

Coping with the Death of a Child



WinterSpring Center

Transforming Grief and Loss

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A United Way Agency

Dear Parents,

Thank you for contacting WinterSpring Center. We are pleased to offer some guidance to you on your grief journey, and hope the information included is helpful. Support is crucial for the newly bereaved parent, and may make a tremendous difference in coping with the death of a child. If you haven't already done so, we hope you'll contact WinterSpring for information on grief support groups.

WinterSpring Staff

Support for grieving parents

How do I go on?

The death of a child is one of the most tragic events that can strike any family. No other loss takes the heavy toll on our hearts than the loss of a child.

When a child dies, the first difficulty for parents is struggling to absorb the reality of a world-shattering event of this magnitude. Parents may not be able to "take it in." Even after a child has suffered with an illness such as cancer, when death is known to be imminent, the reality of child loss can be difficult to comprehend.

Because a child's death is considered so rare and unnatural, no formula has been developed to guide loved ones in coping with the aftermath. How a family responds will be experienced differently depending on the dynamics within the family. But it is generally true that the death of any child represents the loss of future dreams, relationships, experiences and fantasies. The loss of the future may be one of the more difficult realities facing parents. The sorrow, sadness, despair, depression, anger and bitterness are long lasting, debilitating, and difficult to resolve. Most parents also fear the loss of the child's memory. One mother confided, "Suddenly she was gone and I remember I was fearful I would forget her... what she looked like... this, I knew, I could never tolerate."

Finding ways to keep memories alive is an important way for parents to find comfort. Writing poetry or stories about the child, or making a memorial book with photos, can help heal a broken heart. What may be most helpful of all is sharing the story of sorrow with others. One parent said, "I had to talk about Mark. I had to somehow hang on to all the memories I had of him. I vowed never to surrender them. By being able to talk about him... all the things he had ever done, I was able to keep him alive... at least in my own mind."

We may find we are unable to discuss our loss when it may be most helpful. In some cases this is because of a reluctance to burden or upset others. Other times, close friends and relatives may have trouble entering into meaningful and helpful discussions of the tragedy. Emotions and grief may amplify, without the aid of supportive listeners. For those currently with a partner, problems may occur, a distancing from one another, as each moves through a private journey. Some couples are drawn closer,



leaning against one another for strength. Others suffer from the silence that one or both may withdraw into. The longer the silence continues, the harder it is to deal with. We may fear that everyone is forgetting our loved one. For this reason, parents may need to look for opportunities to discuss all the details, as well as the pain, surrounding the child's death.

After the death of a child, parents may feel they are spiraling endlessly in a nightmare of confusion, disbelief and horror. This may be especially true if the death was sudden. The thought of never seeing a beloved child again in this life can feel so overwhelming that the effect on minds and bodies can feel like insanity. Sometimes it seems suicide would be a welcome relief. Know this is normal and to be expected after such a catastrophic loss. Many emotions and physical effects will be felt following such traumatic news. The following is a short list of some of the grief reactions that may occur after the death of a child.

- Loss of energy
- Mood swings
- Despondency
- Lack of concentration
- Disruption of routine tasks
- Problems on the job
- Discord in relationships

Attempts to force a return to normal activities too soon can tap depleted resources and result in extreme distress. Regardless of forewarning, death may leave us tired because it is exhausting and demanding work. It may be all a parent can do just to get through the day, let alone get out of pajamas.

What Helps

Grievers need understanding during this time, and to be treated with gentle care. It is helpful to remember that a bereaved parent's self-absorbed state is normal, that it is difficult to react any other way. Parents need to learn to say no without apology or explanation. When given an invitation, for example, "I'll let you know," may be the best response given a parent's mixed feelings.

The important work during this time is to accept the reality of the death. Seeking out strong supporters who will hold space for you to express your pain and sense of loss without trying to fix or adjust it is crucial. Parents need good listeners who will not judge or analyze comments, and who will encourage letting the feelings out.

After the acute phase of shock, denial and disbelief begins to subside, a return to our normal activities, in a limited way, may occur. As time passes, after the acceptance of the loss, we can move on to the other tasks of mourning, which include:

- to adjust to an environment from which the child is missing
- to express our grief outside ourselves in some way
- to develop a relationship with accurate memories of our loved one
- to invest in other activities and relationships, and rebuild our life



How death affects individual family members

Many factors, including individual experiences from childhood, affect what happens within our families when a child dies. How we were taught as children to respond to death, and whether we were included or excluded in the grieving process, can give us a roadmap for present grief. If the roadmap is helpful, we may have learned to get through grieving by expressing, crying, and finding support. If the roadmap does not guide us well, we may find we learned to withhold emotions, withdraw from others, and block or bury what cannot be dealt with.

The greatest gift a parent can give a child is permission to express feelings. If this was your childhood experience, this can be a very helpful background to have. If repression was the rule, then it may be more difficult. Fortunately, times are changing. Men are more frequently taught to regard tears as a natural and human response to sadness – not as a sign of weakness. This sets an example for children and other family members to be authentic and not to feel shame when expressing their feelings.

With so many factors affecting each person's journey through grief, we have included a compendium for information for fathers, mothers, and children. Though the profiles may not be typical of the individuals in your family, we hope the variety of perspectives will encourage discussion, mutual understanding, and acceptance of each individual's unique grieving process.



An infinite hole

By Deborah Flarity

A woman fell into a hole. It was a deep, dark hole. She couldn't climb out. So she called out for help. She was desperate in her personal pit of despair. A passerby heard her cries. He said, "Don't worry. I'll find someone to get you out." No one ever came.

A construction worker walked by and heard the woman. He said, "Don't worry. I'll find a ladder." He never returned.

An older lady came by and heard the voice in the hole crying for help. She jumped down into the hole. The trapped woman was astonished. "Why did you jump into the hole with me? Now we're both stuck in this horrible place."

The older lady said, "Don't worry. I've been here before. I know the way out."

Jason was not quite two years old. He had bright icy-blue eyes, curly brown hair, and a bit of a temper. He was a great kid. All the geology students looked forward to playing with him when we had "Friday afternoon tea" on campus. Sam and I were poor college students, but we were proud parents.

My plan was to spend a few months on the farm with my folks. Sam was at a geology field camp in the Tenton Mountains. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to take a break from classes and let Jason play outside without worrying about city traffic. I was looking forward to baling hay, feeding cows, and spreading some manure.

Mornings in upstate New York are soft and pleasant. Thursday, June 26, 1975, was no different. Dad was raking hay in the lower pasture, I was tending to some household chores, and my brother, Lar, was busy avoiding his. Jason was outside, busy filling a bucket with dried cow plops, dumping them out, then refilling the bucket.

It was just before noon when Lar decided it was time to feed the cows. He was 16 years old, which meant noon was the beginning of his day. As he loaded hay on the back of the pickup truck, I went to the mailbox. Lar finished loading the hay and backed up the truck to head down the lane behind the barn. He didn't see that Jason had stepped behind the truck. I

was at the mailbox when I heard Lar scream for me.

I'm not sure of all the details, but I remember telling Lar to get Dad. He knew CPR better than me. By the time Dad and Lar got back from the lower pasture, I had Jason in the house trying to make him breathe. Dad continued CPR, and I called for an ambulance.

I remember riding in the ambulance watching the paramedic shake his head "no" to the driver, indicating the uselessness of their efforts. A neighbor drove Dad and Lar to the hospital.

In the emergency room, it took only a few minutes for the doctors to pronounce Jason DOA. Then the questions started, because it was not a natural death. After the staff finished with Dad, Lar, and me, I signed some paperwork and the neighbor drove us home.

The ride home was surreal and silent. Lar and I were in the back seat. By the time we got home, Lar was curled up in the fetal position in my lap. All six feet of his confident demeanor had evaporated.

When we walked into the house a mild panic came over me. I thought, "We've been gone for hours. I'll bet Jason is awake from his nap." I ran upstairs thinking I heard Jason crying, only to find an empty bed with his favorite blanket and an old stuffed animal. That was the moment reality slapped me in the face



– the moment I fell into the dark, empty, lifeless hole.

Sequence and details are a blur. There were funeral arrangements to make and people to notify. Sam was in Wyoming, hiking around the Tetons where phones were not available. We had to call the sheriff to find him. What a terrible way to find out your son is dead. My mother was in Florida. Emergency travel arrangements were made for both Sam and Mom. At a time when our grief did not allow us to make decisions, several decisions had to be made. The minutia was overwhelming.

Jason’s funeral is also a blur. I felt blank.

But that would all change in a little general store, in a little town in the mountains of Wyoming. I met a stranger there who changed the course of our lives.

The day after Jason’s funeral Sam had to fly back to Wyoming, to finish field camp. I went with him. I was aimless and barely able to function.

Waiting to greet me at camp was a large pile of laundry. Sam had left in a hurry, and housekeeping details were not high on his priority list.

I didn’t know what to do. I’d never known anyone who’d lost a child. Sam and I were in foreign territory. So ... I started with the laundry.

It sounds like a simple chore. In fact, it was a life-healing event. I was in the Laundromat, sorting dirty clothes, when a woman came in with her pile. Seeing me, a stranger in a very small town, she exclaimed, “You’re the one!”

“Excuse me?”

“You’re the one who just lost a son.”

I confirmed her guess by breaking into sobs. Then she asked if she could tell me a story. Feeling like a captive audience, I agreed.

The woman was older than me, maybe forty. She extended her arms straight out, perpendicular to her body. I thought she was about to fly away.

“The hole you feel is this big. I know,” she said. “I lost a child several years ago.

“The hole is endless, no sides, no bottom, no dimensions,” she continued.

At that point I believed her. She was exactly right about the endless hole, the one Sam and I were in.

The woman continued, “Over chunks of time, eventually the sides will become visible and the bottom of that ugly hole will begin to show. In time, you’ll go through an entire day without crying. Eventually, you climb out.”

She was right. Time did shrink that blasted hole, and the day came when we did not cry ... at least until we realized we had not cried, and then we felt guilty and cried!

But time passed and the hole – that horrible, dark, endless hole – started to shrink. We went through entire days without a show of grief. The hole grew smaller. One day without sadness became days. The emotional pain exuding from that infinite hole was replaced by memories – good memories of our son’s short life.

The Laundromat lady was compassionate enough to relive the loss of her child and share her story with me. I only saw her for a few minutes. Those few minutes she took to define our pain-filled hole and the promise of someday being able to manage that massive empty void set us on a positive path that we were able to share with others who suffered the same desperate fate. She helped us out of the hole because she knew the way.

Sam and I talked, cried, raged and hated God. We exposed our most secret thoughts. Each experience was a tiny moment of healing – an act that gave dimensions to the hole. Our mending memories helped to fill in our wounds, and we continued to function.

Two years later I had to tell the story of the Laundromat lady and her infinite hole to my grandmother when my mom died of leukemia. Grandma’s response was succinct: “It’s wrong. It’s out of order. Parents aren’t supposed to bury their children at any age.”

She was exactly right, but I didn’t have the power to change the facts. All I could give my grandmother was a tiny thread of hope,



wishing that someday she would weave herself a blanket of comfort. She did.

Thirty-some years later I have healed enough to write this story. Sam and I went to have two more children. We now have three grandchildren. Most important, we embrace life. We learned early how precious and fleeting it can be. We have faced difficult times through job transfers, unemployment, the loss of other family members, and hard times in general. But through it all we knew that nothing was insurmountable. After you bury a child, everything else is easy. Priorities are redefined.

In 1975, when our son died, we were young and vulnerable. There were no support groups, and we could not afford counseling. We relied on each other for support, did not hide our ugly thoughts, and talked. In the beginning, we searched for an answer to the overwhelming question, "Why did this happen

to me?" Then we realized the death of a child has no reason, no explanation, no end. The question is unanswerable.

Everyone is different, and help comes in strange ways. I encountered a woman in a Laundromat in a small town in Wyoming. She defined my hole and assured me of a way out. I did not seek her help; I wasn't even looking. But when an unsolicited life changing event came along, I recognized it and accepted the help.

The lady gave Sam and me the power to grow past our tragedy. We became our own support group and mended our damaged family. And if you are facing a devastating loss, you can do that, too. Let someone jump into the hole with you, and show you the way out.

Don't let a loss become the death of you. It is an amazing process to rediscover life. Let it happen.



Finding compassion after a child's death

By Stephanie Salter

Grief is a tidal wave that overtakes you, smashes down upon you with unimaginable force, sweeps you up into its darkness, where you tumble and crash against unidentifiable surfaces only to be thrown out on an unknown beach, bruised, reshaped. – Stephanie Ericsson, "Companion Through the Darkness"

WHAT IS the statute of limitations on grieving for a lost child? What does it look like to "get over" the death of your 15-year-old son or 15-month-old-daughter?

Are you over it when you can smile once a month, or must you be able to smile four times a week? How about making it through your child's birthday? Are you allowed to fall apart and cry four years in a row, or is one the limit?

How about Mother's Day?

Are you supposed to participate in it, ignore it or dread it and stay indoors?

How absurd, you say. There is no law about grieving, no standardized, set time. People must be allowed to heal at their own pace.

Really?

"In the reception line at my son's funeral, a dear friend told me, 'Don't hang around with the grievers. They'll suck you into their club and never let you out,'" said Virginia Steele Felch. "At the time, I thought that made sense, but now I understand why grievers form a club. We're forced to go to each other because no one else understands."

Despite what most people may think they say or do around a grieving person, the reality is much different, said Felch.

"People don't know how to deal with you. They say the stupidest things," she said.

Most of all, people are in a hurry. And, as the month stretch on, they convey their impatient message: "Aren't you over it yet?"

Felch, a San Francisco photographer, lost her 15-year-old son, Zachary Clayton, to a car crash three years ago. He was her only child.

In astounding and rapid succession, Felch's father and mother died. Then the home she and her husband William shared burned to the ground in the Oakland hills fire. All of Zack's mementos went with the house.

No wonder Felch says that finding a "club" of grievers – The Compassionate Friends – was "literally a lifeline" for her.

Founded in Coventry, England, in 1969, The Compassionate Friends is a worldwide support network for bereaved parents and siblings. The San Francisco chapter, to which Virginia Felch belongs, meets at 7:30pm, on the first Tuesday of every month at St. John's Presbyterian Church at Lake and Arguello streets.

Usually attended by about a dozen people, the meetings are the one place that grief-stricken mothers, fathers, sisters or brothers can know they will not be judged – or asked in a slightly irritated manner, "How many years ago did you say your child died?"

As the organization's informal credo states, in part: "To you who are newly bereaved, we know how devastated you are. You are not alone in your grief. We have all been in the depths of despair; some of us still are. We are here to help you with unconditional love and understanding."

As Felch's April newsletter attests, a typical meeting includes myriad topics of discussion from the havoc a child's death can wreak on a marriage to how much grieving parents want to talk about their children.

"Do you want to see our eyes light up like they haven't in months?" wrote Felch. "Just



watch us tell stories about these precious children!”

Nothing is off limits, whether it is the desire to follow your child to the grave or the eventual realization that – no matter how much love and support you have – everyone ultimately, must endure her or his grief alone.

“At the last meeting somebody said that (losing a child) is a crash course in existentialism,” said Felch.

For information about The Compassionate Friends, you may call the chapter leader, Jan McMillan, at 415-821-7781.

Or you can just show up at St. John’s Church on June 1 for the next meeting.

If you do, Felch would like you to remember, you will meet people there who know acutely what Stephanie Ericsson meant when she wrote:

“Grief makes what others think of you moot. It shears away the masks of normal life and forces brutal honesty out of your mouth before propriety can stop you. It shoves away friends, and rewrites your address book for you.”



Minus One

By Elizabeth Uppman

“IS THIS your only child?”

I am pushing a grocery cart with a toddler in it. The old lady is throwing me the gentlest conversational hook: the opportunity to talk about my children. Some mothers are happy to have this kind of conversation; some just tolerate it. Me, I want to drop through the floor, fake a seizure – anything to escape the knot of tension and nausea that is forming in my throat.

I have to decide if I’m going to say I have two children or three children. The fact is that I don’t actually have three children anymore. Gabriel, my middle child, died of pneumonia in November, 2000. So our family now consists of my two girls, my husband, and me. The factual answer to the supermarket lady’s question is two, but the emotional answer is three. Still three. Always three.

I don’t know how many times I have gotten stuck between two and three – in the bank, at the pharmacy, at the school carnival. Each time, I try to find the best way to juggle the truth, my emotions, and the other person’s expectations, but no matter which number I chose, something almost always goes splat before the conversation finishes.

Two is the more straightforward answer, especially with strangers in public, where conversations are too brisk and bare to contain the hugeness of three. But when I once tried two, I discovered it wasn’t the easy way out after all. It was horrible. It was like trying to cure a hangnail by cutting off my hand. The nausea came on full-bore and I spent the rest of the day in the bleak and grimy hole of guilt and regret, feeling I had denied that Gabriel ever existed. The emotional fallout wasn’t worth it, just to save some stranger from a few awkward moments.

So instead I do a little tap-dancing. I say something like *No, I have two other children, a girl and a boy, without mentioning that one is in school and the other in the cemetery.* If I’m lucky, the conversation ends there.

But sometimes my good stranger presses on, bored and jolly and pleased to be making a connection: *And how old are your other two?* Well, how old is a dead child? I could say three and a half, the age at which Gabriel died, or I could give the age he would be now if he had lived. Progressing his age makes me realize how much the years have galloped away, but keeping his age static makes Gabriel recede into the background, like a traveler left behind at a motel. Neither answer feels right.

At this point I usually opt for the truth. I try to be gentle. *Well my little girl is eight, and my little boy (looking the person directly in the eye) would have been five this year, but (I tilt my head slightly and smile a rueful smile) he died.* I was always careful to say the he died part loudly and clearly, since it’s is not what the supermarket lady is expecting, and there’s nothing worse than a couple rounds of *Her What?* He dies. *He what?* He DIED.

I always wish I could make it easier on people. I hate for them to think I draw them in only to spring this trap on them. If only supermarket ladies weren’t so persistent! It’s like watching someone stride gaily into a tar pit. My tar pit. Don’t go in there, I think. You’ll be sorry.

Because now, of course, the lady has to say something back. For me, the best kind of reaction is to acknowledge that what I shared was a loss, and that loss hurts. In short, the best response is *I’m sorry*, to which I can say *Thank you* and then change the subject.

There are other kinds or reactions. People sometimes say *wow* or *huh*, their eyes shifting uneasily to the floor. Someone once lifted her eyebrows, looked away, and said a pinched little *oh*. I was sharing too much. Another time, an acquaintance walked into my tar pit and then blithely walked back



out again. “That’s right, your husband told me about that, “ she said, as if we were discussing a softball game.

Are these people callous, or am I expecting too much? I don’t know. People should probably be kind to grieving mothers, if only to shore up some cosmic goodwill for the inevitable day when they, too, will grieve. But usually they just want to get away, and why not? There’s no upside to prolonging the encounter, only a potentially embarrassing sob fest. I know that. I know that my grief doesn’t do anyone any good. It does not increase the gross national product or help the homeless. It’s an invisible wound that takes forever to heal, and healing requires the kindness of strangers – tired strangers, stumbling strangers, strangers who are stitching up their own wounds. People can’t always be helping me with my troubles. People have lives.

Well, most people have lives. Gabriel doesn’t. To me he is still a person, but he is not alive, and that is the root of all this difficulty.

Perhaps a year after Gabriel died, I read an essay in which the writer said her greatest fear was of her son dying. This, she said with great conviction, was the one event she would not survive, the one barrier she would not be able to cross. I admire this writer, but this passage gave me a sour feeling. Sometimes the worst happens; sometimes it happens to you. Then what? Would she really perform the obligatory suicide? Or was this just one of those reckless, superlative things we say, like a dare, to try to express the enormity inside our chests? “Damn the torpedoes! You shall know the extent of my love!”

But then I realized that obligatory suicide might come in different forms- A friend once told me about a woman who brought up her dead son in every casual conversation, ten and eleven and twelve years after the fact. My friend thought this was evidence of deep psychological problems, but I believe I understand that woman. Perhaps she made a promise to her son, or to herself, that she would keep his memory alive no matter what – no matter how much time had passed, no matter how tired or hurried she was, no matter how rudely the other person treated her. If you met this woman and got suckered into hearing her story, it would almost certainly be awkward and unpleasant to get away. You would probably think she was some kind of crank. But she might also be some kind of hero.

And what about my obligatory suicide? What did I choose?

At first I didn’t think I was choosing anything. In the early months after Gabriel died, I thought I was dumbly getting up every morning for no good reason. Actually, I wondered whether putting one foot in front of the other was stupid, immoral even, in the face of so much evil and loss. The world that was my son was gone, along with the smell of his hair, like dusk in summertime. Gabriel was a handsome fellow with exquisite taste: kiwifruit, salmon in dill sauce. My little gourmet. How could I continue to live in the world that had taken those things away? But I had always gotten up in the morning, and choosing a new approach seemed harder than just doing the same old thing.

And then, because I had wanted another child for a long time and because I wasn’t getting any younger, my husband and I chose to have a baby. We named her Lucia, which means light – as in “at the end of tunnel.” In the rush of parental duty and joy, I forgot about the obligatory suicide for days at a time, though I didn’t forget about Gabriel for a minute.

When I look back at those days, I finally understand that I made a choice without realizing it – that I had actually been choosing all along. I chose, simply, to go on. I limped away from obligatory suicide, away from its necessity and attractiveness. I did this knowing that Gabriel deserves as much sacrifice as any mother’s son. I simply couldn’t fulfill that motherly suicide pact. But I believe I can love him more than life itself and still love life.



Lucia is now three and attending the preschool Gabriel attended, where his teacher has a picture of him on her windowsill. The kids sometimes ask who that is. "He's my brother," Lucia says offhandedly. They require no further explanation.

As for my two-versus-three problem, it gradually wore away, like paint on a stair. The all-defining nausea decreased bit by bit as the months went on, and eventually I came to realize that I could talk about my two live children without mentioning my dead one and without imploding from guilt.

Nowadays, when a little old lady asks after my kids, I choose whether to share the secret that is Gabriel. If she passes my instantaneous screening test – if I get a good vibe, if she seems capable of handling the sticky web of feelings surrounding the death of a child – then I might tell her. Or I might not. I'm picky. I usually tell only people who matter to me or who might matter to me in the future. I'm partial to young mothers and elderly people, folks attuned to the reverberations of the beginning and end of life. But it's okay, now, if a stranger walks away never knowing that I used to have a little boy and that he's gone. He's still mine. I'm keeping him safe.

I have, however, begun performing one tiny public ritual in Gabriel's honor: I make it a point to acknowledge the losses of others who are brave enough to speak of them. I was recently sitting across the lunch table from a new acquaintance, an elderly lady with magnificent white hair. She told the group, with careful control, that her husband had died some months earlier. I didn't wait for the appropriate pause in the conversation: "Rita," I said, "I'm sorry you lost your husband."

She looked at me, a little surprised. Then she said "Well, thank you. He was quite a guy." She leaned back in her chair and looked off to her left, almost as if she expected to see him there, as if she couldn't help but look for him. Then she shook her head and smiled. "He was quite a guy."



Men, Women and Grief

Adapted by 'WinterSpring' from the original by Buzz Overbeck

Male / Female Relationships

- Most relationships are intrinsically challenging due to our inherent differences.

He:

Big Picture

Thinks

Logical

Copes Internally

Sighs

She:

Details

Feels

Intuitive

Copes Externally

Cries

- Most fathers can acknowledge this is a reality 3 to 6 months after the death
- Most mothers need 9 to 24 months to acknowledge this is a reality and to move into mourning practices.
- Most men feel their spouse needs professional help after 3 to 6 months

Potential differences in our grieving

1. **SHE** needs to talk about what has occurred. She goes over the story in an effort to gather every possible detail to explain why and how.

HE feels uncomfortable dealing on such a feeling level and finds excuses avoiding such confrontations

2. **SHE** takes comfort in her faith

HE is angry with God, feeling that the event invalidates his faith

3. **SHE** often wants to visit the grave.

HE feels an aversion to visiting the cemetery

4. **SHE** withdraws, reads books on grief, and writes as a means of expressing her pain

HE throws himself into his work, hobby, or other activities to keep busy and avoid the pain.



5. **SHE** expects him to grieve and behave the same as she does and thinks he doesn't care when he doesn't.

HE needs space to grieve in his own way and resents her for imposing her feelings on him

6. **SHE** seeks Support Groups as an outlet for her expression

HE wants to avoid showing his pain in front of other people; particularly strangers!

7. **SHE** has no interest in Sex and resents his desire for it at this time.

HE wants to make love for the comfort and reassurance that comes through intimacy

8. **SHE** knows that her life is irrevocably changed and will never be the same again.

HE wants her and their life back the way it was before the event.

9. **THEY** can sometimes compete with each other to see who is grieving the hardest

10. **THEY** seek to escape the event by taking a vacation, moving, changing jobs, etc.

11. **THEY** seek to numb their pain through Alcohol, Drugs, Shopping, Extramarital affairs, or other child

12. **THEY** are angry with the Doctor or other authority figures involved with the event and have, more than once, discussed legal action.

13. **THEY** feel betrayed by their family and friends through their perceived lack of understanding and caring

14. **THEY** both feel the other person is, in some way, to blame for the event.

15. **THEY** are both so caught up in their own grief that there is no recognition or understanding of the grief experienced by their children or extended family members.



What can be done?

- Be informed about grieving needs and expectations of each other and the importance of recognizing and allowing each other the natural process of grief
- Encourage and help HER come to a bereaved parents support group at 'WinterSpring' or 'Compassionate Friends' where she can find others who will share her experience with her
- Encourage HIM to go to a couple of meetings with her only as an observer. Group is for support and it is not required to actively participate. Most men will inevitably participate if they can just get there!
- Discourage the making of any decisions that will impact any important area of your lives for one year!
- If there are other children, encourage them to express and discuss their grief openly and honestly, give concern to how the child is coping with the experience, and recognize that the child is grieving too. (Children's Program information – 541-552-0620)
- Towards an awareness and acceptance of each other's grief using the following 3 step guide:
 1. List and discuss those elements of grief unique to HER
 2. List and discuss those elements of grief unique to HIM
 3. List and discuss those elements of grief common to BOTH
- Establish periods during each week where you can express and share common feelings
- Establish periods during each week where you can express and share intimacy and closeness were the loss is not the focus
- Establish periods during the week or month for family activities which include the children, if any.



Men ... and Grieving

by Tom Satterly

Following is a first person account of one couple's experience after the death of their daughter.

"My husband and I have shared a painful journey through grief since our oldest daughter was killed (by a drunk driver) almost three years ago. We have learned that grief is unique and very individual. Few of us are prepared to go where it leads and certainly not in the case of sudden violent death of a loved one. In looking back on our journey, the finality of Kirstin's death is still the most difficult aspect for each of us. Beyond that, our responses to grief have been very different. I'm convinced that most men and women grieve differently.

"Like the majority of couples, my husband Michael took over the direct responsibility of calling friends, making funeral arrangements and taking care of insurance. I did help to make some of the decisions and I was the one to tell our son and daughter of their sister's death. However, most other responsibilities passed me. I was allowed to "fall apart" and be protected by family and friends. Michael was strong, "the protector" of the family. I wonder if this may be a built-in instinct, possibly reinforced by society. Michael said he was strong because he had to be.

"During the following year, Michael worked at two jobs while I barely managed one. My emotional roller coaster ruled the family while he continued to try to be the stabilizer. I reached out for help to others through MADD and Compassionate Friends. Michael did not join these groups. Apparently, many men find it hard to express their feelings to others in groups.

"For Michael, the most difficult aspect with which to deal was the loss of control over his life. He struggled to gain control while so many situations continued to spin all of the family out of control. I wonder if loss of control may be more difficult for men. Even with the women's movement, women continue to live more comfortably with events over which we have limited control. Most families move according to the husband's job requirement, rather than the wife's. Having been through an unplanned pregnancy, I learned to adjust relatively well to an event that I could not control.

"Among many myths that society perpetuates is that tragedy brings families closer together. The elevated divorce rate among couples whose children have died indicates the stress and strain which these marriages face. I often reflect with a sense of wonder that our marriage did not become one more casualty of drunk driving. The first few years found us pulling in opposite directions, but with time each has allowed the other to find his or her own way to deal with what has happened. Slowly, healing began.

"My absolute bottom, when I felt I couldn't hurt anymore and life had no meaning or hope, came within six months of Kirstin's death. It wasn't until well into the second year though, that Michael finally hit bottom. Our family and friends wanted to rush us through our grief and get 'back to normal'. This became one more pressure for both of us. Since Michael's delayed reaction appears to be very normal for men, we must do more to be patient with their delayed reactions.

"As I have stopped to listen to my husband and he has become more open about his feelings, I have allowed him to feel his grief in his own way and in his own time. We have both become more comfortable with our shared feelings and more accepting of our differences."



To Fathers

"I'm sorry to hear about your daughter, Sam. How is your wife doing?"

These words from a well-meaning co-worker are often typical of how society treats a bereaved father. Because a man may tend to feel he is the leader of the family, he may sense he isn't allowed to grieve and must endure for the sake of everyone else. Trying to be strong for others, while his world falls apart, may contradict the man's natural urge to curl into a fetal position and cry until he is spent. As his feelings are repressed, the grieving process may become more difficult for him and for those who love him.

While the grief of a father is most likely as great as a mother's, each person's journey through grief is unique. There is no "cookie cutter" that shapes all our grief the same. Often the father's suffering may not be as apparent to others, who mistakenly assume he's doing pretty well, all things considered. In truth, on top of his grief may lie an added burden of guilt for feeling helpless and out of control just when he should "be strong."

As the protector, he feels his child's death may seem like a personal failure. "I shouldn't have let him ride his bike to the store," a father may say, even though the child had ridden to the store unscathed many times. By not preventing the death, the father might feel blame. Further, he may feel blocked from discussing this shame with his partner because guilt is his secret.

Anger is often common as we struggle to come to terms with loss. This emotion sometimes makes people look for a scapegoat. One father found that his anger over his sons' death made him lash out at his family. Noticing this tendency, he waited until everyone had left the house and rushed into his bedroom, beating his pillows and crying from the pressure of holding up." We should welcome these moments that move us toward healing. Examining each feeling lets us realize what must be dealt with and, in time, accepted. Enduring for others becomes unnecessary, and people can explore various emotions. Without this outlet, anger, irritability, and depression can intensify.

Also vital is a good support system. Family members, clergy, and friends may not allow a grieving man to lean on them and weep. An impartial and sympathetic listener may be one of the most important lifelines available to a grieving father.

"When do you start to get better? The landmarks don't exist until you can get far enough away to start to look back at them. And landmarks are really events that you are finally ready for."

Looking outside the circle of friends and family for guidance, many have found special solace with other bereaved parents. Groups such as WinterSpring and The Compassionate Friends provide a place to share our stories and hear how others are coping. Through the group process, many fathers have gained the ability to open up to others when a man realizes he doesn't have to be a stoic, rock-solid person in charge of his feelings, it may relieve some of the pressure. Coming together with other grieving parents may normalize some of the feelings and provide us with non-judgmental partners.

We should learn to be patient with the process without feeling a need to "hurry and get back to normal." Knowing that no timetable exists for our grief can be a relief. The bittersweet pain of sorrow



can feel like a tie to our children. Ending the spirit is resilient, and the will persevere will eventually return, even though we are forever changed.

To Mothers

"No one knows how I feel about losing my child. No one," a bereaved mother may lament. The isolation of a woman burying a beloved child is a burden shared by most grieving mothers. Carolyn Sybist in her article *"Thoughts of a Mother,"* says:

"I am the parent of a child who has died. The real significance of that fact is that it took me so long to come to terms with the ultimate reality of it, to accept that which is true. Like many of the components of each of our lives, the death of a child is something that finally you incorporate into yourself. Instead of waking up one morning being healed from grief, you learn to live with it."

A young mother of two, Carolyn tells how she is different from the young woman she was just before her child died. In one instant, all of life changed, as if a bomb had been dropped into her family's peaceful existence.

Especially hard was the evening of the funeral, with the onset of a thunderstorm and the fact that her son was out in the rain, sleeping in a small grave among other children: *"I had never left a child in the rain before and the franticness of that reality was a reality in itself. The haziness was a comfort; reality was a sheer terror."*

She noticed a difference in how she mothered her surviving daughter. She became the perfect, overprotective, smothering, all-consuming parent. Afraid to let her child from her sight, she also feared to accept the responsibility for her care.

The loss also affected her relationship with her husband. For some partners, the depth and length of the grief process is frightening: *"We talked, but we didn't talk. He was alternately strong and compassionate and angry and unfeeling. And sometimes we hated each other and ourselves, but never openly. Our sex life was mostly bad. Tenderness and need can get lost in fear."*

Generally, in our society, women are allowed more expression of their emotions than men. People may expect a grieving mother to cry freely and accept it as appropriate. A woman's partner may find it difficult to allow himself this necessary release, and it may affect his well-being. Angry outbursts, sulky silence, and other attempts at burying the grief may signal a need for an emotional outlet. With her focus on the grief, a woman may turn inward, away from her partner. Fulfilling his needs, either through physical or emotional means, may be an impossible task. This dilemma could create distance and resentment, as the father feel rejected and excluded.

Relationship with friends and family members may also be altered. For Carolyn, it was hard to talk to anyone about her baby. A mention of even good times involving him could bring a conversation to an uncomfortable standstill.



Joining with others outside her family and friends proved to be her lifeline. Through her connection with fourteen other grieving parents, she says, *“The release inside of me of so many locked up feelings can only be described as nearly exhilarating. It was a strange blend of hearing other people say what I had been feeling, and feeling along with them what I was hearing them say. It can only be described as a warm reunion of very old friends; there were no strangers.”*

Since grief includes personal introspections, this self-examination may lead to changes in how we live and interact with others. Bereaved parents’ marriages may be troubled in the years following a child’s death, in part due to internal changes and priority shifts. In time, you may learn to accept your partner’s expression of grief although it’s different from your own. As you work through your greatest pain, remember, there isn’t a right or wrong way – just your way.

Years later, Carolyn still remembers and revisits the old grief: *“I cry with the clear knowledge that it’s okay to cry, that remembering is not abnormal or strange, that there is a time and place for remembering that you don’t ever really forget, that you learn to live with it. I am many things. And among those things is the acceptance of an inescapable truth. I am the parent of a child who has died.”*

Supporting our Partner

“All I can do is watch my family suffer,” a mother may admit. Losing a child often gives a feeling of being powerless and may diminish self-worth. As well as her own grief, the bereaved mother may be affected by her partner’s grief. While each withdraws into their own grief, both may feel deprived of the love and affection that would give them comfort. Partners may lose interest in sex or other forms of intimacy and may wonder if the loving relationship they had before the death will ever return. Giving comfort to one another may feel unrealistic and burdensome, as both may feel self-absorbed in death’s aftermath. Cuddling, massage, and gentle hugs, while not necessarily leading to sex, are a comfort during this time and may be what each needs most. If we accept our partner’s feelings of disinterest as a normal occurrence and not as a rejection, we can remove the pressure of one more demand. Temporary “fixes” such as extramarital affair, drinking, or drug use may be tempting during a time of seemingly unendurable pain. It is important to remember that postponing the issues through these or other addictive behaviors won’t replace any of the work that needs to be done and will add more trauma to an already battle-scarred family.

Even simple conversations about the death may be difficult. One mother said, *“All I want to do is talk about what happened, about our baby, but he doesn’t seem to want to talk. Doesn’t he care about me? About our child? He doesn’t realize how much that hurts.”*

Her partner responds, *“I know she wants to talk about her baby, but when she starts crying, I don’t know what to do. I feel so helpless. Men are supposed to ‘fix’ things, and this is something that cannot be fixed.”*

Looking for common ground through communication is an important part of grieving. While both partners need to grieve privately and in their own ways, partners benefit from airing the events of the death together, as well as discussing aspects of their child’s life. If one parent suffers in silence, not sharing the difficulties, while the other wants to discuss the hard issues, a distancing may occur. If one



the partners tend to respond defensively when questioned, further damage may be done. Defensiveness closes the door; honesty opens it. Sharing your personal journey with your partner may be a particularly comforting activity because no one else really shares the bond with that child in the same way. If this discussion is kept non-judgmental, neither partner will feel attacked, fixed, or analyzed. Begin honest in evaluating the relationship with the child and each other can give strength to a marriage, and in turn, to the remaining family.

One thing couples find helpful is to learn how others deal with a child's loss. Many wonderful books are available that explore the effects on a couple. Comfort comes with the knowledge that, although the death of a child may rock the foundation of long-term relationships, others in a similar crisis experienced a renewed bond.

One way to help a partner heal is to work toward accepting the other's unique path through grief. Joining a group such as The Compassionate Friends or WinterSpring can also shed light on how others cope and offer tools to help along the way. Healing seems more possible when we've witnessed others coping and working through the process.

Children

Children are often called the forgotten grievers, because too often we assume because they are not talking and they aren't feeling the loss. We see them at play on the day of the funeral, wondering how they can be so carefree. We may withhold information from them, wanting to shelter them from the facts. In truth, denial gives children the impression that we don't think they are capable of dealing with death. The gift of understanding and coping with grief is a gift we should give our children, a tool that's useful throughout life, laying the groundwork toward a healthy future.

At a recent seminar, Alan Wolfelt shared his story of fourteen grandchildren gathering at his father's funeral: *"They dosed themselves with grief,"* he observed. They ran in and out of the viewing, stopping by and touching and patting the deceased, announcing, *"Grandpa's dead,"* before rushing out again to play with their cousins. He went on to say how integral the children were to the funeral. Each added a single flower to a bouquet near the casket. Fortunately, Alan's family received a meaningful first experience with grief.

One child wrote about her loss: *"When I lose something, I feel sad/ When someone takes it, I feel mad/ When I wish thing were different, I feel bad/ But when I can talk and someone listens, I feel really glad."*

Children need to be listened to so that we can watch for misunderstanding and troubled thoughts. Allowing them the space to confide their secret fears may result in opportunities to set the record straight. Feeling blame for a sibling's death or guilty about the lost relationship can be a heavy burden for a youngster. Further, unresolved issues with grief may cause problems for the child down the road, sometimes causing angry outbursts, depression, and difficulties in school.

Sometimes our past includes poorly handled grief as our only model. This pattern may leave us unable to know how best to help our families and ourselves. In most cases, it is possible to "undo" at least part of our misconceptions about grief and end the legacy before we hand it down to our



children. A parent should not feel blame for good or bad grief experiences with grief from the past. Exploring these past messages and expressing our feelings around them, either with our families, partners, or counselors, is one way to work through these issues. A WinterSpring support group may be helpful for those needing a resolution of some old business, as well as providing support for the children.

The Parent

While you are going through the weeks and months following the death of your child, you may need time alone to sort through all the new feelings. This is necessary and a part of moving through the grief. During this time, it is common for parents to become unaware of others and unable to function in the usual ways. We may not notice that our children need haircuts, have outgrown their shoes, or have no clean socks for school. We may forget to pick them up after practice or attend the game. Tasks we used to hurdle through in a day may go unnoticed for weeks.

All of this confusion may give a child, who depends on parents for care and reassurance, a feeling of abandonment. Not only has she lost her brother or sister. Now she senses she's lost Mom and Dad. For this reason, try not to shield your child from the truth. Let her know you will be feeling under the weather for some time. Hold her, reassure her, and cry with her. It's proper modeling for her to follow and opens a channel of honest communication. Let her know you are still there, even though your family will be forever touched by this death.

At WinterSpring, we are dedicated to helping the entire family endure grief, and we provide support for children of all ages. Please contact WinterSpring for a packet for grieving children or for information on support groups for children and teens.

Pueblo Verse

Hold on to what is good
Even if it is a handful of dirt.
Hold on to what you believe
Even if it is a tree which stands by itself.

Hold on to what you must do
Even if it is a long way from here.
Hold on to life
Even when it is easier letting go
Hold on to my hand
Even when I have gone away from you.

Traditional



Grief work: after a child dies

Harold K. Bush, Jr.

When my wife and I see news reports about the deaths of young people, as we did after the grisly slaughter at Virginia Tech last April, we inevitably think back to June 1999, when we lost our son, Daniel. He was a healthy, jovial and playful boy, and his sudden, unexpected death was devastating. Because of our own bereavement, our reactions to the deaths of children inevitable include a deep sympathy for the surviving parents.

We think about the horror that the parents will be facing in the weeks, months and years to come. It is possible to look at the parents who agree to be interviewed and to detect the numbness that accompanies survivors in the days after such a tragedy. We think to ourselves: "Those poor parents. They have no idea how to hellish their lives are probably going to become in the next few years."

I suppose this sound pretty dark. But having lived through the trauma, I can testify that I had no wisp of a clue what the subsequent years would feel like. Parental grief is grueling and can lead to all sorts of mental hell.

One has to work through multiple myths about this ordeal. People will say, for instance, that time heals all wounds. But about two years after Daniel's death I was feeling not better but markedly worse. I was so discouraged and often so physically and emotionally anesthetized that I began to do research on the clinical findings about parental grief. I undertook this research mostly as an attempt to figure out if I was losing my mind and if I would ever start feeling better about life.

The findings of clinical psychologists helped me to understand several things. First, my reactions were normal and predictable. I was not losing my mind, but experiencing what the vast majority of bereaved parents experience. Feeling numb and short of breath, thinking incoherent thoughts this is common. Looking around and expecting Daniel to run in at any moments is not a sign of mental illness. Seriously questioning the nature of God is not unusual for people of faith. My emotional and physiological responses were quite predictable.

Another piece of bad advice I heard was to "let go of the dead child and go on with your own life." This sort of advice has its roots in the modern theories of grief that considered extended and grueling patterns of grief to be pathological. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Sigmund Freud makes a famous distinction between mourning, which is the normal reaction to the loss of a loved one, and melancholia, which is a form of mental illness. According to Freud, grieving people need to break free from the deceased, let go of the past and reassert their individualism by charting a new course for life. A healthy grief experience, according to Freud, is one in which the deaths of loved ones will not leave "traces of any gross change" in the bereaved.

But Daniel's death left very intense and never-ending changes in my wife and me. More than eight years later we still think about Daniel every day, miss him a lot and refuse to let go of him. Clinical workers are now discovering that this is not only predictable but probably much healthier for the bereaved. For decades, counselors for the bereaved urged them to let go of the dead and get on with their lives, an approach that has been called the "breaking bonds" method. Oddly, this approach is still common, in



spite of an abundance of clinical evidence showing it to be misguided. In reality, research has consistently shown that lifelong grief is normal in cases of the loss of close family members, especially children.

Psychologists are recognizing the importance of maintaining bonds with the dead. In my own case, I still feel a deep connection with my son, and I have no intention of ever trying to break that bond.

Parental bereavement brings about a crisis of meaning. Losing a child challenges one's view of the world, leading frequently into a kind of despair and hopelessness. A child evokes a connection with the past, an investment in the future and an extension of self. To say it another way, a child is a concrete expression of hope in the future, and when a child dies, much of a person's hope dies as well. In my case, I wandered around in a sort of hopeless trance for at least a couple of years, if not more. I did my duties, taught classes and graded papers, even went to church, but somehow I felt as if none of it really mattered very much. Days and weeks went around and around.

And since Daniel was our only child, Hiroko and I felt forlorn in not having a legacy for the future – and still do, in many respects, Our loss challenged our previous assumptions about the purpose and meaning of life. Since Daniel was such an important part of the meaning of our lives, what was left for the future?

One of the most disturbing clinical studies I came upon showed that this psychological state of “overwhelming life meaninglessness” does not necessarily change with time. In other words, there is clinical evidence that the adage “Time heals all wounds” really does not fit parental bereavement. (I was also beginning to realize that healing itself is a Freudian metaphor based on the mistaken idea of grief as illness.) Actually, the opposite might be more accurate: there may be an intensification of pain, especially in the third and fourth years after the loss.

To put it in even grimmer terms: studies show that parental grief actually gets worse with time. I recall discovering that stunner in about the second year after Daniel's death, and it was pretty depressing to realize that I might not have bottomed out yet. My wife had, however. She suffered a nearly complete meltdown approximately 18 months after Daniel died. At first, Hiroko had seemed particularly numbed, and I wondered why she was so unemotional about our loss. Meanwhile, I was hyperventilating, having trouble sleeping, and frankly asking God why he hadn't just taken me instead. I was also feeling tremendous guilt, though it was nowhere near the sheer horror yet to come.

One of the oddities of the research on parents who lose children is the differences in spiritual reaction that survivors can experience. Some parents turn completely and permanently away from church, God and belief of any sort. Others turn even more toward God and find their religious faith rejuvenated and strengthened. And then there are some who experience a little bit of both responses – they seemingly deal with both increasing doubts about God and increasing faith, however stranger that might sound.

One of the greatest consolations in my own experience has been the realization that I actually do believe in God. I have been reminded over and over of the powerful ending to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, where Jesus describes a storm hitting two different kinds of houses, one built on sand, the other on solid rock. Over these eight years, I have been thankful so many times to realize that there was a little bit of rock underneath my life.



At times I have even wondered why Hiroko and I have continued to believe. My short answer is in two parts: you cannot deny what you know to be true, and ultimately it is God who is in control. And the amazing reality is that, for whatever reasons, we did evidently know something, and we do still believe in the reality of God and his kingdom.

It is very hard to say all that without sounding arrogant, but there it is. I often ask why were we fortunate enough to have something real underneath our feet, while so many others discover, when we challenged by similar disasters, that their beliefs were no more real to them than fairy tales. Here the arrogance dies away, because I really do not have the slightest clue. Nevertheless, I am thankful that something real remains for us. As with our view of gravity and similar phenomena, denial has simply not been an option for us.

A great deal of research indicates that both parents sustain powerful bonds with the dead child. Ironically, Freud was never able to get beyond the loss of his 27-year-old daughter Sophie, and later, of Sophie's four-year-old son. Freud's personal experiences with profound grief indicate the dilemmas created by his own theory. Though his ideas suggested that one must cut ties with the dead, he was unable to do so. Freud's actual response trumped his own theory.

The Freudian fixation on cutting ties with the dead rooted in an obsessive atheism that demands that one reject the possibility of reunion and realize that the loved one is no more. Much clinical evidence has rejected a good deal of the Freudian method. Grieving parents have generally tended to reject it in their own reactions, too.

Time after time, surviving parents describe how the dead child will continue to live on in their hearts, and thus act as a motivation for the survivors to give back to society. The focus on a continuing bond with the dead reveals a belief in the possibility of human redemption in the face of tragic circumstances. This redemptive aspect of tragedy is documented repeatedly in the stories that parents tell about the memory of their child. Much evidence, for example, shows how survivors often become more compassionate and merciful after losing a child. Often, memories of the dead have spurred surviving parents on to good works that benefit humankind, all done as a legacy to the lost child. One small example of this is the Daniel Foundation, a charitable trust that we set up in our son's memory. Among other things, the foundation supports ministries and charities that work with urban at-risk youth. We hope that our bond with our son will live in perpetuity through the Daniel Foundation.

I recall listening to the father of Reema Samaha being interviewed about his beautiful daughter, a bright student at Virginia Tech and a skilled creative dancer. As he spoke, images of Reema dancing on stage were broadcast. Joseph Samaha emphasized how he and his family would keep Reema alive forever in their hearts, and that her life would continue to have meaning. "She did not die in vain," he said. Her life committed to art and beauty would continue to reap redemptive benefits.

In these moving comments, it is clear that parents do recognize that the bonds with the dead child continue even after death. They know that the legacy of their child does not need to dwindle away into oblivion. Though some people might like to dismiss these sorts of sentiments as wishful thinking, melodramatic affection or worse, they actually emerge from deeply held beliefs about the power of suffering, the motivational memory of the beloved, and ultimately the hope of a potential reunion. "I keep her in my mind," Samaha said. "Her face is in my mental vision. It keeps me going."



Losing Daniel was a thunderclap of a blow. The trauma of parental grief is horrific and long-lasting. Now over eight years later, my wife and I are managing to breathe deeper, and we have managed to continue our journey. But like Joseph Samaha, I sense that the presence of my child is always there to keep me going, as corny as that might sound. I am also comforted that somehow, miraculously, we still remember God, the one who holds all things together by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3). And I am thankful that something real was underneath it all.


Finally, since we are also told in scripture that “the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccles. 12:7), and that he will most assuredly “wipe away every tear” (Rev. 21:4), we do hold out hope for a reunion with our son. Soon enough, I suppose, we will know the truth about these matters. Until then, and hopefully for long after, our bond with Daniel will continue.

Harold K. Bush, Jr. teaches English at Saint Louis University. He is cofounder with his wife, Hiroko, of the Daniel Foundation. (www.danielfoundation.org).

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Sheryl Clark
gave herself
time to grieve.

► SHE SURVIVED

the death of her child

Nine years ago, Sheryl Clark stepped right into every mom's worst nightmare. Her only child, 9-year-old Katie, was killed in a collision while riding in a friend's car. "I left work, went to the friend's house where she was playing, and there was no one there," says Sheryl, 48, of Tucson, AZ. "Then I got home and got the call from the hospital for me to come right away—the person on the phone wouldn't say why. When I got there, the doctors told me my daughter's head had been split open, and she was dead—in those words, I was in absolute, utter shock."

How she bounced back

- To help herself heal, Sheryl opened up to everyone. As a divorced single mom, she didn't have a partner to lean on (her ex, Katie's dad, lived in Georgia and didn't take an active part in their lives). But she knew plenty of other people who could lend a sympathetic ear. "I repeated the story to fiends, business associates, anyone who would listen," says Sheryl, a financial planner. "It was my way of making it seem real."
- She turned to others who had faced similar ordeals. Sheryl joined the Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents who have lost children. "I went to all these meetings for over a year," she says. "Initially, my family, friends, and neighbors helped, but there comes a time when you realize they've all heard your story, and they expect you to move on. I didn't want to infringe on people. The Compassionate Friends was a safe place for me to grieve."
- Instead of dwelling on heartbreak, Sheryl vowed to celebrate her daughter's life. She set up a church ministry for the homeless (one of her daughter's favorite causes) in Katie's name. "Suddenly everyone knew me as Katie Clark's mom," she says. "It was comforting to feel that validation of her life."



- To move on with her life, Sheryl focused on what really mattered to her. “My whole life revolved around Katie – every meal, every event, every bedtime,” she says. “To have that ripped away was so surreal. I still had so much to give.” Six years ago, Sheryl adopted a baby girl, Galina (pictured above), from Russia. “I decided I wasn’t done being a mother. I treasure every day with her,” she says. “Now I want to spend more time with loved ones, because I know how quickly things can change.”

What you can learn from her

Give yourself time to bounce back. “Allow yourself time to grieve, to let it wash over you,” says Gail Gross, Ph.D., a family and child development specialist in Houston, TX. “Only then can you ultimately recover.” Also, expect life to change after a loss. “Things will never be ‘normal’ again,” cautions Gross. “But healthy, resilient people like Sheryl will eventually reach a ‘new normal’, and be very happy.” Yes, we are forever marked by hard times, but the unexpected bonus is what we learn from the loss. “In the end, we’re the ones transformed,” says Gross. “Healing from any great hurt can make you stronger, more giving, compassionate human being.” And those are gifts that no tragedy can erase.



Grief Rituals and Memorialization

Rituals are not the path. They are the reminders that there is a path.

Emmanuel

Part of the sorrow we experience through grief is the physical absence of our loved one. To help us connect with our memories, and get safely back, grief rituals are particularly helpful. Taking the pressure off a little at a time without immersing completely allows a comforting escape from the build-up of emotions.

Make something that reminds you of your loved one, e.g., a drawing of her, a clay sculpture, a needlework project, etc. Design something to acknowledge your unique sorrow.

Plant a bush, shrub, tree, or flowers in a special place. This is especially helpful if the burial site is far away and can't be visited often. Use this spot for your private ceremonies and as a gathering place for other family members. Leave small mementos, flowers, read a favorite poem, release a helium balloon, or speak to the deceased.

Keep mementos displayed if it comforts you. Pack things away that cause you pain. You may find you change your mind and want things you've given away, so don't let others rush in to clean out the closets.

Write down your special memories. Add to these stories or anecdotes from friends and family. Alternatively you could make a tape recording of the same thing. Write a letter to the deceased expressing feelings you may be struggling with. Buy a special journal and set aside time each day to write. Make a memory book including stories and photos.

One hospital holds "Healing Circles" weekly for staff to pray for patients as well as for themselves. Sometimes community rituals are designed to unite both families and professionals, such as those honoring cancer victims. Join in these ceremonies of remembrance, and explore other ways to connect with other grievers, such as through a support group.

Find ways to let your loved one live through you. Explore hobbies he enjoyed, and continue to do the things you did together. Cook his favorite meal. Listen to his favorite song. Tell his favorite joke. Visit his favorite places. Make a memorial donation in his name to an appropriate and meaningful cause. Volunteer your time toward his pet project.

Acknowledge birthdays, anniversaries or other landmarks in life by involving your loved one through ceremony. Transform family traditions and allow them to evolve to reflect your new life without your loved one. View old videos, share favorite stories, set a place at the table, and allow laughter and tears to combine into a special time of healing and reflection. Embrace the new relationship that is formed after death, and demonstrate it through remembrance activities.



Grieving the Loss of an Adult Child

*by Fran Morgan
Deer Park, Long Island, New York*

“Are you crying for Paula?” my husband asked.

Paula was our friends’ beautiful, vibrant and charming thirty-eight-old daughter. She had died suddenly from a pulmonary embolism. It was unexpected and tragic. Days after we received the horrific news, I was still walking around with a lump in my throat, and my tears were very near all the time. “I’m crying for Marie and Frank (her parents), for her, for everybody.”

Voicing my unspoken thought, my husband quietly said, “for us.”

After the call came, my mind’s rewind button clicked on. Sleepless, I was back in 1975, into the raw anguish of hearing the news that our beloved seventeen-year-old son, Peter, was dead. I felt as though it had all just happened. Empathizing, my sorrow was for her grieving parents who from now on would try to have a normal day when no day would ever be normal again. My sadness was because I knew what every morning would bring. Awaking from their twilight sleep, they would not understand for some seconds why they were enveloped in dread – then the thunderbolt will jolt them! Their beloved girl is dead.

I cried because I knew the grief for their child they are going through. Even though they are in their seventies and each has lost both parents, as well as aunts, uncles and friends.

Nothing in their lifetime experiences of mourning could have prepared them for this. No parents were event meant to outlive their children.

Because our friend’s daughter had always lived with them, I think their grief may be even worse. Not only was she their adored youngest, they were all best friends. There was joy and affectionate camaraderie in their relationship. I wept because I know they will now “see” her at the kitchen table, imagine her in her chair as they watch television and remember every place in their home that she laughed with them, talked things over, hugged them, relaxed, read, and sat at her computer. I know they will hear a car door close, and preoccupied, will think. “Paula is home,” before the agony of reality tears again at their souls.

I weep because her radiant light has left our world – leaving this old planet less bright. I cringe for them because I know that well-meaning people will say hurtful things like, “she wouldn’t want you to cry,” or “You have other children,” as though she were not an irreplaceable treasure.

How does one offer comfort? I can pray. I’ll ask God to send them friends who will let them talk endlessly about her, who will hold them when they cry and cry and cry for her. It is the path of healing and recovery. When speaking to them, I shall never start a sentence that begins with, “Maybe the reason God did this was...” I don’t know what God thinks. I do know that no matter how I ignored Him in the beginning, no matter how I raged at Him, and even when I didn’t think of Him at all, He was always with me.



When our son died, my mother told me God would send me many compensations. He did. She was one of them. Marvelous family and friends healed us with their love. If our newly bereaved friends need to say things about God that I don't agree with, I won't try to "shush" them. From personal experience, I think God has a very thick skin and needs no defending. I believe God is closest to those whose hearts are broken.

I will tell them about The Compassionate Friends support group where so much understanding and healing takes place. I will honor their devastating sorrow by listening to their lamentations and to their outraged, "Why?" without trying to give an answer. I will write to them as often as I can, just to let them know that someone cares and understands what they are going through. I will remind them of how their wondrous daughter touched our lives with her hospitality, charm, kindness and loving warmth. I will tell them, "You buried your child – you do not have to bury your pain."

And last but not least, I will ask our merciful God to rest their weary minds, and to give them the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

*From Bereavement Magazine
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Validations

This forum is dedicated to all the bereaved who believe that their loved one who has died can somehow through various means give them a sign that their spirit survived death. In my workshops, I have heard thousands of stories that support this phenomenon. In all cases, those whom have experienced a sign find comfort knowing that their loved one lives on in other sphere of existence. This is an immeasurable catharsis for the grieving soul and validates their belief that love never dies. If you have experienced a posthumous message from a loved one please send your story for possible inclusion in this column.

Thank you, Mitch Carmody

Many thanks to Darrin and Angie Niemeier for sharing their story about a sign they believe is from their young daughter, Shayla, who died in 2007. This is a classic example of a sign, where a deceased loved one communicates through a living creature with loved ones here on earth.

Dear Mitch,

My husband, Darrin, and I were just at the TCF National Conference where we attended a couple of your workshops and a sharing session. First, let me just say that you moved both of us and your words were so very comforting. Our only daughter, Shayla, was 2 ½ years old when she passed away in January, 2007. Yesterday, as we were driving home from the conference we were discussing how you said that if you want a sign you just have to ask for one. We were discussing how sometimes we think something might be a sign but sometimes we are not sure. Darrin then asked for a sign from Shayla. He said he wants Shayla to give him something that would be an obvious sign but he did not know what it could be.

Later, on our drive home, a commercial came on the radio about adopting cats from a pet refuge. Darrin and I then had a conversation about how I had wanted to get a cat for Shayla before she passed away. Darrin said that "Pee-Wee" (one of our nicknames for Shayla) would not have wanted a cat. I asked him, "Did you ever ask her if she wanted a cat? Did she tell you she didn't want a cat?" Darrin said, "Well, no. I guess I didn't. I just knew that if I asked, she would say yes, and then we would have to get a cat." That was about the end of our conversation and at that point we were almost home.

Yesterday was also Shayla's birthday. She would have been four-years-old. We went straight to the cemetery when we got home to meet some of our family there and release balloons for Shayla's birthday. When we got to the cemetery and got out of the car our two nieces were there and they started yelling at us, "Darrin, Angie look there is a cat here!" Darrin's brother was there first, by himself. He said he was sitting there waiting and this little white cat just showed up on Shayla's grave and was just laying there. The cat stayed there and would just walk around and then lay back down on her grave again. The cat let us pet her and she was there the entire time that we were there. This really meant a lot to us, especially since it happened on her birthday. Thanks for taking the time to read this letter.

Darrin and Angie Niemeier

Kansas City, MO



When a Child dies

How parents react to and cope with one of life's most devastating losses

by Ronald J. Knapp

The death of a child is one of the most tragic events that can strike any family. No other loss, with the possible exception of the death of a spouse, extracts the heavy outpouring of anguish that loss of a child elicits.

Childhood death is not as common as it was earlier in this century, but there are still approximately 54,000 deaths per year for those between the ages of 1 and 24. Each of these deaths affects the family with a tenacity that is difficult to comprehend. For some parents, years pass before they are able to resume their normal lives. Others never seem to find their way out of the turmoil and disorganization of bereavement.

One reason for this is that we are a child-centered society. Most parents are preoccupied with child rearing; they pamper their children and take great pride in their development. When a child dies, it seems so inappropriate, unnatural and unacceptable that it is difficult to comprehend. This is particularly true when the death is sudden and unexpected. There simply is no context within which such an event can be fitted.

The death of a child is usually more tragic and traumatic than the death of an older person because a child is the last person in the family expected to die. And because a child's death is considered so rare and unnatural, few rules have been developed to guide loved ones—parents and others—in coping with the aftermath.

The death of any child represents the loss of future dreams, relationships, experiences and fantasies that have not yet been enjoyed. This loss of the future creates special problems for grieving parents. The sorrow, sadness, despair, depression, anger and bitterness are long-lasting and debilitating and exceedingly difficult to resolve.

It has been generally assumed that there is no way to predict how a family or individual will respond to death since each instance will be experienced differently by each family and by each person. However, in a recent study in which I interviewed more than 155 families who had lost a child, I found six significant similarities in the way families responded to the death of a child.

One similarity was the desire of parents never to forget. The child is gone, out of sight. And parents, mothers particularly, harbored a greater fear that what memories they had of the child might eventually fade away. They dreaded that they would forget this sight of the child's face, the sound of his or her voice, the texture of the child's hair, the uniqueness of the hands, even the child's smell. As one mother told me, "Suddenly she was gone and I remember I was so fearful I would forget her ... what she looked like This, I knew, I could never tolerate."

All parents eventually developed a need to talk about their tragic experience and about what they remembered about their child. They had an intense desire to reveal their sadness and anger, to allay their guilt and to have others understand their

EVEN PARENTS WHO HAD NOT PLACED MUCH CREDENCE IN RELIGION PRIOR TO THE LOSS - THOSE WHO HAD DRIFTED AWAY, AGNOSTIC PARENTS - EVENTUALLY TURNED TO RELIGION.



reactions. This was one way they kept their memories alive and confronted the reality of what had happened to them.

“I had to talk about Mark. I had to somehow hang on to all the memories I had of him. I vowed never to surrender them. By being able to talk about him ... all the things he had ever done, I was able to keep him alive ... at least, in my own mind,” said one mother.

Often parents were unable to discuss their loss at a time when such discussion would have been most helpful, such as at the time of the death itself. In some cases this was because the parents were reluctant to upset others. In other cases it was because close friends and relatives refused to enter into meaningful and helpful discussions of the tragedy.

This inability or refusal to communicate often amplified the emotions and extended them over long periods. And the longer the silence continued, the harder it was to deal with. This conspiracy of silence that surrounded parents was what led to their fear that everyone was forgetting, that their memories were fading and produced the burning desire to keep the memories alive by vowing never to forget. My interviews were, for many parents, the first opportunity they had had to fully discuss all of the details, as well as the pain, surrounding the loss of their child.

After listening to these parents express themselves, I concluded that talking and open discussion are essential. Anyone standing between parents and their need to express themselves about their loss will be deeply resented and eventually their friendship will be discarded or pushed aside.

In addition to the intense need to remember and to express oneself about the loss, there was another feature shared especially by those suffering the sudden loss of children older than infants. The death of an older child, particularly a sudden death, is one of the few categories of loss in which the mothers and fathers contemplate their own deaths as a way of legitimizing the loss. There were tinges of this feeling present in varying degrees in all parents interviewed.

To many parents – especially mothers, but many fathers too – survival for themselves was at best questionable. There appeared to be no hope, no way of justifying their lives, no way of continuing without the deceased child. Many parents wanted to follow their children, to be with them and to escape the devastation and agony that the separation had caused.

As one mother said: “I wanted to die ... to escape ... the pain. It was the worst pain I had ever experienced. I kept thinking, ‘Why Susan? Why Susan? Why not me?’”

These feelings and responses are closely related to the “survivor syndrome,” which is a typical reaction to the sudden death of a loved one. The survivors, who can find no reason why they survived and the deceased did not, have intense feelings of guilt and vulnerability. This survivor syndrome is usually short-lived and can be seen within a rational framework, but parents who thought of dying could not see the irrationality of their desires, and remnants of these thoughts extended over a much longer period. Fortunately, for the vast majority this desire was not acted on. But it seems that almost all parents who suffered losses of this type contemplated their own deaths.

The acute phase of these feelings of desolation and wanting to escape from life generally lasted from two weeks to three months. The chronic phase, which was of longer duration but less intense, lasted a year or more. During this latter phase the parents tended to develop a nonchalant attitude toward death, often having non overt fear of dying. Even though they no longer contemplated taking their lives, they still considered allowing death to occur if it were pending.

Few parents – mothers or fathers – ever again feared death in the same way they did before the tragedy. In the majority of cases this attitude continued for many years, long after the chronic phase had passed. In fact, I believe that living with no fear of death may become a permanent characteristic for most parent-survivors.



What kept these parents moving forward was the realization that their own death would compound the existing of other family members. Recognition of their own responsibilities to a spouse, other children, even their own parents helped them hang on to life and simply hope for the best.

About half of the mothers who experienced this death wish could simply no longer muster the motivation to look for happiness and contentment. Instead they preferred to is quietly, watch the world go by and no longer participate. These were the real tragedies left in the aftermath of the sudden loss of a child.

Many parents, whether or not they had experienced a death wish, inevitably attempted to search for some cause or rational reason for the loss. For some, this effort became a genuine search for a reason to survive. For others it represented a simple need to make the loss intelligible.

In fact, all survivors seemed to have a need to fit death into some kind of recognizable context. It was the rare family who could simply accept the loss of a child as an act of “fate.” Most had to develop a sense of control over the event and find a way of justifying the death in their own minds. This was true for all categories of loss – after an illness, sudden death, suicide and murder, the search for a reason took longer to develop.

Nevertheless, in time even these parents usually began their search for logical reasons for the death – reasons they could accept, reasons they could feel comfortable with. In essence, they searched for assurances that the loss was not in vain

I WANTED TO DIE . . . TO ESCAPE . . . THE PAIN. IT WAS THE WORST PAIN I HAD EVER EXPERIENCED. I KEPT THINKING, “WHY SUSAN? WHY SUSAN? WHY NOT ME?”

In their sometimes frantic search for meaning and justification, 7 out of 10 parents turned eventually to their religious faiths for answers and for comfort.

This held true even for those who had not placed much credence in religion prior to the loss – parents who had drifted away from their churches, agnostic parents who considered the existence of God to be questionable and parents who were unsure of the existence of an afterlife. Because it was too comforting and painful to deal with the idea of their child being totally obliterated, they began to search their backgrounds for some evidence that the death was not the finality they had thought it to be. They found answers in their early religious beliefs, which they now actively rekindled in one form or another.

In some cases the response took the form of a genuine religious revitalization or conversion. In others it took the form of a belief in some sort of reunification with the child after the parent’s own death in an afterlife of sorts. I say “of sorts” because these concepts did not always correspond to the traditional concept of “heaven.” In most cases the afterlife was thought of as a place of an existential nature where reuniting would take place, but there were many inconsistencies in the way these concepts were expressed. For example, following the death of his son on father said: “I always thought religion was a myth. But since Mike’s death I have come to think of it as a nice myth, a comforting myth. If it’s not true, after I die it won’t matter anyway. But right now, it’s kind of nice to hang on to.”

Many parents thus felt that they had achieved some sense of satisfaction, however temporary it may have been. And it seems that those who were able to orient themselves in this way were indeed able to deal more effectively with their losses.

I do not know, at this point, how firmly these new beliefs were held; however, I did find that even after several years these new commitments continued to hold sway over many parents.

DOING THINGS WITH THE FAMILY AND TAKING A GENUINE INTEREST IN EACH OTHER CAME TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN TRYING TO “KEEP UP WITH THE JONESES.”



In addition to the religious experiences, I also observed significant changes in values. This was particularly true for parents who had struggled through a long terminal illness with a child - about 35 percent of those I talked with. Among families who had experienced a sudden death, a high level of anger and resentment often remained, and it was difficult to determine any real change in values. However, I believe that a significant value change will occur in response to all types of child death. It simply takes a longer time to manifest itself in the aftermath of sudden death.

Prior to the death, many of these families had been very involved in worldly affairs. However, months of heroic effort in ministering to the needs of a dying child, coupled with the death itself, tended to shake attachments to traditional values and goals of success and personal achievement and replace them with new commitments to more intangible values.

Many families no longer needed to strive the way they had in the past. Grated, I do not know how valid this finding is in regard to families in other social classes, but for these middleclass families there appeared to be a de-emphasis on worldly values.

Family, as opposed to individual, goals become primary. Parents tended to become more concerned with cultivating and strengthening family relationships. Remaining family members gradually began to be viewed in a new light, with renewed emphasis on their importance as people who have needs that must be met and concerns that must be addressed. Doing things with the family rather than for the family and taking a genuine interest in each other eventually came to be more important than trying to "keep up with the Joneses."

Fathers, for instance, in the aftermath of the loss, tended to become less interested in their jobs, less career-motivated, less interested in simply making "more money" and more interested in establishing better, more stable, higher-quality relationships with other members of the family.

In one family the father consistently refused promotions and pay raises because they meant moving away from the extended family. As his wife explained, "We have simply decided that our family now comes first My husband and I are very close to our parents and brothers and sisters. We want to preserve these relationships. They became so very important to us after Sandra's death. Prior to that time, we, like all our friends, were in the 'fast track' We just never gave much thought to what relationships really meant."

Many parents became less concerned with appearances and with things such as clothes, furniture and keeping the house and yard in perfect shape. "I used to worry about all the little things in life... how to pay for this or that; keeping the house clean; making sure the yard is mowed, and so on," said one mother. "I still hear my friends complain about these things. And I think 'How silly!' What a waste to occupy your mind with such trivia! Today I am happy to say that I am more concerned with the larger issues - my family's health, my family's happiness."

A sense of vulnerability came to dominate family life. Life was viewed as something that could be snatched away at any moment, without warning. On father commented, "Time became very precious to us. When you face few threats, you tend to take what is important in life for granted - such as family and friends. When you are faced with losing something precious, time suddenly becomes something not to be wasted."

These feelings did not come immediately. There were many long months of agony, turmoil and confusion as parents desperately attempted to work through the acute phase of their grief. However, once this phase began to subside, parents could begin the arduous task of putting their lives back together. It was at these times that one's values and ideas of importance began to change.

The loss of a child tended to make parents more tolerant of other people and more sensitive to and understanding of the problems and suffering of others. I found that bereaved parents were more willing to listen to others express their problems, more willing to try to develop a sense of



understanding, more willing to respond in a personal way to the expressed needs and concerns of others.

“It’s amazing how my attitude has changed toward all the hardships that happen to people in the world.... I find myself reaching out in a more loving and understanding way than ever before,” said one father.

The last finding was the discovery among most of the families in my study of what has come to be called “shadow grief” – grief that is never totally resolved.

ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T CRY ANYMORE AS OFTEN AS I USED TO, MY LIFE IS NOT THE SAME . . . IT WILL NEVER BE THE SAME. . . NOR DO I EXPECT IT TO BE.

I first identified shadow grief in an earlier study of women who had lost a child at birth. My Clemson colleague, sociologist Larry G. Peppers, and I found the lingering effects of grief to be quite prominent among these mothers. They couldn’t completely shake the vestiges of grief.

This type of grief does not necessarily dominate parents’ existences as is once did, but many of the feelings remain, ever so subtly, and perhaps are never entirely forgotten or resolved.

Shadow grief does not manifest itself overtly. On the surface most observers would say that the “grief work” has been accomplished. But this is not the case. Shadow grief reveals itself in the form of an emotional dullness, in which normal activity is moderately inhibited. It is characterized by a dull ache in the background of one’s feelings that remains fairly constant and that, under certain circumstances and on certain occasions, comes bubbling to the surface, sometimes in the form of tears, sometimes not, but always accompanied by a feeling of sadness and a mild sense of anxiety. As one parent in an earlier study described it, “My son died 13 years ago.... Although I don’t cry anymore as often as I used to, my life is not the same.... It will never be the same... nor do I expect it to be.”

There are many factors and variable that make the loss of a child a unique experience for parents, but unique does not mean abnormal or bizarre. The reactions – the commonalities reported here – are quite normal perhaps even routine. It is crucial for parents who lose a child to realize that their deepest feelings and their most bizarre behavior are similar to what other parents have had when faced with the same tragedy.

It is also important for anyone who deals with parents who have lost a child to realize that their reactions are to be expected. We should be tolerant of the episodes of emotional behavior and outbursts that are the safety valves for the rage that builds within them. The worst thing we can do is to continually tell them to stay calm and maintain control. And we should not try to help them forget, as we are inclined to do, but help them keep what memories they have alive and fresh.

Friends and family members can often make the difference between success and failure in the parents’ ability to cope with the death of a child. Failure to cope adequately may result in a life characterized by a deep-seated sense of loss and loneliness, with the tattered remnants of shadow grief draped about the shoulders of the bereaved. But with the help and support of others and with a determined drive on their own part, parents can achieve some resolution of their grief. There is a light at the end of that long dark tunnel. That light of survival will go unnoticed at first, but given enough time and support, it will eventually come into focus for whoever has the courage and determination to make the journey.

Ronald J. Knapp, Ph.D., is a sociologist at Clemson University. This article is adapted from his book, “Beyond Endurance: When a Child Dies (Schocken Books).”



Bereaved Parents & Guilt

Survival guilt: Why am I still alive when my child is not?

Parental duty guilt: It was my responsibility to protect my child.

What if? guilt: I could have done something different to prevent what happened.

Causal guilt: I did something to deserve this (can be specific –i.e. a past abortion or more vague –i.e. I’m a bad person).

Guilt for thoughts related to the death: i.e. a sick child’s parent wanting them to die to relieve them of pain, or feeling relief when the death happens.

Regrets: I wish I had done things differently when I had the chance, i.e. spent more time with my child, said I love you more, etc.

Guilt that I’m not as sad anymore, guilt when I’m not thinking of my child 100% of the time, guilt for feeling happy again, for moving on.

Guilt for not being able to parent surviving kids the way we think we should, i.e. losing our temper, not being with them enough, tanking our own time to grieve.

Guilt for having bargaining thoughts i.e. I wish someone else had died instead.

Guilt for feeling special because of the death, for liking the attention it brings.



“I tell you now that when a child dies, this is how you live. You pay attention to what is lost, relive the love and life, and relive the death. You do not turn away and are not ashamed. For when there are no answers, you can only live and you can only feel. And if you can, you live it all, and feel it all – touch and taste, shed every tear.

You must not let the world rip you out of your heart. You must love the dead as you love the living. For what you love is all that matters, and what you love is all that lasts.

You must not let the world rip you out of your heart. It is the only thing you have.”

William Loizeaux: A Daughter’s Life, 1993, New York, Arcade Press

