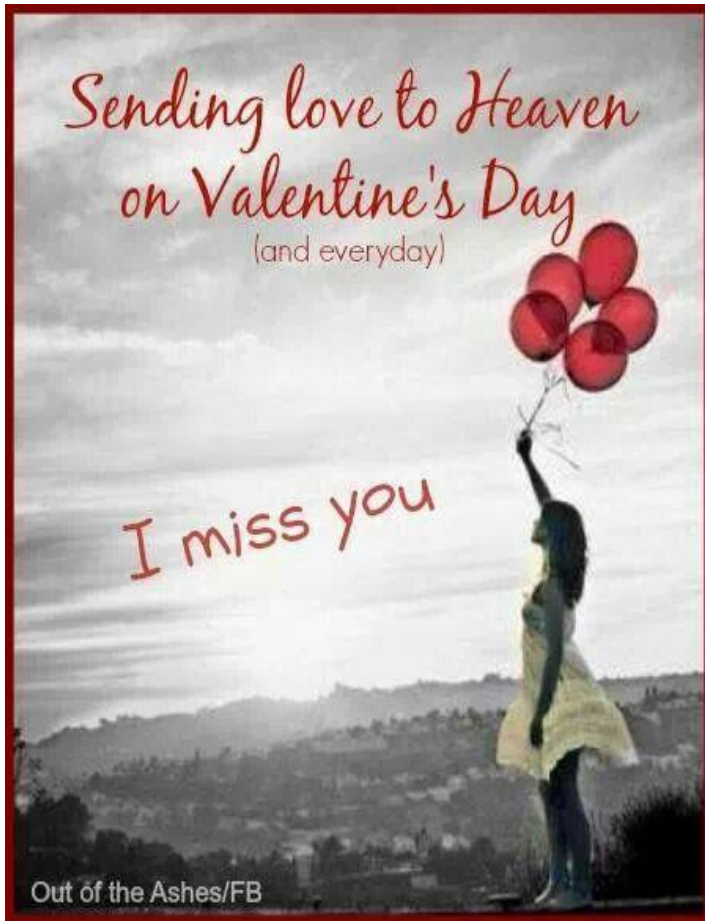
As I sit staring out the window  
watching the leaves fall to  
the ground, I get lost in my  
thoughts...in my thoughts of you.  
As the wind whistles and  
whirls through the trees in  
the silence of the night I hear your  
name whispered in my dreams and  
awake with your name upon my lips.  
Words fail to express my grief and  
the love in my heart or the longings in my soul.

Through the darkest of days even the  
ones filled with hope, you are right there in  
my head and if love could bring you back  
you would surely be right here at my side.  
From the first moment I laid eyes on you  
I knew love.  
I watched you grow.  
I watched you bloom.  
I shared your laughter and felt your tears.

I never really thought that I would  
have to see you go.  
I never thought I would have  
to say goodbye.  
My heart is so filled with love  
and longing that it feels only a  
heartbeat away from exploding.  
As the days go by and grow into years  
so does my love. My love continues  
to grow...it's never ending.

If we quietly pause with our eyes closed  
and our hands over our heart  
and slowly breathe in that  
love...breathing deep into our heart.  
Feeling that love...a love so strong,  
a love so pure.  
With every heartbeat we feel know that your  
child is right there in your heart...  
just a heartbeat away...  
right here in our hearts.  
always and forever...  
I love you





## SAVE THE DATE!!

Please join us for a weekend of Hope & Healing

*REFLECT... and be inspired by our inspirational speakers who offer hope for the future. Learn about the mourning process and how to move forward in you grief during our interactive workshop sessions.*

*RENEW... old friendships and make new connections with fellow bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who understand what you are going through. Take off your "mask" and share your grief in a safe and affirming environment.*

*REMEMBER... your child as you take part in our Candle Lighting Ceremony and Slide Show Presentation. Honor their memory by taking good care of yourself during this healing weekend.*



**bereaved parents usa**  
**national gathering**

august 4-6, 2017 | washington, dc

[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

## ANOTHER YEAR

~ Alice Weening

*This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.*

*Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain.*

*We will be able to smile again.  
We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death.  
We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.*



### **THE SPACE BETWEEN THOUGHTS**

*You are no longer in my thoughts constantly.  
You are now dwelling in the space between thoughts,  
a part of my every moment,  
whether joyful or sad or in between,  
or both simultaneously.*

*I walk, talk, work, play, and you surround me.  
You are in the sparkle of my smile  
and the wisdom in my thinking,  
the rainbow circles in my life.  
As I breathe and live, you breathe and live.*

*As I learn, you are teaching,  
not only me, but all those who are in my life today.*

*You are a blessing, Dear Child, for all you were,  
and all you are, and all you forever will be.*

*~ Genessee Bourdeau Gentry*

