



# MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

*Bereaved Parents of the USA*

## Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

[www.mhbpusa.com](http://www.mhbpusa.com)

MARCH/APRIL 2019



*Please join us for our next meetings*

Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> -- Topic: **Open Sharing**

Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup> -- Topic: **Hope & Healing**

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.

### BPUSA WELCOME

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren.

We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a safe space where grieving families can connect, share our stories, and learn to rebuild our lives.

We attend meetings whenever we can and for as long as we find helpful. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness, and feelings of hopelessness, knowing these emotions will be met with compassion and understanding. As we support, comfort and encourage one another, we offer hope and healing. As we confront the deaths of our loved ones, our shared grief brings us to a common ground that transcends differences, building mutual understanding across the boundaries of culture, race, faith, values, abilities, and lifestyle.

Together we celebrate the lives of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, sharing the joys and the heartbreaks as well as the love that will never fade. Together, strengthened by the bonds we create, we offer what we have learned from one another to every bereaved family, no matter how recent or long ago the death.

We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA. We welcome you.

I'll love you *forever*  
I'll like you *for always*  
as long as I live...  
*my baby* you'll be



It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn't heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore's stick house. Inside the house was Eeyore.

"Hello Eeyore," said Pooh.

"Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet " said Eeyore, in a Glum Sounding Voice

"We just thought we'd check in on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay."

Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather sad, and alone, and not much fun to be around at all.

Which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time hanging out with someone who is Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All, would you now."

Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house.

Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"We're sitting here with you," said Pooh, "because we are your friends. And true friends don't care if someone is feeling sad, or alone, or not much fun to be around at all. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are." ♥ ♥

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better.

Because Pooh and Piglet were There.

No more; no less.

A.A. Milne  
E.H. Shepard



# CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING MOTHER

By Jessi Snapp of [Luminous Light Studio](#)

As a grieving mother, I tend to walk a very fine line as I reintegrate into society and learn to navigate this new life of mine. What the world sees of me is only what is apparent on the surface. There are certain things I choose not to share because I am just trying my best to function normally again. And that is no easy task.

Not to mention, I am often misunderstood by those unfamiliar with this kind of grief. It is exhausting having to explain myself day in and day out. This is precisely why I hide a lot of my tears. I secretly cry in places like my car while driving alone or in the shower where no one can hear me. I probably cry way more often than anyone realizes. And I've perfected the art of pulling myself back together.



**A smile doesn't always mean I'm fine.** Just because I walk around with a smile on my face doesn't always mean I am okay. It doesn't mean I am "over it" either. I smile because I am trying to live my life again. There are times when I spend the day smiling and feeling okay, but I still end up crying myself to sleep at night.

There are also days where I am genuinely happy. But it doesn't mean that the deep ache in my soul has subsided. It's still there. It will always be there. Don't mistake my smile for something it's not. Is that confusing to you? Good. Because it confuses me too.

**There have been times I've had to resist the urge to physically hurt you.** Every time you complain about your children, I don't know whether to laugh or cry because it is so ridiculously insensitive. But I do know that I have to resist the deep urge to throat punch you. It is tough to listen to people complain about their living children because I would have done anything to have those "problems" in my life. Listening to these petty complaints makes me want to beat my head against the wall. But instead, I usually laugh hysterically at the idea that you think it's a real "problem."

And what's more – I will probably never truly empathize with your poop stories or sleepless nights. I know motherhood can be tough, but it will never compare to mothering a child who is no longer here.

**I don't want to hear about your new pregnancy.** Don't get me wrong. I am happy for you. I value the prospect of new life more than anyone I know. But I don't want to hear how hard your pregnancy has been or how you "just want it to be over." I will slap a smile on my face and congratulate you. And I am probably going to be happy for you, but I also may flop between feelings of jealousy and horrible – yet realistic – thoughts that you too might lose your baby. Because contrary to what you believe – it *could* happen. And I *hate* that it could.

**Don't think that because of my grief, I didn't notice your absence.** Don't assume that because I'm cordial with you, all is fine between us. You dropped off the face of the earth when I needed you most, and I resent you for it. But saying that to you would cause more issues. And trust me – I don't need anymore. So, I choose to say nothing at all.

**I hate making small talk.** I avoid it as much as possible. I know how it goes. Eventually, you will regret striking up the conversation once you ask me how many children I have because I am not going to lie to you to make you feel comfortable. I will tell you that I have a child, but he died. It will be wholly rehearsed and forced – but it will still fall from my lips.

And if you're a mother holding a baby, I will probably avoid eye contact and resist striking up a conversation. It doesn't mean I am ignoring you or that I am completely uninterested in talking to you. I want to tell you about my baby. You see, I would love to swap stories with you. But odds are you probably don't want to talk about my dead baby.

**Sometimes simple things can be the most challenging.** Like when I visit the doctor, and the paperwork asks me to scribble down how many children I have. I don't know if they mean living or living and deceased. Or when I have to sign a birthday card – I always pause and wonder if I should sign my child's name too. Or would that be weird? It all just becomes more emotionally complicated than it's worth.

**I still sleep with a teddy bear.** Yes, you read that correctly. I am a fully-grown woman who sleeps with a teddy bear. But it isn't just any teddy bear. It is my child's teddy bear. I want more than anything to feel him close to me, and his bear brings my heavy heart a bit of comfort, especially on the nights where tears are endless, and sleep doesn't come easily.

**I am sorry I lost him but not sorry I had him.** I know people often look at me with pity in their eyes when they hear that I've lost a child. But please don't think that this means I regret having him be a part of my life. You see, he was one of my greatest blessings. I am not sorry that he was a part of our family. And I would do it all over again even knowing the outcome. Because I love him that much and I am grateful for our time together.

*\*Thank you to the group of beautiful grieving mothers who shared their confessions with me for this article.*

Grief is neither a disorder nor a healing process; it is a sign of health itself, a whole and natural gesture of love. Nor must we see grief as a step toward something better. No matter how much it hurts-and it may be the greatest pain in life-grief can be an end in itself, a pure expression of love.

Gerald May

## **SPRING COMES AGAIN**

~ Elizabeth B. Estes

*In the first year of bereavement, spring is often a painful time of year. Nature reminds us of rebirth when we are not yet ready for it. Easter or Passover arrives with its significance for those of us who are religious. Despite the fact that nature is giving out signals of renewed life, we don't feel renewed and are uncertain that we ever shall again. The flowers, dogwoods and blooming shrubs remind us of the fact our child cannot experience the beauty, and we are sad.*

*However, believe me, a time will come when we will feel the stirring of happiness at warm days and green grass and the bursting forth of buds. Then Spring will seem a promise that love, experienced as we have known it with our child, never goes away – it is always there, even when the child is not.*

*The cycles of nature will be a reassurance that as the earth experiences its ups and downs, so will we -- that it is natural. Laughter will come, and lethargy, and joy, and tears; but changes will take place just as the earth experiences them, and we will move forward or backward as we can, carrying the love for our child with us. Love does not die, cannot be buried, and continues just as the changing seasons do.*



# What does it mean to 'hold space' for someone else?

It means we are willing to walk alongside another person in whatever journey they're on, without judging them, making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome.

When we hold space for other people, we open our hearts, offer unconditional support, and let go of judgment and control.

[www.transpiral.com.au](http://www.transpiral.com.au)



the longer we live,  
the more of your presence  
we find, laid down,  
weave upon weave  
within our lives.

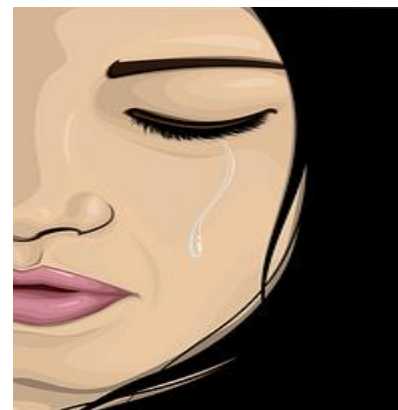
...

there are many things,  
we could have said,  
but words never wanted  
to name them;  
and perhaps a world  
that is quietly sensed  
across the air  
in another's heart  
becomes the inner companion  
to one's own unknown.

John O'Donohue

tears have a wisdom all of  
their own. they come when  
a person has relaxed  
enough to let go & work  
through his sorrow.  
they are...  
the natural  
bleeding of an emotional  
wound, carrying the poison  
out of the system. here lies  
the road to recovery.

Quoted





## 2019 BPUSA NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE “SPIRIT OF LOVE”

*Our gatherings provide an opportunity to hear some of the best speakers in the nation who are experts on many topics related to grief. 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.*

*You will also get to know many parents, siblings and grandparents from different parts of the United States who have experienced losses such as yours. You will come to understand that you are not alone on this journey.*

*Please join us for 3 days of remembering, honoring and celebrating our children and brothers and sisters. Let this be the year that **Hope & Healing** will fill your heart...*

**ANNOUNCING OUR 2019 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

			
GLEN LORD	SUSAN TOLER-CARR	PAULA STEPHENS	GARETH WILLIAMS

**NATIONAL GATHERING 2019**

**Bereaved Parents USA**  
August 2-4 ♥ St. Louis, Missouri  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

The graphic includes a stylized city skyline with a large arch and the words "spirit of love" in a script font. There are also silhouettes of airplanes flying above the skyline.

**Speakers and Workshop Presenters** – offering hope, inspiration and tools for healthy grieving.

**Thursday Night Activities** -- Meet and greet while enjoying food and beverages followed by entertainment. The Gathering officially begins on Friday morning.

**Meals** -- Total Meal Plan (including gratuities) offered at a reduced price or purchase individual meals.

**Sibling Program** -- Sibling specific workshops, hospitality area and evening sharing sessions.

**Workshops, Sharing Sessions** and creative memorial craft stations offered throughout the days and evenings.

**Candle Lighting Ceremony and Slideshow Presentation** of our children offered on Saturday evening.

**Sponsorship Opportunities** – sponsor a Memorial Page or business ad in the Program Book, a Workshop sign, a Table Centerpiece and more.

**Bookstore** – The Centering Corporation offers a wide variety of books, CDs and more on grief-related topics.

**Spirit of Love Gallery** -- we will be providing a small gift shop at the Gathering. This year vendors will be selling unique bereavement-related items.

**Raffle** – Raffle items typically include butterfly or angel themed items such as jewelry, handbags or artwork; gift cards for national chain restaurants and services; and themed baskets. A few higher value items such as a trip, a handmade quilt, original artwork, or autographed sports items and other collectibles may be raffled off separately. All proceeds directly benefit BPUSA and its mission of helping grieving families.

**Hospitality Room** -- A social gathering spot to enjoy snacks and beverages and/or a place to take a break from the busy schedule and catch your breath while you visit with fellow bereaved families from across the USA.

**Reflection Room** -- A peaceful and serene room to relax, reflect, and rest. Grief work can be exhausting.

**Picture-Buttons** - Order buttons with your child's or sibling's picture on it.

**Creation Station** – A place to express your love for your child through art. Decorate your own unique votive holder for the Candle Lighting or paint a rock to “hide” around the St. Louis area or to bring home with you as a memento of the weekend.

**Comfort Stations** -- yoga classes and chair massage will be offered throughout the weekend. A Comfort dog will be available to receive and give hugs, cuddles and unconditional love whenever needed.

**REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!**

A paradox is a seemingly self-contradictory statement or situation that is in fact often true. The paradox of mourning we will consider together in this article might, at first glance, seem self-contradictory, but as I will reveal, it is actually a forgotten Truth with a capital T. It's a Truth we must rediscover because it is essential to healing in the aftermath of significant loss.

The International Dark-Sky Association is a nonprofit "fighting to preserve the night." Recognizing that human-produced light creates "light pollution" that diminishes our view of the stars, disrupts our circadian rhythms as well as ecosystems, and wastes significant amounts of energy, the association seeks to reserve the use of artificial lighting at night to only what is truly necessary.

As you read about Paradox 2, I would like you to remember this mantra of "fighting to preserve the night." During our times of grief, we are also well served to fight to honor and preserve the sanctity and restorative powers of the dark night of the soul.

### **The dark night of the soul**

One way in which we used to honor the need to make friends with the darkness of grief was to observe a period of mourning. During this time-whose length and detailed customs varied by era, religion, and culture as well as by each mourner's specific relationship to the person who died-mourners essentially withdrew from society. When they did venture out into the community, they wore clothing that outwardly represented their internal reality.

Such mourning "rules" or customs were a way of acknowledging loss and honoring the need for a period of darkness. They were superficial signs of a deeply profound, spiritual crisis. In fact, a significant loss plunges you into what C.S. Lewis, Eckhart Tolle, and various Christian mystics have called "the dark night of the soul."

After the death of someone loved, the dark night of the soul can be a long and very black night indeed. If you are struggling after a significant loss of any kind, you are probably inhabiting that long, dark night. It is uncomfortable and scary. It hurts. Yet if you allow yourself to sit still in the blackness without trying to fight it, deny it, or run away from it, you will find that it has something to teach you.

### **The so-called dark emotions**

Have you ever noticed that we tend to equate the dark with all things evil and bad, while light represents goodness and purity? Darkness is night, ghosts, caves, bats, devils, and vampires. Darkness is also ignorance and void. And when we feel "dark" emotions, we mean that we feel sadness, emptiness, loss, depression, despair, shame, and fear. Yes, the dark emotions are painful and challenging to experience. But are they really "bad"? No, they are not. Feelings are not intrinsically good or bad-they simply are. They arise in us in response to what we are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling in any given moment. They also emanate more abstractly, from our thoughts. Feelings are essentially the bodily response to the existential experience of living and being.

And so, we must turn to the dark emotions of grief. We must acknowledge them and allow ourselves to feel them. In fact, I often say that we must befriend our dark emotions. Befriending pain is hard. It's true that it is easier to avoid, repress, or deny the pain of grief than it is to embrace it, yet it is in befriending our pain that we learn from it and unlock our capacity to be transformed by it.

The pain of the dark night of the soul can seem intolerable, and yet the only way to emerge into the light of a new morning is to first experience the night. As a wise person once observed, "Darkness is the chair upon which light sits."

### **The necessity of grief**

Yes, when you are grieving, it is necessary to feel sadness and other so-called dark emotions. But why is it necessary? Why does emotional pain have to exist at all? Couldn't we just move from loss to shock to acceptance without all that pain in the middle?

The answer is that sadness plays an essential role. It forces us to regroup-physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. When we are sad, we instinctively turn inward. We withdraw. We slow down. It's as if our soul presses the pause button and says, "Whoa, whoa, whoaaa. Time out. I need to acknowledge what's happened here and really consider what I want to do next."

In fact, many of the acute symptoms of grief force us to slow down. We experience "anhedonia," which means the inability to find pleasure in activities that we used to enjoy. In other words, we don't feel like doing anything. We also tend to feel tired and sluggish. We are listless emotionally as well as physically. This is called "the lethargy of grief." Stillness allows for the transition from "soul work" to "spirit work." According to the groundbreaking thinking of Carl Jung, "soul work" is the downward movement of the psyche. It is the willingness to connect with what is dark, deep, and not necessarily pleasant. "Spirit work," on the other hand, involves the upward, ascending movement of the psyche. It is during spirit work that you find renewed meaning and joy in life.

Soul work comes before spirit work. The spirit cannot ascend until the soul first descends. The withdrawal, slowing down, and stillness of the dark emotions create the conditions necessary for soul work.

### **The darkness of liminal space**

Grief lives in liminal space. "Limina" is the Latin word for threshold, the space betwixt and between. When you are in liminal space-or limbo-you are not busily and unthinkingly going about your daily life. Neither are you living from a place of assuredness about your relationships and beliefs. Instead, you are unsettled. Both your automatic daily routine and your core beliefs have been shaken, forcing you to reconsider who you are, why you're here, and what life means.

Yes, it's uncomfortable being in liminal space, but that's where grief takes you. Without grief, you wouldn't go there. But it is only in liminal space that you can reconstruct your shattered worldview and reemerge as the transformed you that is ready to live and love fully again.

### **The underworld of your grief**

Most of us know we harbor darkness inside of us. We secretly feel not only pain and fear but also hate, cruelty, lust, and other emotions we judge as shameful. We have thought and done things that we hope no one else ever learns of. Often parts of our grief, too, inhabit this world of shameful, hidden thoughts and feelings.

In Greek mythology, Persephone becomes the queen of the underworld. It is not a throne she sought after, however. Living happily on earth with her family, she is kidnapped by the god of the underworld, Hades, and, after some trickery and back-and-forth, is forced to remain there with him six months of every year. From then on, Persephone embodies the duality of winter/summer, evil/good, darkness/light.

All of us are Persephones, really. The trick is in awakening ourselves to the reality that our underworlds are not shameful. Rather, they are simply pieces of the complex puzzle called being human.

### **The music of the night**

I think that sometimes insomnia, like our dark emotions, has something to teach us. Wakefulness during the dark hours offers us quieter, more mysterious opportunities for reflection than those we may encounter during the day. Of course, I understand that the dark hours can also conjure our darkest fears. When we awake in the middle of the night, we may lie in bed ruminating over what we have lost as well as our fears for the future. Even if someone else is sleeping nearby, we may feel deeply alone.

If you experience such nighttime despair, try to remember that this is an opportunity to embrace your pain. It is a normal and necessary part of your journey. Consider giving it movement by getting up and out of bed for a while. Keep the lights off or low and pace as you think. Step outside into the moonlight and breathe the night air. Or try writing down your nighttime thoughts and feelings in a journal.

### **The light of empathy in the darkness**

When people are sympathetic to you, they are noticing and feeling concern for your circumstances, usually at a distance. They are "feeling sorry" for you. They are feeling "pity" for you. They may be offering a simple solution, platitude, or distraction. Sympathy is "feeling for" someone else.

Empathy, on the other hand, is about making an emotional connection. It is a more active process-one in which the listener tries to understand and feel your experience from the inside out. The listener is not judging you or your thoughts and feelings. She is not offering simple solutions. Instead, she is making herself vulnerable to your thoughts, feelings, and circumstances by looking for connections to similar thoughts, feelings, and circumstances inside her. She is being present and allowing herself to be taught by you. Empathy is "feeling with" someone else. In your time of darkness, the loyal empathy of just one other human being can be the candle you need to find your way through to healing.



## Entering the light

Paradox 2 says that you must make friends with the darkness before you can enter the light. But what is the light? There really is no set destination on the journey through grief. The light of healing in grief is not exactly like the light at the end of a tunnel. Reconciliation is the goal, but it is not a fixed end point or perfect state of bliss. At least here on Earth, bittersweet is as sweet as it gets.

The Chinese yin-yang symbol represents the duality of many experiences in life. The shape of the symbol is a perfect circle - in other words, a unified whole. But comprising the circle are two comma shapes-one black (the yin) and one white (the yang). And within each comma shape is a dot of the opposite color.

The symbol is a visual reminder that everything is comprised of both darkness and light. Yet the darkness and the light are not opposing forces. Rather, they are complementary twins that only together form a whole. What's more, the drop of white in the black yin and the drop of black in the white yang remind us that nothing is purely dark or light, good or bad. Instead, life is made up of people, places, actions, things, and experiences that are mixtures of both.

And so, think of the light as the thoughts and feelings you want to experience more of. Hope. Gratitude. Happiness. Joy. Love. Peace. The more you make friends with the darkness, the more your capacity for these thoughts and feelings will grow.

**“IN ORDER FOR  
THE LIGHT TO  
SHINE SO BRIGHTLY,  
THE DARKNESS  
MUST BE PRESENT.”**

**Francis Bacon**

No matter how long the winter,  
spring is sure to follow.  
- Proverb -

