



where brothers and sisters are heard

# THE SIBLING

# VOICE

april - june 2014

## poetry - a meaningful and easy way to express your grief

When you lose someone you love, especially a sibling, your life changes almost as drastically as your parents' lives. Well-meaning people often forget that siblings of all ages grieve. In fact, at griefHaven we refer to siblings as "the forgotten ones." That is one reason we have a newsletter that is just for siblings.

In this issue, we are dealing with one of the powerful ways siblings of every age can deal with their feelings and honor their brothers and sisters: Poetry. In this article, Alice Wisler describes how to write a poem and the value it can bring to your thoughts and feelings.

In fact, the Psychology Career Center states that "People dealing with grief from the loss of a loved one find many ways to cope." Psychologists suggest expressing emotions of grief in order to deal with the overwhelming feelings of sadness, isolation, loneliness, anger, and disappointment. Mourners express these feelings through talking, letter writing, prayer, blogging, and oftentimes through poetry. And hospices even offer poetry therapy groups.

Something about the beauty and melody of written poetry is soothing and helpful to those working through grief. Whether an individual is mourning the loss of a son or daughter, a brother or sister, a parent, or a pet, poetry is a time-tested way to express oneself, a form of

expression that transcends cultural and geographic boundaries. Writing poetry helps people relate to others who are suffering, as well as acknowledge and assuage their fears.

If you have never written poetry before, it's easy and meaningful to do. Anyone can do it, and it doesn't matter if you are three or 83. Begin by putting a list of words you like on a piece of paper. Surround yourself with peaceful music and perhaps items that remind you of your sibling, or go to a place that makes you feel connected or at peace with your loved one.

Turn these words into sentences. Sometimes just telling the story of how you feel is poetry enough. Let the words flow. Other times, a more structured or formal organization is desired. Look at other poetry you like and study its structure. Play with the rhythmic quality of your words. Read them out loud.

Think about what you want to say with your poetry. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks about your writing. When you are ready to share it, you will. And through this process you bring healing to yourself, as well as others who read your poetry.

In the words of the great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "There is no grief like the grief that does not speak."

So try your hand at it. It's so much easier than you think. — Susan Whitmore



## Resurrection - griefHaven on the *Good Morning America* show ([click here](#))

Inspired by the new TV show, *Resurrection*, the producer from *Good Morning America* contacted me to see if I would address the question, "What if someone you loved really could come back?" Interestingly, I had already done my own little research project, asking griefHaven parents this question: "If you were given the option to have your child back for one day and then leave again, would you take it?" I thought for sure almost everyone would say, "No way. I could never go through that pain twice."

Yet, you surprised me, since 62% of you said you would do it in a heartbeat, even if it meant going through the initial pain again. The rest said, "No way!"

You'll see that we have a new section in our newsletters entitled Friends of griefHaven: *Now You Know™* where we keep you abreast of what our Friends are doing and all that griefHaven has been and will be up to.

By the way, I will be in St. Augustine, Florida June 27, 28, and 29 giving the keynote presentation for the TJ Coughlin Jay Fund Foundation. If you are interested in having me do something for your group while I am there, please contact our office.

Last, check out the details of our new TV show by watching this two-minute explanation. [Click here.](#)



~ Susan Whitmore  
founder & president

# express yourself through poetry

by alicia wisler, bereavement specialist; reprinted with permission [lovetoknow.com](http://lovetoknow.com)

## The Beauty of Poetry

Poetry speaks to us when we are in love, in awe, and in sorrow. When a sibling dies, we may turn to poetry to be the voice for us in our time of deep mourning. The words penned by someone else may resonate with us and evoke our emotions so that we can reflect upon our sentiments. We may take our poem and keep it in a safe place, share it with others or read it at a funeral or memorial service.

## Where to Find Poems

Well-known writers such as William Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, and many other poets may come to mind when we focus on death in poetry. Via the Internet, you can do a search for a poem about loss. Take some time to read over what you find. Not every poem will ignite the emotions you hope for, as some poetry might appear too trite, while others might sound too dark and dreary. When you find a poem that speaks to you, copy it down and make sure that you give credit to the author of the piece.

If you are unable to find what you want online, head over to your local library and peruse some poetry books about love or death.

Better yet, write your own poem. Here's how.

## Writing Your Own Poem

Writing your own poem in memory of your sibling can not only be meaningful, but also helpful. Death often takes us to deep, profound places, making it easier to compose lines we never thought we could. Use this time of sorrow to stir your mind. Start with a few words about how you feel and about what your sibling meant to you. String some of the words together to form a verse or two. You may include some of these in your poem or come up with your own.

- Longing
- Love
- Missing
- Joy
- Beauty
- Blessing
- Friendship
- Memory
- Sadness
- Forever

## Presenting Your Poem

Once you have completed your poem, there are so many different ways you may use it, including sending it to places like griefHaven to be used in a future *Sibling Voice*. There are poetry websites on the Internet. You could also post it on Facebook, include it in a special journal or place where you keep your memory items, or even start your own blog or book of poems. The opportunities are endless!

## Grieving the Loss of a Sibling

If you and your sibling were not close at the time of his or her death, or if the two of you were in an estranged relationship, do not let this keep you from grieving. Many times relationships among family members are

strained. In death, forgiveness can occur, as well as healing. Poems pertaining to your situation may help you during this time as well.

Regardless of your relationship with your sibling, taking time to deal with his or her death is important. Hopefully other

family members will want to recall memories from your sibling's life and you will have time to share what your sibling meant to each of you. As holidays and other special occasions approach, they will be difficult to handle, so make sure that you are aware of the various components of grieving at these special times. Emotions that seem to be pronounced and feel like an out-of-control roller coaster ride are natural. Often when a loved one dies, we are thrown off guard as to when certain emotions will trigger tears. Take care of yourself as you mourn the death of your sibling. Grieving is hard work, but necessary in order to rebuild your life without your sibling there. If you are fortunate, friends will be there to help you deal with your grief. Allow others to befriend you at this time of anguish.



“Death often takes us to deep, profound places, making it easier to compose lines we never thought we could. Use this time of sorrow to stir your mind.”



Alice J. Wisler was born and raised in Osaka, Japan and currently lives and writes in Durham, NC. She also teaches workshops on writing through the heartache.

In addition to bereavement support, Alice is also a cook. She has authored two cookbooks, *Down the Cereal Aisle* and *Slices of Sunlight*.

# Richard My Brother

Who took his life on the 18th December, 2010,  
age 45 years young

by anthony fairchild (plymouth, deven, england)

A Husband, a son, a father, grandkids in tow—  
You left all the people that loved you so.  
Oh why did this happen, I miss my bro.

Outside you seemed happy in this you'd become,  
But inside what went deep and deeper was numb.  
In childhood you were older, older than should be,  
We went without father, so you were father to me.

In life you did struggle to find comfort and need,  
Always looking for answers and coming up empty.  
I hope where you are now fills you with glee.  
Looking down, show me a sign; I'll think of thee.

With guidance I know, your family will grow.  
They'll fulfill all their dreams, because it is written so.  
And looking down, the proudest man there you'll be,  
Just like it was, when you were around here to see.

Richard, R' Ricky, my brother, my bro,  
A husband, a son, a father, grandkids in tow—  
You left all the people that did love you so,  
Oh why did this happen, I miss my bro.

# To My Stillborn Sister

by andrea gabrielli

How do you love a person  
Who never got to be?  
Or try again to see a face  
You never got to see?

How do you mourn the death of one  
Who never got to live?  
When there's nothing to feel good about  
And nothing to forgive?

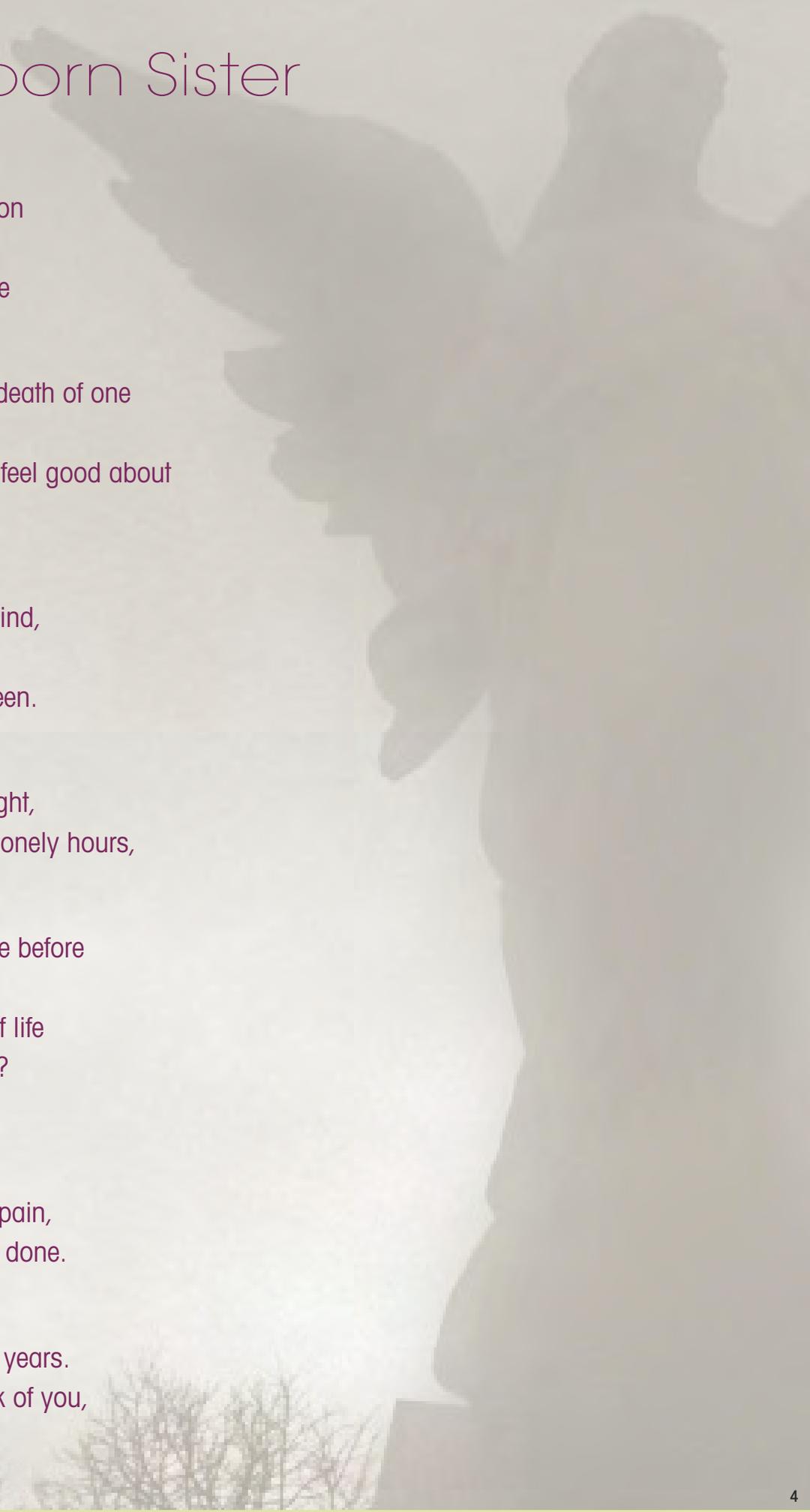
I love you, little sister,  
You're a person of the wind,  
Free to be the memory  
Of all that might have been.

I love you, little sister,  
My companion of the night,  
Wandering through my lonely hours,  
Beautiful and bright.

What does it mean to die before  
You ever can be born?  
To live the lovely night of life  
And never see the dawn?

Ah! My little sister,  
You lived like anyone!  
Life's a burst of joy and pain,  
And then, like yours, it's done.

I love you, little sister,  
Just as if you'd lived for years.  
No more, no less, I think of you,  
The angel of my tears.



# Friends of griefHaven Now You Know™

Friends of griefHaven continues spreading the word that griefHaven is here with new grief tools and knowledge – online, in person, to everyone in need

## 2014 CURE Childhood Cancer Event, Atlanta, GA

Susan Whitmore, Founder & President of griefHaven - Keynote Speaker and Presenter

Little did I know that the morning of January 25, 2014, would see the beginning of a life-changing experience for me. You see, it was the first time with all of the speaking engagements I had conducted that I was in front of a room filled with parents, grandparents, and siblings whose children had all died from cancer. As you know, cancer is what ended Erika's life.



Karen McCarthy, Lisa Branch, Wendell & Susan Whitmore, Sharon Bryan, Rhefta Ascari

There were 130 people present, and I gave a PowerPoint presentation that included new information about grief, as well as the latest on the grieving brain. On Saturday, I facilitated two workshops, and Sunday morning I was honored to give the final, inspirational presentation that ended with a special song, *Sing: A Song to My Mom*—a song inspired by Erika and, for the first time, dedicated to all mothers and fathers around the world. At the end of the video of *Sing*, the cohesion and love amongst everyone was palpable, and we emerged into a big, hugging, beating heart of love, filled with tears and appreciation for each other.

Thank you to the amazing CURE staff for everything they do every day to support the families in need of hope and love by allowing me to be a part of one of the most amazing weekends of my life!

## Pacific Palisades Women's Center

On March 4, griefHaven received a grant to be used to subsidize grief counseling and to pay for 30 free packets of hope to families in need.

The PPWC works hard every year to raise funds through its annual Home and Garden Tours, where it then uses those funds to award grants to community organizations. Thank you PPWC for your ongoing support!

## Upcoming Events

🌸 Susan Whitmore, Founder & President of griefHaven, will be in St. Augustine, Florida, June 27, 28, and 29 as the Keynote Presenter for the incredible TJ Coughlin Jay Fund Organization. If you are interested in Susan doing something in close proximity while she is there, please contact our office.

🌸 FOGH Council members are now working on the logistics for the 2014 Live Your Best Life luncheon AND the 2015 gala awards dinner to be held in Los Angeles. More about upcoming events soon!

🌸 griefHaven has been intimately involved with Dr. Mary-Francis O'Connor and her research regarding the grieving brain. As many of you know, we are very passionate about this project. We hope to be able to raise the \$90,000 needed to do the third portion of the research project which will be using fMRIs (functional MRIs) to look into the brains of parents whose children have died. The results of this project will help millions of people all over the world. If you would like to know more about donating to this important research project, please contact Susan Whitmore directly. Your donations will literally change lives and the way the world approaches grief.

## Fancy Feet "Gift of Light" Dance Event

On Saturday, March 15, the talented children from the Fancy Feet Dance Studio of



Pacific Palisades danced their little tails off for a spectacular griefHaven fundraising event. Through the generosity of owner Emily Kay/Tillman, the entire proceeds, \$7,611, was given to support griefHaven's important work in this world. (To see the Fancy Feet page, [click here](#)). A big thank-you goes out to Emily, Patty, and the amazing staff! griefHaven will support so many families with this generous donation.

## Good Morning America TV Show

Did you miss it? If you did, no problem! Watch griefHaven on the *Good Morning America* show ([click here to watch](#)) talking about the new TV show *Resurrection*, with comments that griefHaven parents gave about how they would feel if their child really were to return.

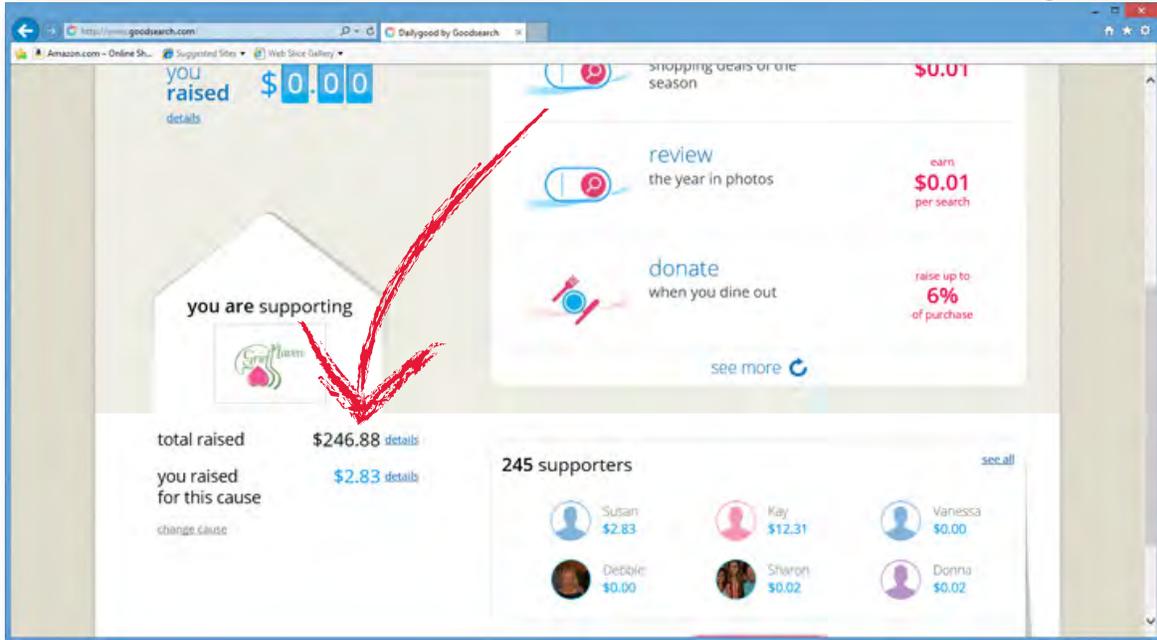
## Now You Know™ Television and Educational Shows

Exciting news! griefHaven is going to start an online TV show and short educational videos covering a variety of topics that will help educate the world about grief. The actual TV show is entitled *Now You Know™* and will cover topics other than just grief. The short educational videos, also *Now You Know™*, will cover various grief topics. [Click here to watch.](#)

# SAY WHAT?

Did we say you can earn money by simply surfing the Net? YOU BET!

It's SO easy. All you need to do is go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com), name griefHaven as your charity of choice, and the website will walk you through the rest!



please "like us" on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/griefHaven)

And help so many other families in need find us!

