



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 2018



Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, November 1st -- Topic: "Coping with the Holidays"

Thursday, December 6th -- Topic: "The Gift of my Child"

Share a memory, a hope or dream, bring a photo or 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.

When The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year... Isn't By Kristi Hugstad

The holidays aren't always joyful — especially if you're grieving. Be sure to take care of yourself first.

Stuffed turkeys and yuletide carols might be the stuff of holiday cheer, but when you're grieving, twinkling lights and festive dishes could simply be salt on your open wounds. The holidays – with their ubiquitous scents, sounds, sights and feelings – likely reminds you of a happier time, or simply a time spent with someone you loved who is gone. Your "ghosts" of Christmases, Thanksgivings, New Years' or Hanukahs past might still be haunting you this holiday season. Here's what you can do to get through it.



Plan ahead

You've heard the old adage that a failure to plan is a plan to fail. If you're dreading the holiday season, the last thing you want to do is *make plans for it*. But guess what? Avoiding the holidays – like avoiding your grief – will only make it worse. Plan where you'll be and who you'll be with for any major holidays you celebrate. Make sure to choose company that understands what you're going through and can act as a support system for you. If other family members are grieving, talk about how each family member feels comfortable celebrating. What is comforting for one might be painful for another, so be candid with your feelings.

Take care of yourself first

Regardless of what you're going through, the holiday season can be draining. But when you're grieving, the stress of family plans, work obligations, gift lists and party planning can seem insurmountable. During this time, give *yourself* the greatest gift you can: self-care. Practice healthy nutrition, good sleep habits and engage in some quiet relaxation or meditation on a daily basis. Don't feel guilty for skipping out on your office holiday party in order to relax and recharge. Only *you* know how to best care for yourself, so if that involves surrounding yourself with family and friends, do it. If it means quiet time alone, that's okay too.

Ask for help

If you're like most people, "help" is a four-letter word you try to avoid. But when you're grieving, you *need* support. Sadly, after a death, even though your friends and family *want* to help, they simply don't know how. That's where you come in. Don't be afraid to ask for help – and to do so specifically. If you need someone to simply give you a call every day to lift your spirits, *ASK!* Believe me, people want to help; they just need you to tell them how to do so effectively.

Do some good

Grieving has a way of turning our feelings *inward*. That's only natural, as you are forced to confront your new reality of a life without a person or relationship you valued. But one of the best ways for you to get the focus off your grief is to simply lend a helping hand. Fortunately, charitable opportunities abound this time of the year, so find a good cause and get involved. Whether you're simply dropping change in a collection jar or organizing a food drive from scratch, serving others is both comforting and healing throughout the grieving process. (**Editor's Note: See Children's Home Wish List below. KC**)

Remember that you're unique

Unless you live in a Hallmark original movie, holidays are rarely perfect – for *anyone*, let alone someone suffering through a loss. Be careful not to compare your holiday celebrations with those of a friend, family member or acquaintance (which likely looks more picture-perfect on social media than it was in reality). Likewise, don't feel pressure to grieve in a certain way, either. There's no guilt in enjoying a holiday gathering or event, even if your loss is recent.

Get some help

Grief knows no season, but it can certainly be accentuated by memories of a certain time of year. If you need a little extra help through the holiday season, be sure to attend a grief group (**MHBPUA Meeting on December 6th or Candle Lighting on December 9th**) or schedule extra time with your therapist, if necessary.

WHAT TO DO WITH A MIND THAT'S WORKING OVERTIME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

By Melanie Newman

I know I'm not the only one to wake in the middle of the night with thoughts racing, finding it hard to fall back asleep.

Not only is this exasperating but, it's potentially dangerous for one's health!

Do you have the tools to manage those sleepless nights caused by an overactive mind?



Even if you've created a nightly ritual to prepare for sleep, what happens when you wake up at 2 or 3 or 4 a.m. with your mind working overtime? You're not ready to get up for the day, yet you dread the possibility of lying in bed, unable to quiet your mind.

From research and personal experience, I've compiled four techniques to help you be prepared for those sometimes, inevitable middle of the night frustrations.

Here are four techniques to help you fall easily back to sleep:

1. Recite a prepared mantra in your mind.

A mantra is just a simple word or phrase that focuses the mind. Studies have shown that it doesn't matter whether you recite a Sanskrit mantra, an affirmation, a scripture phrase, or a single word. As long as you repeat it with focused attention you will get results. And that result is a calm and quiet mind.

2. Write down the thoughts that are keeping you awake.

If lying in bed awake for over 20 minutes, get up and write down your thoughts. This process organizes your thoughts and reassures you that you can, if needed, come back to those thoughts in the morning. You can then let go of the worry that you might forget something important. Then, go back to bed, giving yourself permission to return to those thoughts tomorrow, if needed. A pleasant surprise might be to discover you may not need to return to them at all.

3. Breathe deeply.

Focusing on your breathing quiets the mind and shifts the body's response from the fight-or-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system to the relaxation response of the para-sympathetic system. Soon your body will relax and sleep can return.

4. Provide your mind with an unimportant distraction.

An inconsequential distraction is one technique I've used for years without realizing it was a recognized technique. I would often think of something interesting to me but of little importance. For example, I would mentally imagine how I could rearrange the furniture in the rooms of my house or what colors I could paint the walls. None of it was necessary, but it was fun for me to imagine and was actually a restful exercise. It busied my mind in a pleasant, non-stressful way which was actually conducive to allowing the body to sleep.

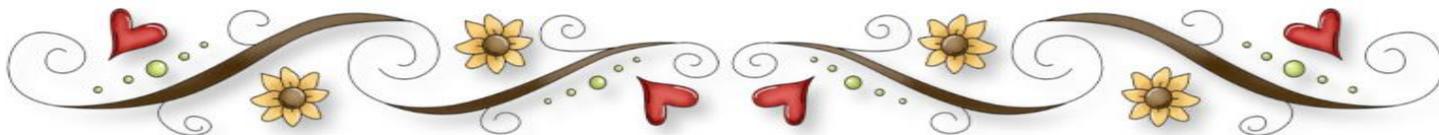
These are just a few techniques that can be powerful in improving one's ability to receive a good night's rest. However, remember that:

There is no one right way. You'll need to experiment and find what works for you.

What may work one time, may not work another time. That is why, it is beneficial to have a menu of techniques to choose from.

All these techniques require practice. The more you practice, the easier it will be to employ the best technique needed at the time.

Training your mind requires discipline but is worth every effort. Sleep is our best restorative tool to being healthy, active and enthusiastic about our lives.



A sharing from one of our MHBPUA members, Sari Grandstaff in memory of her son:

Here is a haiku and photo -- A selfie of my son Jacob Simon that he took not long before he passed away at 24 years old.

A haiku I wrote for him:

*“I still feel your hugs
and your hand squeezing my hand -
treetops fan the clouds”*

And a comment Jacob posted on a haiku poetry site called *Tinywords* in response to one of my many haiku poems.

“ur a haikubird but i love you more than life itself”

jake simon

2006-09-15 08:51:20



When long-time bereaved parents come to a meeting, they are the hope for the newly bereaved because they have survived. ~ Marcel Kopp

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CONTINUING BONDS

By Eleanor Haley

Continuing Bonds is a concept that gained attention (in the world of people who pay attention to grief theory and research) in 1996 when Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman published their book Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief. This concept is helpful for grieving people and grief support people alike. If you want an in-depth look at continuing bonds you can check out the book linked above, read this article, or view a recording of our webinar Continuing Bonds: Beyond the Basics.



For those of you who just want the basic 101, here are a few things you should know about one of our favorite grief concepts, continuing bonds.

One: When continuing bonds first hit the scene, it challenged some the existing grief theories. Particularly those that seem to suggest grief is linear, finite, and leads to things like acceptance, detachment, and new life. Whether intended or not, these theories often leave people with the sense that grief is something to be overcome and that the ultimate goal is to 'let go'.

Klass, Silverman, and Nickman (1996) noted that bereaved people often want to stay connected to deceased loved ones. Under previous models, these ongoing connections may have been viewed as pathological, but through their work, they revealed that not only are these connections normal but they also often bring great comfort and solace.

Two: People continue their bond with deceased loved ones in ways that are unique to their relationship with the person who died. However, some ways that people commonly maintain connection include:

- Dreaming of the person who died
- Talking to the person who died
- Thinking of the person who died
- Believing the deceased is looking out for the living
- Keeping things that belong to the deceased
- Visiting places where they feel close the person who died

Three: In acute grief, continuing bonds behaviors may seek to maintain *physical* proximity to the person. The bereaved may want to hear, see, touch, or smell things that remind them of the person. They may look for them in a crowd or think, for a split second, they see their face. They may leave everything exactly as the person left it, as though they may return. In these early days, the bereaved may long for these connections, but also find them to be triggering reminders that their loved one is gone and will never return.

Later on, after some time has passed, continuing bonds behaviors may seek to maintain more of a psychological proximity by engaging in rituals, thinking of the person, talking to the person, thinking about their values, carrying on their legacy, memorialization and remembrance, etc. Though these connections may always cause some sadness and longing, over time they may also bring the person a sense of comfort and support knowing that, through their ongoing connection, their loved one is always with them.

Four: Klass, Silverman, and Nickman also observed that connections with deceased loved ones do not remain fixed and static. Rather they change and grow in the same way that relationships with the living evolve over time. So, for example, a girl who experiences the death of her mother at 10 will view her connection with her mother through a different, more age-appropriate and nuanced lens at the age of 21 – 35 – 60 – and so on.

Five: Continuing bonds isn't prescriptive. There are times when a continued bond with the deceased will be distressing and unhelpful. For example, when the relationship with the deceased was troubled in life, it may remain troubled in death as well.

Experts on continuing bonds are not suggesting that grief support professionals go out and prescribe continuing bonds to grieving people. Rather, grief support professionals should understand that continuing bonds is normal, not pathological, and help facilitate attitudes and environments in which continuing bonds can thrive.

During this most difficult time of the year, when we are reminded that there is an empty chair at our table and one less person on our shopping list, may it comfort you to shop for a child who is missing his or her family. Please bring your unwrapped purchases to our December 6th meeting or to the December 9th Candle Lighting.

CHILDREN'S HOME OF POUGHKEEPSIE WISH LIST 2018



Electronics

Digital cameras and Disposable cameras
Radios and stereos
MP3 players
Alarm clocks
Headphones, earbuds
Batteries (AA, AAA, C, D, 9V)
Movies (DVD) rated G, PG, or PG-13

Video Games

Nintendo DS and Nintendo 3DS
Nintendo Switch
Xbox One
Playstation 4
Games and accessories (age-appropriate)

Sporting Equipment

Footballs, Basketballs, Baseball Gloves, Bats, Bases
Field games
Sleds
Double Dutch jump ropes
Fishing poles and gear

Games

Playing cards
Puzzles, Board games and Travel games
Legos
Action figures

Art Supplies

Canvases
Crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint
Coloring books (adult and kids)
Calligraphy sets
Paper
Easels
Craft kits
Models (with non-toxic glue and paints)

Accessories

Earrings, necklaces and bracelets (boys and girls)
Pocketbooks and purses
Wallets (boys and girls)
Wrist watches
Travel bags (duffel bags), sport bags
Writing journals/Diaries

Clothes

Hats, ski gloves, scarves, head bands
Fleeces and sweatshirts
Sweatpants/Athletic Pants/Leggings
Team shirts with (team) logos
Boxer Shorts
Pajamas and Lounge Pants
Bathrobes
Slippers, Socks

Bath and Body

Soaps, lotions
Perfume/Cologne
Make-up
Nail polish and supplies

Room Decor

Jewelry Boxes
Picture Frames (non-breakable)
Pillow Pets
Fleece blankets
Twin Comforters, Twin sheet sets
Musical/projector night lights
Desk lamps/lava lamps

Gift cards

Walmart, Target, Best Buy, Poughkeepsie Galleria
Game Stop, Five Below, Forever 21, Charlotte
Russe, Barnes and Noble, FootLocker, Old Navy,
Visa & MC Gift Cards

The 80 children in our care live in 11 separate residences, which is why we occasionally need more than one large item or need items repeatedly. Currently, our youngest child is newborn and the oldest is 21 years of age. The average age is 15 in our residential program.

NEW, UNWRAPPED GIFTS | AGE-APPROPRIATE GIFTS | NO WEAPONS | NO TOYS OF A VIOLENT NATURE

MID HUDSON BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Sunday, December 9, 2018

Rombout Fire House

901 Main St, Fishkill, NY 12524

6:30 Registration

7:00 Ceremony

Slide presentation of Our Children

Live music performed by Jim Nurre

Reception immediately following the ceremony

♥ Please bring a finger food to share after the ceremony. ♥

If you have not already done so, please submit your child's picture to be included in the Slide Presentation as soon as possible

Kathy -- kjcorrigan5@gmail.com

*A time to remember our children
who have died.
A time to honor your own
healing process.*



IDEAS FOR CREATING NEW HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AFTER A DEATH



Someone you love has died and now the holidays will never be the same. I'm sorry to put this so plainly, but it's true and you need to acknowledge it.



Too often people stumble into the holidays after a death believing things can stay the same. Some passively assume everything will work out, while others believe if they try hard enough to be positive and maintain tradition that PEOPLE WILL ENJOY THEMSELVES DANG IT. I hope these approaches work out for some, but I can promise you they won't suffice for all.

The creation of new tradition and ritual provides you the opportunity to find meaningful and lasting ways to remember loved ones. Further, it allows those who have died to play a continuous role in holiday celebrations going forward.

We're going to provide you with a few ideas for creating new holiday tradition after a death, but we encourage you to really think beyond this list and create traditions that are reflective of who your loved one was and how you want

to see their legacy continue. New traditions can be simple things you decide to do on your own or bigger rituals that you create with your family. As you think about this, remember traditions are meant to be repeated year after year, so choose something that your family can realistically keep going. Even better, choose a tradition that can be handed down to future generations.

1. Food:

- **Holiday dish:** Choose your loved one's favorite dish (or recipe) and make sure the dish is present at your celebration year after year. For example, my family makes "Autie's beans". Why are they "Autie's beans"? I have no idea, I'm pretty sure "Autie's beans" is the same thing as plain ole green bean casserole!
- **Favorite dessert:** Instead of choosing a dish, choose their favorite dessert to make every year.
- **Breakfast:** If the holiday dinner is crazy, crowded, and hectic, start a tradition of having your loved one's favorite breakfast foods with just your immediate family.
- **After dinner drinks:** If the person who died wasn't a part of the family celebration, start a tradition of meeting friends and family in the evening to remember the person who died over hot cocoa and eggnog.
- **Cookie recipe:** This is my personal favorite, use your loved one's recipe to make Christmas cookies. I used my mother's recipe this year and shared them on Facebook with my far away family.

2. Music

- **Holiday playlist:** Have a go-to list of holiday songs that remind you of your loved one.
- **Sing:** Start a tradition that involves singing your loved one's favorite holiday songs. My family *always* sings *Silent Night* just before going to bed on Christmas Eve and it *always* makes me cry. You could also try traditions like these...
- Have a caroling party before the holidays where you invite all your family and friends.
- Have a sing-along after holiday dinner.

3. Memory tablecloth:

This is an awesome idea! Every year lay a special tablecloth and fabric markers or sharpies. Ask holiday guests to write down their favorite holiday memories, especially those that involve family members who are no longer present.

4. Light a candle:

As a family, light a candle in the beginning of the holiday season and allow it to burn throughout. If you're not comfortable with a real candle, use a fake candle or a special light up decoration.

5. Candle ceremony:

On the night before the holiday or on the night of the holiday, gather everyone for a candle ceremony. Give everyone an unlit candle. The first person lights the first candle and shares a memory. They can share a memory of their deceased loved one(s), a memory from past holidays, or a time during the year when they felt their loved one's presence – you decide (it's your tradition after all)! After the first person shares their memory, they light the candle of the next person and that person shares a memory – so on and so forth. Once the last candle is lit, do something to close out the ceremony (for example: sing a song or say a prayer).

6. Blessing:

If a blessing is traditionally said at any point during the holiday, add a lyric, quote, verse, poem, or saying that reminds you of your loved one. Choose something that really reflects your loved one, even if it's silly or out of context.

7. Secret Signal:

Create a secret signal for your family members to give one another when something reminds them of the person who has died. This could be a signal used at any moment, happy or sad, throughout the year.

8. Give to charity:

Every year chose a charity to give a gift to in your loved one's name. Keep the same process for choosing the charity each year – maybe you decide over Thanksgiving or you gather on the first Sunday of December, for example. Allow everyone to offer suggestions and then choose as a family. If you don't want to just make a monetary donation, look for shelters doing "adopt a resident" programs or opportunities to buy gifts through an "angel tree".

9. Go somewhere where you feel close to your loved one:

Start a tradition of visiting your loved one's grave or another place where you feel close to them on the holiday. Choosing a designated time, like first thing in the morning, may make it easier to plan and uphold this tradition.

10. Moment of silence:

At your holiday celebration, allow people an opportunity to share the name of loved ones they've lost and then have a moment of silence to remember those people.

11. Tell stories:

Every year on my daughter's birthdays I tell them about the day they were born. Why not start a tradition of telling special holiday stories on the holiday? Instead of reading the kids *T'was the Night Before Christmas* when you tuck them into bed, start the tradition of telling them a story from a holiday when their loved one was alive.

12. Add an extra plate:

Always add an extra plate to your dinner table to symbolize your loved one's presence in everyone's hearts and minds.

13. Holiday memory/Gratitude box:

Leave a box, slips of paper, and pens out, and ask those you're spending the holidays with to write down their favorite holiday memories, memories of loved ones, or gratitudes. Ask them to put their slips in the box and read them over dessert. If you feel as though your family has had an especially tough year, writing down gratitudes might help people to shift their perspective a little bit.

14. Remembrance ornaments and trees:

Buy a new ornament every year that reminds you of your loved one. This could be an ornament that you think is pretty, a photo ornament, or an ornament that symbolizes something about your loved one. If children are affected by the loss, invite them to help you select the ornament or even allow them the opportunity to make the ornament themselves.

- A tree for your loved one: Consider buying a small tree specifically for these remembrance ornaments. This will give people an opportunity to look at the ornaments all together, ask questions, and reminisce. You might even consider having a specific tradition for decorating and lighting this tree.
- A remembrance tree: If you will have a lot of people at your celebration, or if you have a lot of visitors throughout the season (or if you work at a grief center or hospice), put up a remembrance tree. Set up a table with sharpies and ornaments people can write on close to the tree. Allow anyone who passes through to write the name(s) of their deceased loved one(s) on an ornament and invite them to hang their ornament on the tree.

15. Stockings and garlands:

The holidays can be really tough when you're grieving (oh, you already knew that?). Set out brightly colored slips of paper and pens and instruct people to write any of the following of the slips of paper.

- memories
- moments when you thought of/missed your loved one
- words of encouragement to other family members
- words of appreciation for other family members
- gratitudes

After sharing, have a designated stocking in which to place the slips of paper or make a garland out of the slips of paper.

16. Put regrets to the fire:

Henry Havelock Ellis said, "*All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.*" In addition to the memories and traditions you keep with you, you may also be holding onto things like regret, guilt, and feelings of resentment. Start a holiday tradition of lighting a fire, writing down your regrets from the past year, and then throwing your regrets into the fire to symbolize a fresh start.



HELP NEEDED!

The National Board is looking for a bookkeeper who knows how to work with *Quickbooks*.

Please contact Kathy Corrigan at bppresidentusa@gmail.com

Volunteering with the National Board of BPUSA is a wonderful way to honor your child and give back to the organization that has helped you in your grief journey.



SAVE THE DATE

It's not too early to start making plans to attend the 2019 National Gathering Conference. We hope you will join us for an uplifting and inspiring weekend.

Our Annual Gathering Conference provides an opportunity to hear some of the best speakers and workshop presenters in the nation who are experts on many topics related to grief and loss. They will inspire you with their messages of HOPE. They will offer you the tools you need to continue to HEAL as you transition from mourning to living again after the loss of your child, sibling or grandchild.

The camaraderie and connections created, as you get to know parents and siblings from across the United States who have experienced similar losses, will touch you in a profound way. You will benefit from sharing stories, tears, hugs, laughter and more as you bond during workshop sessions, shared meals, remembrance ceremonies and creative activities. Let the "Spirit of Love" fill your heart in 2019.

NATIONAL GATHERING 2019



Bereaved Parents USA

August 2-4 ♥ St. Louis, Missouri

www.bereavedparentsusa.org