

The
LIGHTHOUSE



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Relections

Sometimes as a parent who has been wounded by death of a child we need time apart to heal. For me over the years, it's been camping. Right-now I am in my own private (Eden) where my tent is pitched beside a creek. Water cascades over layers of rocks, around a small island like sparks of glory, yellow and orange butterflies flutter among its tall grass. Birds are chirping, one with a plaintive three-note cry. A trio of chipmunks chase each other down the bank. Upstream tumbling falls are liquid silver, caught in the light.

"My daughters pop-up" campers are in nearby sites. Over a cup of coffee this morning, Mim and I talked about our missing family members - Karen, Jon, and David. "Yes they 're in Heaven," Mim said, "But how I wish when I'm horseback riding, one of my siblings could be sharing with me, the beauty of a trail through the woods!"

Flashbacks came to me of our Adiramdack camp-outs: Karen, Mim, and Jon around the breakfast tables, laughing as their dad flipped pancakes. And the night the bear came snuffling around the old Hedroom tent, I lay on my cot rigid with fright. After trying to thump the ice chest open, the critter gave up and shuffled away.

You too may recall special vacations with your dear ones. Simple outings brought such pleasure to our children! Jon built stone dams across brooks, Karen loved to swing in the hammock. Davy remembered vividly the raft trip with Mim in Alaska.

Yes, as time heals, good times shine through the loss. So take time alone in a beautiful setting to savor shared joys with the children no longer with you, or come together as a family and talk about vacation memories. This summer edition of "The Lighthouse" contains excellent material to help you care for mourning children. There are also guidelines for you in your journey through grief. May you see woven in the fabric of your life, threads of grace, the goodness of your special one(s).

Peace and joy,
Connie Jackson



Make small beginnings toward reshaping your life without the one you loved. Your efforts are seeds of hope that you can cultivate into a fruitful new existence.

Reflection:

Hold the cup upright in your hands.
Look upon it as a cup that holds tears.
Let the cup represent your own pain and tears or the pain and tears of someone you know.
Envision God's hands around your hands as you hold the cup of tears.
Allow this Compassionate Presence to give comfort to you or to another who is in pain.

From "The Cup of Our Life" Joyce Rupp

It Will Affect Them

"We're praying Justin's handicap won't affect Jeff."

"Then I guess you're had better quit praying."

Stunned by these words from a friend - in fact, horrified by them - I, who am never without words, was speechless. When my friend felt the pain of my silence, he explained, "If a normal child had been born into your home, it would affect Jeff. To pray that the handicap won't affect him is to pray the prayer of denial. It will affect him. Begin now to pray instead that this event, the handicap (and eventual death) of his brother, will serve as an influence for good and not for evil."

I've thanked my friend (who is also a professor in rehabilitation counseling) many times for his words of wisdom. That year in our lives is still like a black cloud in my memory, so pronounced it was with sorrow. This conversation began my journey to walk in truth, no matter what happened.

We can't have emotional health without truth. We laud truth, but when tragedy strikes, we simply cannot comprehend or admit the truth of our situation all at once. God has equipped us with an intuitive gift; grief counselors call it shock and denial. It eases us into our new reality and gives us the strength to get through the mechanics of ceremony and burial. If we get stuck here and don't move on, our loss haunts us for the rest of our lives. If we work through our pain and cry our tears, our loved one remains a cherished memory - and the experience of walking through our grief will enrich us with new strength and endurance for the future.

A child unaffected by the death of a loved one is a myth. When we see children playing, seemingly unaware of the pain of loss, they, like adults, are in the grief stage of shock and denial. It will take a while for them to understand what has happened and learn to assimilate death into their conscious minds.

Moving from shock and denial to acceptance is not an easy journey. We have a slogan in our grief recovery classes:

It is true that the truth sets you free.

But before it does, it gives you a whole bunch of pain!

How Can WE Tell That Our Children Are Grieving?

Look for changes or extremes in their behavior:
Did they color within the lines, but now they scribble?
Has the content or style of their drawing changed?
Are they spending more or less time alone than before?
Has their frustration level heightened?
Are they more shy or more talkative than they were before?
Have they become clingy or withdrawn?
Have their eating habits changed?
Has their sense of humor changed?
Have they developed new illnesses or fears?
Are they afraid to go to sleep?

Are they more childish or more mature than is normal for their age?

These are normal reactions. As we observe them, we should encourage our children to talk, listen to them, hold them, read to them, and call them when we are away for extended periods of time. WE might occasionally suggest and emotion: "Are you sad that Uncle John died?"

This is not the time to scold or correct our children for the reactive behaviors listed above, unless of course their behavior is harmful. In fact, we shouldn't even voice our concerns to them. Instead we should overdose them with love and affection. Life as they knew it has been dealt a mortal blow. Recognize these behaviors as childish versions of our own grief. I remember, for example, a period of time after Justin died when the ring of a telephone could send me into a panic attack. It had so often been the bearer of bad news that I had a conditioned response. These reactions are not signs of crisis: they are signs of fear because of a broken heart.

In times of sorrow we parents are wonderful mother hens. We want to gather our children together, tuck them under our wings, and shield them from the harsh realities of life. We want to protect them from the ugliness and sorrow of the pain in the world around them. It is so much easier to bear grief ourselves than to allow our children to experience it. Yet experience it they must. No matter what we do, no matter what we say, life with its heartaches and joys will happen to them. When we accept that truth, our role can switch from protecting them to mentoring them.

What Can We Do or Say?

Watching and wondering is so difficult! Sometimes we learn to pray as parents not because we have great faith and not because we are righteous. Sometimes we pray because we have no alternative. Name each of your children daily in prayer. Do this every day of their lives, in good times and in bad. Whether you believe in prayer or not, I promise it will change your life.

But we can and should do more than just pray. In the wake of grief you might try the following:

Encourage your children to talk about the deceased.

Encourage your children to cry when they need to.

Cry with them when you need to.

Teach them how to deal with rather than repress their anger

Encourage them to express their thought, fears, and feelings creatively:

Draw a picture of Grandpa.

Sing a song about Mary.

Write a letter to Dad: ask Jesus to make sure he gets it.

Write a book about Grandma.

Tell me again how your and Stevie saved that kitten.

Tell Fido (or Dolly) about Justin.

Help me remember what he looked like.

Allow your children to live a normal life:
Have them invite friends over.
Let them spend the night with friends.
Talk about it when the need to.

Don't talk about it if they don't want to.
Play with them; laugh with them; read to them; pray with them.
Hug them.
Laugh with them again.
Hug them some more.

When do our children need extra help ?

Grief reactions can become problematic. If grief is too painful, or if showing grief is considered inappropriate in our home, we can't express our heartache in healthy ways, so we repress it. When this happens, we enter what is called the sleeper effect of grief; it is buried very much alive, and it clouds everything we do.

How can we tell our children our mourning ? By watching their behavior. Any major change in behavior that lasts longer than a typical mood swing is a sign that something is seriously wrong. Professionally, I am founder and director of SCORE, a nationally validated program for getting at - risk students turned onto learning, mastering their course content, and graduating eligible for college or career. I train school staff to watch grades. If a student's grade moves from A to C or lower in one class, that student needs our help to deal with a teacher conflict or a difficult subject. If a student's grades drop across the board, that student is in crisis and needs intervention. It's that simple. The crises differ from one situation to the next, but the principal never fails.

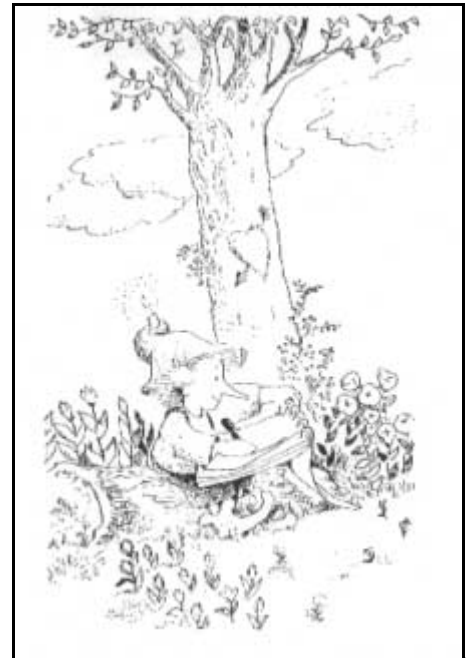
The following are signs of deeper grief. They too are normal once in a while. If they last beyond a few instances you may need to look for help outside your immediate family.

- Drawing obsessed with death or violence
- Cruelty to other children (beyond age - appropriate spat)
- Cruelty to animals
- Phantom or copycat illnesses
- Facial ticks or body twitches
- Eyes that periodically cross or won't focus
- Obsessive behavior
- Lethargy or hyperactivity
- Extreme behaviors inappropriate for a child's age
- No reaction at all, as though the death didn't matter

When heartache and brokenness, the uninvited guests visit our home, they will affect our children. If we pray that they will serve as an influence for good rather than evil, we moved into action. We must look for the good that God has promised will come, rather than bemoaning the helplessness of the situation or pretending it doesn't hurt.

God has not promised us that everything that happens to us will be good, but He has promised us that He is bigger than our every circumstance and that He has the power to grow good from our life's ashes of grief.

From "Take my hand", B. Johnson



In a letter, a poem, a drawing, a journal entry, or an imaginary conversation with the one you have lost, pour out your feelings you never had a chance to express. This will foster healing

Why Do Good People Suffer?

Charlie Brown's team is behind 98-0, and he is standing on the pitcher's mound, talking to himself: "Boy, I must be stupid to stand out here and take a beating like this! The other team is laughing at me; my own team hates me; I'm a lousy pitcher; my stomach hurts. I don't know why I play this game. I must be really stupid!"

Lucy comes over to console him: "Charlie Brown, you can't go on like this. You've got to change your attitude! The years are going by and you're not enjoying life at all! Just remember, Charlie Brown, that the moments you spend out here on this pitcher's mound are moments to be treasured! We're not going to be kids forever, Charlie Brown, so treasure these moments!"

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Then Charlie Brown, with determination on his face, tugs at the bill of his cap, rears back, and fires a pitch toward the plate. The batter swings and rips a scorching line-drive back through the pitcher's box knocking Charlie Brown off the mound. His cap goes one direction; his glove goes another. Knocked right out of his shoes and sock, he lands flat on his back. Lying there, Charlie Brown surveys the situation: "This is a difficult moment to treasure!"

Charlie Brown expresses, in a lighter vein, what we all too often find very heavy - that many moments in life are "difficult to treasure." Life can be painful, and no one is exempt from the pain. I consider this to be the difficult, frustrating, and challenging question to confront our faith in a good and loving God: "Why do good people suffer?"

Just think of it. We talk about the goodness of God - a God who is all-powerful, a God who loves his children - and it seems that with a God like this, the world should be a living paradise. But there is a problem. All around us, we see the starkness, the agony of suffering. A hotel catches fire and scores of people are trapped and killed. A schoolbus slides off an icy road and thirty-four children lose their lives. A telegram informs a young wife that her husband has been killed in action. A volcano erupts, taking the lives of hundreds. A telephone call gives you the news you dreaded to hear: your loved one has cancer.

The question screams inside of us: Why? Why does God permit such things to happen? Why does God let God permit such things to happen? Why does God let good people suffer? Why did God let the best be nailed to a cross? Has God forsaken us?

I remember sitting with a young woman in a hospital waiting room some years ago. The doctor had just brought bad news about her husband, and she felt utterly forsaken.

"Doesn't God care?" she cried. "Why my husband? He has been a good man all his life. He has worked hard. He has been a wonderful father. He has been a good churchman and has taught Sunday school. He has been honest and kind and loving. Now he has to die young, while people who have never done anything for anybody, who have never been to church, who have cheated and lied, live on. Why? It's just not fair!"

I certainly do not presume to know the full answer to the problem of human suffering. It is, without doubt, one of life's great mysteries - a problem so deep, so profound, so wrapped in holy awe, that since the beginning of time, people have literally pelted heaven with their prayers, asking "Why?" Even the wisest person in the world cannot answer the question completely. Still, we must try. Out of my struggle with this perplexing question, let me share some ideas I found helpful.

Yes, we suffer because we live in a world of dependable natural laws; we live in a world that's racked with growing pains; we live in a world that gives us freedom of choice. *There is however one more thing to be said about suffering in our world - that we are not alone. God is with us, enabling us to suffer creatively; enabling us to turn our defeats into victories and our sorrows into triumphs.*

We can trust God. We don't have to be afraid, because nothing can separate us from God and God's love. From "When Grief Breaks Your Heart"; James W. Moore pp 41-43

My Brother is Going to Die (an 8 year old's perspective by Jeff Johnson)

He died two days ago.

You should have seen my brother before he died. My family misses him very much. We love him very much. He was the nicest brother I've ever had in my entire life. I wish he was still here.

I used to play with him very much. One time I asked him, "Let's go play football." I bet you guys are going to laugh at this. Please don't laugh at me. I will miss him very much. So will my mom and dad. We love him very, very, very much. We wish he was still alive.

He was in the hospital for two and a half months. I got to hold him in the hospital. I was only three years old then. Sometimes I cry nowadays. We wish he was alive. When he died, he was four and a half months old.

I knew he was going to die soon. He was the nicest brother I ever had. We miss him very much. My mom said, "He is very sick. He will die soon." We miss him and he misses us.

Perspective of a Young Adult

I have always had an extra sense of compassion for those struggling in life, and I don't know quite how to explain it. I have been dramatically affected by my brother, even though I don't remember consciously deciding to make his death a positive part of my life. I was only three when Justin died; I didn't know about my mother's conversation or her prayer that his death would serve as an influence for good in my life, but her prayers were certainly answered. I never remember a time when I was bitter over my brother - I was just lonely for him.

I think my brother's handicap has made me much more aware today of how the disabled need help. I seem to have the necessary patience to work with those who are less able than I am, and I really enjoy it. I know that it's easy for me to talk to handicapped people.

I always see some part of Justin when I come across children with disabilities. A child where I work has a shunt in his head because of hydrocephalus (the disease that afflicted Justin). I think it is much easier for me to understand and care for him after having gone through the trauma and grief of my brother's handicap and death. Had I not gone through this, I would not have known to treat this young boy with dignity rather than pity or fear. I laugh with him, talk with him, tease him, play with him. God is able to work in my life and through Justin's to give me compassion and confidence.

Encourage children to write out what they think. I don't remember writing that little passage, but it helps me see what I was thinking about and how I was dealing with Justin and his death. I missed getting to have someone to play with, be a brother to. I didn't have a little brother to boss around anymore. Those who have siblings can appreciate that.

The fact that I was about two years behind my mother in dealing with things is quite normal. Children learn how to cope with challenges by observing the behavior of others. It wasn't until I saw my mom come to grips with the reality of loss and make it a healthy part of her life that I could know how to do the same.

Children learn how to cope with challenges by observing the behavior of others.

From "Take My Hand", B. Johnson

Cherishing Your Memories of a Loved One by Linus Mundy

There is so much I can't and don't want to forget about the losses in my life. My father comes to mind first. A man of 70 years, he died on Father's Day in 1985. Recently I was rereading one of my favorite books, Ernest Hemingway's *The old Man and the Sea*, and I came upon the simple line: "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him."

Strong and cherished feelings and memories about my father arose inside of me. My dad may never have taught me much about the fine arts and sciences, but he did teach this boy to fish. And I loved him.

Only a month before Dad died, I asked him to help me carve some "figure-four triggers" for a simple rabbit trap like the ones he and I used to set when I was a youngster. I wanted to share this quaint little contraption with my own children even if we were only to enjoy the thrill of seeing life up close and then setting the trapped animal free. I also wanted to give my children an experience of what it was like in my father's time, when families hunted and trapped for food.

As he and I got started on the project, Dad winced with the pain of his illness as he carved the trigger stick. Yet the whole time he knew just what we were up to together: we were making and preserving precious memories; somehow trying to

immortalize what he and I had enjoyed together years earlier, what he and his father had enjoyed years before that.

Working your way through.

Memories are personal. Whether it's simply speaking the name of your beloved one, holding a ceremony to honor his or her memory, or revisiting a favorite place or activity you shared, the key is to make and preserve connections. Here are a few ideas - my own as well as borrowed ones - to help you strengthen cherished connections with someone you have loved and continue to love.

Don't hide the hardship.

Loss is painful - that's no secret. Memories too, can be painful, "but you need to tell your story," says Charlotte Hrubes, co-founder of Joyful Again!, a recovery program for widows and widowers. She urges people not to hide the hardships of their losses, but to share them in a group. "You need to be real somewhere, because other people in your life will probably avoid talking about it. At support groups you can share your feelings...It helps to hear others express the same feelings you've been wrestling with. People who sign up for our sessions invariably tell us, "No one can have ever felt this much pain." But then they hear others say the same thing in the group..... they gain the strength of realizing they are normal."

Being "normal" means wanting validation for a full range of feelings that loss brings. For example, it is normal for even your closest friends and relatives (and, yes, you yourself too) not to speak the name of the one you've loved and lost. Somehow we have it within our power to pretend that someone we loved deeply and intimately must never have even existed.

When my sister begins to talk about our mother, who has died, I answer back that my little Patrick sure is growing up quickly. If my wife happens to mention the miscarriage we experienced just two months before my father's death, I'm quick to end the conversation and hide the hardship.

You will not be cured, butone day - an idea that will horrify you now - this intolerable misfortune will become a blessed memory of a being who will never again leave you.
Marcel Proust - letters

Some parts of grief have to be let out. Our grief needs to be observed by others. Says Donna O'Toole, a noted grief author, publisher, and teacher: "Grieving our losses does not disconnect us from life but rather, like invisible threads, the losses of our lives weave life unto life."

**"The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude."
-Thornton Wilder, playwright**

Don't hide the hope and the joy. It is also no secret that love is stronger than death. That is something to celebrate. Ask any of those who have loved and lost and have begun to heal. They remember the death, but they remember the love more. And their fondest wish is that their loved ones now be at peace, in a place of joy. For me, at this time in my life, I have a clear hope in such an outcome after death. But I'm also ready to acknowledge that for many people there is much mystery and doubt about it all.

Arie Brouwer was a theologian who served as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. He died in 1993. Seeing his death coming, he spoke of faith and hope as mysterious yet very real. He said, "This experience of hope in spite of everything is to me even more important than the experience of faith in spite of everything. However mysterious, I am profusely grateful for both."

We, too, must learn to remain grateful for the love and joy we not only shared with our loved ones but may still be blessed with through our memories of them and our hopes for them. If your belief system gives you the added comfort, joy, and trust that all is well with your loved one now in paradise, indeed that is a further blessing to celebrate. If you struggle with doubts and fears talking with a trusted friend, counselor, or minister may be of comfort and help.

Keep your loved one's finest qualities alive. This can be your ongoing gift to the one you love, and his or her ongoing gift to the world.

At the burial rite for my father, friends and family were solemnly filing by the casket, giving a final blessing. Some stopped to offer a handshake, a hug, or a word of comfort to our grieving family. "There will never be another one like him," I offered to one of my dearest friends. Her response was a simple: "You're just like him." I've never forgotten those beautiful, spontaneous words. And I try to live by them, difficult as it is for me.

"Imitation is the highest form of flattery," goes the saying. The greatest lessons our loved ones have taught us can be beautifully and repeatedly shared. We pay great honor to our loved one's finest qualities by trying to live and act on them in and through our own lives.

You knew your loved one well. Ask yourself: what were the special traits and virtues you learned from her or him that you can help perpetuate by actively developing and sharing them? The world needs all it can get of the good and unique things your loved one possessed and shared. These traits now belong to you - and to the ages - if you act to keep them alive. What a tribute and testament! What a gift to the world!

All that we know about those that have loved and lost is that they would wish us to remember them with more intensified realization of their reality. What is essential does not die but clarifies. Thronton Wilder, playwright

Use simple ceremony and ritual. Ceremony and ritual are especially helpful for remembering our loved ones. "Whenever we experience a transition, happy or sad, a ceremony helps us recenter ourselves by making a symbolic statement about that change," writes Lynda Paladin in *Ceremonies for Change*.

Betty Hopf, a Sister of Providence and a chaplain with a special gift for grief ministry, gives workshops on remembering. "It is more painful to try to forget than to remember," she says. Here are just a sampling of her ideas and suggestions.

Bring a favorite picture of your deceased loved one to a family gathering and explain why it's special to you, what memories it brings to mind for you. Others often will chime in with their memories. Visit the cemetery as a group and bring a flower that symbolizes some special trait about your loved one. "Mary taught me to stop and smell the roses;" "John brought new life and sunshine to so many."

Invent your own simple ritual, individually or together with family and close friends.

Take heart. In *The Angel Who Forgot*, Elisa Barton tells the story of an angel who can heal ailing children. The angel loses his beloved pony in the forest and is so sad he can't bear to remember it. To stop the hurt, the angel throws all his memories away. But now he can't remember how to help others and cannot heal a young child who needs him. With the help of a wise parent, the angel's memories are recovered and the angel once again is whole, once again able to heal others. Heal and be healed. Remember.

From Abbey Press "Care Notes" by permission.



Undertake new activities and create new rituals out of the past. Through them you can maintain the memory of your loved one, even as you embark on a different chapter in your life.

The Price We Pay For Love

Reinvesting Yourself In Living When A Loved One Dies

Nothing in life prepares us for the death of a loved one. We don't have a choice about whether or not we will grieve; the choice we do have is whether or not it will be a healthy grief.

The pain of grief is sometimes so powerful we don't believe that anyone else on earth could possibly understand our feelings. Grief is a roller coaster of emotions usually plunging to the universal questions "Why? Why me?"

The natural cushion of shock and numbness in the first three months gives way to searching and yearning. We need to verify that our loved one lived. Unfortunately, the people around us hesitate to mention the loved one's name, trying to spare us, to protect us. Yet at this time, this is the only subject that has meaning in our lives.

Eventually we feel emptiness. Depression and apathy set in. Life has lost its meaning and we feel cheated, betrayed, and robbed of our todays and tomorrows. We face many stumbling blocks.

- Anger and bitterness
- Denial of the death
- Visions of the dying process
- Well-meaning friends who offer platitudes
- Unrealistic expectations of being our "old self again"
- Inability to forgive ourselves-excessive guilt. "If only," "Why didn't I..."

Grief is never over... It is a life-long process. We must learn to use the tools that can guide us to resolution, to turn this terrible life tragedy into a growth experience. One step at a time, we can move to our future - a future that once again will hold promise for us.

Milestones On Our Journey

- 1) Feel the pain.
Allow yourself to really feel what you are feeling-the whole range of emotions - whether it's sadness, anger, guilt, ect. Denying the feelings only intensifies and prolongs the pain
- 2) Cry.
Tears can be the most therapeutic tool you have-let them cleanse you and relieve your pain inside.
- 3) Talk, talk, talk.
Share the pain. Sharing grief diminishes it. You must talk about your feelings even when you feel you "can't go on," or that "life will never have meaning again." It helps you when someone responds by their presence to your pain.

Talk, too, to the loved one who died. Even though you may feel uncomfortable, this will give you the opportunity to finish your thoughts and feelings you've wished to express. Use statements such as:

"When you died, I wanted to..."

"I miss..."

"How could you leave me..."

"It was a relief when you died, the ordeal and pain was over..."

Let the words flow. You can do it. You have already been through the worst.

4) Keep a journal.

Your journal is a private place where you can write anything. Here, put down unfulfilled wishes, guilts, angers, and other thoughts and feelings. Again, fill in unfinished sentences:

"If only..."

"I wish we had..."

"I'm furious with..."

"I'll never forgive..."

"I'll never see you..."

"I remember..."

5) Let go.

Don't let bitterness engulf you. Resentment is a heavy load and it only hurts you. Find the source of your anger and do everything you can to resolve it - whether you actually clear the matter up with the hurtful person or you resolve the problem in a symbolic way with a friend,

6) Find your own comfort.

Create rituals that feel right to you and give you comfort. Whether it's prayer, meditation, or other activities. Rituals can be a source of strength.

7) Hold off.

Tread lightly when making decisions. Mull over, thoroughly explore your options before making a major step. You may still be too vulnerable to make a life-changing decision.

8) Be kind to yourself.

Be patient with the conflict inside you. Find a balance between the happy person and sad person, the angry self and peaceful self, the guilty you and the glad you - all feelings which are now raging inside your mind. Have patience with yourself. Life is too short for you to be the villain in your life.

9) Learn to laugh again.

Rediscover your sense of humor. Remember: disloyalty to your loved one is not in finding joy again but in giving up on living when you still have life.

10) Nurture your body.

Be good to yourself ! Exercise. Your body can't revitalize without good nutrition and physical activity.

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11) Hug.

Take pleasure from physically sharing with others. We all suffer from skin hunger. So reach out and hug someone - and yourself.

12) Reach out.

If you need outside help, admit it. You want to be willing to be helped and healed. An outside resource may be just the salve you're searching for.

13) Become a wounded healer.

Reach out and help others. It just may help you, too.

14) Let life grow.

Develop new interests, skills, and friends. Focus your energy away from the past and toward the future. Take small steps and enjoy the small victories. You are a changed person seeking new life.

You can be stronger after grief – the choice is yours. You may have been powerless to help your loved one, but you are not powerless to help yourself. Seize the power right now that abides within you and begin again the journey that is your own life. Grief is the price we pay for love – but we do not have to go on paying forever.

To Britt

As I sit and watch a cloud
Go drifting by without a sound.

I know you are there, I know you can see.

Although you can't be here with me

I sense your presence from above I hear you laugh; I feel your
love.

I see your face in a bright rainbow.
If you weren't there, it could not glow.
You are there in the warmth of the sun,
In the moon and the stars when night has begun,
When the wind blows, I hear your voice.
I miss you so much; I have no choice.

You are there in the sparrow's sweet song,
In the hummingbird's hum as he hurries along.
I think of the memories we made on the way.
I love now as I did yesterday.
Sometimes I laugh and sometimes I cry,
As I sit and watch a cloud go drifting by.

Written by Karen Watson (mother)

What's so great about hugs ?

There's no such thing as a bad hug – only good ones and great ones. They're not fattening and they don't cause cancer or cavities. They're all-natural with no preservatives, artificial ingredients or pesticide residues. They're cholesterol free, naturally sweet, 100% wholesome. And they are a completely renewable natural resource.

They don't require batteries, tune-ups or X-rays. They're nontaxable, fully returnable and energy efficient.

They're safe in all kinds of weather, in fact, they're especially good for rainy or cold days. And they're exceptionally effective in treating problems like bad dreams or the Monday blahs.

**Never wait until tomorrow to hug someone
you could hug today.**

In closing:

Soon many of us will be making the trip to Toronto for the annual International BDSRA Conference. From reading the brochure, I see a nice balance of support, education, and fun. I'll be there with Mim, Rick, and Cathy, manning a book table. "Nothing Can Separate Us" is now released and will be on sale at a discount. Stop by for your own-signed copy. Here's the email source: christianbook.com

You might be interested in Nancy Christian's response after reading a preview copy:

"I am a 57 year old grandmother who has a 4 year old grandson Thomas, whom I am very close to, who has the Infantile Batten Disease. You sent the book "Nothing Can Separate Us" by Connie Jackson a "Review Copy" to my daughter Stephanie Anderson. She hasn't had time to read it yet and I did have time. I need to tell you I am not a book reader, but I just couldn't put this book down once I started it. It was THAT good. Since I know about Infantile Batten Disease, I felt Connie did an excellent job being so descriptive. I could relate to what she was thinking and believing, it was a very emotional book - I loved it. I plan to purchase a few books when it comes out in the bookstores to give away.

We know that one day Thomas will go with God to Heaven and I wonder how I am going to handle that when the time comes, but to read about Connie going through it 3 times and the strength she go each time, I felt at ease that God will be there for me too. Your just can't imagine what this book did for me."

May your summer be punctuated with quiet moments for reading, and absorbing the beauty of God's creation.

Peace & joy, Connie Jackson