



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014

Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, September 4th -- Topic: "I Will Remember You – Memorializing Your Child"

Thursday, October 2nd – Topic: Signs, Dreams and other Unusual Occurrences

7:00 at The Children's Home 10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information



CONSIDER THIS...

Four Ways Sadness May Be Good for You

By: Joseph P. Forgas

Scientists are finding out how sadness works in the brain—and they're discovering that it can confer important advantages.

Sadness is not usually valued in our current culture. Self-help books promote the benefits of positive thinking, positive attitude, and positive behaviors, labeling sadness as a "problem emotion" that needs to be kept at bay or eliminated.

Evolution must have had something else in mind, though, or sadness wouldn't still be with us. Being sad from time to time serves some kind of purpose in helping our species to survive. Yet, while other so-called "negative emotions," like fear, anger, and disgust, seem clearly adaptive—preparing our species for flight, fight, or avoidance, respectively—the evolutionary benefits of sadness have been harder to understand...until recently, that is.

With the advent of fMRI imaging and the proliferation of brain research, scientists have begun to find out more about how sadness works in the brain and influences our thoughts and behavior. Though happiness is still desirable in many situations, there are others in which a mild sad mood confers important advantages.

Findings from my own research suggest that sadness can help people improve attention to external details, reduce judgmental bias, increase perseverance, and promote generosity. All of these findings build a case that sadness has some adaptive functions, and so should be accepted as an important component of our emotional repertoire.

Here are some of the ways sadness can be a beneficial emotion.

Sadness can improve your memory.

In one field study, we found that on rainy, unpleasant days that produce bad mood people had a much better recollection of details of objects they had seen in a shop. On bright, sunny days when people felt happy their memory was far less accurate in an identical situation. It seems that positive mood impairs, and negative mood improves attention and memory for incidental details in our environment.

In another experiment, my colleagues and I showed participants a photo of either a car crash scene or a wedding party scene.

Later, we asked participants to recall happy or sad memories from their past, in order to shift their mood. They then received some questions about the photos, that were manipulated so that the questions either did or did not contain misleading or false information, such as "Did you see the stop sign at the scene?"—when there was no stop sign, only a yield sign. We later tested their eyewitness memory, and found that participants in a negative mood were better able to accurately remember original details, ignoring misleading information, while participants in positive moods made more mistakes.

This experiment points to a basic psychological fact: What we remember about the past can be greatly altered by subsequent misinformation. It seems that negative mood reduces the likelihood that later false information will distort the original memory.

So, being in the right mood can help improve our recollections. Research like ours consistently finds that happiness can produce less focused and attentive processing and so increases the chances of

misleading information being incorporated into memory, while a negative mood improves attention to detail and results in better memory.

Sadness can improve judgment.

Humans constantly make social judgments, trying to read social cues in order to understand and predict others' thoughts and behaviors. Unfortunately, these judgments can often be wrong, in part because of a number of shortcuts and biases that can lead us astray.

We repeatedly find that people are more likely to make social misjudgments due to biases when they are happy. When happy or sad participants in one study were asked to detect deception in videotaped statements of people accused of theft (who were either guilty or not guilty), participants in negative moods were more likely to make guilty judgments—but they were also significantly better at correctly distinguishing between deceptive and truthful suspects.

In another experiment, participants rated the likely truth of 25 true and 25 false general knowledge trivia statements, and, afterwards, they were told if each claim was actually true. Two weeks later, only sad participants were able to correctly distinguish between the true and false claims they had seen previously. Those in happier moods tended to rate all previously seen claims as true, confirming that a happy mood increases—and a sad mood reduces—the tendency to believe that what is familiar is actually true.

Sad moods reduce other common judgmental biases, such as “the fundamental attribution error,” in which people attribute intentionality to others' behavior while ignoring situational factors, and the “halo effect,” where judges tend to assume a person having some positive feature—such as a handsome face—is likely to have others, such as kindness or intelligence. Negative moods can also reduce another judgmental bias, primacy effects—when people place too much emphasis on early information and ignore later details.

So negative mood can improve the accuracy of impression formation judgments, by promoting a more detailed and attentive thinking style.

Sadness can increase your motivation.

When we feel happy, we naturally want to maintain that happy feeling. Happiness signals to us that we are in a safe, familiar situation, and that little effort is needed to change anything. Sadness, on the other hand, operates like a mild alarm signal, triggering

more effort and motivation to deal with a challenge in our environment.

Thus, people who are happier will sometimes be less motivated to push themselves toward action compared to someone in a negative mood, who will be more motivated to exert effort to change their unpleasant state.

We put this to the test by showing participants either happy or sad films—and then assigning them a demanding cognitive task with many difficult questions. There was no time limit, which allowed us to measure their perseverance by assessing the total time they spent on the questions, the number they answered, and the number they answered correctly. We found participants who were happy spent less time, attempted fewer items, and scored fewer correct answers than did participants we put in a negative mood, who spontaneously made more effort and achieved better results.

This suggests that a sad mood can increase and happy mood can reduce perseverance with difficult tasks, possibly because people are less motivated to exert effort when they already experience a positive mood. Sad mood in turn may increase perseverance as people see greater potential benefits of making an effort.

4. Sadness can improve interactions, in some cases. In general, happiness increases positive interactions between people. Happy people are more poised, assertive, and skillful communicators; they smile more, and they are generally perceived as more likable than sad people.

However, in situations where a more cautious, less assertive and more attentive communication style may be called for, a sad mood may help. In one study, participants who first viewed happy or sad films were unexpectedly asked to go and request a file from a person in a neighboring office. Their requests were surreptitiously recorded by a concealed tape recorder. Analyses showed that the sad mood produced more polite, elaborate, and hedging requests, whereas those in a happy mood used more direct and less polite strategies.

Why would this be? In uncertain and unpredictable interpersonal situations, people need to pay greater attention to the requirements of the situation to formulate the most appropriate communication strategy. They must be able to read the cues of the situation and respond accordingly. Sad people are more focused on external cues and will not rely solely on their first impressions, which happy people are more inclined to trust.

In other experiments, we found that people in a sad mood are also more persuasive, produce more effective and concrete arguments to support their position, and are better able to convince others than are people in a positive mood.

Here's another example: In social science experiments, researchers use the ultimatum game to study things like cooperation, trust, and generosity. They give players money and tell them to allocate as much as they want to another person who has the power to accept or reject the offer. If the offer is rejected, neither side gets anything. Past research has found that those in the giver role are not simply driven by maximizing benefits for themselves. However, the impact of mood on such decisions has not been previously measured.

My colleagues and I asked participants to play the ultimatum game after they'd been induced to feel happy or sad. We measured how long it took for them to make their allocation decisions and how much they gave. Those in sad moods gave significantly more to others than did happy people and took longer to make their decisions, suggesting that they paid greater attention to the needs of others and were more attentive and thoughtful in making their decisions.

In addition, when researchers looked at receivers in the game, they found that those in a sad mood were also more concerned with fairness, and rejected unfair offers more than did those in the happy condition. In other words, mood can also influence selfishness and fairness.

Sadness is not depression

Though much has been made of the many benefits of happiness, it's important to consider that sadness can be beneficial, too. Sad people are less prone to judgmental errors, are more resistant to eye-witness distortions, are sometimes more motivated, and are more sensitive to social norms. They can act with more generosity, too.

The benefits of sadness have their limits, of course. Depression—a mood disorder defined, at least in part, by prolonged and intense periods of sadness—can be debilitating. And no one is suggesting that we should try to induce sadness as a way of combating memory decline, for example. Research does not bear out the benefits of doing this.

But my research does suggest that mild, temporary states of sadness may actually be beneficial in handling various aspects of our lives. Perhaps that is why, even though feeling sad can be hard, many of the greatest achievements of Western art, music, and

literature explore the landscape of sadness. In everyday life, too, people often seek ways to experience sadness, at least from time to time—by listening to sad songs, watching sad movies, or reading sad books.

Evolutionary theory suggests that we should embrace all of our emotions, as each has an important role to play under the right circumstances. So, though you may seek ways to increase happiness, don't haphazardly push away your sadness. No doubt, it's there for good reason.



ROSH HASHANAH

At the beginning of the Jewish New Year, September 26th this year, there is a special service held in remembrance of loved ones. This is a prayer that is said.....

"I remember in this solemn hour, beloved child, the many joys you afforded me during your lifetime. I recall the days when I delighted in your physical and mental growth and planned for your future. Though death has taken you from me, you are not forgotten. Your spirit is enshrined in my heart.

Oh Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the precious gift which Thou did entrust to my keeping and which Thine infinite wisdom Thou has called back unto Thyself. Though few were the years wherein I rejoiced with my child, many are the blessings that she/he brought into my household.

Teach me to live more nobly and to extend my love and devotion to other children in thankfulness for the privilege of having had and loved this child; though but for a few brief years. Thus may his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life and his/her memory remain an inspiration to me.

Amen"

an understanding

it was an understanding that found its way to her. she understood now. it had sunk in. good wasn't always going to win. she understood all too well. but that's not why you keep trying. you keep trying because you have to. you keep trying because if you don't, the dark really will always win. and that isn't an option. you keep trying because your heart can't live any other way. you keep trying because that is your way of living. you keep trying because ultimately, you believe in light. because ultimately you believe.

terri st. cloud, bone sigh arts

Visit our website: www.mhlpusa.com

Grief can destroy you -- or focus you. You can decide a relationship was all for nothing if it had to end in death, and you alone. Or you can realize that every moment of it had more meaning than you dared to recognize at the time, so much meaning it scared you, so you just lived, just took for granted the love and laughter of each day, and didn't allow yourself to consider the sacredness of it... It was everything; it was the why of life, every event and precious moment of it. The answer to the mystery of existence is the love you shared sometimes so imperfectly, and when the loss wakes you to the deeper beauty of it, to the sanctity of it, you can't get off your knees for a long time, you're driven to your knees not by the weight of the loss but by gratitude for what preceded the loss. And the ache is always there, but one day not the emptiness, because to nurture the emptiness, to take solace in it, is to disrespect the gift of life.
~ Dean Koontz



SELF CARE ~ CREATE A SACRED SPACE
<http://carlymarieprojectheal.com>

I believe we all need a space that we dedicate to our healing, growth and transformation. We need a place to reflect on our journey. More than often when people think of sacred spaces they think of places overseas that they hope to one day travel to. The truth is you can have a sacred space in your own home. A place that you can go to whenever you please. You can make this place anywhere in your home. It may be in your bedroom, perhaps a spare room or out in your garden if you feel the most grounded when surrounded by nature. You do not need an entire room, a shelf, a chair or a table would be fine. The purpose of your sacred space is for you to have a place to go to, to recharge your spirit. A place to calm down and focus on just breathing. A place to pray or meditate. A place to quiet your mind. A place to be still and reflect on the journey you are on and a place to listen to your heart. In all the craziness of our lives we rarely take the time to just stop. Taking time to stop is so very important.

Once you have found the perfect place in your home, plan a time when you can create your sacred space.

You may have to clear your schedule or you may wish to set it up late at night when your home is at its quietest. Put your phone onto silent or if you would like to play some tranquil music, set your phone to airplane mode. Before creating your space, you need to calm your mind. It may help you to take a shower or a warm bath. Make sure you dress in your comfiest clothes. Make yourself a cup of tea or have a glass of water with you. The most important thing for you to do is to relax. You want this to be a peaceful and enjoyable experience. If you go into this project stressed, tired or in a bad mood, or in the middle of the day when there is lots of noise, it will not work for you. Take your time. There is no rush.

You can bring whatever you please into your sacred place. In my sacred space I have an old wooden chair that an elderly man gave me from his garden. That chair reminds me to show kindness to strangers just as the elderly man showed me. Wrapped around the chair is a garland of feathers to remind me that my angels and spirit guides are always with me. Displayed on the chair is a Lotus Flower candle holder. The Lotus Flower symbolizes purity of the heart and mind. I have a piece of Aqua Aura Quartz on the chair as well. I love crystals and stones. They remind me of how amazing and beautiful this Earth is, that it can grow such incredible pieces of beauty and wonder. I have a frame of shells in the shape of angel wings that my friend Katrina gave to me. The wings symbolize all the Earth Angels in my life that have helped me along my way. Also in my sacred space is an old white chair that my mother gave to me. She bought it when I was just a baby and she would feed me whilst sitting in the chair. This chair brings a beautiful mother energy to my space. Over the chair I have a lovely warm blanket for cooler times. I created my sacred space next to a window so that I am able to have fresh air when I sit there. I did not plan for this but the spot that I chose receives the moonlight and also the sunrise every morning. I have wind chimes hanging just outside the window which adds a little more magicalness to the space. Hanging above my mother's chair is the first prayer flag that I made for my son, Christian. When my garden is bloom I always bring fresh flowers into my sacred space. Flowers create a beautiful energy. I spend some time every day there. It is also my favorite place to read.

My sacred space changes throughout the year. Sometimes it evolves into a shrine for my son. Other times I dedicate the space to a friend or family member who is in need of healing. When I am struggling as a mother, I place a painting of the Blessed Mother Mary there. Each piece that I have placed in my sacred space has a Divine purpose. Its purpose assists me in my healing and spiritual growth. This year I plan to place my weekly affirmation there. If you need some inspiration for creating your space, you can visit my ["Sacred Spaces" Pinterest Page](#). I have pinned a few images there.

{Intention} To set your intention for this sacred space, light a candle. As you light the candle, sit quietly and envision what you intend for this sacred space of yours. Fill the space with love by visualizing pink light surrounding you and your space. Place your positive energy in each corner by filling your space with things that have a significant meaning for you. Allow this sacred space to be a sanctuary for yourself. A space where you can go to ground yourself. A place where you can just sit and be still. A place for you to be inspired.

Once you have created your space make a promise to yourself that you will spend some time in your space every day. I know, many of you will say that you cannot find the time each day to do that. Well, I say that you can. Even if it is only a few minutes.

Editor's Note: this is my altar in my Sacred Space filled with angels, crystals and heart-shaped stones... KC





Wisdom asks us to choose life.
She does not want us to just continue,
to hang on, to survive.
She asks us to
experience life
actively, fully, every day-
to show up for all of it.

~Oriah Mountain Dreamer,
The Invitation

Photo: Paul Bardis

*Because of you I know a grief that
brings me to my knees.*

*Because of you I also know a love
that brings me to my knees.*

I embrace both.

~ Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

*There has been many a moment where I have
had to inch my way through. The only thing
harder than the present was what
I dreaded in the future.*

*I found that the best way to prepare for the
next moment is to live fully in this one ...
inch by inch...*

~ Benjamin Allen

No matter how long it's been,

there are still times when I think of you and suddenly, it gets harder to **breathe**