

IN SEARCH OF JOY

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Do you know how long it took me to allow laughter and joy to return to my life? Do you know how far it is from this side of the page to your side? Do you know how difficult it is to write about death?

It was a long journey. It took me 30 years to get from your side of this page to mine...a loooong time...actually a **WHOLE LIFETIME!**

I liked my other life. In fact, I **LOVED** it!

I hadn't intended to be here-in your life. But, then, just as it happened in your life, a single moment changed **EVERYTHING**, and here I am ... with you now and forever.

Thirty years ago, our son slipped away from his mom and dad and big sister. At peace after a lifelong battle with a malignant brain tumor, he took with him all our hopes and dreams of being an **AVERAGE AMERICAN FAMILY**.

We had two children so that no one would have to share the window, or ride on the hump in the middle of the backseat.

We had two children because I had hundreds of recipes that served four.

We had two children because we couldn't figure out how to have the 1.6 children which is the national average.

But something happened along the way to that dream, and in a moment our dreams were lost, and the sounds of joy and laughter left our lives - perhaps as they seem to have left yours....

All of us know the quietness that comes when we realize we are the only source of sound in our house now. We all know that loss--that emptiness--that brings us here, to these pages, in search of something to ease the pain; in search of something to stop the tears; in search of something to dream about again.



I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing right now than living. But that wasn't always true, especially after our child's death when there were days when all I could do was think about dying - to join him or to relieve my pain. **BUT I LIVED THROUGH THAT, JUST AS YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, BY GRASPING EVERY DAY AND CLAIMING IT AS MY OWN.**

Each of us will, one day, rediscover whatever we cherish about life. Each of us will find the laughter that echoed throughout our life with our loved one ... *If* we will look for it.

I'm here on this side of the page, not to tell you **HOW** to be happy, but to tell you that you **DESERVE TO BE HAPPY AGAIN**. It's a different kind of happy, however. It's a happiness robbed of innocence, born out of fire, forged by a flame that has the power to destroy everything in its path--but only *if we let it!*

How did I do it? How did I get to now? I got to where I am today because of healing-time and a commitment to rediscovering the joy in living.

Must we dwell in the darkness forever? Can we begin to understand that our loved one's death was but a moment--a split second of horror? Or can we remember, instead, our loved one's **LIFE**? Is it possible that one day, we will begin to understand that joy **CAN** return?

We cannot find words to soothe the hurt...there aren't any! We cannot shield ourselves

ourselves from the twists and turns of living. We cannot protect ourselves from experiencing life.

We can, however, build supports and safety nets. We can create cushions and pockets of comfort--places where we can rest, momentarily, gathering strength to re-enter the crashing tides.

We can learn to smile again--maybe even giggle and return laughter to our lives. Cry all you want, but remember to laugh when you can. Your life with your loved one was filled with moments of laughter--remember them, enjoy them again and again. Between the tears, allow the joy to return.

What I will try to bring to you in each article is a message with hope, a gift of remembrance, a love letter of laughter. Read these articles as if we were sitting together, across the kitchen table, trying to help each other through the valley. Whether you are a bereaved parent, a widow or widower, a sibling, an adult bereaved child, a grandparent, friend or simply someone who wants to know how to help, I hope you will find information, education and support in these words. They are written from my heart to yours, each word carved out of experience as well as professional education.

I am a psychotherapist and a grief management specialist by trade, a mother by choice and a grieving person by chance.

We have never met, yet our hearts speak the same language, the language of grief.

We hold the same fear of never getting over this and forever having to live with the terrible pain of having someone we love dearly die. Come with me, across

the stepping-stones of grief, finding your way through the darkness, reaching for each touchstone as you can.

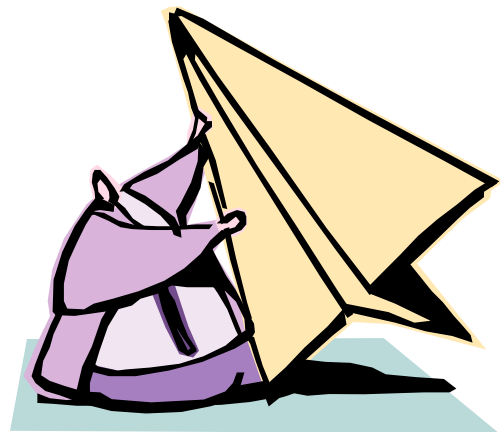


There are no timetables for grief and no one right way to grieve. There are as many ways to grieve as there are people grieving. Know your pain is real and that you have the right to hurt and to ache and to continue loving your loved one. No one can tell you how to grieve or when to heal. I just want to let you know you can find hope and healing and you can find joy once again.

Our loved ones lived and we loved them. We still do. But sometimes we cannot wait for fun and joy to be presented to us. **WE MUST MAKE IT HAPPEN!**

Insist on joyfulness and silliness being a part of **EACH DAY**. What the world needs now is a paper airplane that carries our message of **LOVE AND HOPE AND LAUGHTER** to friends, family-to everyone!

Be a **PIONEER** right now and run your own flying circus. Make your own "Happy Planes" to send everywhere--to your mother who is trying to understand (or just "trying"), to your best friend who hasn't spoken to you since the funeral, to the neighbor who didn't bring a **TUNA** casserole (bless her!), to a child who needs some fun, and to yourself - just **BECAUSE!**



Sail these messages through the air mentally, verbally and physically. Fold the paper airplane right now and let the joy of your loved one's life begin to take the place of the hurt and anger of his death.

Hugs and Hope!

 *Darcie*

