



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

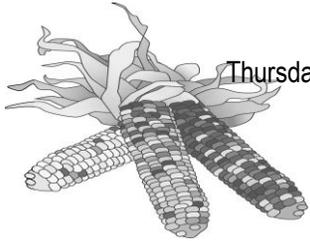
Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013



Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, **November 7th** -- Topic: OPEN – Bring your questions, comments, worries, frustrations to share

Thursday, **December 5th** – Topic: Sharing the Gift of Your Child

7:00 at the D.C. The Children's Home 10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Sunday, **December 8th** – Annual Memorial Candle Lighting

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information



IN THE LIGHT

A shadow of joy flickered, it is me.

I told you I wouldn't leave,

My spirit is with you.

My memories, my thoughts are embedded deep in your heart.

I still love you.

Do not for one moment think that you have been abandoned.

I am in the Light.

*In the corner, in the hall, the car, the yard
these are the places I stay with you.*

*My spirit rises every time you pray for me,
my energy comes closer to you.*

*Love does not diminish, it grows stronger.
I am the feather that finds you in the yard,
the dimmed light that grows brighter in your mind,
I place our memories for you to see.*

*We lived in our special way,
a way that now has its focus changed.
I still crave your understanding and
long for the many words of prayer and good fortune for my soul.
I am in the Light.*

*As you struggle to adjust without me,
I watch silently.
Sometimes I summon up all the strength of my new world to
make you notice me.
When you grieve, I try to impress my love deeper into your
consciousness.*

*My soul is now healthy.
Your love sends me new found energy.
I am adjusting to this new world.
I am with you and I am in the Light.*

Please don't feel bad that you can't see me.

I am with you wherever you go.

I protect you, just as you protected me so many times.

Talk to me and somehow I will find a way to answer you.

Mother, father, son or daughter, it makes no difference.

Brother, sister, lover, husband or wife, it makes no difference.

I see you with my new eyes.

I am learning to help wherever you are, wherever I am needed.

This can be done because I am in the Light.

When you feel despair, reach out to me.

I will come.

My love for you truly does transcend from Heaven to Earth.

*Finish your life with the enthusiasm and zest
that you had when we were together in the physical sense.*

You owe this to me, but more importantly, you owe it to yourself.

Life continues for both of us.

I am with you because I love you.

I am in the Light.

~ Author Unknown

*"There are three needs of
the griever: To find the
words for the loss, to say
the words aloud and to
know that they have been
heard." ~ Victoria Alexander*

DARKNESS by Tom Zuba

We avoid darkness
at all cost.

From the earliest age
we've been taught
that the darkness
is scary
painful
frightening
dangerous
and even evil.



We've been taught to avoid the darkness.

The truth is
that it's not the darkness
that is scary.

It's our learned thoughts about the darkness
that are scary.

The often almost-automatic darkness
that envelops many of us
following the death of someone we love
is filled with gifts.
Healing gifts.



But we've been taught
from an early age
to fight the darkness.
And oh do we fight it.

With a pill (or three)
with a drink (or four)
with food
with work
with television
with gossip
with sex
and with any other soft addiction we can think of.
We will do whatever we must
to make sure we never enter the darkness.
Where the healing gifts lie
in plain sight.

The darkness invites us to slow down.
To rest.
To sleep.
To think.
To feel.
To sort out
sift through
remember and reconnect.



The darkness invites us to cry
softly
or loudly
or any volume level in between.

And to wander.
The darkness invites us to wander.
In order to find our self again,
in order to find life again.
We must be willing to wander.
Often alone.
Through the darkness.



To find pieces
of the shattered puzzle
that was us
whole
before the death of our beloved.
To find the pieces of the puzzle of us
shattered now
in millions and millions of pieces.

To discover
that some of the pieces still fit.
And other pieces must be tossed aside
because they don't fit
anymore.
Those pieces no longer serve us.
And through our wandering
at times feeling clueless and lost and incompetent
realizing that there are new pieces, too.
We discover new
fascinating
sparkly
new pieces to the puzzle
of us
as we wander towards healing
and wholeness.
Again
or for the very first time.



You must wander in the darkness for a time.
Do not be afraid.
It is where healing lives.



“

*Those of us who have worked through
our grief—and found there is a
future—are the ones who must meet
others in the valley of darkness and
bring them to the light.”*

~ Rev. Simon Stephens

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

By Steve Taylor

*There are so many ways to feel dissatisfied
so many different needs to meet
so many goals to keep striving for
so many problems to try to fix
so much of the past you wish you could change
so many fears from the future.*

*No wonder you feel overwhelmed
like a traveler carrying too many bags
with too many paths to choose from
who has to keep stopping to rest
until he can't go on, and collapses.
How could you ever be happy?
Life's too demanding and complicated.*

*But then – an electric shock, an illness or accident
death creeps behind and swipes you hard across your back
awakening you from your torpor
and suddenly the fog dissolves away
And you can see the narrow ledge you're walking
- the one you've always been walking – between life and
death.*

*And now it's all so simple and makes perfect sense -
life is temporary and fragile, precious beyond value
and life contains nothing except this present moment
this brilliant beautiful river of experience.*

*And suddenly those needs stop niggling you
the guilt and fear stop gnawing
the phantoms of the past can't scare you anymore
there's nothing to worry about or to be afraid of*

*Everything obliterated
but the glory of this moment
the grandeur of the world itself*

*And you know that this is all there is
that this is where fulfillment lies
and everything else is only a shadow play of the mind.*

*"You may encounter many defeats,
but you must not be defeated. In
fact, it may be necessary to encounter
the defeats, so you can know who
you are, what you can rise from, how
you can still come out of it."*

~ Maya Angelou

HOPE FOR THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

By Patti Cox

The holidays can be an especially difficult time of year for those who are grieving. When everyone around you seems happy and full of holiday cheer, you may want to just skip the holidays all together. The sights, sounds and smells of the holiday season can be overwhelming and the period of time leading up to the holidays can actually be worse than the day itself.

Before Thanksgiving Day, think about what might be tough and plan ahead, for example the "empty chair," should you keep it in place or remove it from the table all together? Should the oldest child or another family member sit there now? Should you set a place in honor of your loved one? There's no right or wrong answer, do what's best for you and your family.

Be realistic... Don't over schedule, you know yourself better than anyone. Set realistic goals and always have more than one plan. By having multiple plans – plan A, B and C – you can quickly move to the next plan if the previous one isn't working or becomes too difficult.

It's important to remember that you don't have to do things the way you've always done them. It may be a good time to start some new traditions, this doesn't mean you're going to lose the old traditions; you can always go back to them or incorporate them again when you're ready. Just because you've always put on a huge feast doesn't mean you have to this year, have everyone bring a dish, have another family member host Thanksgiving dinner, or go out to a restaurant this year.

Address the "elephant in the room," by acknowledging your loved one and including him or her in your gathering by lighting a candle, making a toast in his or her honor, or sharing favorite memories and funny stories about them. It may be difficult to start these conversations but it will benefit everyone around you and help each of you heal a little bit at a time.

A wonderful new tradition is to cover the table with a plain table cloth, provide permanent markers for family members and guests to write what they're "thankful" for on the table cloth, a favorite memory or message to your loved one, and children can have fun by drawing pictures. Bring the tablecloth out at each holiday until it's full and then start a new one!

Remember to give "thanks" for what you had and what you still have... memories, love and feelings in our hearts can never be taken from us unless we let them. This year give thanks that the grief you feel is based on the enormous love you've shared!

MID HUDSON BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

2013 ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY



Sunday, December 8

Beacon High School

101 Mattewan Road
Beacon, NY 12508

6:30 Registration

7:00 Ceremony

Live music performed by Graeme McEneaney

Call Kathy 845-462-2825 for more information

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

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

WHY YOU DIDN'T FAIL AS A MOTHER

By Angela Miller

I have to tell you this. You didn't fail. Not even a little.

You are *not* a horrible mother.

You didn't *choose* this. You didn't *want* this to happen. You didn't do anything *wrong*. It just happened. *To you*. Despite your begging, pleading, praying, hoping against all hope that it would not. Even though everything within you was screaming, *no no no no no no no no no!!!*

God didn't do this to you to punish you, smite you, or to "teach you a lesson". That is not God's way. You could not have prevented this if you: tried harder, prayed harder, or if you were a "better" person. Nor if you ate better, loved harder, yoga-ed more, did x, y, z to the nth degree or any other way your mind tries to fill-in-the-blank. You could not have prevented this even if you could have predicted the future like *no one can*.

Even if you did nothing more, you are already the best mom there is because you would have done absolutely anything to keep your child alive. To breathe your last breath to save theirs. To choose the pain all over again just to spend one more minute with them. That, is the ultimate kind of love. You are the *ultimate* kind of mother.

So wash your hands of any naysayers, backstabbers, or anyone who sprinted in the other direction when

you needed them the most. Wash your hands of the people who may have falsely judged you, ostracized you, or stigmatized you because of what happened to you. Wash your hands of anyone who has made you feel *less than* by questioning everything you did or didn't do. Those whose words or looks have implied that this was somehow your fault.

This was *not* your fault. This will *never* be your fault, no matter how many different ways someone tries to tell you it is.

And especially if that *someone* happens to be you. Sometimes it's not what others are saying that keeps us shackled in shame. Sometimes we adopt others' misguided opinions and assumptions about our situation as our own. Sometimes it's our own inner voice that shoves us into the darkest corner of despair, like an abuser, telling us over and over and over again that we failed as mothers. That *if only* this and *what if* that, it would never have happened. That you *woulda, shoulda* done *this* or *that* so your child would not have died. That is a lie of the sickest kind. Do not believe it, not even for a second. Do not let it sink into your bones. Do not let it smother that beautiful, beautiful light of yours.

Instead, breathe in this truth with every part of yourself: *You are the best damn mother in the entire world.*

The kind of mother who people write books about.
The kind who inspires the world.

No one else could do what you do. No one else could ever be your child's mother as well as you can,

as well as you are. No one else could let your child's love and light shine through them the way you do. No one else could mother their dead child as well as you do. No one else could carry this unrelenting burden as courageously. It is the heaviest, most torturous burden there is.

You have within you a *sacred* strength. You are the mother of *all* mothers. There is no one, no one, no one that could ever, ever replace you. *No one.* You were *chosen* to be their mother. *Yes—chosen.* And no one could parent them better in life or in death than you do.

So breathe mama, keep *breathing*. Believe mama, keep *believing*. Fight mama, keep *fighting*, for this truth to uproot the lies in your heart— *you didn't fail.* You are not a failure. Not even a little.

For whatever it's worth, I see you. I hear your guttural sobs. I feel your ache deep inside my bones. And it doesn't make me uncomfortable to put my fingers as a makeshift band-aid over the gaping hole in your heart until the scabs come, when and if they do.

It takes invincible strength to mother a child you can no longer *hold, see, touch or hear.* You are a superhero mama. I see you fall down and get up, fall down and get up, over and over again. I notice the grit and guts it takes to pry yourself out of bed every single day and force your bloodied feet to stand up and keep walking. I see you walking this path of life you've been given where every breath and step apart from your child is a physical, emotional and spiritual battleground— a fight for your own survival— a fight to quiet the insidious lies.

But the truth is— you haven't failed at all. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

You are the mother of *all* mothers.

Truly the most *inspiring, courageous, loving* mother there is— a warrior mama through and through.

For even in their death you lovingly mother them still.



*It is a precious thing to learn that
we can survive even the worst
losses. We will be changed, but we
need not be diminished...*

~ Stephanie Dowrick

GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS: 10 PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS By Ellen Gerst

No matter what your faith or whether you celebrate religiously or secularly, there seems to be no avoiding that holiday fever that surrounds us all at this time of year. It is normally a time for family get-togethers, gift sharing and parties galore. These events only tend to emphasize the fact that your loved one is missing from this normally happy and festive time.

So, what are some ways to help yourself to feel better during this season, especially if you have recently lost a loved one, or, even after many years, holiday time is re-emphasizing the missing person in your life?

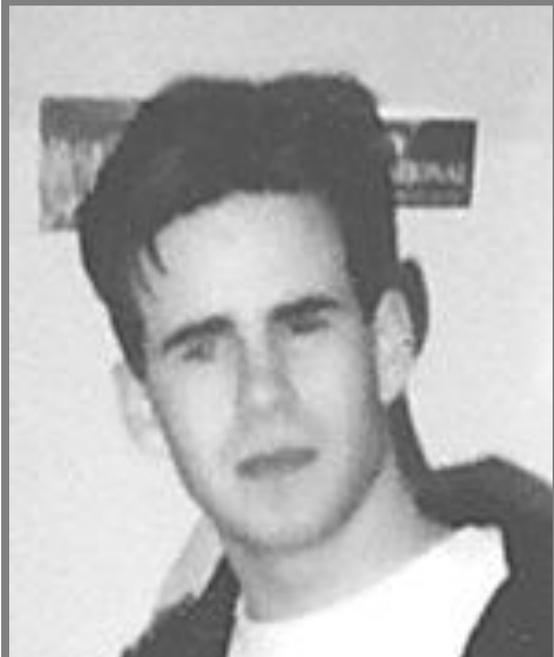
Here are ten practical suggestions.

- 1. Learn to say NO -- and not feel bad about doing so! Say no to those obligations that make you feel sad or stir up memories you don't feel strong enough to confront yet. You can skip parties, both personal and work related. You are not obligated to live up to others' expectations of you.*
- 2. No need to bake those holiday goodies this year. There is way too much of that stuff around anyway tempting us to stray from healthy eating. Staying away from sweets will help to regulate your blood sugar too, which will keep you on a steadier emotional keel.*
- 3. If you need to buy gifts, use catalogs and the Internet to shop stress free at any time of day or night. You might use theme buying to make it easier on yourself. Pick one store where you can purchase everyone's gift – perhaps one for the women and one for the men. For example, Victoria's Secret is a great one for the women in your life. Not only do they have wonderful lingerie, you can find perfume, lotions and potions, CDs, and PJs. Throw in a bottle of wine for the age appropriate, and you're set! Try Home Depot for the men.*
- 4. Scale your holiday decorating down or simply skip it this year. If you want to put up a few Christmas lights, ask a friend to help.*
- 5. If you usually create a holiday letter to send to friends, try writing a generic one and simply personalize the heading and signature. If you have kids and grandkids, focus on their achievements. It's easier to find "happy" items to report about them.*
- 6. Keep your expectations of self in check. Be patient and generous with yourself. Afford yourself the same kindness with which you treat others in times of need.*
- 7. If you previously celebrated this season with lots of rituals, perhaps only include one or two. Do what's right for you and your family. You also can create new traditions that are a better fit for your life right now.*
- 8. If you have no family around, do something special for yourself, for example take a spa day; go on a hike on a beautiful trail; take a trip; read those books you have meaning to get to but are piled up on your night table.*
- 9. Find a place in your heart to which you can retreat when the holiday atmosphere seems too oppressive. This could be filled with fond memories, funny holiday situations from years past, or a place of gratitude that you are still here and coping with your new life.*

10. Let others know what you need. They want to help, but perhaps they just don't know what to do for you. Help them out – make a list!! Great inexpensive holiday presents that give throughout the year might include certificates to help around the house, babysitting, lunch out with friends, etc.

The underlying theme about how to move through the holiday season as gracefully (and quickly) as possible is to do what feels right for you. And, if that means avoiding festivities this season, so be it. Maybe next year you will be able to handle this time of year more easily.

HAPPY 40th BIRTHDAY MICHAEL PATRICK



If their song is to continue,
then we must do the singing. We have to find that special way that will allow us to sing our loved one's song loud and dear ... Knowing that you are doing something to keep your loved one's memory alive keeps you passionately busy, allows you to tell your sacred story, adds joy to your heart, brings an array of beautiful, loving people into your life, and rewards you with a meaningful life again. Your loud voice will echo in many hearts making sure your loved one is never erased from memory.

Elaine Stillwell

I will always sing your song.

Out of the Ashes/FB

***Love you always and forever!
Mom, Dad,
Pete, Lexi & Chris***



CHRISTOPHER USIFER

Miss You and Love You Christopher.....

You changed me.
You changed who I am,
You changed who I will be
I am forever changed because of you.

You've taught me that love has no boundaries

You've taught me that there is more to life
than what I know.

You've taught me to really truly count my
blessings.

You've taught me the strength of a bond
between a mother and a child.

Life is unpredictable.

Life is about the love you share,
and the people you share it with.

Life isn't easy and there is pain beyond
measure but my life must continue,
even though your life is gone.

I must continue,
so that I can change the lives of others
the way you have forever changed me.