



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021



Please join us for our next monthly meeting
All in-person meetings have been canceled until further notice. In the meantime, we will meet via Zoom on the first Thursday of every month.
Next meeting – January 7th at 7:00
For more information, please email Kathy kicorrigan5@gmail.com or call her at (845) 462-2825



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.

Grieving in the New Year By Claire Bidwell Smith

If you're like me, the new year always brings an opportunity for renewal and a fresh start. Except when you're grieving. When you've lost someone you love – recently, or even years ago – the new year can bring on a tidal wave of emotions and expectations. The idea of starting over in the new year can feel unwanted or even just overwhelming.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: BE LESS SAD.

Impossible.

If you have this one on your list strike it out right now! I've heard so many clients tell me stories of trying to "quit" grieving at the beginning of the year, only to have this resolution fall flat on its face.

New Year's simply looks different for those who are grieving. You may find yourself feeling more alone than ever as you watch your friends and loved ones carry on celebrating and making resolutions to embrace the year ahead. Because when you're grieving there is a poignancy that comes with the passing of time, and nothing feels like more of a reminder of this than the new year.

I'll never forget the first new year after my mother died. She had been gone for almost a year but when the clock struck 12 that night and the minutes carried forth into a year in which she was not alive, I literally sank to my knees in pain in the back hallway of a nightclub.

The intense pain I felt in that moment was unexpected for me. For most of that first year, I had felt numb. But when the hands of the clock began to move forward and I realized I was entering a year in which she would not be a part of, I felt overcome with searing grief. The club patrons carried on celebrating around me and I curled into a corner of the hallway sobbing into my hands, missing my mother more than I could stand, and not knowing how I would get through an entire lifetime without her.

ALLOW GRIEF TO BE PART OF YOUR NEW YEAR

Be kind to yourself in the new year. You don't have to make the traditional fresh start, embrace diets, work out regimes, or start a daily gratitude list. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or whether it's been

many years since the loss, it's important to honor your feelings and give yourself the proper time you need to grieve. There will be other years in which you can feel celebratory again. But this year be gentle with yourself.

Let your resolution be one of vulnerability. So many of us are afraid to feel all the big emotions that come after a loss. These feelings can be overwhelming and also make you feel like you are not functioning like everyone else around you but let that be okay for now.

I've had many people tell me years after a loss that they feel they missed an opportunity in their grief – that they did not let it in when given the chance, and that it hardened something about their relationship with their loved one. Use the new year to take a deep breath and to embrace who you are in this moment. We change so much more than we realize. So, remember that you will not always be in this space, but while you are, allow yourself to feel all that comes with loss.

There is undeniably an identity shift that comes with losing someone close to you. Be it a friend, family member, spouse, or child, their absence in your life will force change upon your soul. Most of us try to resist that change, thinking that the answer to getting through the pain is to try to remain exactly the same, to try to retain the person you were before the loss. But in fact, the opposite is true.

When we can allow ourselves to let the loss shape us and change us, we will grow *with* experience, rather than *against* it. And whenever we stop resisting something then we can give ourselves the opportunity to heal.

THE YEAR OF LETTING GO

Let this be the year of letting go. Not of your loved one, but of your expectations of yourself. You will never *get over* your loved one and you do not ever need to let go of them, but in order to heal you do need to release the idea that you can remain unchanged.

Each time you find yourself judging your grief process – whether it's thinking you are too sad or too angry or simply too consumed by it all – let go and know that whatever you are feeling right now is normal and natural. You will eventually reach a state of less pain and sadness and anxiety. You will find a *new normal*. Until then, be gentle with yourself.

MEDITATION FOR THE NEW YEAR

I want to walk you through a simple meditation that you can do anytime you have a quiet and private space for 5-10 minutes. Don't worry if you've never meditated before. Just give it a try.

First lie back in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Then take a moment to simply breathe and become attuned to your body. When you are ready, I want you to imagine that you are rising up above yourself and looking down.

Take note of everything that you are experiencing in this moment in time. Do not resist what you see. If you think you are too sad, or too heavy or too scattered or too *whatever* I want you to let yourself see it and accept it anyway. This is who you are in this moment.

Take another moment to imagine reaching down and stroking your own head in a loving way. Forgive yourself for anything you think you are doing wrong and just for this one moment, during this meditation, let yourself feel real love and compassion for who you are, right here and right now.

Give yourself a message of reassurance and love. See yourself as you would see a friend or a child and meet yourself with true compassion.

When you are ready, return to your body and take some slow, deep breaths before you open your eyes.

Do this meditation as often as you need. It will help keep you present and balanced in the new year. And remember, the path to healing starts with giving yourself space to grieve.



Grief In The New Year: Five Mindful Tips To Cope

By Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT

Grief in the new year is never easy. I have been writing about New Year's Grief for a decade, and I know that on New Year's Eve the MindfulnessAndGrief.com website is busier than any other night of the year. I share this because I want you to know that you are not alone.

Whether your loved one died in 2020 or decades ago, when you are grieving, New Year's does not pass by without your thinking of, and yearning for, the person you love and lost. It is normal to feel strong emotions. It is normal to not know what to do.

So, let's take a collective breath in, and out, to honor all our fellow humans who are missing someone right now.

This includes you.

The new year is a marker in time. As we transition from 2020 into 2021, some of you may be feeling ambivalent. Part of you may be digging in your heels, while another part can't wait for this awful year to end. However you are feeling, please own it. Acknowledge the spectrum of feelings without judgement or shame.

As with other holidays, anniversaries, and days that end in -y, feeling sad, angry, anxious, resistant, confused, detached, or any other difficult emotion is par for the course when you are grieving. Instead of fighting the reality that things are different, let go a little and allow yourself to do things a little differently than before. Here are a few ideas to help you cope with grief in the new year.

5 TIPS TO COPE WITH GRIEF IN THE NEW YEAR

1. Focus on self-compassion and self-care instead of self-improvement.

If you are grieving in the new year, you may want to skip the typical New Year's resolutions and instead focus on self-care for your grieving mind, body, and spirit.

Simple things like getting good sleep, eating nourishing food, and exercising a little bit each day will help your body and mind support you during loss. However, do these things with an attitude of self-care instead of self-improvement, which is often implied in our resolutions.

Don't add to your suffering by trying to attain an unrealistic goal. Instead, treat yourself as you would treat a beloved friend in the same position.

2. Create your own mantra to replace "Happy New Year."

If you are like most grieving people, the idea of being happy is a bridge too far from where you are right now, but since you are going to hear these words again and again, you may as well incorporate them into your self-care practice. Instead of feeling bad for not feeling happy, or angry that someone would assume you could feel happy, use these three ubiquitous words as a reminder to send yourself compassion.

Try this: Each time you see or hear "Happy New Year," offer yourself words of kindness that resonate with you. For example, "May I treat myself with kindness this year," or "May I have a Compassionate New Year," or simply "This is hard and I am doing my best." This not only puts you back in the driver's seat so you have a modicum of control over your experience, but it is also a great bell of awareness that can remind you to take care of yourself.



3. Know that you are not leaving your loved one behind.

When you cross the threshold of a new year without your special person by your side, it can feel like you are leaving them behind. That isn't the case. Yes, the annual change of the calendar is a marker that time is passing, but you will never forget your special person, no matter how many years go by.

Take some time out early this year to reflect on the ways you carry your special person with you. What habits, likes, dislikes, hobbies, or mannerisms do you share with them? What are your favorite memories of your time together? If they are a blood relative, in what ways do you look like them? They have left their mark on your heart, and that will never go away.

4. Prioritize your grief-work with your new calendar.

Instead of just scheduling things you *have* to do, use your new calendar to plan what you *need* to do to support yourself this year.

While none of us have a crystal ball, most people find holidays and anniversaries especially challenging. Record them on your calendar, and plan how you want to spend those special days.

And knowing what you are going to do on these special grief-days may help reduce your anxiety. Whether scheduling coffee over Zoom with a supportive friend on your loved one's birthday or joining a wider circle of friends and family to reminisce on the anniversary of their death, be sure to connect with others unless you really prefer to spend time alone.

You can also plan ahead to attend memorial events through your local hospice or a grief group, many of which are offered online during the pandemic.

Prioritize your events by putting it on your calendar *now*, before work and other obligations take over. You can also block off self-care time for self-massage, yoga, meditation, journaling or just free time to do as you wish.

5. Steady your mind in the present with meditation.


The human brain is rarely fully present, and this is especially true when we are grieving. Part of us wants to fast forward and leave this awful time behind, but an even bigger part wants to turn around and sprint back to the time when our loved one was still alive.

The reality, of course, is that we can't control the passing of time, but we can control what we do with our attention. In the meditation world, we call this bouncing around "monkey mind." Although it is just a side-effect of being human, ruminating rarely reduces our suffering.

There are countless ways you can learn to tame your mind with meditation, but I find that in the early days, months, and even years of grief, focusing meditation practices can be especially helpful.

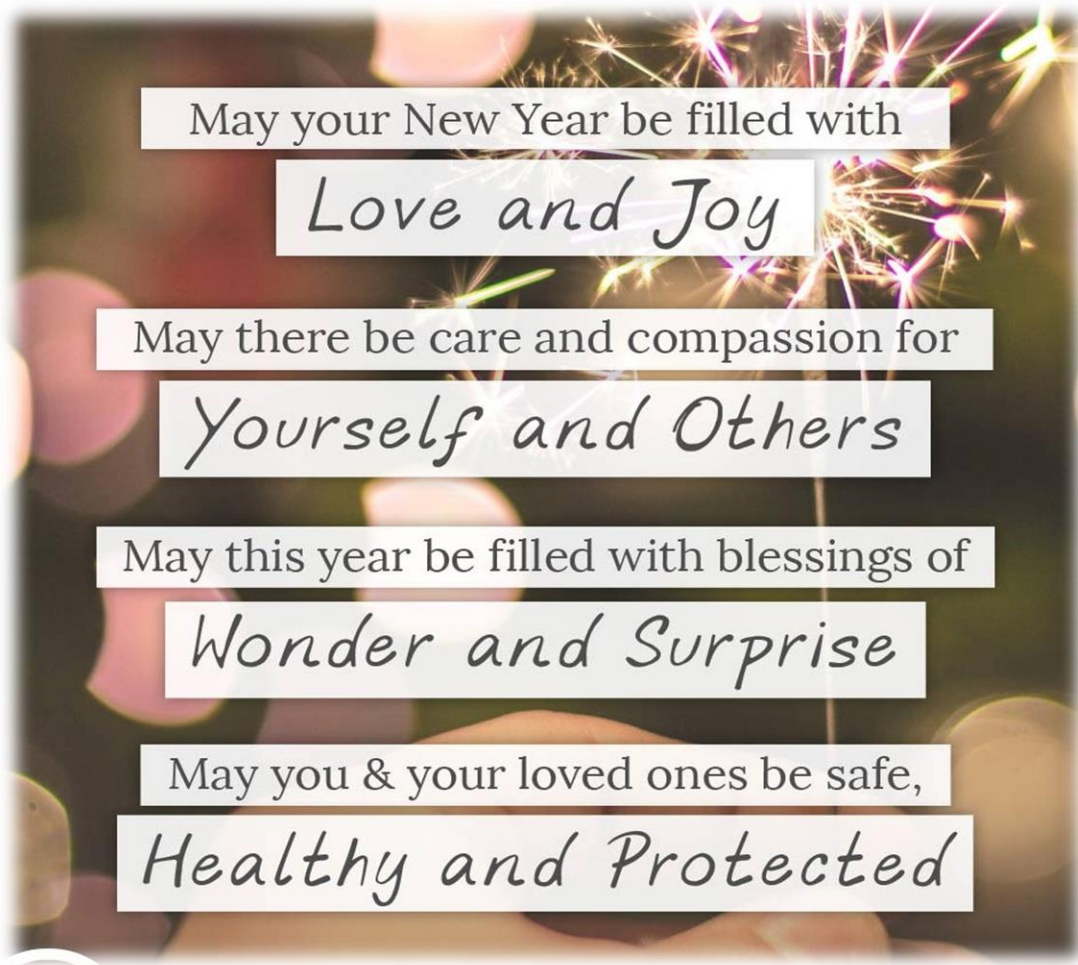
Try this: with your eyes open or closed, turn your attention toward your breath. As you breathe in, silently say to yourself – **In**. As you breathe out, silently say to yourself – **Out**.

Do this over and over each time you breathe, for three to five minutes. When your monkey mind wanders off, find your breath again and start over. It doesn't matter how often you need to begin again. After a few minutes, you may feel calmer and more in control of your own mind.



“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

– Rainer Maria Rilke –



May your New Year be filled with

Love and Joy

May there be care and compassion for

Yourself and Others

May this year be filled with blessings of

Wonder and Surprise

May you & your loved ones be safe,

Healthy and Protected

10 Signs You're Healing Through Your Trauma

By PARITA SHAH

As an energy healer, I guide people through difficult childhood experiences, life transitions, and emotional wounds. Trauma may be recent, decades old, from a previous lifetime, or even inherited from ancestors. So, whether you've been working on your trauma recently or for what feels like a lifetime, here's how to tell if you're making progress in your recovery...

1 | You've accepted that you've been through something difficult —

You can acknowledge that you've experienced a life-changing moment that has impacted you. You accept how your life, mind, body, relationships, finances, or view of the world has shifted from that point. You're no longer in denial of this experience.

2 | You allow yourself to go inwards with presence —

You let yourself feel your emotions, as trying as they may be. You release the need to deny your experience or suppress your thoughts. Every feeling is a messenger and teacher that is guiding our evolution. You're aware that thinking positive thoughts without acknowledgement of our shadow is spiritual bypassing.

3 | You welcome support —

You receive help in various ways whether it's from friends, psychotherapists, energy healers, or bodyworkers. Allow yourself to release the need to carry your burdens alone. There are communities who can understand your pain and professionals to help. Seeking help is a sign of the brave and dedicated.

4 | You nurture your mind and body —

People who have witnessed their wounds know that their consciousness is also imprinted in their cells. Our tissues and body systems are feeling our fears, doubts, and grief. Traumatic experiences can take a toll on the nervous system when they create a fight-or-flight response. It's essential for anyone who's been through trauma to reflect honestly on the ways in which their mind, body, and spirit have coped or failed to cope. Ask yourself, "How can I nurture myself going forward?"

5 | You're aware of expectations —

As human beings, we consciously and unconsciously set expectations to heal and create deadlines. It's easy for us to want immediate change and gratification. Know that after the immense time and effort that you've dedicated to healing, it's *okay* for you to not always feel *okay*.

6 | You have experienced healing's ebbs and flows —

You experienced days, weeks, or months of wins, and then noticed yourself taking a few steps back. Anyone that has been on a healing journey of any kind knows that healing isn't a linear process. Every day and every bit of effort doesn't yield us a set amount of progress. We often lose momentum and listen to the voice of our ego. A sure sign of healing is being okay when you've wandered off path or plateaued. You know that this is a part of the cycle — healing can bring us to the depths of our shadow before we can see the light.

7 | You see the light within —

There is an incredibly courageous, strong, and loving being inside of you. You are more resilient than you know. As you do the work, you are choosing healing for yourself and also for the collective consciousness. You are healing the generations before you and the generations to come. When you're working through your trauma, you see glimpses of your Highest Self and embody him or her.

8 | You know you're not alone —

While you are unique, your experience and pain have been felt by people across time and space. The same qualities that you are seeking within yourself, others are also seeking. Let people who have come before us guide and protect us, teaching us how to heal and how to be with our pain. Seek help from a higher power of your own understanding whether that be God, the Universe, spirit guides, or ancestors.

9 | You express your truth when the time is right —

While it's not necessary for you to share your journey with anyone at all, it may be a sign of healing if you're able to come forward with your experience. When we speak or write about our experience, we may find closure and acceptance with our trauma. We step into our purpose and embrace our truth. Allow yourself time and growth before you put yourself out there. When you are ready to be seen and heard, know that your message can help countless others.

10 | You forgive and see yourself as whole —

You know that your traumas and pain are only a part of your journey on Earth; your soul is whole and eternal. You aren't broken. You are simply here to learn and grow. You haven't sinned. You did not receive this for energy that you previously put out into the Universe. You release the need to punish yourself.

The stages of healing are numerous and the process is different for all. These signs are not meant to be opportunities for self-criticism but rather sign posts that offer reroutes. Consider the ways in which you've made progress. Commend your dedication to healing. Let yourself return to the journey with a renewed approach



Grief Rituals Can Help on Valentine's Day (Or Any Special Day)

By Marty Tousley, RN, MS, FT

We've barely made it through the holidays of November, December and January, and now the stores are filled with hearts and flowers and candy, all of it in celebration of the gift of love.

But February 14 can be a difficult day for those of us who are grieving, and for some it will be the first Valentine's Day since our precious Valentine died. For us there is no celebration; there is only grief.

Sometimes, for fear of "letting go," we may find ourselves "holding on" to our pain as a way of remembering those we love. Letting go of what used to be is not an act of disloyalty, and it does not mean forgetting our loved ones who have died. Letting go means leaving behind the sorrow and pain of grief and choosing to go on, taking with us only those memories and experiences that enhance our ability to grow and expand our capacity for happiness.

If our memories are painful and unpleasant, they can be hurtful and destructive. If they create longing and hold us to the past, they can interfere with our willingness to move forward in our grief journey. But it doesn't have to be that way. We can choose which parts of life we shared that we wish to keep and which parts we wish to leave behind. We can soothe our pain by thinking of happy as well as sad memories. The happiness we experienced with our loved ones belongs to us forever.

If we decide to do so, we can choose to embrace Valentine's Day as a special day on which to commemorate our loved ones and to celebrate our love for them. Death ends a life, but it does not end the relationship we have with our loved ones who have died. The bonds of love are never severed by death, and the love we shared will never die either. For Valentine's Day this year, we can find a way to honor our loved ones, to remember them and to show them that our love is eternal.

We can build a piece of "memory time" into that particular day, or we can pack the entire day with meaning. Think of it this way: It's much easier to cope with memories we've chosen than to have them take us by surprise. Whether we are facing Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, an anniversary or birthday, or any other special day of our own choosing, we can immerse ourselves in the healing power of remembrance. We can go to a special place, read aloud, or listen to a favorite song. We can celebrate what once was and is no more.

Personal grief rituals are those loving activities that help us remember our loved ones, and give us a sense of connectedness, healing and peace. Creating and practicing personal grief rituals can also help us release painful situations and unpleasant memories, freeing us to make our memories a positive influence in our lives.

What follows are just a few examples of personal grief rituals. The ideas are as unique and as varied as the people who invented them. Think of ways that you can adapt them and make them your own. You are limited only by your own imagination.

- If you're a writer, write – it could be an article, an anecdote, a story, a poem, a song, a letter, an obituary or a eulogy. If you don't want to write for someone else, keep a private journal and write about your feelings as you journey through your grief.
- Buy a very special candle, decorate it and light it in honor of your loved one.
- Purchase a book — perhaps a children's book — on coping with the loss of a loved one and donate it your local library or school. Place a label inside the front cover inscribed "In memory of [loved one's name]."
- Plant a tree, bush, shrub, garden or flower bed as a permanent growing memorial to your beloved. Mark the site with a memorial plaque, marker, bench or statue.
- Memorialize your beloved in cyberspace by lighting a virtual candle at [Light a Candle Online](#).
- Write a special note, letter, poem, wish or prayer to your beloved, go outside, attach the paper to a balloon and let it go – or place it in a vessel and burn it, and watch the smoke rise heavenward. If you are harboring bad feelings or regrets, gather symbols to represent those hurtful or painful situations, events, or feelings from your past, place them in a container and hold a private burial or burning ceremony, saying goodbye and releasing them as you do so.
- Ask relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbors to gather their contributions, and put together a scrapbook or box of memories containing mementos, letters and photographs of your loved one.
- Celebrate the life of your loved one by continuing favorite traditions or eating favorite foods.
- Select a Valentine card that you wish your beloved would have picked for you and mail it to yourself.
- Give yourself a gift from your loved one that you always wished he or she would have given you and think of your beloved whenever you use it or wear it.

Voices of Experience: Winter Grief

From THE BELL AND THE BLACKBIRD Poetry by David Whyte

Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words. ~ Robert Frost

The grief of losing a loved one: the need to walk, to remember, to heal when you cannot heal; to remember what you do not wish to remember. The unconscious call for invisible help, and the not knowing consciously, how, in any way, to ask for it; the way everything refuses to console until we are ready for that consolation. The way winter turns to spring. ~ DW

WINTER GRIEF

*Let the rest
in this rested place
rest for you.*

*Let the birds sing
and the geese call
and the sky race
from west to east
when you cannot raise
a wing to fly.*

*Let evening
trace your loss
in the stonework
of a fading sky.*

*So that
you can give up
and give in
and be given back to,*

*so that you can let
winter
come and live
fully inside you,*

*so that
you can
retrace
the loving path
of heartbreak
that brought you here.*

*So you can cry alone
and be alone
so you can let
yourself alone
to be lost,*

*so you can
let the one
you have lost
alone,*

*so that
you can let
the one
you have lost
have their
own life
and even
their own
death
without you.*

*So the world
and everyone
who has ever lived
and ever died
can come and go
as they please.*

*So you can
let yourself
not know, what
not knowing
means.*

*So that
you can be
even more generous
in your letting go
than they
were
in their leaving.*

*So that you can
let winter
be winter.*

*So that you can let
the world alone
to think of spring.*

