

SHOW 2. Resiliency: The Antidote to Tragedy

Michael Josephson, Character Counts, KNX Radio,
1070 <http://www.charactercounts.org/audio/CC-122303.ram>

I was inspired to discuss the loss of a loved one after I met Susan Whitmore, a woman who was devastated a few years ago by the death of her child, Erika.

Though she is by no means completely healed (that probably never happens), Susan has transformed much of her grief into positive energy. From the boundless love she had for her daughter, she has extracted the motivation not only to survive but to thrive.

Through a new website, www.griefhaven.org (that is continually and will be forever under construction) and a planned video, she draws on the experiences of other parents as well as grief counselors to provide solace, understanding, knowledge and, above all, compassionate love to parents who have lost a child. The Grief Haven logo, an upside-down heart, is an eloquent symbol of the enduring quality of love.

Susan's journey from hopeless despair to tireless dedication is a classic example of resiliency -- the capacity to bounce back from terrible tragedy. Grief Haven is a noble effort to help others and a living monument to her daughter. But it's also an act of self-healing.

Doctors Steven and Sybil Wolin (www.projectresilience.com) point out that pulling a gratifying and constructive life out of the fires of extreme personal trauma is a continual struggle often marked by setbacks. Resilient people overcome rather than succumb to the powerful forces of sadness and self-pity because they draw on their inner resources to do what Susan's daughter urged her to do -- to begin again.

An important impetus to resilient behavior is the active intervention of caring adults who not only console but distract and ultimately re-focus emotional energy through encouragement and continuous support. Just as important is the willingness of the injured person to keep heart and mind open to receive the healing qualities of love and time. Both caring and the acceptance of caring require character.

This is Michael Josephson reminding you that character counts.