



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA



Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016

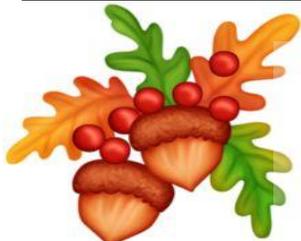
Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, November 3rd -- Topic: **Holiday Hope**

Thursday, December 1st -- Topic: **Creating A Holiday Memento**

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.

THE REALITY OF THE EMOTIONS OF GRIEF

By Rhonda O'Neill Mother, Grief Survivor, Pediatric RN, and Author of the book, *The Other Side of Complicated Grief*

Society tends to believe that grief makes you sad. If only grief was this simple. If you have lost someone you love, you should be prepared for the reality that grief will drag you through a huge expanse of emotions – from the raw, debilitating, and shocking wound of your immediate loss to the long-term feelings of loneliness, isolation and longing for your loved one that never quite go away. You may also be caught off guard when your emotions change rapidly, intensifying and then retreating again, only to reemerge when you least expect them.

Most grieverers are vulnerable when exposed to all of these complex emotions. Not only are you confused by what you are going through, but others around you don't understand either.

All of these feelings may combine to make you feel as if you are losing your mind. It is important to know that you are not losing your mind – you are grieving. And at times it feels as if you are fighting for your very survival.

The emotions you undergo during grief will possibly be the most painful and confusing experiences you will ever have. Grief can leave a path of destruction so wide and overwhelming that it feels as if you will never recover. However, by understanding the grief process and the emotional fallout that can occur, you can be better prepared to deal with your pain.

The Emotional Reality of Grief



The Other Side of Complicated Grief
www.theothersideofcomplicatedgrief.com

We, as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives after the death of a child.

Emotions of Grief:

- Shock
- Guilt
- Anger
- Irritability
- Rage
- Despair
- Regret
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Denial
- Skepticism
- Resentment
- Yearning
- Sadness
- Worry
- Isolation
- Self-Pity
- Envy
- Fear
- Hopelessness

These are just a few of the negative feelings you may experience. The actual scope of what is possible is almost endless. If these feelings are not acknowledged and eventually worked through, they can pull you down into the quicksand of grief, each one like a weight attached to your ankle.

Many times we try to push these emotions aside because they are not “acceptable” ways of coping, and because others are uncomfortable around our emotions. But...regardless of what is expected of us grievers from society, these emotions are inescapable, and we cannot change or ignore our feelings about the loss of our loved one, all we can do is try to move through them. Don't let society make you feel ashamed or guilty about what you are going through.

While grief has universal aspects, it tends to be a very isolating and subjective experience. The truth is that the grief experience is quite personal. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. There are no emotions that are better or worse to feel. Each of us will deal with the loss of our loved one differently. But we can be prepared for the possibility that our grief will not look the way that either we or society expects.

Grief is a process that cannot be hurried or brushed aside. These emotions must be felt and processed so that we can eventually move to a place in life where we are finally able to live with our loss. To a place where our pain becomes at least bearable.

How Do I Process my Emotions?

- **Do not push your emotions aside.** Your emotions are trying to help you heal your broken heart. Feel them. Listen to them. Let them help you to move forward and accept that your life will be different. You will be different. This is the sad and brutal truth of grief and loss.
- **As you work through your emotions, hang onto the love and the positive memories.** Eventually it is the love you shared, and holding onto those memories, that will be the healing balm for your heart. Allow the negative emotions to move through you, but hang onto the positive memories and the love.
- **Healing your heart doesn't mean that you will forget your loved one, or that the love you shared is over. This love is yours forever. Love cannot be lost.**
- **Realize that a part of your heart will always be wounded.** This is a non-negotiable part of grief. Even years later, decades later, you will always mourn the loss of your loved one. But you will discover that love and loss can walk side by side in your life, and that you can experience joy in life again. Finding this joy is something your loved one would want for you. Keep working through your emotions and you will eventually come across that joy again.

Read Rhonda's blog at www.theothersideofcomplicatedgrief.com

We, as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives after the death of a child.

**“GRIEF IS LOVE NOT WANTING TO LET GO”
...ONE OF THE MOST DAMAGING BELIEFS YOU
CAN HOLD AFTER LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE.**



Earlier this week I spotted this quote by Earl A. Grollman going back and forth on twitter and Facebook. It might seem lovely, and understanding, and respectful. I think it's just a little bit.....ghastly.

Recently a regular reader of my blog commented that I'm often banging on about beliefs about G.R.I.E.F., but not spending as much time telling people *how* to come out of pain. She is right...but there is method to my madness. Well...at least the 'madness' around my work anyway. The reason I write a lot about beliefs is simple. The first, and most important, step in starting to come out of your pain *is* to address any unhelpful beliefs you may have about it. By 'unhelpful' I mean any beliefs you hold about this pain being permanent and or/desirable. If you believe that a.) your pain and grief will never go away, or that b.) you wouldn't ever want it to go away....then guess what....it never will.

The process I take people through has 9 steps and the most important one, the absolutely crucial one, is the one dealing with beliefs. Because, to be absolutely honest, when you've lost... someone you love, if you don't address your beliefs, you can let all the time in the world go by, or do all the different work you like but you won't ever completely come out of grief as your reasons to stay there are too strong.

“He does not believe that does not live according to his belief” ~ Sigmund Freud

Freud was absolutely right. We will live by our beliefs....and your beliefs around grief/pain are no exception to this. I read a blog the other day by an artist who had created a beautiful mandala that said over and over 'Love is forever grief is forever love is forever grief is forever'. Grief is forever? That is one heck of a commitment to have made.

And the quote by Grollman (above) is the perfect example of one of the beliefs that will keep you in the pain you are in. "Grief is love not wanting to let go". Identifying your pain as being one and the same as your love for the person you've lost is not a good idea. Why? Would you ever give up your love for them? Of course not. And if you believe that your grief *is* love then you won't give that up either.

So here are some **“what ifs”** you might like to think about instead:

What if your love for them and your grief over their loss are actually two *separate* things? When they were alive you loved them without it hurting you. **What if** you could do that again?

What if your love is your pure connection to them...and your pain is just your emotions and thoughts around their loss that get in your way?

What if you could let go of your pain *without* letting go of your love for them?

What if your grief/pain, the thing you think binds them to you and keeps their memories alive, is actually the thing getting *in the way* of your love for them? Like a painful barrier that stops you thinking about them and connecting with them easily?

What if examining and challenging your beliefs around grief could make a profound difference to the pain you are in and the way you are able to remember them?

What if your grief is *not* "love not wanted to let go?" Love is forever but **what if** the pain doesn't have to be?

Just what if? ~ Kristie West

*“A belief is not merely an
idea that the mind possesses.
It is an idea that
possesses the mind.”*

- Robert Oxton Bolton

WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING, THANKSGIVING DAY FEELS PAINFUL

When you lose someone you love and are grieving, Thanksgiving Day feels burdensome and painful. When a brain tumor took away our precious Katie's life I dreaded that holiday. For seven years we served no rutabagas because they were Katie's favorite vegetable. The thought of their seasonal aroma wafting through our home without her in it was too much to bear.

I don't share this part of me today to make you sad. I share it because you are my extended family and I am yours – we are all fellow travelers. During our lifetimes we will lose people or they will lose us because that's just the way the cycle of life goes.

When we suffer loss we question if we will ever overcome the pain of its paralyzing grief. We think we won't survive and we doubt we can ever feel happy again. Even poor Charlie Brown had doubts, "I think I'm losing control of the whole world," he once sighed. Giving thanks seems counterintuitive, too, when we only feel like crying. But we can give thanks and we can go on. Here are a few suggestions on how to go about it.

- Make the conscious decision to live. That means you get out of bed every day and put your feet down on the floor. "Thank you for my feet" even if they don't feel like walking.
- Allow yourself private time and space to quietly listen to songs that were important to your loved one and cry some more; sigh some more; but then, switch to a different kind of music to distract yourself.
- Do something active such as taking a walk and meditating on your specific pain. Have a little talk with the beloved person you lost and allow your tears to flow; they are healing you.
- Write your longings for your beloved in a private journal; expressing your feelings is crucial for your journey through grief and sorrow.
- Go to someone else's home this year or to a movie instead if you don't feel like cooking – normal has been redefined for you. If you have children or grandchildren, hug them. Children don't always understand death but they understand life and it will rub off, I promise.
- Turn toward your mate or friends for consolation not against them.
- Pray for the strength and courage to accept your now life then pray some more. Meditate, do yoga, walk. Ask others to help you – friends, sensitive family members, a bereavement counselor or spiritual advisor.
- Consider all the other people in your life who love and depend on you. They need and want you there physically, emotionally and spiritually this Thanksgiving even if you are sad. Why? Because they love you and they want to give you an extra hug. We all need those extra hugs when we are hurting...

Author's Bio:

Mary Jane Hurley Brant, M.S., CGP, is a grief counselor and author of *When Every Day Matters*.

"In her moving book, Mary Jane Hurley Brant confronts the unthinkable with courage, compassion and candor. This book is an exquisite evocation of life after loss." Sarah Ban Breathnach author of *Simple Abundance*

"This is a book that will break your heart and put it back together again. This is the story of a daughter who wouldn't give up and a mother who never lost faith. The reader can't help but be inspired by the indomitable human spirit that resides within Mary Jane Brant."

www.WhenEveryDayMatters.com

*May your holiday be filled with reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved is perhaps
the most wondrous reason of all.*



SPIRIT GIFT

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road. Our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together – and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those “spirit gifts” are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I’ll hear his voice: “Pay attention, Mom.” (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains with you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this season and through every moment of re-establishing your life.

~ Catharine (Kitty) Reeve

Wintersong

*Season of lights, season of love and peace
Season of shadow, season of memories,
Season of warmth and joy, season of secret tears.*

*Give us the courage to laugh again
Give us the vision to hope again
Give us the power to love again.*

For all our new seasons and all our new years.

~ Sascha Wagner

HANUKKAH DAY 8 – TREASURING GRIEF AND MOVING FORWARD WITH PEACE

By Rabbi Katy Z. Allen

... the last night of Hanukkah, we fill the *hanukiah* with candles, eight candles for eight nights, plus the *shamash*, or helper candle. Once again we kindle the *shamash*, and then we kindle all of these eight candles. Our homes and our hearts fill with the light from so many candles. Shining together, the light of each individual candle multiplies and is magnified by the others around it; “Many candles can be kindled from one candle without diminishment;” (*Sifre B’haalot’kha* 93) after saying one prayer, another is always available from the same place from which the first one came. An eternity exists, of which we can touch one tiny corner...



Grief – we all experience it. We experience grief when we lose someone, when we lose something, when we lose an ability, when we lose a relationship, when we lose a hope, when we lose a vision of the future, when we lose a piece of the Earth – the pathways to grief are many and varied.

What do we do with our grief? The answers are as varied as our countenances. Perhaps we should treasure our grief, for our grief is a great teacher. It is sacred, for out of our grief grows a sense of peace. We understand as we grieve that we can deal with loss. We learn our strength. We gain insight into what it means to be human. And through our grieving we find our deepest gifts, and we find peace.

... we say to those in mourning, “May the Space/Place comfort you...” The “empty” space within us as a result of our loss turns our darkness into light... The Space within us keeps our lamp burning. The Space within us helps us move forward, turns our darkness into light, and brings us peace.

I invite you on the last night of Hanukkah to take yourself on a meditative journey. Envision – or gaze into – the eight lights of the *hanukiah*. As you focus on these lights in reality or imagination, feel the light within you, and allow it to grow brighter. Pay attention to what it takes to allow this light to grow. Feel the light within you, sense it. How does it look? Is there action in it? Are there people in it? Keep the image of the eight lights of the *hanukiah* in sight, and feel the light within you. Then allow these lights within and without to meld together. Feel them all as one. Hold that feeling, and let this light shine in prayer for others, for all the Earth, for the Universe....And when you are ready, come back to the present, holding the sense of light with you.

“Don’t let the light go out, it’s lasted for so many years.

Don’t let the light go out, let it shine through our love and our tears.”





#GIVINGTUESDAY™

11.29.2016

Black Friday, Cyber Monday and, now, #GivingTuesday!!

Entering its fifth year, #GivingTuesday is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration.

*Please donate your time, resources or a monetary contribution to support the work of **BEREAVED PARENTS of the USA** either at the local level (Mid Hudson Chapter) or to our national organization **BPUSA**.*

Bereaved Parents of the USA helps grieving families rebuild their lives after the death of a child, sibling or grandchild through educational programs, memorial events and self-help support groups throughout the country.

For more information, please visit our websites BereavedParentsUSA.org or MHBPUA.com



Holidays are clearly some of the roughest terrain we navigate after a loss. The ways we handle them are as individual as we are. What is vitally important is that we be present for the loss in whatever form the holidays do or don't take. These holidays are part of the journey to be felt fully. They are usually very sad, but sometimes we may catch ourselves doing okay, and we may even have a brief moment of laughter. You don't have to be a victim of the pain or the past. When the past calls, let it go to voice mail...it has nothing to say. You don't have to be haunted by the pain or the past. You can remember and honor the love. Whatever you experience, just remember that sadness is allowed because death, as they say, doesn't take a holiday.

Even without grief, our friends and relatives often think they know how our holidays should look, what the family should and shouldn't do. Now more than ever, be gentle with yourself. Don't do more than you want, and don't do anything that does not serve your soul and your loss.

May the memories of the season come on gentle wings and bring hope, love and peace





Mid Hudson Bereaved Parents of the USA

2016

Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony

We light a candle to remind us that their light will always shine...

Sunday, December 11

Rombout Fire House

901 Main Street, Fishkill, NY 12524

6:30 Registration

7:00 Ceremony

Includes:

- ♦ Slide Presentation of Our Children
- ♦ Live music performed by
Jim Nurre
- ♦ Reception immediately following the ceremony

Please bring a finger food to share

If you have not already done so, please submit your child's picture to be included in the Slide Presentation by December 1st to Kathy at kjcorrigan5@gmail.com



Plan a vacation in Washington DC and treat yourself to a Grief Retreat!

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