



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 meetings

Thursday, September 6th -- Topic: Our Children's Belongings

Thursday, October 4th – Topic: Open Sharing

7:00 at The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie

10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018



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.

A BUTTERFLY ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

Dave Roberts Adjunct professor of psychology-Utica College. www.bootsyandangel.com

A Mountain Wedding

I recently returned from a week-long trip to Golden, Colorado. My wife Cheri and I got a chance to relax and explore some attractions in and around the Golden area. Our primary purpose for being there however was to witness our youngest son Matt marry the love of his life Jodi, in a beautiful, intimate venue on Lookout Mountain. It was a beautiful ceremony with both sides of our families being well represented. There was one conspicuous physical absence on our side of the family, however...my daughter Jeannine.



Gone But Always Near

Jeannine died on March 1, 2003 at the age of 18, due to a rare form of cancer. Since her death, I have received numerous signs of after-death communications from her. Signs reveal to us that our loved ones are ok, that they desire to have an ongoing relationship with us, and that we will see them again in the afterlife.

I have discovered through conversation with others and my own experiences that the signs we receive from our loved ones are usually a product of what is happening with us or around us in the present moment. As our family was preparing to celebrate Matt and Jodi's nuptials, I expected that Jeannine would make her presence known before and after the wedding. In fact, I invited her spirit to accompany me on the trip .

A Serendipitous Receipt

We began the first leg of our journey to Colorado at the Albany International Airport. After we went through airport security, I ordered a meal from McDonald's and was immediately drawn to the number on the receipt. The number 301 reflected the month and day of Jeannine's death, a definite indication that she heard my invite to join us in Colorado for her brother's wedding.

On July 3rd, me, my wife and her sister took another trip to Lookout Mountain to explore the Buffalo Bill Museum and his gravesite. I lingered for a bit by Buffalo Bill's grave; my wife and her sister were walking towards the museum. I noticed a butterfly flying in a circular route, several times around Buffalo Bill's grave. A couple of times she flew quite near to me. She eventually decided to take a brief respite before taking flight once again.

My first experience with signs that I can recall, after Jeannine's death was during the summer of 2003. I was walking around my neighborhood and discovered that a butterfly was following me and hovering over me for a good portion of my walk. At the time this butterfly appeared, Jeannine was prominent in my thoughts. As I was then, I was convinced that the butterfly I saw on Lookout Mountain was a sign sent by my daughter.

The keynote of the butterfly, according to Ted Andrews who wrote *Animal-Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small*, is transmutation and the dance of joy.

Butterfly reminds us that shapeshifting our perspective is necessary after loss, and that the experience of joy after loss is also possible.

I wish to conclude this piece with the benefits that I have discovered by incorporating signs into my personal grief path and some miscellaneous observations.

Before I begin, I would encourage you to become familiar with the types of after-death communications that occur. Two great resources for increasing your technical knowledge in this area are: : *Visions of the Bereaved*, by Kay Witmer Woods and *Hello From Heaven* by Bill and Judy Guggenheim.

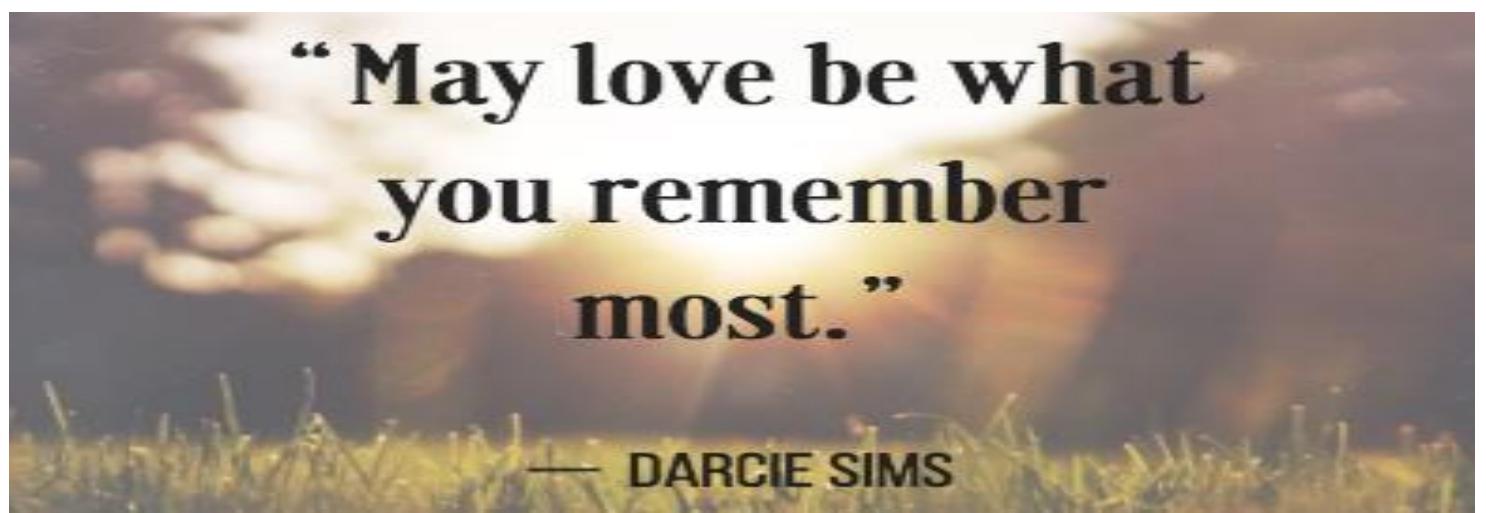
Observations

- The perception of signs is a subjective process, unique to each individual. That process is driven by evidence of the heart and must be honored by those who are privileged to bear witness to it.
- We don't have to wait for our loved ones to give us a sign of their presence. We can create a sacred space where we can communicate with our loved ones anytime. Jeannine and I shared a love of music. When I am yearning for her presence, I will listen to some music that we both enjoyed while keeping her in my thoughts. Doing this always brings me peace.

Benefits

- I am able to see Jeannine's death as a rebirth into a new existence and that we share a relationship that is pure, ongoing and constantly evolving.
- Openly sharing my experience with signs has allowed me to attract people who have committed to ongoing awareness and thinking multidimensionally. They inspire me, which in turn motivates me to inspire others.
- Perhaps the greatest teaching that I have discovered through my experience with signs is that not only do we eventually learn to live without our children's physical presence, but that we eventually learn to love with their eternal presence.

"Develop your senses- especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else." ~ Leonardo da Vinci



**“May love be what
you remember
most.”**

— DARCIE SIMS

Editor's Note: Sunday, September 9th is Grandparent's Day. Do you know a grandparent who is grieving? Print this article and give it to them to let them know that you understand what they are going through. KC

Helping a Grandparent Who Is Grieving

by [Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.](#)

"When a grandchild dies, grandparents grieve twice. They mourn the loss of the child and they feel the pain of their own child's suffering. Sometimes we forget about the grandparents when a child dies. You can help by not forgetting, by offering the grandparents your love, support and presence in the weeks and months to come."

A child or young adult has died. Everyone who loved the child is now faced with mourning this tragic, untimely death. The child's parents are heartbroken. But what about the grandparents? How might they be feeling? How can you help them with their unique grief?

This article will guide you in ways to turn your concern for the grandparents into positive action.

Realize that a grandparent's grief is unique

When a grandchild dies, the grandparent often mourns the death on many levels. The grandparent probably loved the child dearly and may have been very close to him or her. The death has created a hole in the grandparent's life that cannot be filled by anyone else. Grandparents who were not close to the child who died, perhaps because they lived far away, may instead mourn the loss of a relationship they never had.

Grieving grandparents are also faced with witnessing their child—the parent of the child who died—mourn the death. A parent's love for a child is perhaps the strongest of all human bonds. For the parents of the child who died, the pain of grief may seem intolerable. For the grandparents, watching their own child suffer so and feeling powerless to take away the hurt can feel almost as intolerable.

Acknowledge the grandparent's search for meaning

When someone loved dies, we all ponder the meaning of life and death. When a child or young adult dies, this search for meaning can be especially painful. Young people aren't supposed to die. The death violates the natural order of life and seems terribly unfair.

For grandparents, who may have lived long, rich lives already, the struggle to understand the death may bring about feelings of guilt. "Why didn't God take me, instead?" the grandparent may ask himself. "Why couldn't it have been me?"

Such feelings are both normal and necessary. You can help by encouraging the grandparent to talk about them.

Respect faith and spirituality

Many people develop strong commitments to faith and spirituality as they get older. If you allow them, grieving grandparents will "teach you" about the role of faith and spirituality in their lives. Encourage them to express their faith if doing so helps them heal in grief.

Sometimes, however, faith can naturally complicate healing. The grandparent may feel angry at God for "taking" the grandchild. He then may feel guilty about his anger, because, he may reason, God is not to be questioned. Or the grandparent may struggle with feelings of doubt about God's plan or the afterlife.

Talking with a pastor may help the grandparent, as long as the pastor allows the grandparent to honestly express her feelings of anger, guilt and sadness. No one should tell a grandparent that she shouldn't grieve because the child has gone to heaven; mourning and having faith are not mutually exclusive.

Listen with your heart

You can begin to help by simply listening. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judging are critical helping tools. Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on the words that are being shared with you.

The grieving grandparent may want to share the same story about the death over and over again. It's as if talking about the death makes it a little more bearable each time. Listen attentively. Realize that this repetition is part of the grandparent's healing process. Simply listen and try to understand.

Sometimes grandparents, especially grandfathers, don't want to talk about the death. They may have been raised to believe that talking about feelings is frivolous or selfish or unmanly. It's OK; they don't have to talk. Simply spending time with them demonstrates your love and concern.

Be compassionate

Give the grandparent permission to express her feelings without fear of criticism. Learn from the grandparent; don't instruct or set expectations about how she should respond. Never say, "I know just how you feel." You don't. Think about your helper role as someone who "walks with" not "behind" or "in front of" the grieving grandparent.

Allow the grandparent to experience all the hurt, sorrow and pain that he is feeling at the time. Enter into his feelings, but never try to take them away. And recognize that tears are a natural and appropriate expression of the pain associated with the death.

Avoid clichés

Words, particularly clichés, can be extremely painful for a grieving grandparent. Clichés are trite comments often intended to provide simple solutions to difficult realities. Grandparents are often told, "God needed another angel in heaven" or "Don't worry, John and Susie (can) have another child" or "You have to be strong for your child." Comments like these are not constructive. Instead, they hurt because they diminish the very real and very painful loss of a unique child.

Offer practical help

Preparing food, washing clothes, and cleaning the house are just a few of the practical ways of showing you care. And, just as with your presence, this support is needed at the time of the death as well as in the weeks and months ahead.

Write a personal note

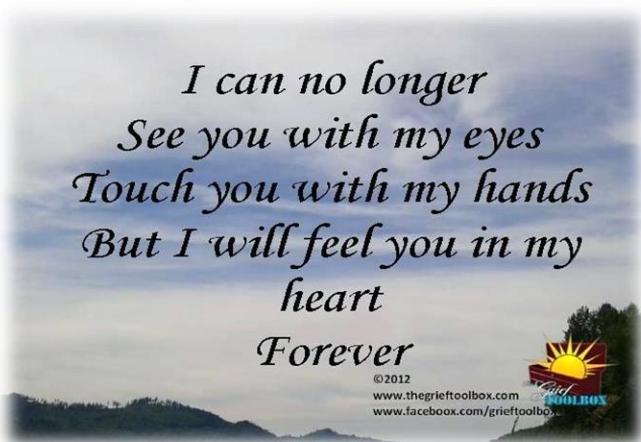
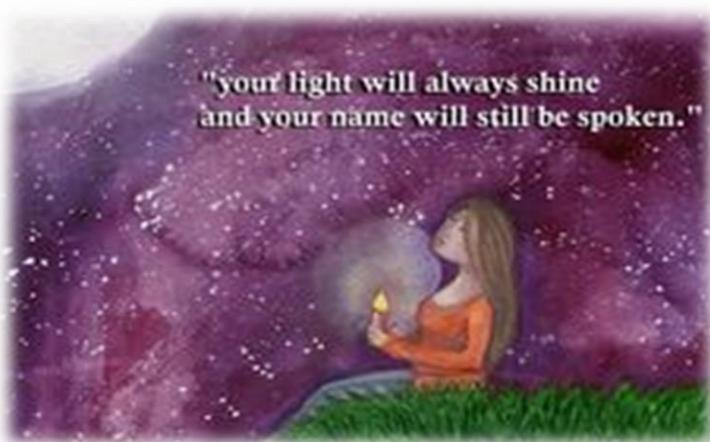
Sympathy cards express your concern, but there is no substitute for your personal written words. What do you say? Share a favorite memory of the child who died. Relate the special qualities that you valued in him or her. These words will be a loving gift to the grandparent, words that will be reread and remembered always.

Use the name of the child who died in your personal note and in talking to the grandparent. Hearing that name can be comforting, and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important child whom the grandparent loved and misses so much.

Be aware of holidays and other significant days

The grandparent may have a difficult time during special occasions like holidays and other significant days, such as the child's birthday and the anniversary of the child's death. These events emphasize the child's absence. Respect this pain as a natural extension of the grief process.

These are appropriate times to visit the grandparents or write a note or simply give them a quick phone call. Your ongoing support will be appreciated and healing.



This is a free event! Please join us!



Mid Hudson Bereaved Parents of the USA is proud to sponsor
an award-winning songwriter, recording artist and speaker
who will inspire us with his hope-filled words and music

Alan Pedersen



Saturday, September 8th
1:30 p.m.

**East Fishkill
Community Center
890 Route 82
Hopewell Junction, NY**

Please RSVP Kathy
kjcorrigan5@gmail.com

PLEASE BRING A FINGER FOOD TO SHARE AFTER THE CONCERT



The Angels Across the USA Tour 2018, is all about hope, featuring the message and music of Alan Pedersen. The Tour is supported by hundreds of families and organizations who sponsor butterfly decals bearing the names and home towns of their loved ones who have died. These decals are lovingly placed on the Angels Across the USA van which travels across the country.

The Tour works with organizations large and small who are reaching out to those in grief and offers to present a program regardless of their ability to pay a fee or all of the expenses of travel. The Angels Tour will travel to more than 100 cities in 2018.

LOVING MY SON, AFTER HIS DEATH

By Nora Wong

I can feel their unasked questions. People wonder how I can still stand, still walk, still laugh. But they don't ask. You can't ask that of a mother who has lost her child. My son, Daniel, died three years ago at the age of 22. When people ask me, "How... are you?" that pause, that inflection, tells me that's really what they want to know.

I am tempted to tell them that it is I who am lost, not he. I am lost in my search for him, knowing he is nowhere on this earth. And still, it would not surprise me if he were to appear by my side wearing only his jersey boxers eating a snack at the kitchen counter. At times I can almost smell his warm cheesy breath and his still-boyish sweat. But when I look over my shoulder, he is not there.

My mind invents stories. Daniel is not dead; he is lamenting the performance of his fantasy football team with high school buddies while they wait on line for ice cream at Magic Fountain. He is in his dorm room at Stanford, talking deep into the night with his friends. Daniel is lingering with new friends on the rooftop of his investment firm in Boston where he just started working.

"Where are you, Daniel?" I shout the question to the sky when I am strong enough to bear the silence that follows. "Why did you die?" Even that has no real answer. His doctors think Daniel died of new onset refractory status epilepticus, or Norse, a rare seizure disorder in which healthy people with no history of epilepsy suddenly begin to seize uncontrollably. The majority of patients die or survive with significant brain damage. There is no identified cause or established treatment for Norse. This cloud of uncertainty does not obscure what I know: My child is dead. The instinct to protect one's offspring runs through mothers of virtually all species. I violated the basic canon of motherhood. I failed to protect my child. That my child is dead while I still live defies the natural order.

I love my husband and our two surviving children, but I couldn't simply transfer my love for Daniel to them. It was for him alone. And so, for the longest time after his death, my love for Daniel bruised me.

So unbearable was my occluded heart that I called out to him in desperation one day: "What will I do with my love for you, Daniel?"

My eyes were closed in grief when suddenly I seemed to see him before me, his arms bent and lifted upward in supplication. In my mind's eye, his face was suffused with love and tinged with exasperation, a common look for Daniel.

"Just love me, Mom," he says.

"But where are you?" I ask.

"I'm here!" he answers with frustration. And then he is gone.

I had not heard his voice since the day before he suddenly fell ill. I spoke to him while he lay unseeing and unmoving in the hospital bed. I told him I loved him. I begged him to speak to me. I begged him to come back to me. He never answered or moved to squeeze my hand. The only flicker from him over his 79 days of hospitalization was a single tear. One day a tear slid from his left eye down his cheek and disappeared beneath his chin.

And now, months after he had died, I felt him before me.

"Just love me, Mom. I'm here!"

His words unleashed a torrent. I fell forward, my tears streaming. I felt breathless with release. I could continue to love him. I would love him in a new way.

It was harder to do than I expected. I would see him everywhere, in every full moon, in each brilliant day. My spirits would soar. But there were days when a weight in my heart made each breath shallow and every step an effort.

On the worst days I sit before my laptop and pour out my feelings to the only person who can take in my sorrow and remain unbowed. The keyboard is damp when the final refrain leaves my fingertips: I love you, Daniel, I love you. I miss you. I miss you. And then I press "send."

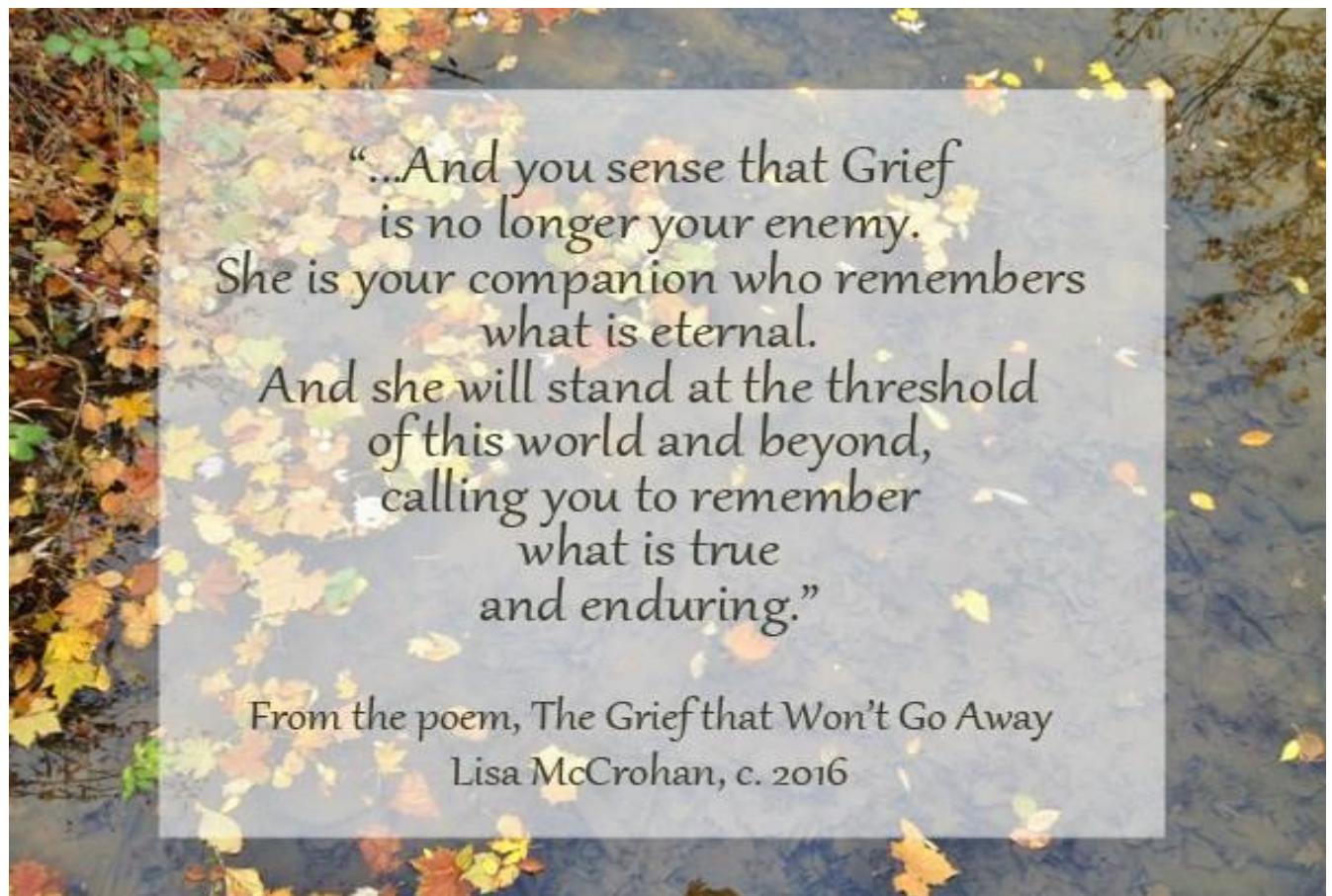
Daniel's friends continue to visit us. It is a pilgrimage of sorts. My heart tightens when I see them. Their presence illuminates our immeasurable loss.

His friends reveal to me how much Daniel meant to them. Now there will be a missing groomsman at the wedding and empty air in the place of a steadfast friend. At the end of one visit, a young man asks, "Recognize this sweater?" I don't. "It's Daniel's," he explains. I suddenly recognize Daniel's old cotton sweater stretched to fit his friend. The young man folds forward to touch the sleeves of the sweater, hugging himself. He is tall and blond and athletic. He and Daniel were opposites in looks and temperament, best friends since nursery school. He had just returned from Moscow where he was working. "I wear this when I travel," he says, touching the arm of the sweater again. "It's so soft."

I encourage Daniel's friends to tell me about their work and their plans for the future. At first, they are self-conscious, and their voices are tender. They don't want to hurt me with their future plans when there is no future for Daniel. But as they speak of the things they will do and the places they will go, their excitement breaks free. I smile into the glow of their unlined, earnest faces and I feel my son. I think they feel him too. For a moment we are all reunited.

I will carry this child for the rest of my life. He lives within me, forever a young man of 22. Others will carry him as they move forward in their lives. He will be with them when they look out to the world with compassion, when they act with determination and kindness, when they are brave enough to contemplate all the things in life that remain unknown.

I still search for him, but without desperation. I look for him in others. My search is lifted by his words: "Just love me. I'm here."





Fall's transformations are remarkable. Trees change into a symphony of color and movement. The transition from summer to autumn is stunning and obvious. The transitions in grief are less obvious but equally stunning.

As leaves tumble down, branches are left empty. People in grief may feel this emptiness in every level of their being. The empty chair, the unheard laughter, and the absence of touch are painful reminders of loss. An array of feelings from fear, loneliness and anger to guilt, shock, and relief may move through us like a powerful wind.

It takes great strength to turn into this gale, facing these feelings of loss and bending with them until they begin to subside.

This storm of emotion may leave us feeling exhausted, but ultimately clearer about what brings meaning to the present.

Autumn is a time of balance, when light and dark and heat and cold find equilibrium. We, too, can find balance in fullness and emptiness, pain and appreciation, work and rest. We gradually begin to see the possibilities of a life with meaning and hope.

The other side of grief is seeing what it is to live...

**YOU ARE MY
SUNSHINE
MY ONLY
SUNSHINE**

**YOU MAKE ME
HAPPY
WHEN SKIES
ARE GREY**