



griefHaven Newsletter

Where Hope Resides

This griefHaven Newsletter is sponsored by the Fellows family in Santa Barbara, CA. Thank you for your generous sponsorship.

“Tears are the words your heart cannot say.”

Life, Loss & the Promise of Paradox

by Sue Holtkamp, Katie's and Joy's Mom

Most of us avoid pain like the plague. And well we should. The sunny side of the street is much better real estate than the swamplands of sorrow any day of the week. Yet, in 1978, I learned that both emotional and spiritual wholeness come when we learn to merge the properties of sunshine and shadow that make up our stories. Some of us spend a lifetime learning this. I did.



Joy, Glenn, Lyn, Sue, Katy
The Holtkamps—1976

All of my life I had wanted to sing and dance and laugh and not be sad. Yet just before my fortieth birthday, something so dreadful happened to my world—to my real tangible world and to my private assumptive world where I really lived—that nothing

would ever be the same again. What happened was indescribable, breath-taking, excruciating pain. It is called *grief*. All the positive thinking and all the rationality in the world would not make it go away. It was to be embraced, experienced, and eventually exhausted. Somewhere in my mind, I must have known that there would come a time to mourn. Surely, but not now.

Glenn was only forty-seven. And Katie was only seventeen. Perfectly healthy they were. Yet suddenly, inexplicably, they were gone. They were, and then they were gone.

As much as anything, I was puzzled. Shock and disbelief competed with episodes of awareness as others tried to explain. “Unexpected thunderstorms,” they told me, as though those simple words should be sufficient to explain such a momentous event. I merely looked bewildered. “Thunderstorms,” they tried again, a bit louder this time, supposing that it was my hearing, not my heart, that

prevented my grasping their words. Eventually I understood that thunderstorms had aborted Glenn and Katie's last journey together. Twenty minutes into the cross-country

“It would take a very long time for me to learn that falling apart actually kept me whole.”

flight to visit our middle daughter, life as we knew it ended. Dreams for our just-graduated youngest girl and hopes for our own future were replaced with a strange new world—one of suffering and pain, tears and sorrow. In one moment in time, my world became a place where even breathing required effort. My husband and daughter were both gone.

For a while numbness and denial allowed such robot-like behavior that I appeared almost normal. It would not last. Confusion and disorganization soon took turns creating a bizarre comedy of chaos. I thought Glenn's and Katie's deaths bizarre. Yet people kept telling me that

I *had* to accept it. “Reality,” I think they called it. No one seemed to understand how absurd their logic had become; no one except me. And I couldn't find the words to tell these, my dear, well-intentioned friends, that they sounded like fools.

Mercifully, I did not know of the thousand and one ties that would have to be pruned loose and changed. No one told me that old memories had to be re-lived and stored and new memories made. No one knew, or at least no one told me, that great paradox was to be found in grief. I had to learn on my own that acceptance of a loss, especially the loss of a child, comes only after angry rebellion, that confusion gives way to lucidity and clearer vision. I longed for peace to replace my fears and anxieties, not believing that some day that peace would come.

It would take a very long time for me to learn that falling apart actually kept me whole. I couldn't have imagined or believed early on that within the exquisite pain and suffering a gift

(Continued on page 2)

Making A Difficult Day Meaningful

We tried letting others know how to support us after our daughter died. We didn't need much. Some listened; most didn't. That had been very painful. So, over time, we simply began to avoid those places where there was no mention of her or where others clammed up if we mentioned her. We could see no other option, since it was just too painful to attend an event and pretend everything was okay. Then something wonderful and completely unexpected happened—something that gave us hope.

It was the third Christmas Eve without our daughter. We had avoided doing anything that felt like what the holidays used to be when she was alive, because holidays the "old" way were just too painful and had taken on a new, bleak perspective as we realized we were only trying to endure them. But our lack of

Growing



Ideas

involvement in family events was also taking its toll on our extended family, so we decided we would do everything we could this year to go to family events, even though we knew it would hurt.

So, on Christmas Eve, we walked into our niece's home—and there, on the mantle, was a framed photo of our daughter snuggling with her beloved cat, smiling at us as we entered. We were filled with an array of emotions, for they had made sure we knew she was not forgotten. This loving and selfless gesture showed us that not only had they been listening to us regarding support, but that they cared enough to do something. Throughout the evening, they reminisced about her, sometimes laughing, sometimes shedding tears. All evening we saw her beaming face smiling down on

us. We felt as if she were there with us. We felt safe, warm, loved, and not alone.

The end result? Monumental. We know we can always visit their home any time and be comfortable, because we know that she will never be forgotten there, that we can cry, and that we can openly talk about her. They put aside their own fears, worries, and discomfort about our child dying to allow us the love and compassion we so longed to receive. After all, our families are the main ones left who do remember her and the times we all shared together.

Please remember those children who have died. Say their names, share the memories, and create an environment that will allow the parents to visit again and again.

Life, Loss & the Promise of Paradox (Continued from Page 1)

would emerge, or that there would come new meaning to fill the meaninglessness in my life. No one would have had the courage to suggest that months and months of hopelessness would finally give way to new hope. In time, when I had exhausted my pain and could pry myself away from it, I discovered the pain had hollowed me out, allowing for a different kind of relationship with my beloved, clearing the way for new life. Here I began to accept the reality that great truth often lies within paradox: contradictory statements or situations which are nonetheless true.

“No one told me that old memories had to be relived and stored and new memories made.”

The entire mourning process abounds with contradictory yet true realities. We cling to our pain even as we plead for release; we embrace new life even as we struggle to accept death. In the upside-down world of sorrow, we discover that "going crazy" may actually keep us sane—that weakness becomes strength. In the end, we discover to our dismay and to our delight that losing ourselves in the service to others allows us to find our selves

anew. And wonders of wonders, we learn that it is quite possible to experience both grief and joy. Those of us who mourn learn what we thought we already knew: that humankind grows in both the sunshine and shadow of life—each plays a role in our story. Rather than engage in some silly, unrealistic charade about life, those who mourn their children can now better offer assurances to one another that courage and tears bear each other's company well, while joyfulness lies hidden just on the other side of despair.

When my sister was dying, she and I sat mesmerized on the living room sofa watching a young athlete on television. He was a skier, but not just any skier. He had only one leg. We could hardly believe what we were seeing. For the entire run, we watched as this remarkable young man showed amazing skill on the slopes, doing almost everything the other skiers were doing, but using a single ski. It was breathtaking, inspiring, and quite simply wonderful. Amid the welcoming crowd at the bottom of the hill, his smiling face stood out. Yet, one thought lingered in my mind, "In spite of this young man's remarkable performance, he still has only one leg." I believe he is the perfect metaphor for those who recover from great loss. For me, it matters little that I

have earned three degrees and live a full and productive life. Although I do it with a limp, I can even dance again. In my own way, I've made it down the slope of grief in good shape; yet, I am and always will be one who has experienced great loss. What I have accomplished doesn't make me other than I am. What I have become allows me to say with absolute certainty that, "While I have known great grief, I also have great joy." That is the promise of paradox.



Dear friends, after writing this beautiful article for all of us, on June 29, 2005, the "worst loss" happened to Sue a second time when her beloved and eldest daughter, Joy, died suddenly after a successful surgery. Our hearts break for Sue and her family. How can we begin to make sense of such a thing? We can't, but we can send her as much love, support, and hope as we can possibly muster.

*After Katie and Glenn died in 1978, Sue received her Ph.D. and built a bereavement practice, using her pain and loss to help others. She has authored two books, *Wrapped in Mourning: The Gift of Life and Organ Donor Family Trauma and Grieving With Hope*. Dr. Holtkamp's third daughter, Lyn Simpson, lives near her in Tennessee.*

With Great Honor: Megan Durtschi

By Chip & Beth Durtschi, Megan's Mom and Dad



Megan doing what she loved most: dancing

To our beautiful, sweet little Megan,

We thought that we would never survive the days, months, and now the years that have passed since that tragic day when you left us. Time has passed, and the raw, suppressive pain that overpowered every breath has lessened and become more manageable. Even now, though, it is not difficult to summon the heartache. We know it will be that way forever. We have now made a new choice after so much pain—we are now trying to choose to live our lives with hope—hope that, as we continue through time without you, we will move forward and live meaningful lives.

We believe that you "know" that we think about you every day. You brought so much joy to our lives during your fourteen years with us. From the time you were born, we were blessed with your

sweet and easy temperament. You were a loving and protective sister to your twin brothers. There was never a sign of jealousy over the attention they attracted. Even as you grew older, the boys always felt your love.

You were just developing into your own person when you died, and we have missed so much not seeing you grow into a mature woman. You were given the gift of skill to master competitions and the stage. Even though you were shy, you rose to outstanding heights. At age eight, we gave you two batons, and six months later you were awarded "best twirler" over 150 other girls, mostly older than you. At age eleven, it was an "all around" state championship in gymnastics. Your performance that day was breathtaking! Everyone who knew you was thrilled because you had such a determined, intense, and tireless work ethic. In the summer before high school, the eight-time state championship, coed cheerleading team asked the high school to waive a long-time rule for the competitive team. After all, it seemed unreasonable to ban a talented freshman from the team who could offer so much to the upcoming season.

You were humble, concerned about everyone else, and demanded the best from yourself. There was a sparkle of realization beginning to surface that you could accomplish anything if you believed in yourself. We found your list of goals in your belongings after the car accident, and number 23 on that list said, "... and anything else I can dream." It was underlined and signed!

And then the dream was over.

Living your accomplishments with you was exciting, fun, and part of what our everyday lives were. Remembering your achievements as we write makes us proud, but also leaves an emptiness. Without you here to share the memories, and without the "what happens



Megan Faye Durtschi
1981—1995

(Continued on page 4)

You Asked ...

Q I have not been able to find much support since my daughter's death. Death is a very taboo subject in this country, especially that of a child. People do not understand my deep need to talk about Joy, to include her in my ongoing life, and to mention her in conversation. What do I do when I speak of Joy and someone goes quiet? What do I say when someone asks how many children I have? Should I include Joy or spare them, which, for me, would imply denying I'm her mom? P.J. LeBaron

A The question, "How many children do you have?" is touchy for the parents who have lost children. When answering that question and talking about Joy, you have to deal with



both the unique relationship you shared with her and others' complex reactions to the harsh realities of death.

First, in your heart, you know you can never deny that Joy is your child. Your memories of Joy are so vivid and real that it could be said that Joy is still literally alive within you. In this way, she will always remain an integral part of your present life. The intensity of these memories is partially due to the unique, powerful bond between parents and children. Joy's being is, in a way, biochemically imprinted into your own being by the special nature of that bond.

Events such as holidays, birthdays, graduations, and weddings can stir up vivid memories of Joy because you naturally

with Dr. Roger Dafter

expect her to be part of them. You wonder what these events might have been like if Joy were there to share them with you. Likewise, when you see other children in your daily life that remind you of Joy, it may connect you to the tender, loving moments you shared with her. So it is natural to want to talk about Joy and to honor her still being alive within you.

The question then arises as to when and with whom you should share these feelings. As you have noted, many people do not "want" to be reminded of death, especially the death of a child. However, it is *you* who is suffering the indescribable pain of Joy's death, and it is *you* who needs to keep Joy's memory alive. I am sure you think, "After all,

(Continued on page 7)

"Poverty of purpose is far worse than poverty of purse" - Unknown

I recently drove by a church marquee and read these words above. I wondered if the person who put them on that marquee had any awareness of how loudly those words might ring for parents who have lost a child. Every one of us understands what it means to have "poverty" of purpose after our child dies.

It is accepted by all professionals that the death of a child is the worst loss anyone will ever have to endure. Tell a person your child has died, and you will see the grimace or hear how he or she could never survive "that."

We know what it feels like to wake up that first morning after our child has died, when we first become conscious and realize we are in our bed, in our room, and back to reality—that place where our awareness comes into focus and reminds us that she died. We know what it feels like to know she is gone. And we know clearly and exactly what it means to have lost meaning and purpose in life. We know what it's like to have to find a way to get up and get through that day and the next and then the next. From depths of being

lost and hopeless, we must somehow find the means to completely rebuild our lives—to find new meaning and purpose. Yes, we know the utter poverty of purpose. In fact, *that is our starting point.*

Most of us have experienced a death before: a mother, father, spouse, or sibling. That's our reference point for the pain of death. In her book, *Everything Happens For A Reason*, Suzane Northrop explains, "Inevitably, we will all experience loss of a loved one at some point in our lives, and the nature of that loss—when it occurs, whom we lose, what our relationship with that person was like in life—will determine the nature of our grief . . ."

We must somehow find the means to completely rebuild our lives . . .

When our child dies, we are not prepared for the unbelievable, incalculable pain and impact the death of our child has on us. In the beginning, we may realize we have little control over how we cope with this loss, since *this grief is not like any other grief we have known.* It has

a life of its own. This grief makes us feel and think things we never, ever thought we would feel or think. This grief is beyond what we believe we can or want to endure. This grief leaves us helpless with our thoughts and feelings . . . even with our bodies. One mother told me that every part of her was so consumed with the pain of grief that when it came time for her body to move and do something—anything—she could not figure out what to do with her body.

Why does the death of our child fall so far outside the usual experience we have come to know as loss?

Since Erika's death in 2002, this question has been burning within me. I have spent time talking about and researching this question from every perspective. When I began, I thought there was a good chance that I might discover something to explain this excruciatingly painful and lifelong journey of grief that was beyond the obvious results of the death of a child, something new that might perhaps clarify the quagmire—these painful days that keep parents tied in knots and take all the joy out of their lives. I read everything I could get my hands on and interviewed dozens of parents asking them, "To you, why is the death of your child the worst loss?"

(Continued on page 6)

Honoring: Megan (Continued from Page 3)

next," all of the awards mean nothing. Without you little Meggie, the most significant event in our entire lives means that you are no longer here.

After thinking about you the way we have the last few days, it is difficult not

to bargain with God once again: "We've suffered the grief, and we've endured the most painful levels of sadness imaginable. At times it seems as if it is time for you to give her back. So how about one more day with her? Or just an hour? Oh, another hour would be so wonderful. Or please, just ten more seconds. A hug? Just a touch? We'll even take just a glance—anything rather than just a memory. It's just not enough."

Even though we have survived and do experience some joy in our lives, marbled in with what seems to be a relatively normal life are veins of sadness that will forever keep us from being the family we were before you left us.

And so we remember you, Megan, with your gigantic eyes, freckled nose, and tiny blonde curls that framed your face when you were warm. We remember your determination, intensity, strength, vulnerability, grace, sense of humor, kindness, and most of all your

love. We love you Meg. We love you Megan. We love you Meggie. Until we die, we will remember you with love.

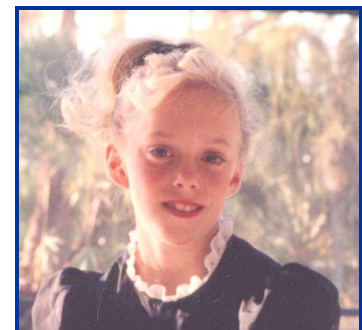
Mom and Daddy

Chip & Beth Durtschi live in Howey-In-the-Hills, Florida. Their twin sons, Nate and Pat, are 21 and at the University of Florida where Pat is attending the College of Building Construction doing an internship for W. G. Mills, and Nate is in the College of Business studying finance and pursuing an international business degree.



Megan, Nate, Pat, Chip, and Beth

to bargain with God once again: "We've suffered the grief, and we've endured the most painful levels of sadness imag-





"Say Their Names"

In our last issue, we introduced **Inside griefHaven**—a place where parents invite you into their world and share honestly with you about issues they are grappling with—and we discussed what to say and not say when a child dies.

Please join us this time for a frank look at one of our deepest needs—the need to hear you “say their names.”

“The mention of my child’s name may bring tears to my eyes—but it never fails to bring music to my ears.

Please don’t keep me from hearing the beautiful music.

It soothes my broken heart and fills my soul with Love.”

Nancy Williams

Ask yourself, “If I did not have a name, how could I identify myself? If I had no name, who would I be?”

Naming a child is one of the important decisions new parents make. Parents often choose names which describe their children’s characteristics,

Just the sound of our child’s name is soothing and gratifying.

relate to perceived destinies in life, honor family relatives, or designate something spiritual or meaningful. In other words, a child’s name is significant. For parents whose child has died, the name remains an ever important connection to that child.

Don Bernstein, Professor of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickson University, studied the long-term effects of losing a child. “It was discovered that all parents eventually develop a primary and fundamental need to talk about . . . what they remem-

ber about their child. They develop an intense desire or need to . . . have others understand their reactions. This is not only how they remember, it is also how they confront the reality of what has happened to them.”

And in her book, *When the A Bough Breaks*, Dr. Judith Bernstein says, “Mention the child’s name. It won’t remind parents of their loss. They haven’t forgotten!” Forgotten? We will never, ever forget. How could we? They are our children forever more.

A person’s name is a direct link to that individual—a personal identity given to each one of us. In some sense, it is a sacred identity we carry with us throughout our lives. It is how we refer to each other, connect with each another, and reference someone else in conversation. A person’s name conjures up thoughts, emotions, and memories simply by being spoken.

When someone’s child dies, most people eventually, for various reasons, stop mentioning the child’s name: they think it will remind the parents of their loss; they don’t want to upset the parents; they don’t know what to say; they aren’t sure if it is okay to bring up the child’s name; they would rather not remember because it’s too awkward or hurts too much; or, they have no new memories to share.

A loving neighbor and friend said after reading our list of what to say and not say when a child dies, “I’ve been doing everything wrong, and I am so sorry. I have been purposefully NOT saying her name because I didn’t want to upset you or remind you.” This is the same approach mistakenly taken by so many because they simply don’t know.

In truth, the mention of our child’s name and the memories

you have are, for us, an immediate, gratifying connection to our child. Just the sound of our child’s name is soothing and

“Billy was an amazing hockey player.” “I loved watching Mitchell play with Robbie.” “Tell me about Zackary.” “I miss Polly, too.” “It was incredible watching Deb swim.”

comforting, yet it is so rarely spoken that, when it is, we may appear taken aback, though we are actually quite pleased.

More than ever, we want to say their names to you, and we want to hear you saying their names—not because we are in denial that they died, but because they did die, and we want you to help us keep them alive in our hearts and in yours. They died, but we are still their parents, we deeply and profoundly love them, and they remain part of our lives.

When our child dies, so do all future experiences with them that we would otherwise be sharing during the course of normal, social conversations. We aren’t able to chime into a conversation about current events involving our child, so we chime in with memories—to be a part of the conversation AND to keep them in our lives.

Recently, six mothers whose children had died went on



(Continued on page 7)

Here are some of their responses:

A child gives you an important meaning and purpose in life, and then it's gone.

No other role has so many personally assumed and socially assigned responsibilities.

You are all things to that child.

It is out of the natural order of things for a child to die.

A child is the future, and you lose that.

My child made 'me' who I am, and now I have to find another me.

The love of a child is unconditional, and no one else loves you like that.

Being a parent is the most important job I had, and now I'm out of work.

I knew who I was through my child.

My child came from me and is literally a part of me.

Her death doesn't fit with the innate sense of fairness.

You learn how to love unconditionally in a way you never loved anyone else.

You invest all of your love 100%, and then it's gone.

Being a parent gives us a higher purpose in life and makes a difference in this world.

In *The Worst Loss*, Barbara Rosoff states, "It robs parents of what they love most . . . there are no precedents. Nothing prepares you for the loss, or for the intensity of your grief."

Not only do we change psychologically, but perhaps we even change on a cellular level to have to endure such a thing. For many, the initial pain and grief are so intense that they actually frighten us. For me, knowing ahead that my child was going to die did not prepare me for anything, for how can we know something we have not truly experienced?

Despite my preliminary research, I still found myself saying, "Okay, I understand the results of losing a child and why my life is so empty and sad, but I still have this thing gnawing away at me that goes like this: What is it about the death of a child that takes a perfectly happy life full of joy and fulfillment and grabs hold of it, shaking it like a rag doll in a dog's mouth, twisting, distorting, and reshaping it so that it becomes unrecognizable?"

I had done research, I had my own experiences, and I had spoken to dozens of grieving parents who lovingly gave me explanations which made perfect sense, yet I could not settle down this whirlwind questioning deep inside me, "There has to be something else. Something is missing. What is it?" I

really wanted to know. I really wanted to understand how such a thing could happen to us parents.

And then, during a moment of quiet thought one night, there it was—a patient and loving truth. Perhaps I had been looking too hard, trying too hard to find some amazing profundity to explain the worst loss. But there it was all along—the simple yet profound truth that I knew before her death, throughout her life, and even before her birth, before I held her in my arms and said, "Hello, little Erika. Welcome to your life and your new family. I'm so glad to finally see you, and you are so beautiful."

I realized that it was there all along—the unfathomable, inexplicable, and amazing bond that parents share with no one else but their children. We do not share that same bond with spouses, friends, spiritual advisors, or other family members. That bond is shared with no one but our child. And *that* bond is only with *that* child, whether or not we have other children. Each bond is unique, which is why it makes no sense for anyone, hearing of your loss, to ask the question, "Do you have more children?" That bond we came to know so well, here, in this world, was severed. It was severed despite everything we would have given up to make sure that did not happen. It was severed without our permission. Yes, the devastating *results* are in the list outlined above. But perhaps encapsulating all of that is the loss of this essence: the unseen bond that began from the moment of conception.

And then it wasn't.

A mother states, "I really feel like some vital piece of me is missing, I'll never get it back, and I'll never be whole without it."

Religious teachers refer to the bond between a parent and child as a way to show us what they mean by the ultimate love. Buddha teaches that unconditional love is the same as that between a mother and a child. Judaism teaches us to strive to love one another the way a parent loves his children. In Christianity, they say we are all loved equally as God's children. That religions choose to reference the love

between a parent and child as the ultimate love beautifully explains the "worst loss."

Whether or not you embrace specific spiritual beliefs, as a parent you experience this unseen, intangible bond of love. That bond exists with your child as part of your everyday experience.

And yet, the bond between a parent and a child is not something that anyone can fully understand. It has never been adequately explained because it goes beyond words and actions. We can see *results*. We have all seen the changes this bond can make in parents' lives. Yet, some things "just are what they are," and perhaps the bond between a parent and child is just that. It just is deeper, richer, more profound, and more inexplicably amazing than anything we can ever explain or dream. We can't see it, touch it, smell it, or taste it. But we experience and know it.

So after all my searching, researching, and questioning, I have come to what I believe is the answer to my burning question. It's not some huge revelation, as I thought it might be. It's simple, yet profound.

Severing that bond through death takes from us the unseen yet profound connection. The loss of that unique bond makes the loss of a child the worst loss, for that bond epitomizes for us the highest and greatest form of love we can have or ever know.

Certain things are simply invisible to the human eye, but can forever be felt by the human heart and sensed by innate wisdom. I am grateful to have known that ultimate bond with Erika. Now that she's no longer here, I strive every day to know that bond in a new and different way, and my worst loss makes it the hardest thing I have ever had to do. When she isn't here, the challenge feels at times insurmountable. But I will never, ever give up trying. And so I trudge ahead on my path, step by step.

And now I truly "get it."



"Say Their Names" (Continued From Page 5)

their second annual retreat. It was a time where they could be themselves, say their children's names, and not worry about others' reactions of painful and maddening silence or discomfort—both hurtful to a grieving parent. They reveled in how freely they could talk about their children to one another, and how often talking about their children naturally came into the conversation.

After dinner one evening, plates were passed around for dessert, and, as a gesture of love



from the chef (see chef's photo, page 5), written in dark chocolate on each mother's plate was her child's name. These mothers were filled with feelings of warmth, surprise, and comfort. One mother commented, "It was so

so wonderful seeing her name in someone else's handwriting." They all cherished the moment, yet realized how they longed for *that* to be the norm.

From the very beginning, we wonder how we will survive

We work very hard to see sunshine in the shadows.

such a thing as the death of our child. We grow, over the days and months, to accept our new lives, and we work very hard to see sunshine in the shadows. We treasure friendship and shared memories of our children now more than ever. Without others in our lives now—loving us, guiding us, encouraging us, remembering our children—we wonder if we could keep going.

Yes, true friendship is more important than ever before. And, if you knew our child, your memories are like treasure troves of the finest jewels hidden away inside of you that can only be enjoyed when

you open up and say the words—when you say their names, when you share stories we didn't know, when you listen to us tell stories *you* didn't know, when you allow us to talk about them whenever and wherever.

Nothing will bring them back. But saying their names and sharing their memories will keep them alive and bring forth warmth and gratitude from their parents.

Parents tell us, "Eventually we find ourselves making the world a place where we can accept not only our child's death, but also our friend's silence. We feel we have no choice." *It doesn't have to be that way.*

That is why we are sharing with you our deep longing, our deep desire, for one thing you *can* do:

**Please,
say their names,
and say their names
again!**

You Asked ... (Continued From Page 4)

they get to go home to their children tonight, so can't they put their fears aside to give some love and support when they have so much?"

I have bereaved patients who have tried various approaches to this issue. Some test the waters first to see who is receptive and who isn't. Others express themselves more spontaneously. By simply being aware of and prepared for different reactions, both have reported positive results. One of my patients shared openly wherever and whenever the question arose. Most of the time, even when it seemed to shock some people at first, her openness led to a heartfelt exchange, even with strangers. This is an area where you will want to allow yourself much flexibility: sometimes you may want to approach it one

way, and another time quite differently.

Likewise, when people ask how many children you have, it becomes a personal choice as to whether you include Joy. To include her, you must be prepared to cope with a wide range of reactions that people may have. Perhaps you will find moments when you don't want to include her because you ache too much and want to manage the timing and intensity of your grief. Or you may feel that the people around you at the time would have awkward reactions you are simply not willing to deal with.

Joy will remain a living part of you forever. You must allow yourself the freedom and flexibility to sort out when and where it is best for you to share with others who have their own reactions surrounding the death of a child. Know that

reactions can be very different for people depending upon their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences with death. Many different approaches have been taken by parents in different times and places, and the one that feels right and most comfortable for you in the moment is the one you should follow, without regret.

Dr. Roger Dafter is a Ph.D. psychologist who specializes in grief therapy and can be reached in West Los Angeles at 310-472-8100

**Send your questions to
hope@griefHaven.org**



Board of Directors

- Susan E. Whitmore, President
- Wendell A. Whitmore, Vice President
- Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, Chairperson
- Didi Carr Reuben, Chairperson
- Alice M. Fellows, Treasurer
- Shelley Goodman, Secretary

Newsletter:

If you want this free newsletter sent to anyone, please email us at hope@griefHaven.

Grief Pin

Remember to order your free grief pin at hope@griefHaven.org.



Your Donations Mean So Much

Our goal is to provide the video, Portraits of Grief; Badges of Courage, the newsletter, grief pin, and memory page to all parents who have lost a child, free of charge. If you would like to help us with this goal, as well as to further the Foundation's support for grieving parents, please send your donation of any amount to the address at the top of the page. Please make out your check to "The Erika Whitmore Godwin Foundation." We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation.

What's New At griefHaven.org

- ✦ "Message Board" where you may speak with other parents.
- ✦ "Our Children" page where you may put together a free memory page for your child.
- ✦ Events page where we share past events and future plans.



Did You Know ?

- ? that every time you order a book or CD directly from our web site, the Foundation gets a percentage? It's true, so click on www.griefHaven.org, and help support us with your orders.
- ? our video, Portraits of Grief; Badges of Courage, currently being edited, was held up by a volunteer who refused to return the tapes, forcing us into a lawsuit? The tapes are now safely home, legally owned and copyrighted by the Foundation.
- ? our president, Susan Whitmore, and chairperson, Rabbi Steven Reuben, are both published in a new book entitled The World Is A Narrow Bridge? Read about it and order it directly on our web site at www.griefHaven.org.
- ? you may sponsor any of our newsletters while helping others AND receiving a tax deduction? If you are interested in sponsoring a particular newsletter, please contact Susan Whitmore at switmore@griefHaven.org.

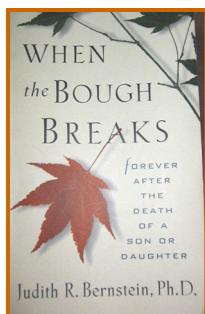
Read, Listen, Watch—Parents Recommend



When the Bough Breaks

by Judith R. Bernstein, Ph.D.

Some of the greatest support tools available to us are things to read, listen to, or watch that help us feel a little bit hopeful, even if just for a few hours or days.



Dr. Bernstein's book, When the Bough Breaks, brings that sense of hope . . . and the knowledge

that we are not alone. Dr. Bernstein writes authentically from personal experience since she, too, lost her child.

When the Bough Breaks relates the stories of different parents, their losses, how they have coped, what they have had to endure, and how they have managed over time to rebuild their lives.

This book, timeless in its messages, seamlessly delves into a diversity of personal stories of tragic loss and heroically recovered lives of hope.

We believe that within its carefully constructed format, bound with love

and hope, everyone will find a wealth of wisdom and healing. We loved this book!

Order this book at griefHaven.org by simply clicking on its title inside the "Resources" section. The Foundation receives a percentage from Amazon.com every time you order.

Do you have a recommendation we can share with other parents? If so, please email us at hope@griefHaven.org, and we will use your feedback in a future newsletter.

