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The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies
Oscoda Area Chapter

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Hope in a Jar: A Gift for Yourself

By Harriet Hodgson

Mason jars are popular these days and the uses are almost endless. People are using them as flower vases, holders for homemade cookie mixes, and holiday decorations. I use wide-mouth jars to store leftovers and food products, such as rice, small pasta, and crackers. Author Elizabeth Gilbert uses a giant jar to document her happiness.



When she felt happy, she jotted a few words on a piece of paper, dated it, and dropped it in the jar. When the year ended, Gilbert read her notes, put them away, and started a new jar for the New Year. I liked Gilbert's idea and kept a Happiness Jar for several months.

But life kept happening and, because I'm my disabled husband's caregiver, made my happiness jar a caregiving jar. The notes turned out to be a chronology of my husband's progress. As a grief healing author, I thought of another use for a Mason jar, and created Hope in a Jar. You can make one too, and the steps are easy to follow.

Write one sentence affirmations on the computer or hand write them on paper. Leave an inch between the affirmations. But the affirmations apart. Put the affirmations in a wide-mouth jar with the affirmations facing inward. Screw the lid on the jar and tie a bow around the top. Affix a tag that says, "Read one a day to feel better." I wrote this on the computer and added a small graphic.

Here are a dozen affirmations from my Hope in a Jar. I share them with you to give you an idea of what to write. If you're having trouble thinking of things to write, copy these affirmations and put them in your jar.

- Quiet enables me to hear my soul, and listen to what it says.
- My loved one's values are part of me and I live them each day.
- I think positive thoughts and monitor my self-talk.
- Although I'm grieving, I give myself permission to laugh.
- At this confusing, challenging time I'm grateful for friends.
- In defense, I've prepared answers to the question "How are you?"
- Assessing my skills helps me to see what I need and get support.
- Each morning, when I awake, I think of the kindness of others.
- Identifying feelings and naming them helps be stay grounded.
- Reading an affirmation a day helps to keep the blues away.
- At this stressful time, happy memories are a source of comfort.
- I'm grieving because of love and love lasts forever.

Now you need to decide who gets the jar. You may give it to yourself, a newly bereaved friend, or church friend mired in grief. Creating Hope in a Jar helps you see the positives in your life. Life is brighter when you are hopeful. As an anonymous author once wrote "When the world says, 'Give up,' hope whispers, 'Try it one more time.'"

Hope in a jar helps you do that. Some affirmations may become your favorites and you read them again and again. Start your Hope in Jar project today!



MONTHLY MEETING

2nd Tuesday of the Month
Sacred Heart Church Family Center
5300 N US 23
Oscoda, MI 48750

Meeting time: 7:00 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 8th:
Lessons Learned

February 12th:
Differences
through Grief

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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The Compassionate Friends Oscoda



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“You Need Not Walk Alone”

THE SIBING CORNER

This corner is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief through encouragement & sharing

Helping Yourself Heal When an Adult Sibling Dies

by Center for Loss | Dec 15, 2016 | Articles

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

“To the outside world we all grow old. But not to brothers and sisters. We know each other as we always were. We know each other’s hearts. We share private family jokes. We remember family feuds and secrets, family griefs and joys. We live outside the touch of time.” —Clara Ortega

Your brother or sister has died. I am truly sorry for your loss.

Whether your sibling was younger or older, whether the death was sudden or anticipated, whether you were very close to your sibling throughout your lives or experienced periods of separation, you are now grieving.

To grieve is to experience thoughts and feelings of loss inside you. If you loved your sibling, you will grieve. To mourn is to express your grief outside of yourself. Over time and with the support of others, to mourn is to heal.

Consider your unique relationship

Brothers and sisters often have strong and ambivalent feelings for one another. Sibling relationships tend to be complex, characterized by a mixture of anger, jealousy, and a fierce closeness and love. What was your relationship with the sibling who died? I’ll bet it wasn’t entirely simple.

Sibling relationships are so complex because while we are growing up, siblings are both friends and enemies, teammates and competitors. We play with our siblings, and we fight with them. We share our parents’ love, and we compete for our parents’ love. We enjoy being part of a family, and we struggle to become individuals.

Sometimes we carry our childhood rivalries and differences into adulthood, and our ambivalent feelings toward our brothers and sisters remain. Sometimes we separate from our siblings completely as adults. And sometimes we become very close friends with our grown-up brothers and sisters.

Yet no matter what your present-day relationship with your sibling was, his or her death is a blow. You shared a long history with your sibling. Your stories began together and were intimately intertwined for years.

Know that sibling grief is important

The loss of an adult sibling is often a significant one. I have had the privilege of companioning many sibling mourners, and they have taught me that they often feel deep pain and a profound sense of loss.

Yet our culture tends to under-appreciate sibling grief. When an adult dies, the myth goes; it is the parents, spouse, and children of the person who died who suffer the greatest loss. We seem to think that siblings are affected less.

Yet the truth is, the more deeply you feel connected to someone, the more difficult his or her death will be for you. And siblings—even when they have not spent much time together as adults—often have profoundly strong attachments to one another.

Yes, your grief for your sibling is very real. And it may be very difficult for you. Allow yourself the time and the support you need to mourn.

Embrace the healing power of linking objects

Linking objects are items that belonged to or remind you of the sibling who died. Photographs, videos, CDs, ticket stubs, clothing, gifts you received from him or her—all of these connect you to the sibling who died.

Some items may bring sadness, some happiness, some sappiness (i.e., when you are happy and sad at the same time). While linking objects may evoke painful feelings, they are healing feelings. They help you embrace the pain of your loss and move toward reconciliation. They may also give you comfort in the weeks and months ahead.

Whatever you do, DO NOT get rid of linking objects that remind you of the sibling who died. If you need to box some of them up for a time, do so. Later, when you are ready, you will likely find that displaying linking objects in your home is a way to remember the sibling who died and honor your ongoing feelings of love and loss.

Honor the sibling who died

Sometimes grieving families ask that memorial contributions be made to specified charities in the name of the person who died. Consider your sibling's loves and passions. If he were still here, what would make him proud to have his name associated with? Some families have set up scholarship funds. Some have donated books to the library or schools. Some have donated park benches or picnic tables, inscribed with an appropriate plaque. Some have planted gardens. You might also choose to carry on with something your sibling loved to do or left unfinished.

You will find that honoring your sibling is both a way to express your grief and to remember what was special about him or her.

Understand the concept of "reconciliation"

Know this: mourners don't recover from grief. Instead, we become "reconciled" to it. In other words, we learn to live with it and are forever changed by it. This does not mean a life of misery, however. Mourners often not only heal but grow through grief. Our lives can potentially be deeper and more meaningful after the death of someone loved.

Yet we only achieve reconciliation if we actively express and receive support for our grief. Find someone who will listen without judging as you talk about your grief. Cry. Journal. Make art. Find things to do that help you express your grief, and keep doing them. I believe every human being wants to "mourn well" the deaths of those they love. It is as essential as breathing. Yet because our culture misunderstands the importance of grief, some people deny or avoid their normal and necessary thoughts and feelings. Choose to mourn. Choose to heal. Choose to live and love fully again.

A final word

To be "bereaved" literally means "to be torn apart" and "to have special needs." When a sibling dies, it is like a deep hole implodes inside of you. It's as if the hole penetrates you and leaves you gasping for air. I have always said that we mourn significant losses from the inside out. In my experience, it is only when we are nurtured (inside and outside) that we discover the courage to mourn openly and honestly.

Remember—you are not alone, and you are not forgotten. No, your love does not end with the death of your brother or sister. You can and will carry your sibling with you into the future, always remembering your past and what he or she brought to the dance of your life.



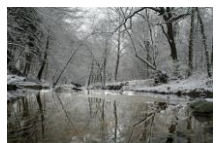
January Warmth

*Like a tree in the winter
Which has lost its leaves
We look ahead to spring
For new growth and
Warmth of the sun
To heal the pain
In our hearts.*

*Let us make January a time
To reach out to each other
And give that warmth
From our hearts,
and in return,
We will all show new growth.*

~Pat Dodge

TCF Sacramento Valley, CA

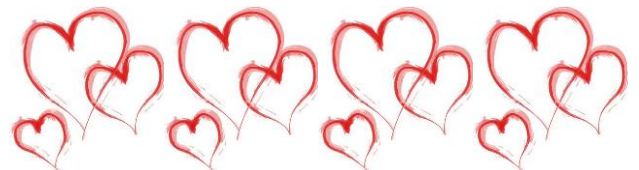


February

Let this cool and
gentle
month of the heart
remind you
not only
of lost

treasures,
but also of riches
(past and present)
in your love.

~Sascha Wagner



"Grieving is a journey that teaches us how to love in a new way now that our loved one is no longer with us.

Consciously remembering those who have died is the key that opens the heart that allows us to love them in new ways."

~Tom Attig

From The Heart of Grief



*"Forever In Our Hearts"
Our Children/Siblings Remembered*



Birthdays



January
Derek Toppa



February
Ashley Scott



Remembrances



January
Audree Ball



January
Tony Calabrese



February
Jerry Bunk



*Celebrating
White Grieving*



January
Katie Kirkpatrick



January
Tommy Draper



February
Casey May Whitney



The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



A huge thank you goes to everyone who attended the 4th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting on December 9th. Special thanks to Northern Blend Chorus of Sweet Adeline's for providing music for the event! It was an opportunity for us to honor and remember our loved ones taken too soon! To see a video of the candle lighting go to <https://www.tcf-oscoda.org/community-events>



*Memories
Unique as snowflakes,
impossible to hold but for a moment,
yet when one is gone
there is another gliding
down upon the first
until they become blankets
of protection against the
storms of loneliness,
Memories, gentle memories.
Marcia F. Alig
TCF Mercer, NJ*

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Donations for new books are always appreciated and are a great way to honor our loved one on a birthday or anniversary.

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