



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

Until further notice, MHBPUA will be meeting on the 1st Thursday of every month via ZOOM @ 7:00 pm. The link for each meeting will be sent out by email to all those on our email list. Please email Kathy to be included on our email list: kjcorrigan5@gmail.com
Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information about our chapter.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



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.



THE SACRED TASK

By Lexi Behrndt

Sometimes, life is about perspective, about the lens with which we view our stories and our circumstances. In the world of parents who have outlived their children, we have to learn quickly about perspective. In order to truly keep living after the breath has left our children's lungs, we are forced to choose the lens with which we'll see their life, their story, and our lives and our stories when everything is seemingly broken.

This world of parents who have outlived their children— it's both a heartbreaking and extraordinary world.

In it, you are in the presence of warriors, of men and women who have been given one of the most sacred tasks and missions. You are in the presence of men and women who were chosen, not chosen for pain, but chosen to be the only people in the world to parent their precious children. Parenthood, in and of itself, is a sacred task. It's true. But parenting a child, parenting children, when you can no longer reach out and touch their faces, hold them in your arms, watch them grow, that is one of the greatest, most sacred tasks you can be given.

Out of every person in this world, you were chosen to be their parent. Out of every person in this world, you are the ones who were chosen to know them, better than anyone, to be theirs, to have your souls tied together for eternity. Out of every person in this world, it was you, it is you, and it always will be you.

We can choose to view our circumstances strictly through the lens of sorrow, of sadness, of pain, or we can look at it through a different lens, one that acknowledges the pain but doesn't see exclusively through it. It notices the broken places, but it holds fiercely to hope. It aches and it hurts at times, but it holds ever more tightly to purpose, to good, to redemption.

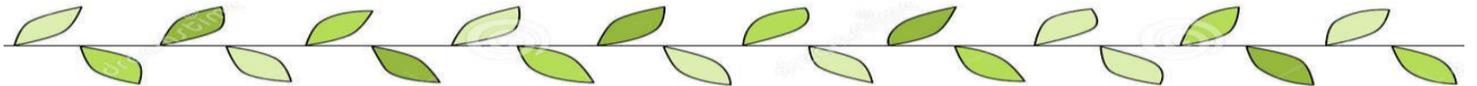
You, your children, their stories did not end. They continue to be written every single day that breath is held in your lungs. This is your sacred task.

Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel, you are not.

You are brave. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job. Your story is far, far, far from over.

Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and afters through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across world, through time, and death cannot even touch it. You've been given a sacred gift, a second chance, an invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself.

You are theirs. They are yours. For eternity. Press on.



MOVING FORWARD... by Ann Moss Rogers

(Ann was a keynote speaker for our BPUSA Virtual Gathering Conference. Her talk called "Turning Pain into Purpose" was very well received by our attendees)

What does it mean to move forward after loss?

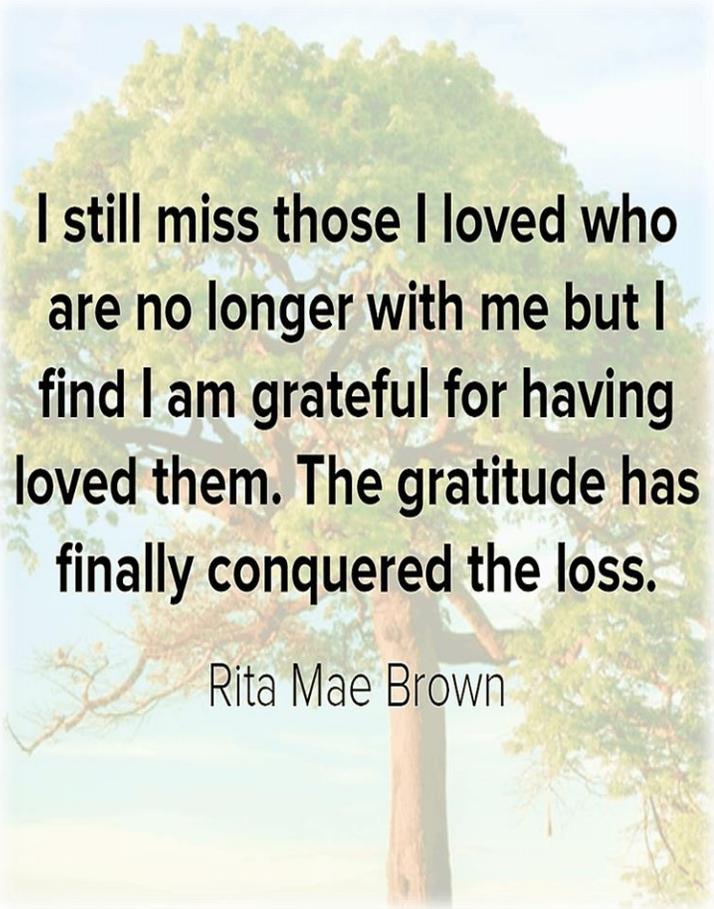
While my loss was the death of my son by suicide, yours could be the loss of a loved one to mental illness or addiction. It could be loss of a marriage or even a job.

After my son Charles died, I would hear people talk about moving forward. Early in the grief process, I couldn't fathom what that meant or what it would look like. Despite my tragedy, the world lunged forward with annoying consistency and continued to spin on its axis while I struggled with the steps on how to take a shower and get dressed.

At first, moving forward was out of obligation and I was stuck in a slower moving dimension. Accepting the loss was the most difficult part and what made those first days, weeks, and months the hardest. I didn't want it to be true. Some part of me struggled to hold onto the before so I wouldn't have to face this after part. Sleep allowed me to forget. Awake meant reality and pain.

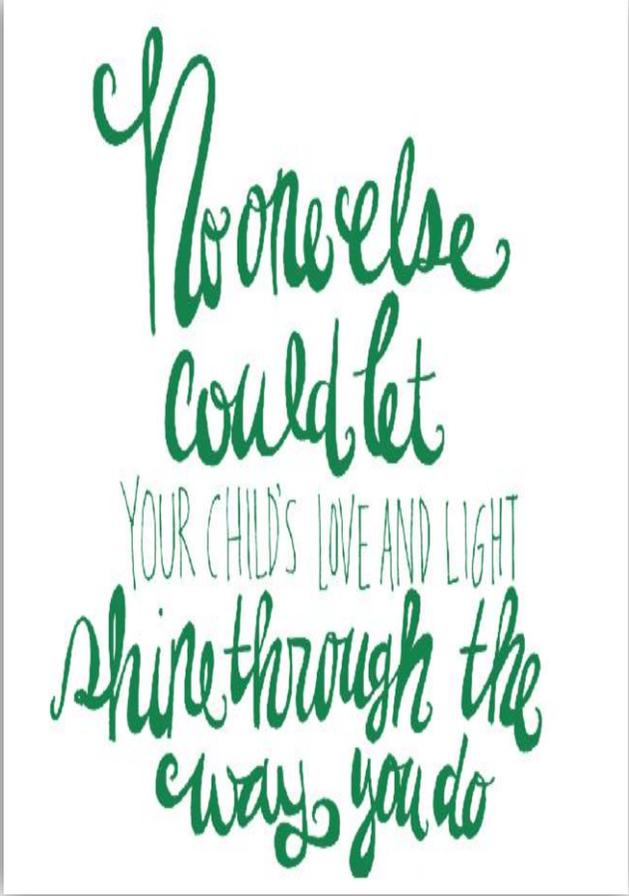
Moving forward doesn't mean leaving your loved one behind or abandoning their memory. It means accepting the death of someone or something you loved. It's natural to fight this transition and even get angry at it. It's natural to want to push it away.

Eventually, I learned to walk along beside grief, incorporating it into my life. And then one day looking back I noticed I had moved forward. I learned to feel the feelings and from there I learned to love, live, and laugh again.



I still miss those I loved who are no longer with me but I find I am grateful for having loved them. The gratitude has finally conquered the loss.

Rita Mae Brown



None else
could let
YOUR CHILD'S LOVE AND LIGHT
shine through the
way you do

GRIEF TRIGGERS AND POSITIVE MEMORY: A CONTINUUM

By Eleanor Haley – www.whatsyourgrief.com

Central New York, where I grew up, overachieves when it comes to cold weather seasons. I won't even get started on winter, but I will take a few moments to ruminate on fall.

As soon as the calendar hits September, the air grows cold, and the green trees of summer blossom into vibrant orange, red and yellow bouquets. Walk down the street, and you are surrounded by leaves in rich hues falling like snow and crunching underfoot. And the air has a certain *feeling* about it, like a mix of romance, nostalgia, and a touch of melancholy



In my 33 years, I have amassed quite a few fall-related memories. First days of school, homecoming, pumpkin carving, leaf pile jumping – if these were the only things that had ever happened in fall, my memories from September thru November would be picturesque yet typical.

But my loved one died in the fall, on a crisp October New York morning, and now it seems I will never experience the sights, smells, and feelings of fall in quite the same way. In the scrapbook of my mind, memories of hayrides, Halloween, and apple picking play second string to goodbyes, red-eyed family members, graveyards, sadness, and longing. With its sensory overload, fall is a landmine of grief triggers.

I couldn't find an actual definition for 'grief trigger' so I'm going to go ahead and define it for you. A grief trigger is anything that brings up memories related to a loss. Triggers may be obvious and easy to anticipate – like a birthday or a holiday – or they may be surprising – like spotting someone who looks like your loved one in a crowd. A grief trigger might tie to a specific memory or emotion, or it may be something that flashes into consciousness and merely leaves you with a sense of sadness and yearning.

Grief triggers are troubling because they open the floodgate for [involuntary autobiographical memories](#). These are the memories that pop into your head without any effort on your part to recall them. They might hit you out of nowhere as you're driving down the street, sitting at your desk at work, or while you're microwaving popcorn. Many of these memories are innocuous, while others, especially those associated with deceased loved ones, can leave you with a veritable range of feelings.

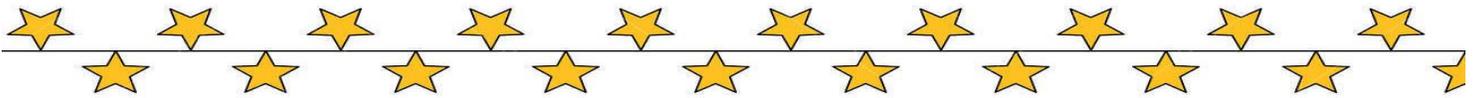
To clarify, these memories aren't entirely random and don't actually *come out of nowhere*; usually, a sight, sound, song, smell, word, or another memory triggers them. These memories that are often associated with strong emotion interrupt your brain's regular programming, and the intrusion may be happy-happy-joy-joy, or it may make you feel like you've been hit in the gut.

For those who've recently lost a loved one, knowing these triggers are out there can cause a fair amount of anxiety. You might fear being blindsided by reminders of your loved one, their death, and their absence, especially right after a loss when your emotions are raw and labile. Some grievers will respond by eliminating and avoiding reminders such as objects, people and places; others will try and battle their way through, growing less and less embarrassed by each public outburst of emotion.

Under a dense fog of emotional malaise in the thick of fall, it is always tricky for me to maintain perspective. Still, I fight the urge to avoid reminders because, although they seem like the enemy during times of darkness, my involuntary memories are usually the exact opposite. You see, it happens often enough that a song, a place, or a face reminds me of something wonderful about my loved one – enough so that I would endure any amount of pain to remember the good.

Memories are where our loved ones continue to live after they're gone; this is why we hold onto objects that remind us of them and go to places where they feel near. True, when someone we love dies, we are always at risk of their memory triggering aftershocks of the pain. But inversely, if we let them, such reminders may also fill us with warmth and comfort. In time you may even find that the very "grief triggers" that once caused you sadness now fill you with a sense of love and remembrance.





TEN THINGS GRIEVING CHILDREN WANT YOU TO KNOW

By Lauren Schneider, LCSW

1. Children want to be told the truth about the death:

- Tell them in age-appropriate and direct language
- Ask them if they have any questions and clear up misconceptions

2. Children look to you as a role model for how people grieve:

- Share your feelings with them as long as they are relieved of the task of having to “fix it”
- Each child will grieve in their own unique way
- They will grieve alone in an effort to shield you from their pain

3. Children want to talk about their person who died:

- They need you to tolerate listening when they tell their story or share their feelings
- They fear that they will forget their loved one



4. Children express their emotions through play and behaviors which may be problematic for you:

- They can't always tolerate intense emotions or know how to talk about them
- They might make decisions you don't agree with
- They need to take breaks from their grief and engage in age appropriate activities.

5. Children need to know who would take care of them if you could not:

- They may fear for your safety especially when you are apart

6. Children benefit from being included in mourning rituals:

- Your child needs the opportunity to participate in ongoing rituals
- Rituals aid in their understanding of death

7. They need you to help them feel safe:

- Provide clear and consistent boundaries, limits and expectations
- Give them room to safely interact with peers and adults outside of the family

8. They need to be taught coping strategies:

- Include ways to comfort themselves in your absence

9. Children need to be included when making decisions:

- About how to celebrate holidays, birthdays and anniversaries
- About other family circumstances such as moving or changing schools.

10. Children need you to take care of yourself: they will only adapt as well as you do.



In this season of light, remember the light your loved one has brought to your life. Light a special candle -- not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared. Spend a moment in a quiet prayer of thanksgiving for having loved and been loved by this person.

~ Darcie Sims

The Gift of Simply You

By Kristin Hendricks, owner and founder of Simply You.
www.simplyyousupport.com/my-story/

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is upon us. It is no new news that our culture and society tend to focus much attention on the gift-giving aspect of Christmas. The stress and pressure of shopping for the perfect gifts accompanied by overspending is, frankly, exhausting. There is an awkward presence, between the polarities of greed and generosity, which fills the air as we struggle to find our balance and peace in the true meaning of Christmas. Somehow, somewhere, at some time, we moved away from simplicity. We have forgotten that the greatest gifts of all lie within the very essence of who we are.  The valuable gifts we each possess are easy to overlook. It is difficult for us to see our true selves and believe we have something worthwhile to offer. We



each, do indeed, have unique and special gifts that no one else in this world can duplicate. There is only one You. And You are needed to take your place in the beautiful canvas of life called humanity. Our gifts do not need to be deemed grand or extravagant. They do not need to be on the front page of Fortune 500, appear on the New York Times best-seller list, or make headline news. What if your gift is packing groceries? Shoveling snow? Walking dogs? What about the gift of kindness..., the gift of being a good listener..., the gift of organization..., or even humor!? These are all precious gifts that we can extend to one another. They are not only deeply treasured and appreciated but needed. Being You is enough. Sometimes more than enough!

Let me share a story....

Many years ago now, in May of 2001, I experienced a very traumatic, life-changing event. At full-term pregnancy, I delivered a stillborn baby girl. I found myself in the depths of the most agony, grief, and heartache ever imagined. The first person to rush to my hospital bedside was a woman named Rose. She was a lovely, caring, and wise woman who supervised a large women's group in which I participated. Although not a close and intimate friend, I found comfort in her guided presence. She was intent on giving me 2 pieces of advice that day. The 1st ... 'There is no greater loss than the loss of a child.' True. The 2nd ... 'People will say stupid things.' Also, true. These simple words from Rose were a gift in itself and enabled me to maintain a high level of strength, grace, and composure as I navigated the coming days. When I found myself subjected to many failed attempts of sympathy and understanding, the voice of Rose would usher in. She taught me that most people were just trying to come to terms with such a traumatic situation and process their own shock and confusion as to why such a thing would happen. At the same time, these same people were also looking for a way to somehow relate to what I was going through by reflecting on their own experiences.

Earlier that same spring, just shortly before my due date, we hired an ordinary, down-to-earth, hardworking man to trim the hedges and bushes around our home. He wasn't necessarily educated. He wasn't necessarily polished or eloquent. And by the look of his rusty old pick-up truck, not necessarily 'rich'. But he did a fantastic job trimming bushes at a fantastic price. Last he saw, I was a very pregnant expectant mother. Months passed and, in the fall, he knocked on our front door. He was driving by and noticed our hedges could use a little sprucing up. He stopped unannounced to ask if we would like this work done. There was a shift in conversation as he quickly remembered we had been expecting a baby. Excitably, he exclaimed, "Hey! The last time I was here you were getting ready to have a baby! What did you have? A boy or a girl?!" Uggghhhh - my heavy heart sank to the big black hole of grief. 'Here we go again ...', I thought to myself. It was a common question I had uncomfortably answered many times by now. I took a deep breath and prepared to peel back the Band-Aid on a still fresh wound. I gently replied, "We had a baby girl. But she died." His face dropped. He looked to the floor of the porch of where we stood. I could see that this simple man who was already short on words, quickly could find none. He was stunned. There was a rise of awkwardness as the air became tense. After a few moments, he said "Boy..., I've had some tough times as well. My back sure has been bothering me a lot lately ... having all sorts of trouble,..." and he reached to place his hand on his lower back while stretching and moaning. Really?! You're comparing your sore back to the death of my child?! But as quickly as I was offended, I heard a subtle whisper of the wise words shared by my dear friend Rose ... "People will say stupid things" ... and grace took over.

I told him that I wasn't sure if it was in the budget to have any work done and that I would check with my husband and let him know. We said a blundering goodbye and I closed the door, still dismayed by what had just taken place. Moments later, I was walking through the house when something out the window caught my eye. It was him. Trimming bushes! The nerve!! Did he not hear that I would get back to him?! Not only had he inadequately acknowledged the painful loss of my baby girl but had now taken it upon himself to do the work I had not approved!! I quickly scurried to the porch and loudly clarified that I had told him not to do any work that day! After my frantic attempt to stop him, he looked up and said, "oh ... no ... it's ok ... I'm just going to do it ... there's no charge ..." I stood silent and in awe, deeply touched, and I understood. This simple ordinary man, who had been gifted with the not-so-desirable art of trimming bushes, gave to me the greatest gift of all. He did not have the words to heal my broken heart. He did not have the capacity to truly understand my pain. But he gave all that he had, all that he could, through his skillful talent as a bush-trimmer and gave of himself in a pure expression of love and compassion. That gesture, above any other gesture that has been extended to me, meant more to me than anything else anyone has ever done. We have long since moved away from the area. I do not remember his name. He has no idea the impact that his simple offering made on me, and to this day, still cherish.

So, as you worry, fret, and frantically search for the perfect gifts this holiday, do not underestimate the power you have by being Simply You. You and Your gifts are of value. They are needed. 'Tis the season to pause, reflect, and take inventory of the gifts that you have within. Acknowledge them. Honor them. Celebrate them. Wrap them up with love and give them back to the world.



NATIONAL GATHERING 2021



Bereaved Parents USA

August 6-8 ♥ St. Louis, Missouri

Grief Through the Holidays Workshop

GRIEF THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS WORKSHOP

Navigating with Hope



The Holidays can be difficult for those who are grieving the death of a loved one. This online workshop is designed to support you as you navigate the holiday season, especially during our current pandemic environment. Our hope is that the workshop will provide an opportunity for space to share about emotions and feelings and provide strategies, tools, and connections as we enter and navigate the holidays.

Editor's note: I have never attended any workshops sponsored by this organization but I'm going to try this one. It's free so If it's not good, I will just leave!) K.C.

Friday November 13, 2020,-- 6:30pm – 8:30pm (Pacific Time) -- Online via Zoom

FREE!

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

WORKSHOP AGENDA

6:30pm – Entering the Holidays ~ a Compassionate Presence Approach

7:00 – 7:45pm – Breakout Sessions

7:55 – 8:30pm – The Power of Self Care & Closing Ritual Ceremony

8:30 – 9:00pm – Optional Connections Time

BREAKOUT SESSION OPTIONS

Session A: “Reimagining Traditions: Choices in Changing Times”

This session will address the challenges holiday traditions can present. It will focus on choices you can make to engage with tradition in a way that is authentic to you while communicating your needs to your family/friends as you hold your deceased loved ones in your heart.

Session B: “Managing the Holidays with Children & Teens”

This session will address family communication and planning in approaching the holidays and focus on the importance of intentionality and ensuring that each family member's feelings and needs are respected and considered.

Session C: “Feeling Disconnected and Lonely in a Very Connected World”

This session will address the challenges of loneliness (heightened due to the current pandemic) during the holidays and focus on choosing meaningful ways to navigate the season while honoring and remembering your deceased loved ones.

Session D: “Sobrellevando los días festivos”

Esta sesión hablara sobre como sobrellevar los días festivos después de una pérdida. Se enfocará en proveer informacion para padres de familia en cómo pasar estos días con sus niños y adolescentes. También hablaremos sobre cómo continuar tradiciones y cómo manejar sentimientos de soledad.

Direct questions to holidaywkshp2020@kara-grief.org