



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME VI NO. 4, Fall 2001
(October, November, Dec.)

Adapted from FAITH FOR A TIME OF CRISIS

By Dr. Alva H. Clark,
Omaha, Nebraska

I want to share with you some ideas which I believe have some significance for our lives as we know them today. What I say here will give some direction to the question posed by the theme of our meeting: Real Life, Real Pain, Real Hope. Let's do it in terms of some questions for the function of faith, the content of faith and the tools we use to cultivate our faith.

If you take time to study faith in its various forms down through the ages, I think it is fair to say that the purpose of any faith is to provide us with hope in meeting the difficult and unsatisfactory experiences of life. The griefs we bear provide us with real pain as we try to understand the nature of real life. There are many things that we can control or manipulate the circumstances in which we experience our day to day events. But there are other factors which cannot be manipulated or changed through any skills or technology we know. For those things we need faith. So, let me give you an exciting definition of faith. Faith has the purpose of enabling us to find hope in meeting the non-manipulable factors of our existential medium. More simply put: it is the way we live with hope when our day to day experiences cannot be controlled by any skill or technology available to us. This faith can be either simple or

complex. In dealing with the pain of bereavement, we need not only a spiritual faith but an emotional strategy which will enable us to manage bereavement creatively rather than destructively. The unwise attitudes that people take to grief are now found to be the source of many medical diseases and psychic maladjustments.

The first law which should be followed in the time of the loss of a loved one is

These remarks are taken from the keynote address at the 2001 Gathering of BP/USA. In light of the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the remarks take on new meaning. For a complete copy, contact the Newsletter Editor.

to express as much grief as you actually feel. The function of friends is to be the sounding board for the grief of the bereaved.

A second truth we have learned is that we must learn how to extricate ourselves from the bondage of the physical existence and coexistence of the loved one.

A third truth is that from working with one child, a grieving mother should transfer their conduct patterns to a group of children. We face grief without any expectation of miraculous healing but with the knowledge that, if we are courageous and resolute, we can live as our loved ones would wish us to live, not empty, morose, self-centered and self-pitying but as brave and undismayed servants of the greater life.

They lived, they toiled, they laughed, they served, and we must be their worthy emissaries in the portion of life that they leave behind them.

It is normal for any person to experience moods of resentment and of hostility even toward the most beloved parent, child, brother or comrade. Thus the burden of guilt is lifted like a cloud which too long has darkened the horizon of life and the mourner is liberated from the oppression of guilty grief.

When we face the loss of a dear one, we should allow our heart full leeway in the expression of its pain. We need to understand that the experience of pain somehow has a curative function and that any evasive detour around normal sorrow will bring us later to a tragic abyss. We were given tear ducts to use just for such hours of darkness. We will show wisdom if we are willing to talk about our loss and, through that creative conversation with friends and companions, begin to reconstruct the broken fragments of our lives.

It is good for us to accept the sympathy and the stimulation of social interaction. We need not be impatient with the slow healing process of time. There are many steps to be taken along the highway leading from sorrow to renewed serenity and it is folly to attempt prematurely to telescope and compress these successive stages of recuperation into a miraculous cure.

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BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

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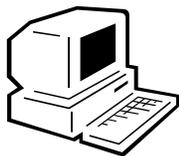
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NEWSLETTERS

The newsletters are now available on the web site by downloading on Adobe. They can then be printed and/or saved on a disk. If you can receive your newsletter that way, it would save the national budget greatly for printing, paper and postage. We now send over 700 Newsletters each quarter, and there is no charge for the Newsletter. If you are willing to use the web site and Adobe, please contact the Newsletter editor at the address listed above. newsletter@bereavedparentsusa.org



FROM THE EDITOR

Betty R. Ewart

The BP/USA Annual Meeting was during the Gathering at Dallas. The Treasurer reported that we are financially solvent. The major expenditures for the year were the Newsletters and the printing of the Brochures. So far, the brochures have been paying for themselves although this may be re-evaluated when reprints need to be made. A favorable Audit report was received also. We are in the process of registering both our logo and our title so that they are protected.

Pat Moser reported that we now have 35 chapters and 13 satellite chapters related to them. There are several in process of forming. We also have over 60 Members at Large.

Our web site is constantly expanding and improving and the newsletter is now available there in the Adobe format. It was announced that next year's Gathering will be in New Orleans.

The election results were announced and Betty Ewart was re-elected to the Board, Mary Murphy was also elected to represent chapters and Theresa Valentine was elected the Member at Large Representative.

At a meeting of the new Board on Friday evening, officers were elected and assignments for the next year were decided. These are as follows:

President: Betty R. Ewart

Vice President: Mel Giniger

National Contact: John Goodrich

Assistant Contact: Kathy Pacey

Chapter Development: Pat Moser

Members at Large: Theresa Valentine

Web Site: Mary Murphy

Non-voting, elected by Board:

Secretary: Nan Giniger

Treasurer: Paul Kinney

The Board will meet at the end of Oct. in St. Louis. If you have any

items you would like discussed, please contact any board member. Betty Ewart and John Goodrich may be reached at the address, phone, fax and e-mail listed in the first column of this page.

Send inquiries about chapters or about starting a chapter to Pat Moser at 3921 SW 5th Ave, Ocala, FL, 34474. Her phone is 352-854-1275. Her e-mail is chapter@bereavedparentsusa.org.

Contact Theresa Valentine about being a Member at Large at 5107 N. 142nd St., Omaha, NE 68164. Her phone number is 402-431-9090 and her e-mail is tavlsv@radiks.net.

Mel and Nan Giniger can be reached at 10668 Eastborne Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024, by phone at 310-475-8164 and by e-mail at nancyginiger@aol.com.

Kathy Pacey can be reached at 8306 Woodridge Dr., Woodridge, IL 60517, by phone at 630-910-6256 and by e-mail at hobsonrx@xnet.com.

Mary Murphy can be reached at 351 Geyer Forest Dr., Kirkwood, MO 63122, by phone at 314-822-7448 and by e-mail at aamurph@swbell.net.

Paul Kinney can be reached at PO Box 5903, Louisville, KY 40255. His phone is 502-456-5827 and his e-mail is bpusatreas@cs.com

We want, once again, to tell Shirley Ottman and her committee what a great Gathering they had for us all in Dallas. The speakers were great, the workshops and sharing sessions were good, the boutique and bookstore were outstanding and the hotel and meals were great too. We will be sharing many things from the Gathering with you in this issues and later ones. The group in Dallas showed us how a small group can put on a great gathering So many other chapters and persons helped with everything. It was truly a joint effort which many found helpful.

See you next year in New Orleans!

(Continued from cover page)

Unbearable pain, poignant grief, empty days, resistance to consolation, disinterestedness in life, gradually giving way under the healing sunlight of love, friendship, social challenge to the new weaving of a pattern of action and the acceptance of the irresistible challenge of life.

The world is so made that we have to respect truth. What we have learned scientifically about the whole bereavement situation vividly demonstrates that, when we lie to ourselves about our own emotions by suppressing our feelings of grief, burying them deep in the subvault of our unconscious, then the universe wreaks havoc with our emotional life for this violation of truth. Psychic happiness and serenity are dependent upon the honesty which we show to others and the honesty which we show to ourselves. Life commands us to be true to your own feelings rather than to outer conventions. Be confident of your own strength to withstand the shocks and tragedies of life and know that the universe, which demands truth, has within it the power for your healing. The world wounds, but it also miraculously distills medicine and balm for those wounds. Trust life, face it without mask or masquerade, and you will yet conquer sorrow and be victorious after grief. Tutored by grief's slow wisdom, the human family will surmount the hill of tragedy and descend into the valley of inner peace.

One of the great truths of life, as we know it, is that we are finite and mortal. It is the part of wisdom to taste the cup of joy and sorrow without inner rebelliousness, to accept with equanimity the inevitable fact that we and all we possess are transient. And yet there is almost a universal feeling that God could not shut the door completely upon so many slowly developed talents and gifts, but that there must be infinite realms where we can use the powers we have achieved here in order to

paint vaster portraits and sing nobler songs beyond the shores of mortality. Many great thinkers, among them Plato, Kant, Tolstoy, insist that nature could not have placed mind in humans like a candle to be gutted in a passing wind.

Some have developed concepts of personal survival and others have found meaningful such concepts as the immortality of the human race. We are a part of a huge drama. We are linked by chains of love and culture with the wealth of the past and the promises of the future. Most of us have the privilege of molding the spiritual life and destiny of the generations that come after us. Those whom we influence by the example of our lives, the children who are touched by the flame of our spirits. It is in them that we live on and find our eternal significance. We live today trusting the universe to take care of tomorrow.

We learn that there are two meanings to "the end." One is "finished" and the other is "purpose." We have the privilege and the responsibility to fulfill the purpose of those who preceded us, to build a world where human beings will not need to perish with their mature songs still unsung, a world where human beings will need only to learn to adjust to normal grief rather than to bear abnormal sorrow and tragedy, a world that will provide all persons with the opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Editor's Note: Dr. Clark is a retired minister in the United Methodist Church. We had planned to refer to this speech from the Gathering but, after the tragic happenings on Sept. 11, it seemed that more than short references would be helpful. I hope I have in no way detracted from Dr. Clark's message by taking only parts of it. I will be glad to supply a copy of the complete speech to any wishing it. There are more parts dealing with faith and our spiritual lives and more examples of points he made.

I am sure, as you read it, you will see how almost prophetic his message is. Contact me at the address listed on page 2 for a copy. Thank you Dr. Clark for all the help you brought to us in the speech and in your workshop. How very helpful this has come to be in today's world.

HELP LINES

We are pleased to be among the groups recommended by web sites for those seeking help after the Sept. 11 tragedy.

The special issue of TIME had an opening page entitled How You Can Help. Under Who Can Help You is listed Griefnet with its web site of www.griefnet.org. If one goes to that Web Site and clicks on Resources and then on Bereaved Parent Resources, a listing comes up with BP/USA as the first and our website listed so that, with a click, one goes to our pages. We are also on the Google search engine and the AOL listing. We hope those seeking help will find us!



When the soul goes through the birth process, the angels in heaven do weep, while those on earth rejoice. When a soul dies through the death process, the family on earth does weep, while the angels in heaven rejoice.

From **DEATH DOES NOT PART US** by Elsie Sechrist

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, November 14, 2001: Annual Grief and Bereavement Seminar at the Bryant Conference Center, University of Alabama. The theme is "Acquired Bravery, Understanding the Human Response to Loss. For information, call 205-553-6459.

Sunday, December 9, 2001: National Children's Memorial Day. Across the nation and, indeed, the world, those who have had a child or children in their family die are asked to light a candle at 7 p.m. As the time zones progress across the world, a wave of light will sweep across the nations and remind everyone of the world's loved ones. This should be especially meaningful this year. BP/USA chapters, groups, churches and individuals may wish to plan a special program or plan a Christmas Candlelight Memorial at that time to participate in this observance.

Saturday, January 26, 2002 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: A retreat for grieving persons presented by the National Catholic Ministry to the Bereaved at the Community of the Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Cincinnati OH. For information, call Carole Spontak at 513-697-9197

BP/USA Annual Gathering will be in New Orleans and the theme will be "Together We Remember, Together We Grieve, Together We Grow." Dates, location and other information will be in the next newsletter, mailed to BP/USA Chapters and on the BP/USA web site, www.bereavedparentsusa.org as available.

July 5-7, 2002: National TCF Conference in Salt Lake City, UT. To receive information, write TCF Conference, PO Box 1149, Bountiful, UT 84011.

September 12-15, 2002: Third International TCF Conference in Sydney, Australia. More information later.

BOOK REVIEWS

By the Editor

Again these past months we have many good books for review. We thank the many publishers who are now sending us review copies.

TEAR SOUP, a new book about grief, is by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen, beautifully illustrated by Taylor Bills. It is a book about Grandy who has suffered a big loss in her life and is cooking up her own unique batch of "tear soup." A list of ingredients for tear soup included such things as "a pot full of tears," "one heart willing to be broken open," and "a lot of patience", among others and it is to be "seasoned with memories" and, as optional, "a support group." To order, call Grief Watch, Portland, Oregon at 503-284-7426 – fax: 503-282-8985 or e-mail at www.tearsoup.com.

WHEN MOURNING DAWNS, by James E. Miller, is a book to help people progress through grief. There is also a video available of the materials which can be viewed and discussed in sections. This is published by Willowgreen Publishing, 10351 Dawson's Creek Blvd, Suite B., Fort Wayne, IN 46825.

SIT DOWN, GOD...I'M ANGRY by R. F. Smith, Jr. was given to the editor by a member of the BP/USA support group in Lewisburg, WV. The Rev. Mr. Smith is senior minister of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church of Huntington, WV, and a bereaved parent. He tells of his struggle with his anger with God when his son died. Although, of course, it has a religious theme, it is never "preachy". At the very end, I found a quote which one of my priests sent me when Ruthie died which sums up things so well. He says, in a letter written to his son after the son's death, "The rafters of our theology have trembled. We have touched the bottom, but I'm happy to report to you that the bottom is solid! We shall make it." The book is available from Judson Press in Valley Forge, PA and through Amazon.com.

A DECEMBERED GRIEF by Harold Ivan Smith arrived just in time to be reviewed in this issue. It deals with "Living With Loss While Others Are Celebrating." Alan Wolfelt, Director of the Center of Loss and Life Transition, says, in the Foreword, "No book can take away the hurt you are feeling. I am confident, however, that the excellent suggestions in this compassionate text will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful yet painful, time of the year." I would agree. This is also a spiritually oriented book with much hope and compassion. There is also a companion book for those who want it, called JOURNALING YOUR DECEMBERED GRIEF which is an inactive journal which can be filled out and used as a healing tool. Either or both may be obtained from Beacon Hill Press, 2923 Troost Ave., Kansas City, MO. 64109, phone 1-800-877-0700.

WHAT IS GOD? WHAT IS LOVE? WHAT IS DEATH? are books written by Etan Boritzer and illustrated by Robbie Marantz. They are written for use with children but are useful for all ages. WHAT IS DEATH introduces children – and all of us – to "the concept of death with examples of customs and beliefs from different religions and cultures" and encourages children "to embrace the positive in life." These are available from Veronica Lane Books, 513 Wilshire Blvd. #282, Santa Monica, CA 90401.

THE MATS by Francisco Arcellano, originally published in the Philippines, deals with remembering our loved ones who have died. GOODBY RUNE by Marit Kaldhol and Wenche Oyen, originally published in Norway, gives children a chance to learn about the difficult issues of death and sorrow in a direct and intelligent manner. Both books are well done and illustrated and would be helpful for adults also. The books are translated and published by Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 7946 Ivanhoe Ave., Ste. 218, LaJolla, CA, 92037.

ONE BIG SUPPORT GROUP

Betty R. Ewart, Editor



Please forgive if this newsletter is a little late this quarter. Who can stay away from the TV right now or stop reading the newspapers and concentrate on something like writing a newsletter. I am reminded of the time, just after our Ruthie's death, when I found it hard to concentrate or accomplish anything.

We have all, in the United States and in the world, become one big support group! Some of us are new members, some have been members for months or years. We are suddenly hearing things all over again and reliving things all over again.

Let me quote just a few things that I have written down as I read and watched.

From a reporter: "I don't know how you do it! I can't imagine going through a loss like this. But you seem so calm! What am I missing?" And, from the bereaved father, "The Pain!"

From a parent: "We are just missing our daughter and would give anything to have her back."

From a grieving wife: "I have found strength in visiting others – I am not alone!"

From a griever who was asked how one goes through this: "We didn't choose this. We must get up each morning and go on and rebuild!"

From so many who received cell phone calls from loved ones: "I got to say good bye and I love you!"

And, from another grieving person, "Remember them as people who lived, not as people who died!"

From a Firefighter who died and who had spoken at a funeral for a fellow officer less than 2 weeks before, "Sometimes, in this job,

before, "Sometimes, in this job, goodbye is really goodbye."

About those who hold on to hope even though it seems hopeless, "They know better, of course. But they need time, time to find some way to fit what has happened into the story of their lives."

Don't all of these ring true to the feelings we had and the thoughts we hear expressed by others in our support groups and as we talk with other bereaved parents? Don't we all wish our child had had a cell phone to call and say goodbye and that they loved us and let us say goodbye and that we loved them?

Of course, we realize what is ahead for all these thousands of persons. The days and months, the holidays, the anniversaries and birthdays. We know that they will often think they can not make it but we also know that they will, because we did!

And we ache to be with them and to reassure them. Being with someone who has traveled the road before is what they need. Stop to think a minute. We know now that thousands have died in N.Y., Washington and VA. Each one of these persons had 2 or more parents/step parents, 4 or more grandparents, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, cousins, relatives and friends all over the country and world. TIME magazine estimates that "for every person, 5 or 6 lives are touched. Then each of those 5 or 6 touch 5 or 6 more and those still more. Many of the funerals and Memorial Services have hundreds or thousands in attendance. Think of the numbers that we may be talking about affected directly by these deaths. Then add those of us for whom this brings back memories of our own losses and you see that we have an enormous number. And, of course, there may be more deaths in the days ahead. Perhaps we, as support groups and as individuals, can find these people in our communities

these people and reach out to them. Their stories will be in your papers. Read them and reach out to these people.

We were reminded of the theme of the 2001 Gathering when we read "The Age of Irony Comes to an End" in the special edition of TIME. Roger Rosenblatt, recalls how people had not taken life seriously and said they felt the pain but didn't really understand. He says, "When the white dust settles, and the bereaved are alone in their houses, there will be nothing but grief around them and nothing is more real than that. ... The kindness of people toward others in distress is real. There is nothing to see through in that. Honor and fair play? Real. ... The greatness of the country: real. The anger: real. The pain: too real." And our Gathering theme adds that there is "Real Hope."

The Board of Directors of BP/USA is looking into how we might all reach out too. Anyone wishing to give toward providing brochures, books, newsletters, etc. for grieving persons may make a donation to a special fund at BP/USA. This could be in memory of a loved one or of all lost in this tragedy. The Board will be meeting in October and will investigate the best way to get these materials where they are needed.

If you wish to contribute, please send your contribution to our treasurer, Paul Kinney, at PO Box 5903, Louisville, KY 40255, marked for this purpose. If you have suggestions of how best to use this money, we would welcome those too.

It is in reaching out to others that we feel some comfort and resolution of our own grief. Help in any way – the way that is best for you! As bereaved parents, we can offer an example and a hope that counselors, friends and family who had not had a loved one die can not offer. In memory of your child, reach out!

ROY AND JUANITA PETERSON AWARD

The Roy and Juanita Peterson Award was given at the 2001 Gathering in Dallas to Mitch and Renee Dudnikov.

The first award was given to Roy and Juanita. The next one went to John Goodrich and then one was given to Mary Cleckley. This is an award to recognize those who have been especially helpful to BP/USA and to grieving persons in their community and nationally.

Mitch and Renee have been a part of BP/USA since it started. Mitch was on the first Board of Directors. He and Renee have also been an active part of the BP/USA of Metropolitan Baltimore for many years. Whenever asked to do something for BP, they never say no. Most of the time, they do not have to be asked. They will just come up or write and volunteer to help!

We all feel privileged to know and work with Renee and Mitch and know Marc is proud of what they have done with their lives since his tragic death.

HELPFUL MATERIALS

A Gold Crown Collector's Edition of the Hallmark Hall of Fame, **NIGHT RIDE HOME**, is a very good video of a show done by Hallmark. It deals with a family in which the young son and brother is killed in a fall from a horse. In the course of the 107 minute video, almost all of the matters that we know about are mentioned. The sister has to deal with her guilt since they were riding together and she challenged him to a race. Her boyfriend leaves her because he gets tired of hearing about her dead brother. The mother and father separate because they cannot talk about their different ways of

grieving. The grandmother tries to deal with her own grief and her daughter's grief problems. Everything is sensitively done and accurate. The jacket of the video says, "Nurtured by love, they learn to face the future not as separate individuals-but as a real family once again." This is available from any Hallmark store and would be helpful for personal use. It could also be used in a chapter meeting and could be watched and discussed in segments.

We would also recommend, for personal use or in chapter meetings, a packet of Support Cards which is available from Grief Watch. These cards contain brief questions about various aspects of grief. They help one to think about various areas and would be useful as conversation starters at a meeting. To order these, call Grief Watch in Portland, Oregon. Information is on page 4 under the book review section.



SOME PEOPLE SAY

By Margaret Gerner
St. Louis, MO BP/USA

"I wouldn't go to one of those grief meetings. It's morbid – people sitting around talking about the dead. How wrong those people are.

In so many ways, those who attend are saying, "I am hurting now, but I want to go on with my life." They are saying, "I am crying now, but I want to laugh again." They are saying, "I am sick in body and soul, help me get well." I see these things as healthy, not morbid.

It is not easy to walk into a meeting of any kind alone, especially one where the subject is very emotional, but once there it takes only a few minutes to find out we are not alone; that there are those who care about us and want to help us. We see others hurting and suddenly we want to help them. I don't see that as morbid.

A grieving parent wants to talk about his beloved child who is no longer physically part of his life. That child has died with a tragic suddenness or as a result of an illness that usually takes older people. We want to know why or find a reason or some meaning in our child's death. I don't see any morbidity in trying to understand.

Memories of our child are all we have left. We have a driving need to hang on to those memories lest we lose that small bit of our child. It is not morbid to want to keep that small part alive forever, at least in our hearts and minds.

To walk into a support group meeting is a loud shout – "I want to live and be happy again." It is a cry that "My child is dead, but I know he would want me to go on and be a better person for the suffering." It is a confirmation that even though part of life is gone, there is a reason to go on. There is nothing morbid about doing what is necessary in order to re-enter the mainstream of life.

Grief is neither
a sign of weakness
nor a lack of faith.

It is the price we pay
for love.

Darcie Sims
FOOTSTEPS
THROUGH THE VALLEY

PSST!

By Joan Liljedahl, Silver Spring, MD, From the Newsletter of the Baltimore Metropolitan BP/USA

Psst! They're coming, you know. Before you know it, they're gonna be here! They do sneak up on you. You're going along, peaceful, not too many down days, and then, almost without warning, they're on top of you! Those mind-blowing, gut-wrenching, shiver-producing holidays – they're coming. Yes, starting with Halloween, then Thanksgiving and finally Christmas or Chanukah, they are on us. Each with its myriad memories of our family when it was larger – each holiday tearing at us, destroying us.

To avoid them, there are those who recommend that we do something different, travel, take a cruise, eat out rather than at home, etc. You can do these things and they may help you get through the holidays. There is another way to beat them. Another method to defuse and defeat the downer that the holidays can be to us. Beat them to it!

Let's take Halloween. What about Halloween can tear us apart? The kids' costumes? Remembering how we went around "Trick or Treating" with them? I remember a very small one who, by the third house had turned into a witch – a voracious, avaricious little greedy-guts who wanted to continue forever getting, getting, getting, more and more candy and goodies, and who cried when she had to stop and go home.

Is there a children's home somewhere that can use a helping hand? Sure you may dissolve in tears but, if you can help someone else in any way, you'll be helping yourself more. Or don't shut off the lights and hide in the darkness. Open your door to the little ghosties and goblins. Try to guess who they are. Ask the little ones what their "trick" is. In their

innocence they think they have to perform a trick for you, and may do a dance or something similar. Will it hurt? Maybe. Will the tears come? Probably. But you'll have some fun too. Hiding in the dark at Halloween is no way to live.

For Thanksgiving, you can go away and escape, but how about doing the same things you did before, only now you are one short. Just use a little less salt, let your tears provide the seasoning. It's OK to cry; it's OK to remember; no one will laugh at you, although they may think (and say), "You should be over it by now," but who cares?

Meet Christmas or Chanukah head on! Hang that one special stocking. Don't be afraid of talking about the past. I remember the joy I had when they finally found out how much more fun it was to give a gift than it was to receive one. The tree lights and the menorah candles are much more beautiful when viewed through teary blurred eyes. They have a special glow and luminosity then. Don't worry about "spoiling" these holidays because you are sad. Ask, out loud, for the one gift you really want and need: Compassion. You'll get it.

Sometimes grief seems to be like a splinter. We treat splinters in two ways. We can do nothing, and it will slowly fester and probably become infected. We can attack it head on with a needle and gouge it out of our life. Either way hurts. The first way hurts for a long time; the direct attack way hurts for a much shorter time. The scar is about the same. This year, try not to dodge or hide from the holidays. Try meeting the holidays head on! The anticipation of the day or the event is usually much worse than the day or the event actually is. You can do it. You can't hide from 'em and you can't avoid 'em either. Psst! They're coming, you know...

WEARING A MASK

From the Inside Fernside Newsletter
A Center for Grieving Children

Halloween is a great time to pretend to be someone else. You can be mean and nasty even though you're usually a pretty nice person, or you can be scary when you usually are the one that gets scared. You can pretend to be strong and powerful or beautiful or mysterious or famous. You can pretend to be anything on Halloween.

It isn't fun, though, to try to always wear a mask. Sometimes, for a person who is grieving, it seems like you need to always pretend to be your old happy self. Your friends and others may want you to forget about your loss and go on as if nothing much has changed. But it is really hard to mask your true feelings all the time. It is much better for you, if you can, to take off your mask and just be yourself sometimes. If you let your feelings out, then you are being honest with yourself and others. By taking off your mask and revealing your true self, you will be a much more REAL person. It's better to save masks for Halloween.



REMEDY

**MEMORIES
WILL BRING YOU
LOVE FROM THE PAST
COURAGE IN THE
PRESENT
HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

By Sascha
From WINTERSUN

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MADE

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA

Because my son's birthday always fell very close to Thanksgiving Day, we always had his birthday dinner on his day, but everyone knew his real dinner was the Thanksgiving meal. He loved it and always piled his plate high – maybe more than once. The first Thanksgiving after my son died, my husband, my daughter and I determined we wanted no part of old traditions that day. Not only could I not shop for and cook the meal but I discovered no one wanted me to. It was painful for us all. We steered clear of family and friends and had dinner at the Benihana of Tokyo restaurant. You can't get much further away from tradition than that! But it was what we needed to do that year.

The next year we were invited out for the Thanksgiving meal. Going to a restaurant was better for us than having to be a part of a family gathering. It was easier to pretend that it was just another day and nothing special.

The third year I decided to have a go at shopping for and cooking "the" meal. I only invited family who would understand hot dogs at the last minute.

The next year, I found I approached that day and meal with confidence. I knew I had recovered to a point where it wasn't going to be traumatic for me. It was encouraging for me to recognize that progress. I'm not saying we didn't miss our son, but we were learning to create a life without him.

Had you asked me before my son died how I thought I would be able to gauge my forward progress after he died, I assure you that my ability to

cook turkey, dressing, wild rice, giblet gravy, green beans, sweet potato soufflé and ambrosia would have been near the end of my list of guesses. Don't we have to measure progress in strange ways?

Hope you make some progress this year too. If this year isn't your year, next year might be. A year often makes a lot of difference. I encourage you to know it is possible and worth aiming for. I promise you that Benihana's will have room for you should you too decide to forget it all on Thanksgiving Day. Just isn't a busy day for them for some reason!



PEACE AT CHRISTMAS

By Bruce Conley in
HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

The greatest gift between you and the one you are now missing, can never be worn out, weathered, exchanged or returned. For you gave each other something that can never be taken from you – a treasure of memories – and now they hurt to think of them. Fond, beautiful memories made in love. What if they had never been made at all?

How much worse to have lived without then, No, you take those memories, reminisce over them, let them hurt. They'll probably always hurt; But it does get less. They will become more valuable with time, as will the fondness you hold for those holiday memories you have made. Give yourself a gift this holiday season—Peace—as much as you possibly can. Then share it with those you love. No one can ever take away the good times you have experienced.

Although there are no easy five step plans to coping with the holidays and

grief, there are a few things we can do to help ourselves through the holiday season. First, we must recognize that, as grieving persons, we simply may be unable to function or work at our usual optimum. Our minds can only handle so much at one time! So, set some priorities, both short term and long term.

A short term goal should be simply to get through TODAY...one day at a time. The ultimate long term goal is to come to an acceptance of your child's death and to learn to make life meaningful again.

Stop. Look at and consider what really is meaningful for ourselves and for those we love. Try having a family conference and consider these points: Eliminate the unnecessary and reduce the holiday pressures on yourself and others. Focus on things that really are important to you and your family. Don't over extend. Don't over commit. Be realistic and you won't feel that you have failed. Give special consideration to which activities will help both you and the children....Do you have family traditions? Is it important to continue with them this year, or is it a good time to begin some new ones? Reevaluate, discuss and consider ways of keeping traditions, while alleviating some of the pain of loss.

Finally, remember the needs of others and be aware that your greatest happiness may come in doing something for someone else for, isn't that the true meaning of Christmas?

One thing you can do is start some new tradition that is so different from the old celebrations that it has no painful memories for you.

By Helen Fitzgerald, "The Mourning Handbook"

Taken from A DECEMBERED GRIEF by Harold Ivan Smith

CHRISTMAS TIME, AGAIN

Trisha Lolacher
Regina, SK, Canada

In memory of Shayne Michael, her 18 year old brother

The joyous season rolls around. Oh, but once a year,
Like your normal days, they have their share of tears.

The only thing is, with this festive time,
And it's pretty songs, something's lost in the rhymes.

Someone lost is more like it, I call him Shayne;
You may know him, but by another name.

He is a child, brother, friend, snatched from our sight.
It seems so cruel, so hard to feel right.

When someone you love is gone, in the blink of an eye,
You wish it were fake, like a horrible lie.

If there is one time of year when it hurts so bad,
It would be the time of cheer, one that we've all had.

That's right, Holiday Season is beginning to loom,
There's kids on vacation, lots of bodies at home.

And yet, in the midst of the season that once made you smile,
You wish you could curl up and hide for a while.

It just doesn't seem right, and you know it's not fair,
But there is someone that's missing, who you wish was there.

It's hard to believe that I have survived,
So far it's been four this year will be five.

Still, on Christmas morning, there'll be a smile on my face,
Until I notice what's wrong, a stocking's not in it's place.

And, on Christmas night, after the gifts, food and smiles,
I'll put my face in the pillow and cry for a while.

I can ask all I want, but I know it can't be,
"cause Shayne is the only gift Santa can't get for me.

And, in the Christmas season, do you know what really bites?
When people you thought were there for you, tell you to get on with life.

And the tears will come, and the hurt will stay,
For this and every other Christmas Day.

Shayne died on July 21, 1989 as a result of a drunk driver. His sister is a part of the TCF of Regina, SK, Canada.



By Dennis Klass
Advisor to BP/USA

There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish writing. Those Jews had the custom of rending their garments – literally tearing their clothes – to symbolize the ripping apart that death brings. But the question was raised, after the period of mourning, could you sew the garment up and use it again? The teachers answered yes, but, when you mended it, you should not tuck the edges under so it would look as if it had never been torn. This symbolized the fact that life, after grief, is not the same as before. The rent will show. The next question was, can you see that garment? The teachers answered no. The rending and mending of our life is ours and others cannot wear it.

No, we don't get over it. We change and grow. Our life has a difference which is ours alone. Perhaps we can help each other make that difference the kind of difference that increases the world's supply of compassion, love and healing.



Light a candle during the

CANDLES By Sascha in THE SORROW AND THE LIGHT

When the time comes
for lighting festive candles
let the remind you
not only of what you lost,
but also of what you had.

holiday season and, especially on Sunday, December 9, National / World Children's Memorial Day. See page 4.

2001 Gathering



Dr. Alva H. Clark, Keynote Speaker, and Shirley Ottman, Gathering Chair



Butterfly Quilt



Peterson Award for 2001 given to Mitch and Renee Dudnikov



Butterflies



Hospitality Room



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Shirley Ottman and Helper Hard at Work

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