



# MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

## Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

### Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup> -- Topic: "Grateful and Grieving"

Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> -- Topic: "Celebrating Our Children"

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

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for more 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.

### WINTERSONG

*Season of lights,  
Season of love and peace  
Season of shadow,  
Season of memories  
Season of warmth and joy  
Season of secret tears:*

*Give us the courage to laugh again  
Give us the vision to hope again  
Give us the power to love again  
For all our new seasons  
And all our new years.  
~ Sascha*

### ALWAYS REMEMBERED

©Hallmark, Inc. 2006

*I know I am still with you  
in your prayers, your thoughts, your heart,  
And though you cannot see me,  
I will always be a part  
of life's sweet celebrations  
in those times when you reflect  
on how, though things are different,  
through our love, we still connect.  
We'll see each other someday  
when our spirits all are free,  
until then, I am with you  
because you remember me.*



*Wishing you a Thanksgiving Day filled with  
gentle memories and peaceful moments.*



## *Autumn is the season of change, and the season of dying.*

Brown grass and dried gardens with remnants of vegetable vines and a lonely shriveled tomato hanging on a broken stem remind us the summer has gone.

It is a difficult time for people prone to depression, or those grieving the death of a loved one.

Days are colder and the early evening darkness brings too much quiet time causing us to notice the absence of the one we have loved.

Short days tell us the winter will come and the days of holiday cheer. This realization brings a feeling of dread and panic. What will I do? How will it be? How will I be? Can I survive?

Change and holidays are catalysts that propel the roller coaster of grief, turning calm days into sleepless nights and reopening wounds that have just begun to heal.

Emotional triggers include Halloween with its festive and fun spirit evoking memories of early childhood, wide-eyed and innocent, exploring and participating in a world of make believe. I can be a pirate, or a princess or Dorothy of Kansas. Now I know the world includes grief and all that comes with it. I know about suicide, and disease, and being scared.

Painful memories abound, reflections not of our loved one but on how we coped, what we did instead, how we held it together. Questions everywhere, should I have done more? Did I care enough?

I am alone and I am missing you.

At times it seems new memories will never happen, at least authentic peaceful ones.

I watch the happiness of others quietly resenting the healthy intact families finding joy at their holiday table. A tinge of jealousy sneaks its way to the surface. The holidays present another level of grief.

## *The season of dying is also the season of preparation.*

Age and a traveled path help me to appreciate this irony of autumn. Nature is both cruel in the presentation of emotional triggers and yet loving and supportive in its message to prepare and to have gratitude.

I feel forewarned and I know what to expect. Awareness reduces the number of surprises and adds predictability. Like a squirrel I gather good books and movies to occupy and nurture the wanderings of my mind. My journal lies ready at the bedside. Maybe I will change holiday rituals and side step the pain of the old ones.

Brisk walks and crisp air help to awaken the lethargy. The cold which chills me to the bone encourages comfort food and rich soup, lovely soft flannels and colorful plaids. I can fill my empty home with the smells of freshly baked bread, cinnamon and raisins.

The lonely early night, although dark, reveals diamonds in the sky and the silence for reflecting on what once was. Warm memories unfold and I am at peace. I know where to find you.

Nature sends the brown bear to hibernate, the geese migrate and I am reminded to seek solace. The quiet safe place inside where I can care for myself, where my heart can be still. Where I can experience connection to those I miss, and where I can remember who I am.

Autumn has forewarned me and I have a suspicion of what to expect. I will nurture myself. I will say "yes" to the friends who understand and "no" to those who don't. I will get up and keep going and I will cry when I cry.

I am alone, missing you.



## WHO IS A GRIEVING MOTHER?

By Heather Blair

*"Do not judge the Grieving Mother. She comes in many forms. She is breathing, but she is dying. She may look young, but inside she has become ancient. She smiles, but her heart sobs. She walks, she talks, she cooks, she cleans, she works, she IS but she IS NOT, all at once. She is here, but part of her is elsewhere for eternity." ~ Author Unknown*

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

Does she look different from one who is not? Is her pain visible in the smile she sometimes forces... behind the eyes on the verge of tears? Can you see the aging her body feels from the trauma of loss? She's one who still pictures herself from before the loss and is sometimes caught off guard at the reflection looking back from the mirror.

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

She's one who ignores a baby shower or birthday invitation one day, because the pain is still too raw. And the next, celebrates the small milestones, for she knows how precious they are. She's one who boxes up a lifetime of mementos in an afternoon to spare her husband the pain. Yet years later still can't dredge up the courage to go through them again.

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

She's one who holds it together in the big things and falls apart over spilled milk. Who loves deeply those closest to her, but keeps her heart guarded for protection from others. She's one who grimaces at the first laughs after loss, but later laughs louder than most. She's one who finds joy in the simple things and relishes everyday moments.

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

She's one held hostage by dates on the calendar and unexpected triggers. And one who will always pause for sunsets, butterflies, and sweet signs from above. She's one who lets go of friends unable to support her. And one who treasures those who didn't walk away.

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

She's one who can experience an array of emotions on any given day. And one who wishes tears would come when numbness covers her. She's one who screams at God one moment and clings to him the next. Who didn't expect her faith to grow so much from the most important unanswered prayer she ever spoke.

### *Who is a grieving mother?*

She is one as complicated as the grief she carries.

## COPING WITH HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

By Sherokee Ilse

Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Years -- all celebrations that bring families together. A time to appreciate friends, God, family and the gifts of life. They also serve as reminders of who will not be with us when our family comes together.

Holiday times can be bittersweet for families who have had a loved one die, particularly a child. There are ways for you to gain some control and minimize the difficulty of the often tense, yet special time. Long before the day, make plans, speak up about your needs and desires and follow your heart. In your decision-making process do take into account the rest of your family, but remember it's okay to put your needs at or near the top of the list.

If you decide you want to do things differently this year, let your family know your desires (either personally or through a note). Be tactful and use "I" and "we" statements. For instance, "We are feeling the need to do things differently this year. We miss our child so much that we can't imagine sitting around a dinner table without her. Please understand that we do not want to hurt anyone's feelings. We ask for your support during this difficult time and request that you not challenge our decision."

As you attempt to discover what seems right for you during the upcoming holiday(s) ask yourselves, "What usually happens in our family to celebrate this holiday or family event? If there were a few minor changes could we handle it better? What do we want to do differently?" If you come to the conclusion that you want to make changes, maybe you will find some of these suggestions helpful:

- Buy or make a special ornament or item that could be put on a shelf, on the tree, on the wall or some other place. Put your child's name on it along with significant dates.
- Get a candle that you can light during the festivities as a reminder of your child. Either tell others the significance of the lit candle or write a poem or note to set near it to explain.
- Make a donation to a children's hospital, Toys-for-Tots program, your church or synagogue or some other charity in memory of your child. Or volunteer your time with a local charity.
- Take holiday decorations to the cemetery.
- Seek advice and input from clergy, your faith, community, and the Bible. Maybe you will find comfort in the Lord and that your child is under God's care.
- If you feel a strong need to get away rather than joining the family, do that. Let your family know

that it is hard right now and that you need to alter your plans to help you cope during this holiday season. Hopefully, it won't always be like this. Pick a place you have wanted to visit. Plan some quiet time as well as some activities to keep you busy.

- Set aside some time to remember. Cherish the memories - keep them alive. Write a note or a poem to your child. Make a present or ornament for them. Say a prayer for them.
- Write a holiday letter to your family and friends telling them what has happened and how you are coping. Ask them for support by being specific about how they can help. For instance, you could tell them you hope they will keep saying your child's name out loud. You could invite them to make a donation to a favorite charity in memory of your child. Be brave and open about what you are going through.
- If you have other living children, be sensitive to their needs. They may think that their sibling who died is getting more attention than they are. Find special ways to include them. Yet, be honest and open with them if you are having a hard time coping.
- If you feel it best to not talk about your child during a certain time of the holidays make that known to others. Maybe they will want to bring up your child and you prefer that they don't.
- Use your creativity to express your emotions. You could write, play or create music, sculpt, paint, draw, make something out of wood, work in your yard, weave, do needlepoint or any number of other creative activities. Either keep what you make or share it by giving it to someone else.
- Avoid holiday shopping by buying from catalogs or online. Go shopping early in the season or during times when crowds are lessened.
- If you find yourself getting quite emotional during holiday gatherings, escape to a quiet room and consider telling the hosts you need to leave early.
- Take one day at a time. Don't push yourself too hard. Deal with the moment and what you can do today. The tension and anxiety of worrying about the tomorrows will not help you cope with today.



2015  
Annual Candle Lighting  
Ceremony



Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>

Rombout Fire House

901 Main St, Fishkill, NY 12524

6:30 Registration

7:00 Ceremony

Includes:

- ♦ Slide presentation of Our Children
- ♦ Live music performed by Jim Nurre
- ♦ Reception immediately following the ceremony

**Please bring a finger food to share.**

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



# SIBLING CORNER

## How I Cope With Grief During The Holidays

By Jamie Perry

I feel like I can divide my Christmases into two categories: 1. Christmas before Josh died, and 2. Christmas after Josh died. Josh was ... is ... my big brother, and he died in a tragic car accident when he was 21.

I had just turned 18 and didn't have a clue what being an adult looked like, but I quickly "grew up" in the midst of this experience. I had no choice other than to be strong and help my family; at least, that's what I believed at the time. I carefully pushed my grief to the side in order to support my mother and my younger sisters, while internalizing my perceived obligation to be an unshakable pillar of strength.

In the years that followed, I experienced the gauntlet of emotions and implemented an impressive variety of coping mechanisms. I accepted that I wasn't just saying goodbye to Josh's past, but I was also losing out on his future. I'd never see him get married or have a family. He'd never see me graduate from college, or run a race, or take one of my yoga classes. The pain and struggle of finding a new normal shook me and my family to a bleak, unhopeful place. We have each, however, worked endlessly at finding this new normal, and I'm so grateful to share that my family is redefining and recreating our experiences as a result of our spiritual journeys.

The 10-year anniversary of this accident is just a few months away, and the only lasting peace I've had from it comes in knowing that I can share with and inspire others, hold a place of compassion for hurting hearts, and add a little tenderness into the world through a new kind of empathy that I've cultivated. I hear you and see you, and I know that Christmas, the most elevated time for love and union within our society, is one of the hardest holidays to sit with while processing death, or feeling a grieving heart.

So, whether you've recently (or not so recently) lost a loved one, here are a few suggestions to "make it through Christmas" while respecting your emotions and grief:

### 1. If you feel like crying, then cry.

I know that this has almost become cliché, but so many of us still hold back on feeling the authentic emotions related to our experiences. I watched as my mom would selflessly hold back her tears and her pain on Christmas morning, in an attempt not to "bring us

down." I still knew she was hurting, and anyone who truly loves you will allow you time and space to sit with your sadness. Give yourself permission to feel, and remember that all emotions are temporary. The longer you hold yourself back from crying, the more painful it will be for you and for those around you.

### 2. During your celebrations, acknowledge the person you miss.

I definitely have come to understand during the last 10 years that we have so much trouble processing death because we're hyper-attached to this physical experience. It's understandable, but there's a beautiful freedom in being able to connect spiritually with anyone who you love. My brother often comes to yoga class with me now, shares a delicious green smoothie, or watches a sunset with me. Why? Because I invite him. I connect with his fun-loving spirit and hold that feeling of love, beauty, and amazement in my heart. Try it! Perhaps you could light a candle, say a prayer, or do a simple meditation before or during, say, your dinner, in order to acknowledge that although your loved one may be physically absent, he or she is still very much a part of you and therefore a part of all of your experiences.

### 3. Tap into gratitude.

List everything you are grateful for about the person you are grieving. Saturate yourself with all of the wonderful memories, experiences, and things which that person brought into your life, and allow it to encompass and protect you. I've found so much comfort in simply feeling gratitude that I was able to share 18 years of my life with my brother, and I am further comforted by pulling out all of the love, laughter, and happiness he brought into my life during that time. Choosing to focus on your blessings and what you are grateful for will transform your mood and your outlook — I promise!

I believe there's nothing more powerful than being authentic, being present, and being grateful in all attempts to work through tough stuff. These are just a few ideas to help you navigate the grieving process, especially during a time of heightened emotions. If you've experienced grief and found some other great ways to cope, please leave a comment and let us all know! We are all in this journey together, every step of the way.

And most importantly, if you are hurting during this holiday season, please feel encouraged in knowing that there is a world of love and compassion within you that you can access at any time. I honor the light in each of you. Namaste.



## 7 THINGS I'VE LEARNED SINCE THE LOSS OF MY CHILD *by Angela Miller*

Child loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her “good” days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are needed. If you’d like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts forever, here is what I’ve learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

### **1). *Love never dies.***

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased children as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours— the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn’t so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn’t stop me from saying my son’s name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn’t make him matter any less. My son’s life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

### **2). *Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.***

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds— a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we’ve never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It’s a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

### **3). *I will grieve for a lifetime.***

Period. The end. There is no “moving on,” or “getting over it.” There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no elixir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time where I won’t think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he

would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone— should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born— an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered *forever*.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

### **4). *It’s a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I’ve ever known.***

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I’ve ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship— that we could have met another way— *any* other way but *this*. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave. Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining *the club*. If you’ve ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a lifeforce to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You’ll be thankful you did.

### **5). *The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.***

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well-intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains.

The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

**6). No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.**

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why every holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two— *anything*— than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one of more of your precious children. That is why holidays are *always and forever* hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

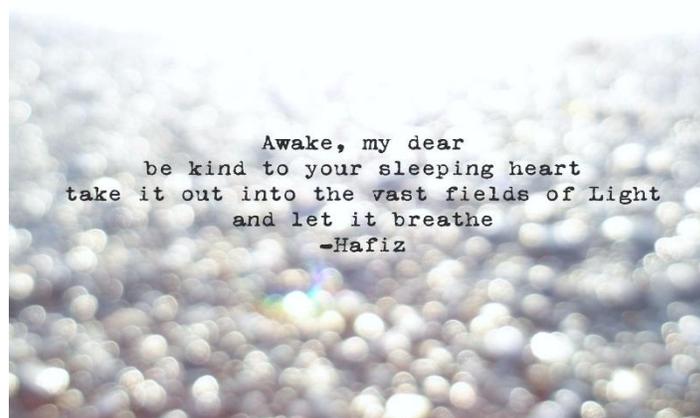
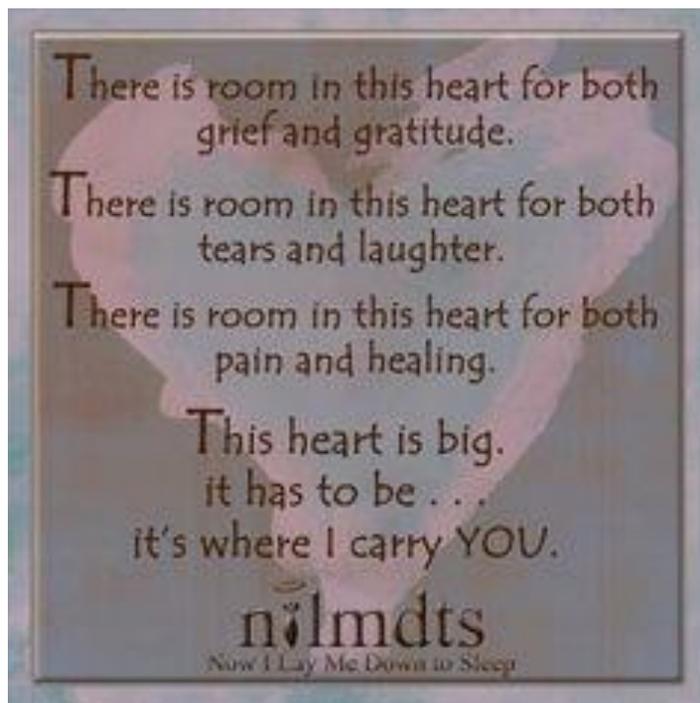
**7). Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.**

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it's both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again— when the joy comes, however and whenever it does— it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply: the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but *because* of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all “worth” it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say *thank you, thank you, thank you*. Because there is nothing— and I mean absolutely *nothing*— I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given.

Even death can't take that away.



## 2016 NATIONAL GATHERING

July 1-3, 2016

Wyndham Indianapolis West

Indianapolis, IN

We are looking forward to bringing you great speakers and workshops all part of a weekend full of hope and healing.

We have so much to do here in Indiana.

Plan your vacation around the Gathering and discover what we have to offer. From the rolling hills, covered bridges, Amish settlements, city life, to historical locations, amusement parks, Amazing state parks and more!

Indianapolis is the Racing Capital of the World with the Indy 500, Brickyard 400, NHRA US Nationals and several more. Plan a tour of the Indianapolis 500 racetrack and museum and/or attend an Indianapolis Indians baseball game.

So much to do in beautiful Indianapolis!



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

### BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA 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.