



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:

IN-PERSON -- Thursday, August 4th Topic: TBD
3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie, NY at 7:00 pm

(Guardian Self-Storage Building, park and enter at the front of the building - East Lobby Entrance)

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



JULY/AUGUST 2022

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.

HOW TO DEAL WITH GUILT AFTER CHILD LOSS

By Lisa Boehm

One of the many normal feelings experienced after child loss is guilt and it is often accompanied by fear and regret. No matter how your child died, you have likely pondered if your child still would have died if only you had done something (or not done something) differently.

My daughter Katie died in a car accident. My husband felt guilty that he didn't wash her car as he originally had intended to. He felt that if he had taken her car to the car wash that she wouldn't have been able to leave the house and would not have died. On the other hand, I suffered with guilt over the argument that Katie and I had had the night before. Now, it seems so senseless. I wasted my last night with her over something as stupid as a messy room. Talk about guilt.

Hindsight, as they say, is 20/20. Everything seems clear after the fact.

But what we all need to know is that we were good mothers and we were living our human and unknowing lives. We had no idea what was coming around the bend. Would I have argued with Katie if I had known it was her last night on this earth? No way! We would have stayed up all night hugging and talking and focusing on what was really important and sharing our love.

I remember telling a counsellor that I felt guilt over Katie's accident and that I felt like I failed my daughter. I knew even when I said those words that it was an accident and there was no one to blame. *It was an accident.* However, as mothers we have a primal instinct to protect our children and keep them safe. Even though it wasn't logical, I still felt like a failure.

We put ourselves on trial and focus on all the negative things that happened leading up to our child's death. We criticize every conversation we had with our child, things we did, things we didn't do, and heap it all on our shoulders.

Inevitably, we feel as if we could have prevented their death.

I have done a lot of work around my guilt. I wish with all my heart that we had stopped Katie from leaving the house that night, but I know that no amount of bargaining or wishing will change anything. I've learned to forgive myself for that stupid argument and know that I am not responsible for her death. But it has taken time and talking it through with my counsellor.

We need to forgive ourselves for that last argument, for not taking them to the doctor sooner, for not seeing the mental health struggles, or the addiction. We simply did the best that we could.

After forgiveness, we need to practice self-compassion. Treat yourself with grace. No matter how your child died, you loved them with every ounce of your being.

How do you practice self-compassion? It seems to be a buzz word as of late, but I assure you it is so important. Self-compassion is about survival and coping and *it's essential*. It means being understanding and kind to ourselves instead of being so harsh and critical.

Now let's talk about the guilt of living or smiling or laughing after your child has died. We all struggle with this at some point and this feeling can last a very long time. In the beginning, it seems impossible - all of it - smiling, laughing, and even living, but in time there is a tiny shift. You may not even realize it has happened. At some point you may find yourself having ok days, then good days even though the sadness and grief are still there. It is possible if you let it.

Try not to feel guilty.

It's ok to live. It's ok to laugh. It's ok to answer "I'm good!" when someone asks how you are doing. It's ok to be ok after your child dies. You don't have to be ok with the fact that your child died, but you can be ok sometimes. I think that often we feel we *can't* be ok because people will think we didn't love our child enough if we're not sad all the time. Not true. And who cares what those other people think anyway?

I come back to a phrase that is so meaningful to me — "I can hold my grief in one hand and joy in the other".

I will have a hole in my heart forever. It will never heal or go away. But I am learning how to live again with my grief. I can still be ok and even laugh and I have let go of the guilt. I do this because I know that's what Katie wants for me. I was once told by a psychic to give her something amazing to watch, so I do my best.

I miss Katie with every ounce of my being and every second of the day, but I'm ok most days and I live my life for her.

Lisa Boehm has created a free video course for grieving mothers. In this 5-part series I address the most common struggles and questions that moms face after losing a child. [You can request it here.](#)



"Dragonflies are the keepers of dreams, the energy within that sees all of our true potential and ability. Dragonflies inspire spiritually and creatively and they help us on the path of discovery and enlightenment. They remind us anything is possible."

A Message from David Kessler

[Often] we mark our lives by the big milestones, career changes, graduations, weddings. We look ahead towards these large, tangible markers. When we are in grief and when things feel uncertain, it can be reassuring to focus on micro-pleasures -- the small things around us that keep us connected and bring comfort.

Consider noticing and looking towards small pleasures to practice re-inviting hope into your world:

- Feed the birds. Notice how they take turns at the feeder and return day after day
- Watch the sunrise or set and spend a moment of silence reflecting on the love you have for your loved one
- Enjoy a warm cup of tea and take a moment to truly savor it with all your senses
- Observe nature thoughtfully, really see the sprouts on your houseplant or the tree on the corner of your block
- Start a journaling ritual to create space for your thoughts, feelings, and reflections
- Plant some seeds on a windowsill and watch them grow and reach towards the sun
- Take a photograph of something that you find beautiful each day

Grief is so pervasive in our society right now. Creating small but meaningful moments of hope can help you feel connected and can begin to rebuild the habit of hope.



ADRIFT

By Mark Nepo

*Everything is beautiful and I am so sad.
This is how the heart makes a duet of
wonder and grief. The light spraying
through the lace of the fern is as delicate
as the fibers of memory forming their web
around the knot in my throat. The breeze
makes the birds move from branch to branch
as this ache makes me look for those I've lost
in the next room, in the next song, in the laugh
of the next stranger. In the very center, under
it all, what we have that no one can take
away and all that we've lost face each other.
It is there that I'm adrift, feeling punctured
by a holiness that exists inside everything.
I am so sad and everything is beautiful.*



30 Daily Practice Ideas for Living Gratefully

THE GRATEFULNESS TEAM



This offering of 30 daily gratitude practice ideas ranges from simple actions to reflective meditations to weeklong commitments – all designed to inspire and support your grateful living journey. Experiment with repeating one practice every day for a week, open yourself to the surprise of trying a new idea each day, and/or use this list of ideas as inspiration for developing your own. [Gratefulness practice](#) is unique and meant to be personalized.

Our hope is that these gratitude prompts and touchstones will help you discover new pathways towards gratefulness—cultivating presence, noticing and appreciating the gifts of life, enhancing perspective, and actively living a wholehearted, grateful life.

1. Tune in to your breath

Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Notice how your breathing takes care of itself, moving itself through you, nourishing your whole body and keeping you alive. What does it feel like to become present to your breath? How might you commit to not taking this miracle for granted so much of the time? For a guided experience, try this meditation: [Cherishing the Breath: A Guided Practice](#).

2. Wake Up Grateful

Connect with the gifts of life through this simple practice from [Wake Up Grateful: The Transformative Practice of Taking Nothing for Granted](#) by Kristi Nelson. When you first wake up in the morning, notice three things you can be grateful for – even before getting out of bed. Kristi writes, “Think of things that you do not have to do anything to earn or receive from anyone else -- things you are already receiving from life before doing anything. This is a powerful practice to greet each day and helps you to feel centered in the privilege and gifts of life.”

3. Transform obligation into opportunity

What would it take to see the considerations, commitments, and responsibilities in your life as your riches, blessings, and privileges? What can you do to remember your good fortune in having people and things to consider and tend as you move through your days? Try this [Obligation to Opportunity practice](#) and notice how it can help your perspective to shift in most any moment or activity.

4. Think of someone gratefully

Bring to mind someone for whom you are grateful. Savor this image or memory. Try to allow the image to be held in all the cells of your body, not just in your mind. Notice what happens in your emotions and body when you do this.

5. Take a gratitude walk

Enter the meditative space of a labyrinth or walk a short path meditatively somewhere near you. You can try following a [specific gratitude walk practice](#) or invent your own. Bring awareness to — and celebrate — the gifts being offered to each of your senses.

6. Celebrate what you are learning

At any point during the day, reflect upon one important thing that you have learned in this day. Take a few moments to write it down. This [Guided Breathwork Meditation on Being in Progress](#) from Alex Elle helps us celebrate the beauty of our non-linear journeys, and the ability to be grateful for our perfect imperfections.

7. Watch “A Grateful Day”

Take 5 minutes to watch Br. David’s short and powerful video meditation [A Grateful Day](#). This video awakens us to the wonders of our world, reminds us about what truly matters, and invites us to notice the everyday gifts of our lives. Share it with a friend. You may also deepen this practice by exploring the video’s accompanying [practices and reflection questions](#).

8. Light a candle

Lighting a candle is a powerful practice for nourishing a sense of presence, perspective, and possibility. To begin, sit quietly and allow a sense of peace to enter your heart. From this place, light a candle in your space (or light one of our [virtual candles](#)). Create a grateful intention and settle into the peace of residing in gratefulness for a few, precious moments.

9. Discover the opportunity in this moment

Make the decision to see your most challenging moments today as opportunities. What might be making itself known or available to you in hard times? How can you cultivate even small sentiments of gratefulness for the gifts that come from struggle? Reflect on this at the beginning and the end of the day.

10. Savor waiting

Turn all of the “waiting” moments of the day into moments of heightened awareness. Try to be fully present in these moments to discover what might be blessings in disguise. Notice that the time between things is a gift. How might you enjoy this gift?

11. Send a card expressing your gratitude

Let someone know you are thinking of them today. You could [send an eCard](#) or a handwritten letter expressing appreciation and acknowledgement.

12. Read a poem

Choose a [poem](#) that speaks to you and read it a few times throughout the day. Notice how no poem is the same poem twice if you read it with true presence and take note of what awakens within you. Share the poem with someone. Add some delight to your email inbox by signing up for our [Poem a Month](#).

13. Notice your hands

Think of all that your hands do for you. Can you imagine what it would be like to not take them so for granted and to offer them your true appreciation throughout the day? Try it. Notice how much your hands help to facilitate what you love in life. Take care of them.

14. Connect wholeheartedly

Reach out to someone you know is going through a difficult time. You do not have to have the right things to say, just connect in a meaningful way. It can be as simple as offering your presence, a hug, or a listening ear. Even a kind text message, email, or voicemail that lets someone know you’re thinking of them without asking for a response can make a big difference.

15. Press pause

When you catch yourself racing somewhere, take 30 seconds to stop. Take a breath and look at the sky or the environment around you. Notice. What was begging for your attention?

16. Ask a sincere question

There is hardly a more precious gift than true inquiry and deep listening. Get curious about those around you. How does gratitude arise for you in this practice? How does inquiry unleash a ripple of gratefulness?

17. Answer a question

Exploring the magic and mystery of questions as a daily practice, we continually open ourselves to learning and to leaning into the great fullness of life. Over time, we can strengthen our capacity to trust uncertainty, recognize and be with paradox, shift our perspective, and engage more gratefully with the world and our lives. Every day, our [Daily Question](#) offers you a space to explore the expansiveness that comes with this practice. You could also try asking yourself, “What is the opportunity for gratefulness in this moment?” anytime things are not going as you had planned.

18. Set an intention

Start your day with an intention to show up wholeheartedly to the many different kinds of things you do and experience today. Take a few moments at the end of the day to notice and contemplate if anything changed as a result of this intention.

19. Begin a meal with gratitude

When sitting down to eat, take a moment to pause and bring to mind something for which you are grateful, and dedicate your meal to whatever arises. If you are sharing a meal with others, take turns sharing your reflections out loud. You may also consider calling to mind all of the people and aspects of the natural world that played a role in bringing this food to your table. Send them a “thank you” in your mind. Relish the blessing of enjoying a meal.

20. Notice the miracle of running water

Each time you turn on the tap, pause to feel grateful that you have access to running water, unlike so many in the world today. If you have access to hot water, notice this as the gift that it is.

21. Do something truly generous for someone else

Expand into the most full-blown heart of your generosity. Do something generous as if your life depended on it, and then try giving a little more. Stretch into your most gracious capacity. Seek nothing in return.

22. Engage in an act of kindness

Offer a gesture of kindness to a stranger or someone close to you with no strings attached and try, even, having no need for recognition. Notice how good it feels to let go of needing or expecting something in return.

23. Clean up your corner of the world

Put a bag in your pocket, head outside, and make a corner of the world more beautiful by picking up the litter along the way. Your appreciation of the earth will be contagious to others. This practice makes [Grateful Living a Grateful DOing](#).

24. Give someone a grateful hug

Actually give the hug — don't simply take a hug. Ask first.

25. Spread love

Tell someone whom you love that you love them and offer that comment a larger context by spelling out some of the things you appreciate about them and why you are grateful for having them in your life.

26. Make a contribution

Make a financial contribution to a non-profit organization doing work that you value. Accompany that gift with a note of appreciation for why it matters to you to have people working to advance missions with which you are aligned. Tune in to the ways we all depend on one another to bring shared values and vision into being.

27. Feel your good fortune

75 million people in the world are illiterate. Feel your good fortune as you read this, and as you read anything today.

28. Contemplate a quote

Think of a favorite quote that brings you a sense of perspective. Write it down or type it out and display it in a place that will allow you to regularly reconnect with its wisdom. For inspiration, we offer a new quote — Word for the Day — daily on our website homepage, by [email](#), and on our social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#)).

29. End your day with gratitude

Every night before you go to sleep, take an inventory of the things for which you are grateful. Let them percolate through your mind and calm your body. Name or write down at least five things that matter to you. You could also try this practice with a partner, friend, or family member.

30. Build a gratitude habit with a 7-day practice

Commit to a self-guided grateful living practice for seven days and notice what changes. Below are a few of our seven-day practices to explore at your leisure:

- [Grateful for Love](#)
- [Cherishing Connection](#)
- [Nourishing Our Nature](#)
- [Wake Up to Perspective](#)
- [Listen](#)
- [The Little Things](#)
- [Wonder of Wonders – A Normal Day](#)
- [Exploring Haiku as Gratefulness Practice \(8 days\)](#)



When you have lost someone you love...

Do not make the mistake of living in sadness, or living small to honor their absence.

You owe it to them to live even more vividly than before.

If they could reach you, they would surely say...

"Take the love you had for me and turn it into gladness, use the love you had for me to drive away the sadness."

Love is an energy, so powerful, so all-consuming that when the person you felt all that love for is not here, you are a vessel filled with a boundless source of power that has nowhere to go.

Harness it.

Use it to burn even more brightly and live even more loudly than before.

Share the love you felt for that person with all the other special people in your life, for it is limitless. There is no end to it and there never, ever should be.

If they could reach you, they would surely say...

"Make my time on earth count loudly, so I've not lived in vain.

Use the love we shared to make more love and not more pain."

If you are struggling to move on, to find the way to carry on.

Without them.

This is it.

Use the love.

Carry them with you in all that you do, using their love as the source.

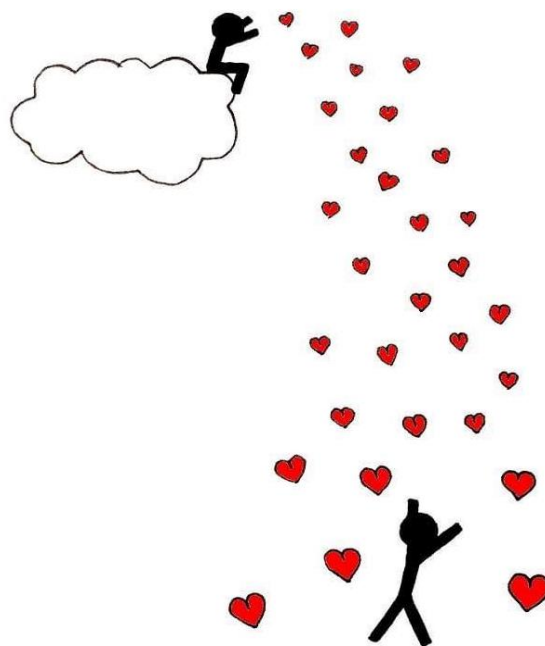
It is what they would want.

Tell their stories, mention their name, feel their love – and share it.

Do not let the pain of their loss overshadow the love that they created whilst alive.

Make them count.

Remember, grief is the price you pay for a love divine. The stronger the love, the deeper the grief but love, love will always win in the end.



Like the sparkle of a
firework, your little heart
fizzled out. But even though
your life was too short, I'll
never forget its magic and how
you made me feel when you were
here.

STILL
LOVED

IG/FB @stilllovedbabies

I feel their presence
around me often, but
I feel their presence
within me always.

Benjamin Allen

TheAfterloss.com

FOR GRIEF

*When you lose someone you love,
Your life becomes strange,
The ground beneath you gets fragile,
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;
And some dead echo drags your voice down
Where words have no confidence.
Your heart has grown heavy with loss;
And though this loss has wounded others too,
No one knows what has been taken from you
When the silence of absence deepens.
Flickers of guilt kindle regret
For all that was left unsaid or undone.
There are days when you wake up happy;
Again inside the fullness of life,
Until the moment breaks
And you are thrown back
Onto the black tide of loss.
Days when you have your heart back,
You are able to function well
Until in the middle of work or encounter,
Suddenly with no warning,
You are ambushed by grief.*



*It becomes hard to trust yourself.
All you can depend on now is that
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.
More than you, it knows its way
And will find the right time
To pull and pull the rope of grief
Until that coiled hill of tears
Has reduced to its last drop.*

*Gradually, you will learn acquaintance
With the invisible form of your departed;
And, when the work of grief is done,
The wound of loss will heal
And you will have learned
To wean your eyes
From that gap in the air
And be able to enter the hearth
In your soul where your loved one
Has awaited your return
All the time.*

~ John O'Donohue