



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com



Please join us for our next monthly meeting

IN-PERSON -- Thursday, May 5th Topic: TBD

3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie, NY at 7:00 pm

(Guardian Self-Storage Building, Park and enter at the front of the building – East Lobby Entrance)

VIRTUAL – Details not yet available

For more information, please email Kathy kjcorrigan5@gmail.com or call her at (845) 462-2825

MAY/JUNE 2022



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.



By **Emily Graham - Author & Grief Coach**

"You will grieve forever" is a phrase that comes up constantly in grief groups, and it makes me cringe.

Is it true? Yes! But...

My grief doesn't look the same as it did 6 years ago. It doesn't look the same as it did 2 years ago. It is constantly evolving.

When we tell people (or have people tell us) we will grieve forever, I am afraid we are doing them a disservice.

People want to have hope they can survive this loss. It's dark. It's suffocating. It's lonely. It's unimaginably hard.

When you're in that place, having someone tell you that you'll grieve forever isn't really helpful.

It conjures images of me being on the floor, curled up in a ball for the next 40 years. That's scary! It's also just not the reality of it.

There are moments of my grief that are peaceful and beautiful. Periods of deep connection to my son. Happy memories. There are moments of my grief that are still sad and wield the ability to drag me down into the dark hole... if I let it.

This grief is hard. But it changes. We do carry grief forever. But it changes. Please remember to also tell people IT CHANGES!! Because it does. It will. It can. With the right support system, tools, mindset, and help.

Grieving forever does not (have to) mean misery forever.

These words can influence someone's definition of one of the most overwhelming, life-shattering experiences. The narrative they create and tell themselves impacts their ability to do this.

I want everyone to know they CAN do this. Even when they don't want to, don't think they can, or don't know how. They already are.

So, instead of saying, "We will grieve forever", can we please start saying "You will carry this grief forever, BUT it will evolve".

THE CHOICE

From *Permission to Mourn* By Tom Zuba

There is no going back
ever
to the person you were
before the person you love
dearly
died.
Many
many
many
parts of that person
the person you were
before
died
too.

There is no going back.

You now have several choices.

1. You may choose to remain stagnant.
Stuck between.
Eventually you will rot from the inside out.
You will have much company in this place.
This stagnant place.
And yes
this is a choice
which you are free to make.

2. You may choose to fall deeper
and deeper
and deeper
still
into the dark pit
where
anger
sadness
regret
hopelessness
despair
guilt
vengefulness
and hatred
will eat you alive.
Eventually.
This does not just happen.
This
too
is a choice.
and over
and over again.
And yes
you will have plenty of company here
too.

3. Or you can choose to live.
Life.
Your life.
Your new life.
A combination of who you were
before
and who you choose to become
now.
Day
by day
by day.

You can choose to live
life
your life
not in spite of the fact
that someone you love
dearly
has died
but
because of the fact
that someone you love
dearly
has died.

Yes
this too
is a choice.
A hard choice.
A choice that requires a tremendous amount of
work.
And courage.
And tenacity.
And determination.
And a willingness to open to grace.

You must say yes.
Over
and over
and over again.

Say yes.
Choose to live.
Life.
Your life.
Your new life.



HOW TO HANDLE MOTHER'S DAY AFTER LOSING A CHILD By Paula Stephens

Many people consider Mother's Day to be a 'Hallmark Holiday' drummed up by greedy retailers. And maybe it is. I read the other day the average Mother's Day gift is \$172.00. But \$172.00 won't bring our beloved children back and Mother's Day, sans the Hallmark card, becomes a day when we are surrounded with reminders of our loss.

This past week I asked everyone who is my email list to send me their best wisdom about how to handle Mother's Day after losing a child. Wow... I've been overwhelmed with love, compassion, insight and kindness. This includes the amazing women who have said, "I have no idea what to do, help me!"

I believe that part of our healing journey is to offer our wisdom and insight into those who have come after us, and those who are just now coming out of the darkness regardless of time. I know for me, I never thought about how I would handle Mother's Day after losing a child – until I had to. You are such a source of profound healing -- pay it forward!

Here are my Top 4 Tips on how to handle Mother's Day after losing a child:

1. Grief is a dynamic process, what worked last year might not work this year and what works this year will change next. Leave yourself open to new ways of approaching where you are. Also, if you have a tough year, don't get attached to thinking, "that's how it going to be for the rest of my life!" Accept it as simply being a tough year and look to find ways to improve it.
2. There is no right or wrong way to do this. You are the only one who can determine what you need. You are as individual as the relationship you had with your loved one. Honor your uniqueness.
3. Know that it's not just 'the day' that makes it hard. Often, it's the days leading up to and following it that weigh on us. The anticipation and the letdown can be very exhausting. Set aside 10 minutes to check in with yourself – How's your energy, your mood, your body, your emotional state?
4. Don't be afraid to feel like you're moving forward – We don't HAVE to stay stuck, we can choose happiness... **If for no other reason than you, of all people, deserve it!**

Tips & Wisdom From Incredible Moms Who Know. The remainder of this post is a summary of how other bereaved Mothers have handled Mother's Day after losing a child. I have had to edit some a bit but have made sure to leave the message untouched.

- *In all my grief on the first Mothers' Day without my daughter, I forgot to call my own mother. Just before bed that night four years ago, I remembered that I still had a mother. A mother who was worried about me. A mother who had lost a granddaughter and was grieving herself. So, I guess my tip for newly bereaved mothers would be to call your mom. If your mother is no longer alive, do something in her honor and be happy she didn't have to go through what you are going through. And then be good to yourself. Because that's what your kid would be doing on this day. Be kind to yourself FOR your son or daughter who died. ~Robin B*
- *I guess my advice is maybe more for families as a whole... Don't feel you can't 'celebrate' the day. You are a mummy and it is as much your day as any other mother. ~Hannah*
- *Last year I bought myself the most vivid flowers I could find at the store (with purple in them of course), "from Kade." ~Jenny*
- *I have been walking this road for 23 years. Our son, Marc, was 18 when complications from a 4-month battle with lymphoma ended his life. I would suggest to someone just starting, to make their child's favorite desert and then eating it in his or her honor. Memories are so very important now, as this is all we have to keep our children alive in our hearts. And memories of those living years must not be overshadowed by the actual time of illness and death. There are more good memories than that. It also feels good to be doing something in remembrance of them. I have been serving cherry cheesecake for 22 Mother's Days now and will continue the tradition. ~Linda*
- *On the days that have huge overwhelming significance to me (not just Mother's Day), what I've done is plunge into volunteer work. I am working with my hands which for some reason feels very good, and I am helping others for a whole day. I volunteer weekly throughout the year but make a special point to work all day on these two significant days. I sent love and support to all who will read this message. ~Karla*

- *We lost Patrick the week before Mother's Day. I dreaded the day, but dread doesn't keep those days at bay. Time passes the same with or without your child. Early in the day, Patrick's 12 pall bearers, all very close, rang my doorbell. They presented me with a James Avery bracelet, from Patrick and them. I've never taken it off. It's my permanent Mother's Day gift. I suggest that you purchase something that you wear every day that reminds you that you're still a mother to someone in Heaven. Dread is a poison that can ruin every month, every holiday of the year. I find that the dread is more painful than the day itself. I do acknowledge that there is a great deal of power in a holiday, for grieving people. But I simply refuse to let it steal my entire life. Yes, I battle with special days, but I always win. My proof? It's my 4th Mother's Day. I may not like it, but it hasn't taken me down. The Monday after, I will still be standing...I'm a survivor, scarred and battle-worn, but still standing. ~Patti B.*
- *This my "trick" to help me make it through all the special days/holidays in which I spend with family. The rub comes when they expect me to be happy and celebrate while I feel like I'm dishonoring the memory of my child by being so. My "trick" is to PREGRIEVE. I select a day in which I celebrate the life of my child who died. Then later on the holiday I can more freely attend the other celebrations. ~Anne M.*
- *When my son died, my thoughtful sister-in-law made ribbons for us to wear to the memorial service from his blankets. With this energy, I can take him with me everywhere. On Mother's Day, I pin this ribbon over my heart, and in spirit, he joins us in the celebration. ~Jennifer R.*
- *We also practice honoring our son every year on his birthday with a hike in nature and a "release" of some kind-balloons or a boat float, for example. This event allows me to reserve other dates for their own purpose as well. Lots of love, understanding and forgiveness-self to self. ~Jennifer R.*
- *We are coming up on my third Mother's Day without Kade. A couple of my girlfriends were running the Rockies Homerun for the Homeless 5K with their families, the race fell ON Mother's Day (this year unfortunately it does not). It was perfect. My hubby and I trained a little for it, did it with friends, and had a patio lunch with them afterward. **I have learned that it is important to have *a plan.*** ~Jenny R.*
- *I like to get inexpensive flowerpots, plant some pansies in them and put on porches of friends that aren't expecting anything:) makes me feel good and not think about my sorrow!!!! ~Saraha*
- *Since I have other children, I feel like I need to let them have the day. I spend time alone in the morning before the day starts and remind myself I am creating memories with my surviving children. ~Pam*
- *I am trying to keep my sons name alive by supporting a foundation that helps families with a child with cancer. ~Hulya*
- *I switched around what I'm doing at work that day so I'll be working with 2 special people & we can make it a nice day:). ~ Carol*
- *Give yourself permission and grace to NOT celebrate if it doesn't feel right. Mother's Day for a bereaved mother is not the time to bow to the expectations of others. ~Amy*
- *Prior to the passing of my son, I used to celebrate (brunch get together) with all the moms in my family. After his passing (and now) I find alone time (take a walk/get a massage, etc.) to reflect how my life is, as a mom, right here right now. Mother's Day has changed through the years for me. I am thankful to be at a place of gratitude now♥ ~Olivia*
- *I'm choosing to keep it low key this year. It's only been three months since I lost my oldest daughter. I will do something low key with my youngest daughter... maybe a small meal out. Maybe I'll read sitting out in the sun and take a nice walk. ~Stephanie*
- *Make time for grief. If I don't do this and just keep pushing it off. The grief will seek me out and make itself known with no warning and usually at the most inopportune times. It is ok to be....angry, happy, sad, frustrated, depressed, fatigued, passionate, etc. Grief takes so many different shapes and sizes. No two are the same. ~Jenna*

"Live in the sunshine of your loved one's life, not the shadow of their death."



From our beginning 27 years ago, Bereaved Parents of the USA has held an annual Gathering to provide an opportunity for parents and families to remember and celebrate the lives of their children, siblings, and grandchildren gone too soon. We offer support and hope to each other as we attend workshops, listen to keynote speakers, and appreciate each other's company, especially at mealtimes. Our goal is to offer education, encouragement, and hope with open hearts to all who attend.

To visit our Gathering Conference website, [CLICK HERE](#)

Please read the Registration Information Packet before registering! Register by June 1st to take advantage of the Early Registration rates. Book your hotel room using the BPUSA link to receive our special conference rate (\$129 per night plus tax) available until June 15.

We look forward to seeing you! ♥



NATIONAL GATHERING 2022



Bereaved Parents USA

JULY 22-24 ♥ ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



Announcing Our Keynote Speakers

Beth D'Angelo ♥ Diane Bergeron ♥ Crystal Webster ♥ Angela Kennecke

WORKSHOP SNEAK PREVIEW!

- Finding Peace Through the Page: Journaling for the Non-Journaler – Crystal Webster*
- Helping Children with Loss – Sadija Smiley*
- Increasing your Resilience - ways to enhance your life – Becky Russell*
- Surviving Loss from Drug Related Cause of Death – Justin Phillips*
- Men, the Invisible Griever? -- Bobby Morton*
- Survive Child Suicide. Yes You Can – Peggy Green*
- The Power of Pebbles & Angels! – Patti DiMiceli*
- Seasoned Grievors and Navigating Grief – Jimmy DeLoach*
- Struggling to Reclaim My Faith – Dennis Apple*

HOW TO HELP PARENTS WHO ARE GRIEVING ON FATHER'S DAY

www.optionb.org

When someone loses a child, their world changes forever. Father's Day is just one of many days that make that loss feel even more profound. Bereaved parents may feel angry, cheated, heartbroken, or all of these at once—and they may worry they can't be there fully for surviving children the way they want to be. Whether it's the first or the fiftieth Father's Day after a child dies, part of a parent's heart always belongs to their lost child. As Darcy Krause of the Center for Grieving Children puts it, "A child is a child no matter how old they are. In a mother's or father's heart, it's *their* child."

Parents who have living children in addition to the one who passed can find Father's Day bittersweet. One child doesn't replace another or soften the blow of that loss. Sue Lloyd of Kara, an organization that provides grief support to families, tells us, "It's like having a separate bank account for each child. Parents want to have pure joy and celebration for their living child but also need to set time aside to mourn the loss of the child who is gone."

Miscarriage is another loss that can ache on Father's Day. In this case, even though parents and family didn't get to know their child, they might grieve for the life that child won't have. And if it was a loss early in pregnancy, friends and family might not even know that it happened. That can be isolating as well.

Dr. Kory Floyd, a professor of interpersonal communication at the University of Arizona, explains, "Fathers are sometimes forgotten, but miscarriage or the death of a child is as significant a loss for them as it is for mothers. Both want to be parents but can differ in how they express grief. Men are taught to be less open with their emotions and can sometimes feel shame for experiencing or expressing grief. It's important to know that even if he's not vocal, a father still has needs and feelings."

As a friend to a grieving parent, you can never take away that pain. But there are things you can do to help support bereaved parents—especially if they're not looking forward to Father's Day. Experts suggest that you:

1 *Meet them where they are in their grief*

Psychotherapist and grief specialist Fran Dorf cautions friends not to say or do things that could make a parent's grief seem like it's out of proportion or taking too long to resolve. Listen to your friend without judgment or advice. There is no right way to grieve. We need to let others work through their pain instead of trying to force them through it.

2 *Let your friend know you're thinking of them*

You could say something like, "You're on my mind today. I miss Michael, too." If they have a living child, try, "This day must be filled with mixed feelings for you. I love seeing the relationship you have with Cora and remember your love for Jessie." If you don't know what to say, that's okay. Just acknowledging that it can be a hard day can help your friend feel supported.

3 *Say their child's name*

Often when someone dies, people stop saying their name around the grieving family. Experts agree that many families want to hear the child's name out loud. Grief-support expert Shelly Gillan of Kara says that "it reminds them that their child is still loved and missed by many. A parent's worst fear is that their child will be forgotten."

4 *Share memories or do something to honor the child -- if your friend is ready*

Darcy Krause advises that while some grieving parents won't want to talk about their child, "others will leap at the chance. Follow social cues. If they change the topic, follow their lead." Let your friend know that you're available to talk or share stories about their child. If you want to give a thoughtful gift, write a card that they can read when they're ready. Take a photo of something that reminds you of the child's favorite color, movie, or holiday and send a text that lets your friend know you're thinking of them.

5 *Support surviving siblings*

Darcy Krause reminds us that, even in families, grief can be lonely. Bereaved siblings can feel left out or experience survivor's guilt that they're still alive while their sibling isn't. They sometimes feel pressure to take on the deceased sibling's role in the family. Pay extra attention to siblings and help them feel nurtured and loved. Plan a special outing with them after Father's Day: a trip to the aquarium, an afternoon of arcade games—anything that makes them feel cherished.

6 *Encourage self-care*

Take your friend for a walk or drop by with a healthy meal. Offer to spend Father's Day together doing something relaxing like enjoying the outdoors or watching a ball game.

7 *Stay in the picture*

Father's Day doesn't necessarily become easier over time for a parent who lost a child. But friends and family can get caught up with their own lives and forget to check in as time passes. Commit to being there in the years to come on Father's Day and to helping your friend keep their child's memory alive.



6 THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT SIBLING GRIEF

By Emily Graham www.justplayinghouse.com

There aren't many resources that exist related to sibling grief. This fact has caused me to begin my own research. Who better to ask than those that have experienced this heartbreak first hand? The [forgotten grievers](#) themselves. While each has had their own journey, many themes stand out.

I am a big believer in the statement, "You don't know what you don't know." How could you? It isn't possible. This unknown is the root of our inability to connect and understand. Without experiencing something firsthand we just don't have the capacity to show empathy.

I came across the saying, "Siblings are the only people we know cradle to grave." It affected me. Talking to sibling grievers this statement came up. Our parents are expected to die before we do. Spouses and friends do not enter our lives until we are older. Siblings are a part of every memory we have growing up. They are intertwined with us from the beginning. We expect they will be there at our side up until the end.

What I am learning is eye opening. I expected it to be. There were also some great points I feel I should share. As I think about the path my daughter's will walk, I want the world to know they are also grieving. Their path will look very different than what we expect. This is what we all need to know.

1 – Siblings Suffer 2 Losses

My girls not only suffered the loss of their brother. They have also suffered the loss of their parents. We have changed. Our daily normal has changed. The family we once were is gone. That will never return the way it was. I know at my house the first 10 months were very difficult. My oldest felt it. A LOT! Regardless of how hard we tried, it was just not the same. It still isn't. I am told it is normal for siblings to wonder if their parents would be this upset if it had been them. We had that question asked of us. New normal is a daily struggle for everyone.

2 – Don't Make Them Feel Different

They do not want to be known as the girl whose brother died. They want to be normal kids, just like everyone else. Please don't ask your kids not to talk about it or bring it up. Please don't tell your kids to be nice to them because it happened. Their brother's death is a normal part of their life. We talk about it all the time. You don't need to avoid the topic. However, you also don't need to draw attention to the fact to make them feel different.

3 – They Struggle With The Same Questions

Just as I hate the question, “How many kids do you have?” They hate the question, “How many brothers and sisters do you have?” This had never even crossed my mind. I personally have spent a lot of time crafting my response to my question. Yet, I still get anxiety when I meet new people. They will inevitably ask this basic question. I want to answer truthfully, but then it can get awkward because people get uncomfortable with my response. I am still navigating that road. We had never even discussed that question with my girls or how they would want to answer it in the future.

4 – They Feel Like A Bystander To Parental Grief

When a child dies, people immediately think about the impact to the parents. Second is typically grandparents. Someone said they were told to “be strong for your parents.” Rarely are they asked how they are doing. Do they miss their brother/sister? On milestones their parents received cards and support. Nothing was directed to the siblings. One of the pieces of advice I got that really stuck with me was to encourage those around us to send a milestone card directly to my daughter. Acknowledge that they know it is tough on them and make them feel like they are part of the grieving process. This thought had never crossed my mind.

5 – Anxiety Is Real

Learning about death in such a traumatic way as the loss of a sibling can cause anxiety. The constant fear that someone else is going to die. This is not always shown in normal ways. I know I hadn't thought about it until we had a breakdown at my house. My daughter was begging to move out (age 5) and live with someone else. She was terrified that my husband and I were going to die next. There is only so much you can say to eliminate that fear. I can tell her all day long that we aren't going to die. However, we never in a million years expected her brother would die. So, the anxiety can be quieted, but we should expect it to rear its ugly head again at an unknown time.

6 – Life Stages Impact Grief

Throughout life there will be moments my girls will be impacted by their grief. It will come without us ever being prepared. As they learn more about death and what that means. As they grow up and hit their own milestones. At times feeling like they take a back seat to our grief knowing we will always be thinking of their brother and what we missed out on with him.

The sibling bond is incredibly strong. It is only fair their grief be acknowledged. I will continue to remind myself my girls are grieving. I hope those around us will do the same.

