



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com

MAY/JUNE 2018



Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, May 3rd -- Topic: **Continuing Bonds with Our Children**

Thursday, June 7th – Topic: **Open Sharing**

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.

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore on Mother's Day Grief

Holidays are meant to be celebratory. Yet, it's hard to feel celebratory when someone is missing. Should we pretend nothing happened? Do we dare talk about it? How do we talk about it? What if we make her cry?

On nearly every holiday, I hear stories from grieving families about the awkwardness of others around their grief. The death of a child is the elephant in the room. Friends and family, often not knowing what to say or do, sometimes say and do nothing.

This can be particularly painful for grieving mothers on Mother's Day, and holidays can become disastrous until people learn to break the ice, open up and share together, approach grief with compassion, and remember the child who died.

There is no one-size-fits-all way to help all grieving mothers, and some of the things that help the most may seem counterintuitive. Buy her flowers or a tender Mother's Day card. Make her a special dinner or ask if she wants to travel somewhere new. It is imperative to recognize her as a mother, even if a grieving mother. Say her child's name and acknowledge her as a mother to that child, the one who died. And if she does not have living children, it is absolutely important to still see her as a mother, because she is – and will always be – a mother. Listen deeply and nonjudgmentally, even if it evokes deep sadness and fear for you as a listener.

I wrote this ***Mother's Day Manifesto*** early in my own personal grief to help me understand myself and to help others understand me more intimately. Perhaps not all grieving mothers feel as I did, but many I've helped directly have expressed a connection with these words:

"I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me.



Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me.

Say nothing.

Do not offer a cure.

Or a pill, or a word, or a potion.

Witness my suffering, and don't turn away from me.

Please be gentle with me.

And I will try to be gentle with me too.

I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path.

Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am able to smile again, missing her is just beneath the surface.

There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer.

I notice suffering more- hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child- or an elderly person struggling with the door. There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? Answerless questions do exist.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night.

As time passes, I may gain insights or even gifts; but anything gained was far too high a cost when compared to what was lost. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder.

Don't forget to say, "How are you really feeling this Mother's Day?" Don't forget that even if I have living children, my heart still aches for the one who is not here —for I am never quite complete without my child.

My child may have died; but my love - and my motherhood - never will."

*Acknowledge that bereaved mothers and fathers have had a loss:
Express the message, "I know this might be a difficult day for you.
I want you to know that I am thinking about you."*

DAD MAKES IT HIS MISSION TO SHOW OTHER FATHERS IT'S OK TO GRIEVE

By Rebecca Dube

Kelly Farley dreamed of being a dad. But after his dreams of fatherhood ended in two agonizing pregnancy losses, he buried his grief deep down and tried to be strong for his wife. That worked — until it all came crashing down.

“I found myself not being able to get out of bed,” Farley says, his voice deep and scratchy over the phone. “I kind of went into a tailspin. I was not able to run from it anymore.”

Since then, for more than 10 years, Farley has dedicated himself to letting other dads know that it's OK to grieve. In fact, it just might save your life.

“I thought I needed to be a pillar of strength, to help my wife. ‘Don't cry, that's a sign of weakness.’ You're taught that as a kid and you believe it,” Farley said. “The loss of a child is the most profound thing. People will say, ‘How's your wife doing?’ No one asks your wife how you are doing.”

“It can eat you alive,” he added. Farley created a website called GrievingDads.com, where he's created a safe space for men to pour out their hearts and get support. He also wrote a book, “Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back.”

What brought Farley back from the brink was a casual remark from a lay leader at his church. Farley spoke to the man about his grief after losing both his son and his daughter in pregnancy, and the man replied, “That's a heavy load, brother.”

Those five words meant the world to Farley. It was the first time someone he really respected acknowledged his pain and loss and indicated to him that it was OK to mourn. As Farley notes, men often feel like they need permission to show emotion and vulnerability.

“I know that sounds so simple, but for me it was confirmation that it was OK for a guy to tell another guy about the pain he was feeling,” Farley said. He started going to support groups. He started talking about his pain. And only then did he start to feel better.

“I made a commitment to myself that I was going to do something to help other guys,” Farley said. He publishes his personal phone number on his website, and he still gets calls in the middle of the night from anguished fathers — sometimes, he can only hear sobs on the other end of the line. He tells them it's OK to cry.

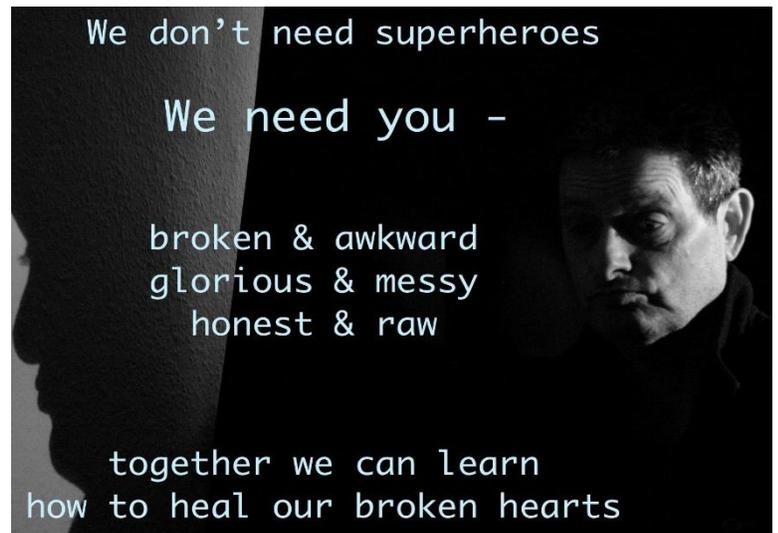
“I don't say things like, ‘Things will get better,’” Farley said. “I say, ‘Things CAN get better.’”

Farley notes that there's not much difference in the way moms and dads feel when they lose a child — for any parent, the grief is a black hole. But there's a big difference in the way men and women are expected to handle that emotion. “We're taught to be the protectors of the family. So, you feel, ‘I let them down.’ There's this shame and guilt.”

Father's Day is hard, just like any significant anniversary or holiday. For Farley, who has no surviving children, seeing happy posts from friends on social media can hurt. It's a challenging day, and he just tries to get through it.

Yet, over time and through his work to help other fathers, Farley has seen a glimmer of hope. Ten years ago, he says, he might have felt only pain on Father's Day. But now when he thinks of his children — daughter Katie and son Noah — it also brings him joy, along with the pain.

“The darkness is so profound. Everything I do every single day is to make sure my children are proud of me,” Farley said. “Now, when I think of them, I smile.”



MOTHER'S DAY BLESSING

May those with children feel appreciated,
May those grieving empty arms be comforted,
May those mourning and missing
The ones who gave them life
Be wrapped in goodness and love today.

- TAMARA RICE

HopeFullyKnown.com



Take note, Real men do cry.

*Especially bereaved fathers
on Father's Day*



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Mid Hudson Bereaved Parents of the USA is proud to sponsor
award-winning songwriter, recording artist and speaker
who will inspire us with his hope-filled words and music

Alan Pedersen



DETAILS TO FOLLOW SOON

[Click here to listen to Alan's music!](#)

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Bereaved Parents of the USA

NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE

Whispers of Hope

August 3-5 ✂ Memphis, TN

Whispering Woods Hotel & Conference Center

Join us for an incredible weekend where bereaved families like us (who often feel isolated in our grief) can connect and create lasting bonds with each other and experience a safe space to remember and speak openly about our children, siblings or grandchildren and express our true grief emotions.

Meet our speakers and workshop presenters -- all amazing grief survivors who will share wisdom and insight about the grieving process and courage, perseverance and grace under the most devastating of circumstances.



Mitch Carmody



Pam Vredevelt



Stephane Gerson



Ann Irr Dagle

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MEET OUR WORKSHOP PRESENTERS!

Denise Ganulin, Joy Hagens, Denise Marie Gaber, Cindy Magee, Ilona Lantos, Doug and BJ Jensen, Bob Baugher, Bart Sumner, Mitch Carmody, Nina Norstrom, Peter Wilcox, Alan Pedersen, Ann Lindner, Jane Bissler, Bobby Morton, R. Glenn Kelly, Donna Mancuso, Lora and Dave Krum, Donna Corrigan, Kathleen Stark, Carol Casey, Julie Blackburn, Laura Diehl, Jeffrey Steinkamp, Dennis Apple, Paul Balasic, Rachel Pearson, Sara Ruble, Chris Mulligan, Diane Romagnoli, Liz Boenig, Patricia Griffin, Stéphane Gerson, Justin Phillips, Vanessa Pentz, Carolyn Zahnow, Kay Bevington and more!

They will be offering their expertise covering the following topics: *Grief Coping Skills; Hope and Spirituality; No Surviving Children; Signs, Dreams and After Death Communication; Men's, Women's and Family Issues; Emotional Health and Self Care; Sibling Grief; Expressive Arts Therapy and more!*

SUNSETS WITH MY SON

By Brian Asci in loving memory of his son Jason



This past summer I went back to the Island that my son and I vacationed last prior to his death. It was our favorite vacation spot and went there many times. I had been with a close friend the year before and although I had reservations we both enjoyed ourselves.

This year I went alone because I wanted to make sure that I didn't enjoy myself last time just because I had company to occupy my time but still enjoyed the vacation spot and could enjoy memories of my last vacation with my son.

I did many of the same things that Jason and I had done back in May of 2006. I went snorkeling, Jet skiing, went to many of the places Jason and I had gone, and to my surprise, enjoyed all of the excursions. I tried to find some

of the same memorabilia that we had purchased back in 2006 but much of what was around then was no longer available.

One of the daily events we enjoyed was watching the sunset. Each day we would make our way to Mallory Square to watch the sun fall into the ocean, we would take in the street performer shows while waiting. It was a time of reflection for Jason and I, and we would talk and make plans of the future, talk about the past, and reminisced about trips we had taken.

I had concerns that It would be a painful time and painful memories but it wasn't. Each day I would sit and watch the sun sink into the ocean waiting for the heartache to start, but it didn't. I thought it was strange at first why it wasn't. On the second day of my vacation, it occurred to me why it wasn't. Jason was there with me. Not physically but in my heart. I felt his presence with me. I also believed that he was watching the sunset with me. Just not sitting next to me. He saw it from above, where I saw it from here. I felt like he watched the sunset each day with me enjoying the moment. For me it was a gift. The thought of Jason watching the sunset with me brought me joy. Would I have enjoyed it more if he were sitting next to me? Absolutely. But he was there. At least I felt it.

I'm sure that some would think I'm crazy, perhaps I am, but the feeling of my son's presence to me was peaceful. At least at that moment. Life is about moments. Watching the sunset while in Key West was and always will be a moment for me. Some chose to see only pain and feel anguish when thinking about their children. Was the loss of my son painful? Only another bereaved parent knows. But I had 27 great years with my son. It was only the last year of his life that was painful. I know of many parents that focus on the pain of the loss. I chose to celebrate my son's life. Cherish his memory not clenching my fists in anger, or by being bitter about his death. I'll be the first to admit that it was tragic to say the least, and I don't ever want to minimize the pain of the loss. But I don't want to overshadow the 27 wonderful years I had with him, with the one bad year he had. Not remembering Jason's good years that I had with him would be more tragic than just remembering his last year. There were far more happy times than sad.

I miss my son every day. One day we'll meet again, and we'll have much to say to each other. But until then I live my life one day at a time. Enjoying good moments when they come, and getting through the bad moments when they come too. He's always with me, as sappy as that sounds. But the love I have for my son will never die. Nor will my memories of a wonderful little boy, a nice young man, a brother, a father, and a person that many loved. A business man, A young man that was quick to help others in need, was thoughtful, and had a smile that could light up a room.



YOU ARE NOT CRAZY, YOU ARE GRIEVING

By Christina Rasmussen

The moon hangs the same way, unmovable.
The stars shine with the same glitter, bright.
The streets stay in their strong concrete, unchanged.
The sun rises, unstoppable.
The birds sing, still.
Life continues almost as if nothing has changed.
Unless life is seen through you.
Then everything is different.

The moon is heavier.

The stars are more obvious than before.
The streets feel tougher. Resisting you.
The sun rises with an extra sun flare.
The birds are too loud.

And life is not the same. After loss that is.

Your voice hasn't left you but you sound different.
Your hair still falls the same way on your head, but it doesn't feel right.
You breathe, but it is harder to do so.
You walk, but your body's gravity has changed.
You speak, but the words come out less frequent.

Your hands are sweaty and cold.

They feel as if they belong to a statue. They hang with no purpose.
Food has lost its taste.
Ice cream makes you feel nauseous.
The phone rings and rings and rings. You don't answer.
Your body somehow doesn't want to carry you anymore.
Nights are a nightmare. Even though you are not sleeping.
Days are long even though they still last 24 hours.

Silence is loud.

Absence is a real person. And you think you've lost your mind.
You have. And we have to talk about it.

You are not crazy. You are grieving.

You are in pain.
And it feels like insanity.
It feels like there is no way back.
There is...

Your way back will happen very slowly.

Almost like a whisper.
The moon will look heavy for a while.
Absence will be your shadow for now.
And the sun will look too bright in the mornings.
Until... Until slowly your hands will feel less cold.
Your voice a little more familiar again.
You will have ice cream and it won't taste like mud.
You will pick up the phone again.
Your body will not resist you anymore.

And nights will not be so scary.

That's when you will know that life is on its way back to you.
That's when you will know you will make it.

You will be ok. Not the same. But ok.

Not crazy. But bold.
Not scared. But cautious.
Not you. But still you.



DAVID WHYTE ON HEARTBREAK

From *Consolations*

Heartbreak is unpreventable; the natural outcome of caring for people and things over which we have no control, of holding in our affections those who inevitably move beyond our line of sight.

Heartbreak begins the moment we are asked to let go but cannot, in other words, it colors and inhabits and magnifies each and every day; heartbreak is not a visitation, but a path that human beings follow through even the most average life. Heartbreak is an indication of our sincerity: in a love relationship, in a life's work, in trying to learn a musical instrument, in the attempt to shape a better more generous self. Heartbreak is the beautifully helpless side of love and affection and is just as much an essence and emblem of care as the spiritual athlete's quick but abstract ability to let go. Heartbreak has its own way of inhabiting time and its own beautiful and trying patience in coming and going.

Heartbreak is how we mature; yet we use the word *heartbreak* as if it only occurs when things have gone wrong: an unrequited love, a shattered dream, a child lost before their time. Heartbreak, we hope, is something we hope we can avoid; something to guard against, a chasm to be carefully looked for and then walked around; the hope is to find a way to place our feet where the elemental forces of life will keep us in the manner to which we want to be accustomed and which will keep us from the losses that all other human beings have experienced without exception since the beginning of conscious time. But heartbreak may be the very essence of being human, of being on the journey from here to there, and of coming to care deeply for what we find along the way.

Our hope to circumvent heartbreak in adulthood is beautifully and ironically child-like; heartbreak is as inescapable and inevitable as breathing, a part and a parcel of every path, asking for its due in every sincere course an individual takes, it may be that there may be not only no real *life* without the raw revelation of heartbreak, but no single path we can take *within* a life that will allow us to escape without having that imaginative organ we call the heart broken by what it holds and then has to let go.

In a sobering physical sense, every heart does eventually break, as the precipitating reason for death or because the rest of the body has given up before it and can no longer sustain its steady beat, but hearts also break in an imaginative and psychological sense: there is almost no path a human being can follow that does not lead to heartbreak. A marriage, a committed vow to another, even in the most settled, loving relationship, will always break our hearts at one time or another; a successful marriage has often had its heart broken many times just in order for the couple to stay together; parenthood, no matter the sincerity of our love for a child, will always break the mold of our motherly or fatherly hopes, a good work seriously taken will often take everything we have and still leave us wanting; and finally even the most self-compassionate, self-examination should, if we are sincere, lead eventually to existential disappointment.

Realizing its inescapable nature, we can see heartbreak not as the end of the road or the cessation of hope but as the close embrace of the essence of what we have wanted or are about to lose. It is the hidden DNA of our relationship with life, outlining outer forms even when we do not feel it by the intimate physical experience generated by its absence; it can also ground us truly in whatever grief we are experiencing, set us to planting a seed with what we have left or appreciate what we have built even as we stand in its ruins.

If heartbreak is inevitable and inescapable, it might be asking us to look for it and make friends with it, to see it as our constant and instructive companion, and perhaps, in the depth of its impact as well as in its hindsight, and even, its own reward. Heartbreak asks us not to look for an alternative path, because there is no alternative path. It is an introduction to what we love and have loved, an inescapable and often beautiful question, something and someone that has been with us all along, asking us to be ready for the ultimate letting go.