



# MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

## Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016



**Please join us for our next meetings**  
Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup> -- Topic: Changing with the Seasons  
Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup> -- Topic: Memorializing Our Children  
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.

## WHAT LOSS HAS TAUGHT ME ABOUT LIFE

By Emily Long

It has been 13 years since my daughter, Grace was born still and nearly 7 years since her sister, Lily joined her.

Life has never been the same.

I am not the same.



I think it's safe to say that this kind of loss changes all of us in irrevocable ways. Life is different after loss. How I see life is forever altered. Sometimes, those thirteen years of grieving my daughter(s) feel like an eternity. Other days, it feels like just yesterday I was saying good-bye.

In my thirteen years post-loss, the grief and the joys, the love and the heartache, the messiness and the healing have all taught me a few things about life after loss:

### Don't Risk Waiting for "Someday When..."

If loss has taught me *anything* it is to not to wait in life, because the "someday when..." we too often wait for might never come. Something those of us who have lost so much already know.

We never know where life will lead or what will happen at any given moment. We can choose to live, really live – fully, wholeheartedly, and completely. This life as we know it can end at any moment, without warning or preparation.

So, *live*. Say I love you. Be honest. Dive into your dreams. Go all the places you want to go. Do the things you dream of doing. Give your whole heart. Go on adventures. Learn whatever you can. Give all you are to relationships. Leave behind what doesn't serve you or the things that hurt you. Be bold.

"Someday when..." might never come. The life you plan might end in the sudden stilling of a heartbeat. Don't risk waiting for a "someday when..." that might never be.

### We're All Doing the Best We Can

Sometimes this thing called life is *hard*. And sometimes we screw up, all of us do. Sometimes we aren't there for people when we could be. Sometimes we aren't as compassionate as we could be. Sometimes we lash out in our grief or our fear or our anger when we don't really mean to. Sometimes we fall apart. Sometimes we judge (ourselves

and others). Sometimes we do things in the moment that we later regret. Sometimes we hurt others. Sometimes we hurt ourselves. Sometimes we hurt each other. We are human and we make mistakes. It's okay.

I truly believe that most of us are simply doing the best we can in any moment with the information and/or the skills that we have. There is always more going on underneath the surface of life than any of us know. People get upset or angry for things we do or don't do when they have no idea the weight of the grief we are simply trying to function under. Same goes for them, often they act or don't act due to circumstances or situations we know nothing about. We're all doing the best we can with what we have, whether anyone else can see that or not.

So, maybe we could all give ourselves and each other a bit of grace and acknowledge our mutual humanity. We're all in this together, one moment at a time. One mistake at a time. Then perhaps, next time, our best will become better.



### **There Truly Are No Rules or Timelines**

When it comes to loss and grief, there are many similarities. That's why these amazing loss communities are so powerful and soul-healing – we can connect in the similarities of our experiences and find others who get it on a deep level, in ways that non-loss parents can't.

Yet, there are also differences. No two journeys are the same – not even if the exact circumstances of the loss were identical. Some are able to find light in the darkness within months and fight their way back to living in those early years after loss. Others find themselves continuing to stumble and crash in the darkness of grief for many years after loss. Many find themselves cycling in and out of painful grief over the years, sometimes buried under the weight of it and other times feeling the light on their faces. Some of us bury our grief only to have it seeping out into our lives decades after the actual death of our babies. Others throw themselves into the messy, heart-breaking wilds of grief right from the start and find that years later the pain has faded to a quiet bittersweetness.

Any and all of these are equally valid and right. No journey of life after loss is wrong – they are all uniquely individual. My loss is not your loss, yours is not mine. Grief, joy, sadness, laughter, tears, gratitude, and love – all of this is life. All of this is life after loss. No matter where anyone is in their experience after loss, they are living.

### **No Community Loves Harder Than This One**

There is no community I desperately wish I wasn't a part of more than this one – this community of parents living without their children. Yet, at the same time, there is no better community to be part of.

I went a decade after my losses before I found this community of child/baby loss. Finding others who understood the terrible ache and grief of losing their child was like breathing new life into my soul.

It's family. It's comfort. It's love. It's support. Like any family, there are disagreements and grumpiness and arguing at times. Yet, I have never been a part of a community so willing to show up, to support, to give, and to nurture than this one. Not everyone in this community agrees all the time – because again, we are all on our own journey of life after loss – yet there is love and support here unlike anything I've ever experienced.

If you let us, we will wrap you in love for a lifetime. That is *this* community.



### **Life on Planet Earth is Temporary, Love is Not**

At some point each of us will leave this thing called life on Earth. Some far, far too soon. Some after many decades of life and living.

I have often heard it said that the only thing we can really count on is that we live and we die. But I disagree. We can count on love. **Love does not die.**

When we lose those that we love, our love lives on. Our love keeps them alive long past their physical bodies are laid down. When we leave this planet called Earth and lay our own bodies down, the love that others have for us will keep us alive. Life is an infinite circle of love. Love is life.

Love isn't exactly something that we can touch or hold or identify on a tangible level, but as parents and as human, we know love. It lives in our souls. Love is the greatest aspect of our humanity and it will live forever. And our children will live forever as love.

## GO THROUGH GRIEF...

At bereavement meetings we hear: "We must go through our grief, not around it." What does "go through" grief mean?

It means to cry when you feel you need to, to express your anger in appropriate ways when you feel it, to muddle around in your inability to concentrate, and to wallow in your self-pity when it overwhelms you. It means to allow yourself to actively experience and appropriately express every grief manifestation that comes on you. It is only by doing this that you will arrive at healthy resolution of your grief—and a comfortable life again.

Every emotion creates energy. If we do not expend that energy by directly expressing our emotions, it is pushed down inside us and creates a pressure cooker of unspent energy. The pressure will build until it explodes in a way that can be destructive to us and to those around us.

Since I was conditioned to fought them as hard as I of my consciousness. life, God and the woman resulted in frequent temper surviving children. Trying to in even further complicating allowing myself to cry I burning in the back of my constricted most of the emotions buried me of destructive and prolonged



not express my emotions I could and tried to push them out But, my unexpressed anger at who hit, and killed my son tantrum flung at my keep myself busy resulted my state of confusion. By not developed an almost constant eyes and my throat felt time. Trying to fight my even deeper in the abysmal pit grief.

I have heard parents say: "If I ever let myself go, I'll never stop crying." Yes, you will. If you allow yourself to cry, you will find that you will cry yourself out. Good, hard crying is exhausting and self-limiting.

Constructive expression of anger, such as telling the individual or God that we are angry with them, or writing a letter to the person we are angry with (and later tearing it up) will release the energy of anger. Thus it will be shorter in duration and intensity, and will eventually be resolved.

The fatigue that many of us experience is our body's natural defense against facing the terrible reality that our loved one is dead. Don't fight this fatigue, especially in the early months after your love's death when the weakness is most pronounced. Don't force yourself to do anything more than you have to do to maintain your job or your family. Allow yourself more time to rest. Pamper yourself with things YOU like to do. This weakness is temporary and your energy will return in time. Fighting the weakness and telling yourself to keep busy will wear you out even more and delay the return of your strength.

Self-pity is part of grief. In reality, our loved one is not in pain; we are. No matter what the circumstances of our love's death, some of us believe that he or she is happy with God, so our grief is for what WE have lost. It is for what has been taken away from us.

We have a tendency to put a negative connotation on self-pity. It is the "don't feel sorry for yourself" attitude. Therefore we deny ourselves the activity of helpful indulgence in self pity.

A compromise to this belief is a technique that works for many people. It is to actually set a time limit on how long we allow ourselves to indulge in a session of self-pity. At a time when you are hurting especially badly tell yourself: "I am going to allow myself to wallow in self-pity for a half hour (or whatever length of time you wish) and then I will stop." What happens is that the emotions of sadness and regret are experienced and expressed, and for a period of time the accompanying energy is spent. As with other emotions that are expressed, this expression is self-terminating.

Just as our physical weakness is our body's way of shutting out the reality of our loved one's death, the inability to concentrate is our mind's way of protecting us from that reality. Don't fight the confusion you feel. Tell yourself that

the confusion is normal and that it will pass. Try not to take on complicated tasks. In your occasional clear moments write out a list of things you have to do. During the confused times, check the list and try to do just one thing at a time.

Ask for help from other members of the family in doing anything that is complicated. Admit to others that you are having trouble thinking. Ask them to help you with what you have to do. Fighting the confusion only adds to it. It is important to know that just because you experience anger, self-pity, or any of the other manifestations of grief now, does not mean that you will always experience them. Most of these manifestations will pass or lessen in intensity as we deal with them.

No one can tell you how long you will experience a certain aspect of your grief because all of us grieve differently and for different lengths of time. Be patient with yourself. Take your own time. If you allow yourself to feel what you are feeling you will move out of that place in your grief much sooner. Fighting grief delays grief.

It is not usual for any of us to give into our emotions or pamper ourselves, but it is also not usual for any of us to have someone we love die. It will not be easy to actively permit yourself to experience and express most of the grief manifestations. Because most of them hurt, or are very uncomfortable, our tendency is to avoid them. But, to reach the other side of our grief we must head directly into the pain.

A final note. It is possible that to family and friends it may seem that we are “giving in” to our grief. That is exactly what we are doing. They cannot understand that what we are doing is beneficial to our healing, any more than they can understand what our grief is like unless they have experienced the death of someone close.

Remind yourself that it is your grief and your pain and that you know what is best for yourself. Do not let yourself be influenced by what the non-bereaved will say.

~ Margaret H. Gerner, MSW



**bereaved parents usa**  
**national gathering**  
august 4-6, 2017 | washington, dc  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

Yes, October may bring upon us thoughts of things that have come to an end, but October also brings upon us all of the memories, and the pleasures, and the love that can never, ever be swept away by the blowing wind, or frozen by the Autumn chill, because always... always... always... there will come a time when something around us resurrects the undying thoughts of those that have given our lives a whirlwind of... purpose, joy, and precious memories.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>

DINNER

5:30 p.m.

Please join us at the **GILDED OTTER IN NEW PALTZ** for a fun, social night out!  
E mail Joanne Arena with your RSVP [kbmom52123@hvs.rr.com](mailto:kbmom52123@hvs.rr.com)



Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>

POT LUCK PICNIC & MEMORIAL EVENT

2:00 p.m.

Bowdoin Park Pavilion 2  
85 Sheafe Rd

Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

Please bring a dish to share -- email Joanne Arena with details [kbmom52123@hvs.rr.com](mailto:kbmom52123@hvs.rr.com)



Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup>

6:30 Registration/7:00 Ceremony

MEMORIAL CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY  
& SLIDE PRESENTATION

Rombout Fire Station

901 Main St, Fishkill, NY 12524

Email Kathy [kjcorrigan5@gmail.com](mailto:kjcorrigan5@gmail.com) for slide presentation details



### GRANDPARENT'S GRIEF: LIKE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

*The death of your grandchild is like a double-edged sword. You grieve for the death of a child whom you cherished; a child who you had hopes and dreams for. But you also grieve the death of your own child, the baby's mother or father. For the child's parents died with the child. Not physically, but figuratively. Your own flesh and blood, the person whom you once knew your child to be, will never be again. Your child has been transformed in a moment of time into a new person. An overwhelming grief has touched their lives. It is a time of confusion, anger and frustration for many grandparents. Offer your unconditional love and support. Go to support group meetings with your child and go to a grandparents group for yourselves. Remember your grandchild on special occasions such as his or her birthday/death day, Christmas and Easter. Send your child a Mother's Day or Father's Day card reminding them that they are still the parents of the precious child, always loved but now lost. Share their pain with them, even years later. It will surely create an even deeper bond of love, appreciation and fortitude withstanding the passing of time and circumstances. In Peace and Memory of our Beloved Children*





**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA HAS PARTNERED WITH FLOWER POWER FUNDRAISING FOR THIS SEASON'S FUNDRAISER.**

Flower Power offers top-quality flower bulbs for our friends and family members to purchase. All orders ship directly\* to our customers' homes and come with a 100% money-back guarantee. And the best part, we get to keep 50% of every dollar sold! Start now by sharing the link below!

\* Plants will ship to your location when it's the appropriate growing time to safely plant your flowers and/or bulbs.

Here's how the program works: We've created a special web page, dedicated to our organization. The page features specific information about our group and explains how supporters can help us achieve our fundraising goals by purchasing flower bulbs and plants directly from Flower Power.

For every purchase made Bereaved Parents of the USA receives 50% of the sale price which counts toward our fundraising goal.

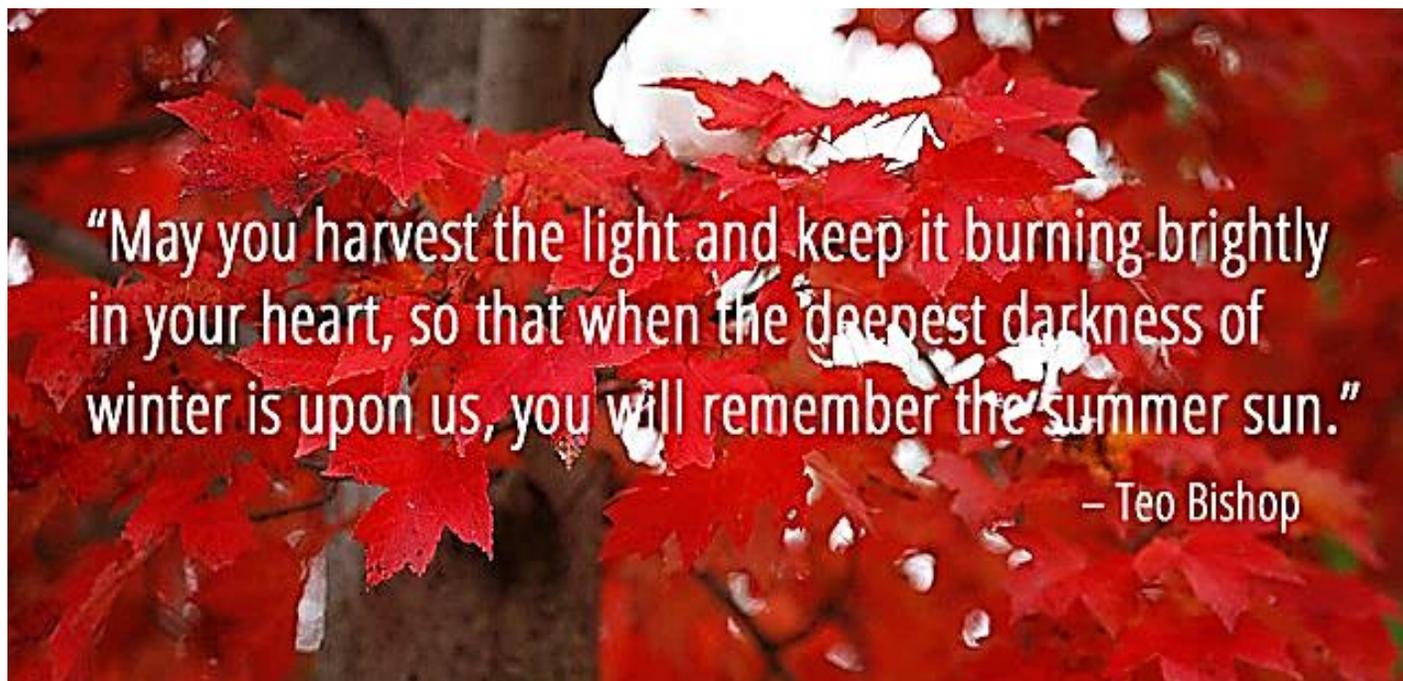
Now here's where you come in! Automatically invite friends and family members to buy from our fundraiser.

Go to [http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?q=campaign&campaign\\_id=23704](http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?q=campaign&campaign_id=23704)

On the top right side you can search for Bereaved Parents of the USA under Find A Group, you will also be able to share it on Facebook with your friends and family. Our success is up to you! Please share with your friends and family!!!

Have fun and thank you!

Questions? – Contact: Fran Alger – [franbpusa@gmail.com](mailto:franbpusa@gmail.com)



***NEEDED:***

*A strong, deep person wise enough to allow me to grieve in the depth of who I am,  
and be strong enough to hear my pain without turning away.*

*I need someone who believes that the sun will rise again, but does not fear my darkness;  
someone who can point out the rocks in my way without making me a child by carrying me;  
someone who can stand in the thunder and watch the lightning and believe in a rainbow!*

*~ Fr. Joe Mahoney (quoted in *The Power of Presence* by Doug Manning)*

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

*The mission of Bereaved Parents of the USA*



***THE GIFT OF GRIEF***

Death takes away. That's all there is to it. But grief gives back. By experiencing it, we are not simply eroded by pain.

Rather, we become larger human beings, more compassionate, more aware, more able to help others, more able to help ourselves. Grief is powerful. It plunges us into the depths of sorrow and forces us to face the finiteness of life, the mightiness of death, and the meaning of our existence here on this earth.

It does more than enable us to change: it demands it. The way we change is up to us.

It is possible to be forever bowed by grief. It is possible to be so afraid of one aspect of it that we become frozen in place, stuck in sorrow, riveted in resentment or remorse, unable to move on.

But it is also possible to be enlarged, to find new direction, and to allow the memory of the beloved person we have lost to live on within us, not as a monument to misery but as a source of strength, love and inspiration.

By acting on our grief, we can eventually find within ourselves a place of peace and purposefulness.

It is my belief that all griever, no matter how intense their pain, no matter how rough the terrain across which they must travel, can eventually find that place within their hearts.

*~ Candy Lightner*

## CREDO

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family.

We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA.  
We welcome you.

### **WHY DO PEOPLE OFTEN FEEL BETTER AFTER CRYING?**

Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Colorado Medical School, works primarily with people who are mourning loved ones. "In my experience," he says, "I have observed changes in the physical expressions following the expression of tears. Not only do people feel better after crying, they also look better."

And according to Dr. William Frey, a biochemist and director of the Dry Eye and Tear Research Center in Minneapolis, Minn., one reason people might feel better after crying could be because they are "removing, in their tears, chemicals that build up during emotional stress." Frey's research indicates that tears, along with other bodily secretions like perspiration, rid the body of various toxins and wastes.

As far back as 1957, it was known that emotional tears are chemically different from tears that result from eye irritation.

Emotional tears contain more beta-endorphins, some of our bodies' natural pain relievers, and protein.

In addition, researchers also are discovering that people who cry frequently enjoy better health overall. Margaret Crepeau, Ph.D., professor of nursing at Marquette University, believes healthy people view tears positively, while people plagued with various illnesses see them as unnecessary, even humiliating.

"I find," Crepeau says, "that well men and women cry more tears more often than men and women with ulcers or colitis."

Consequently, at Marquette's School of Nursing, students and professionals are urged not to automatically provide tranquilizers to weeping patients, but to let the tears do their own therapeutic work. "Laughter and tears," Crepeau says, "are two inherently natural medicines. We can reduce duress, let out negative feelings, and recharge. They truly are the body's own best resources."

