

Yesterday

Yesterday's mistakes no longer are of great importance
in the scope of things.
And I think what matters is lessons learned
and what tomorrow brings.
Yet tomorrow is incomprehensible
for we have yet to live it.
But today I saw you.
We held a conversation. It spoke of love.
It emitted friendship. It held a tear. And even a smile.
So when I arose from our joining.
I began to really contemplate these things awhile.....
It dawned on Me.
Yesterday is a lesson.
Tomorrow's yet to be.
And in the game of life, the one we all play.
We should focus on here and now.
Yes focus on Today.

Written by Daniel F. Armenta
Before his death from this life into
The arms of his Savior, Jesus Christ
April 11, 1967 – January 11, 2002

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A Father's Grief

My daughter has died, causing my grief
That my baby is dead is beyond belief
Still I try to show the world a smile
While my heart and soul are crying all the while

She was my angel and could do no wrong
I'm missing her so much but try to be strong
Tears are the only way to bear this pain
That whenever I think of her, start falling again

There's nothing worse than having your child die
If you live forever, you'll never figure out why
She was chosen to leave this world behind
Overcome with grief, you're going out of your mind

Now there is darkness where once there was light
There's nothing in this life that could be less right
Than a child dying before a parent
For my little girl I'm writing this lament

Harry J. Couchon Jr

A Million Times...

A million times we've needed you
A million times we've cried
If love alone could've saved you
You would have never died.
In life we loved you dearly
In death we love you still
In our hearts you hold a place
No one else could ever fill.
It broke our hearts to lose you
But you did not go alone
Part of us went with you
The day God took you home.
A heart of gold stopped beating
Two shining eyes at rest
God broke our hearts to prove
He only takes the best.
To some you are forgotten
To others just part of the past
But to us who loved and lost you
The memory will always last.

(author unknown)

Anyway

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered,
Love them anyway!

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Do good anyway!

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway!

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway!

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Bo honest and frank anyway!

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway!

People really need help, but may attack you if you help them.
Help people anyway!

Give the world the best you have and you will get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you've got anyway!

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

CHILDREN

Laugh;

Precious are the giggles
That escape your soul
They mend old wounds
Broken hearts are made whole.

Smile;

Tender child
Brighten the path of our tomorrow
Steps that were unclear
Are now well defined; easy to follow.

Teach;

With your innocence
We don't have to cry
Spare us the ignorance
of living a lie.

Delight;

With your antics
At liberty to play
Help free the spirit inside me,
I've had locked away

Embrace;

In your tiny arms
What it is to be alive
With tenderness and love
A harsh world you'll survive.

Share;

The priceless gifts
That are there to be had.
Available to the lucky man

Who is in your heart;

truly becomes your Dad?

Written by Daniel F. Armenta
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Even though I'm gone

*Remember me with love and kindness
for you know I truly cared.*

*Remember me with good deeds,
reaching out, never forgetting others needs.*

*Remember me with a prayer
giving Thanks that I was there.*

*For as long as you remember me
and share the memory with some,
my life will never be over even
though I'm gone.*

(author unknow)

THANKS.....

*By Darcue D. Sims
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

It doesn't seem to get any better....but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken....but there are memories to be cherished.
For that, I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table....but the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller....but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter....but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there....but it lasts only moments.
For that, I am thankful.

The calendar still turns, the holidays still appear, and they still cost too much, but I am still here....
For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty, the soul still aches.....but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come, the dishes pile up....but the dishwasher still works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing, the words still unspoken.....but the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

The snow still falls, the sled still waits, and the spirit still wants to.....
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains....but the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.

The moment is gone...for the love is forever.
For *that*, I am blessed. For *that*, I am grateful.

Love was once (and still is) a part of my being.....
For that, I am living.

I am LIVING.....and for *that*, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful. Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wondrous reason of all.

Grief; the ultimate test of faith

The grief one experiences when a loved one is murdered is unlike any other grief you may feel when losing a loved one to an illness or an accident. Those incidents are part of the natural cycle of life.

Suddenly, a total stranger walks into your home and notifies you that your son, your father, your mother, your daughter, your uncle, your brother or sister has been a victim of a homicide. In essence they are communicating to you that another "human being" or in some cases More than one, had the audacity to disrespect, abuse and end your loved one's life.

Remember how many times you listened to the media report about a murder and you felt a twinge of sadness for them and the family? How quickly you forgot about it and carried on with your everyday life! Now the media is talking about your loved one and most likely coming to their own conclusions without the facts to base their report. Let's face it; no one really knows your loved one except you and your family! Thousands of people will go on with their lives but the world you once lived in has abruptly changed forever.

Grief from the loss of a murdered loved one is the ultimate test of faith. Hebrews 11:1 "now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". Those of faith claim to trust our God, now we have come to that place where we cannot understand the whys but can only trust the One who allowed this pain to enter your life.

How do you forgive, not give in to anger, bitterness and resentment when every cell and fiber of your being is crying out for vengeance! My grief and my faith would let me do no less than to go against my human emotions and lean on God for my next breath. You can only take one breath at a time because you'd rather not breathe at all.

You deal with the murderers who are suddenly depicted as "victims", their families, their lawyers, prosecutors, judges and endless testimonies and photos and diagrams that you don't want to deal with but must if you are to experience any justice. Finally your family obtains that long awaited justice, but you realize that it didn't give you back what you most wanted.....your loved one.

People will tell you "time heals", no it does not, what time accomplishes is this..... it enables you to endure and become familiar with the heartache that no one understands unless you are a survivor of a homicide.

by Christina Leon-Benitez

Grief

We all grieve differently
Some grieve quietly
Solemn in their grief not wanting
To show their pain
While some are loud
Letting the pain out for all to see and then beginning
The long battle of healing
Some hold their grief in for so long
That eventually it eats at them
Causing them to misdirect it
In different ways unknowingly pointing
The pain of loss toward others not wanting of it or deserving
When instead they should be letting go and moving on

Grief is not a friend
For it makes one angry, sad, exhausted, and confused
Grief is an unwanted guest for it stays for a long, long, time
Seemingly never wanting to leave
Once in a while it will allow some peace but for only a brief time span
It would rather curl it's black tentacles around and keep you in it's grip forever

And then one day you realize you are starting to feel a little better
As the seasons change so do we
In time we shall heal
You start to get back into your routine and realize grief is finally
Packing up to end it's long overstayed visit
For it was a long process this visit from grief
Each day gets a little better
Keep on moving
Stay busy
One day, Grief is finally gone
Until the next time it is required to visit again

Stephanie J. DeMartino

Holidays and Grief

Deviate from the norm. This is a time when tradition maybe too difficult to continue.

If you feel you must continue with tradition, do only a part of it. Choose which part you can do at a comfortable level.

Children will understand if you explain to them that this year we are doing something different because Grandpa died. Simply say, "We miss Grandpa so much that this year we want to do something different."

Help the children plan something special for Grandpa, like planting a special tree or lighting a candle.

Get the children's input of how they want to honor Grandpa. They may have something special they wish to do.

Ask children if they wish to draw and make an album of Grandpa and their memories of him.

This is a time of learning for children. Be real. Acknowledge their pain, but include them in some activity, such as delivering food to a family in need. Remember that you are setting an example for when they experience future losses as an adult.

Make a grave blanket from branches, twigs, flowers, etc.

Go on a trip and leave the area. However, remain as autonomous as you can so that you have options and can return when you want.

Buy a special card for your loved one and keep it. You can continue this for as long as you want. Keep them in a special box.

Dedicate a mass to your loved one or dedicate something special in your place of worship.

You may also volunteer at some special place for the holidays if you have the energy. Helping those less fortunate will help you feel less alone and you can dedicate it privately to your loved one.

Send flowers in honor of your loved one to a hospice. You can also make bud vase arrangements for each of the patients there.

If you want to stay alone, plan your time with some activity, such as renting movies, writing cards, planting a special flower, taking the dogs for a walk.

If you do go to a social event, take your own car. You may suddenly feel anxiety and want to leave. If you go with someone, have an understanding ahead of time that if the event becomes too much, you may want to leave early.

Do something special for an acquaintance whom maybe in need of help, such as a gift of money or buying something that they have needed. See it as a gift from your loved one or in their honor.

Most of the time it is not wise to get a new pet during the holidays.

Acknowledge in some special way that your loved one is no longer here. If you pretend the holiday is not happening, you are avoiding reality and you will feel the sadness the following day. You are simply delaying the inevitable.

Drive to a favorite place and reflect on your new life.

Buy yourself something that you have always wanted if personal finances permit.

Get a massage or something to pamper yourself. Loving yourself and being your own personal advocate at this time is very important.

Watch a special video of your loved one.

If you have family for the holidays, plan a time when each person shares a favorite or funny story of your loved one. Remembering and laughing is very healing.

Do not get the same tree out for Christmas. Buy a smaller one that acknowledges the holiday, but is already decorated.

Your life has changed. You have changed. Acknowledge these changes by doing something different.

Make a picture album of you and your loved one for the grandchildren.

Write a letter to your loved one for the holidays. Keep it in a special journal.

Paint a picture or make a card for your loved one. Keep it or take it to the grave.

Buy balloons and let each one be a special wish to your loved one as you release them. This is an excellent activity for children also.

If a friend has died, acknowledge the loss to their family. Buy flowers, send a card, and please use the name of the deceased. It is hurtful to the family when no one mentions their loved one by name.

Write a letter to your friend's family and recall a particular memory regarding their loved one.

Call the family for the holidays and keep the phone conversation short, but very personal. Listen to their pain. They need someone to HEAR them. Know that you cannot "fix the pain", but honor their pain by listening.

If a family member or friend cries with you, that means they feel safe with you and are honoring you with their tears. Just be there for this sharing of pain.

If someone at your work has died, bring a small tree and ask others to bring one decoration in honor of the one who has died. You may want to give it to the family or just keep it at work.

If writing is your forte, write an article about your pain.

You may want to visit the area where cremated remains were scattered.

Release doves. These can be rented and will return to their home.

If you are the facilitator for a support group, ask participants to bring a favorite dessert that their loved one liked.

As a facilitator of a support group, schedule a time when everyone can meet at a restaurant sometime during the holiday season.

You do not have to have permission from family members to change the holidays, but discuss it with them or simply state, "This is what I plan on doing." This is a time to honor your own needs.

Have photographs of the loved one reprinted and/or enlarged for others.

You may wish to visit the place where your loved one died. This is not morbid. Remember that it is also the last place where your loved one was alive. You may wish to leave some memento there for your loved one.

Do what honors your needs and is meaningful to you.

If possible, do not focus entirely on self. You are not alone. Millions of other people are experiencing their sorrow during the holidays. By realizing this, you will be less bitter during this time.

Avoid the malls. Too much stimuli can tire you emotionally as well as physically.

Give yourself permission to cry. Sit in back of the church/synagogue in case you want to leave early.

Above all, be gentle with yourself and others around you. Do not direct your anger regarding your loss at others. Remember that you are making a new memory in the present. What type of memory do you choose to honor?

Remember that grieving is a process, just as loving is a process. The pain you feel today is not where you will stay forever.

Janna Excell, M.Ed.
Bereavement and Crisis Counselor
December 2002

How many?

by Brittane M. Watkins, Sophomore Beaumont High School
A Day of Remembrance Million Mom March, Sunday, October 12, 2003

We mourn the loss of our youth.
Little ones that never got a chance to truly live their lives.

How Many?

How many have to die before we get the point?
If we could only eliminate the hatred and easy access of guns, we would be able to live in peace.
Right?
But, until that happens we are vulnerable. We don't have a clue what could be lurking around the next corner or beyond that next door. We could be going about our daily routine when all of a sudden an angry, frustrated teen pulls out a gun and decides to seek revenge on those around him and then end it all himself.

How Many?

If we only had classes in school that taught our youth how harmful guns are, then people would learn that a gun is not a toy and shouldn't be treated as one. Too many of our young, innocent children are dying because of guns and hatred. Why do we tease and mock people to the point where they feel the only way to live in peace is to end it for themselves and their tormentors? For those of you who are different and get teased or picked on, remember a gun is not the answer.

How Many?

We, as a whole, have to learn that we can prove our point with words, pictures, and in so many other creative ways that we don't need guns. And to those of you who think that you need a gun to solve all of your problems, that a gun makes you "cool" and "down with it" you're wrong and you're a fool for thinking that you are right. You are a coward, get a backbone.

How Many?

To many of our youth have been slain by guns. Here's an idea, let's put a stop to this hatred and sorrow and death and start saving our younger generations. How many of our youth have to die before we get the message?

How many?"

How We Survive

Sometimes,
if we are fortunate,
we are given a warning.

If not,
there is only the sudden horror,
the wrench of being torn apart;
of being reminded
that nothing is permanent,
not even the ones we love,
the ones our lives revolve around.

Life is a fragile affair.
We are all dancing
on the edge of a precipice,
a dizzying cliff so high
we can't see the bottom.

One by one,
we lose those we love most
into the dark ravine.

So we must cherish them
without reservation.
Now.
Today.
This minute.
We will lose them
or they will lose us
someday.
This is certain.
There is no time for bickering.
And their loss
will leave a great pit in our hearts;
a pit we struggle to avoid
during the day
and fall into at night.

Some,
unable to accept this loss,
unable to determine
the worth of life without them,
jump into that black pit
spiritually or physically,

hoping to find them there.

And some survive
the shock,
the denial,
the horror,
the bargaining,
the barren, empty aching,
the unanswered prayers,
the sleepless nights
when their breath is crushed
under the weight of silence
and all that it means.

Somehow, some survive all that and,
like a flower opening after a storm,
they slowly begin to remember
the one they lost
in a different way...

The laughter,
the irrepressible spirit,
the generous heart,
the way their smile made them feel,
the encouragement they gave
even as their own dreams were dying.

And in time, they fill the pit
with other memories
the only memories that really matter.

We will still cry.
We will always cry.
But with loving reflection
more than hopeless longing.

And that is how we survive.
That is how the story should end.
That is how they would want it to be.

by Mark Rickerby

I don't know why

I don't know why.
I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I do have to do is make a choice about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did
before, or I can be destroyed by it and, in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal. That my family and my children were also.
That tragedy happened only to others. But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living, making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends in a way never possible before.

Iris Bolton

I'm Just A Baby

The special little angels that God has let us borrow have lived their too short lives knowing nothing but sorrow.

There is nothing more precious than tiny little feet, making those pitter-patter sounds and making your life complete.

The tiny little hands that hold onto big hands they adore, why can't we love them equally and give them so much more?

Why must we find such angels in garbage cans and rivers, and hear about such horrors that up your spine send shivers?

When babies are so tiny they do not understand, why mommy wasn't there to lend a helping hand.

Where was she when they needed her, where were the loving arms...the ones that were supposed to guard and keep them from all harm?

Why were those eyes so hateful, why's mommy being so mean? What have I done to make her ignore my desperate screams?

Maybe someone will hear me...Is there a mommy there? Will she please take me with her and show me that she cares?

Dear Lord, I'm just a baby, please make her understand, she's not supposed to kill me or leave me in this can.

Oh God, I thought you told me that she would love me so, that she would love me always and rock me to and fro.

You said that she would kiss me and hold me when I cry, but dear Lord, she's leaving me and hoping that I'll die.

I am too small to crawl right now and much too small to walk, oh Lord, please won't you tell her for I can't even talk.

I promise I'll be happy, I promise I won't cry...Oh please, dear Lord, please tell her, I'll really, really try.

To be the perfect baby, I'll do my very best, I'll sleep, I promise, soundly, and even let her rest.

If only she could hear my thoughts, I promise not to nag. Please someone won't you help me, she's put me in this bag.

Maybe someone will find me before the break of dawn, and care for me and love me before my life is gone.

Author Unknown

IN OCEANS OF GRIEF

In oceans of grief
We are all swimming

Aldo Kraas

Love

love

sadness

grief

depression

full blown crisis

miraculous

love

alyssad wassup

Memories

A sight, voice, journey
Dwindle as each day passes
Days of grief and joy

alyssa aarsenault

MI PRIMERA NAVIDAD EN LA GLORIA

*Desde aqui miro la gran cantidad de arboles navideños
Alredor de el mundo de aqui
Con sus luzecitas como estrellas en el cielo
Y se reflejan en la nieve*

*Que bello espectaculo
Por favorno derrames lagrimas
Que estoy a lado de JesuCristos esta Navidad*

*Escucho las canciones Navideñas
Que a todos le gustan tanto
Pero no se comparan con el choro que se encuentra aqui en el cielo*

*No encuentro palabras,
Que explican la alegria que las voces inspiran
Porque no hay comparacion, cuando cantan los angelitos.*

*Se cuanto me extrañan
Es visible el dolor que portas en le Corazon
Pero no estoy muy lejos,
Realmente ni tan distantes*

*Sean feliz por mi, mis queridos
Los mantengo muy cerqa
y recuerden que pasara esta Navidad
con mi padre JesuCristo*

*Les mando a cada uno, un regalo especial
Desde aqui de la Gloria, mi hogar.
A cada uno le mando un recuerdo
de un amor eterno*

*Sabemos que el amor es mas precioso que el oro
Haci lo han dicho en las estorias
Que el Señor contaba*

*Amense y cuiden uno al otro como nuestro Padre lo pide,
No es posible contar las bendiciones o el amor que El tiene para cada uno*

*Pasen una Feliz Navidad y no derramen lagrimas ya mas
Recuerden que este año celebros Navidad a lado de Nuestro Señor JesuCristo.*

My Brother Murdered

My brother murdered
And the newspaper called me
And asked me what I had to say
And I said "no comment" -
And they printed in the paper
His sister was contacted
About her brothers murder
And she said "no comment."
But I had plenty to say
I just couldn't say it then
Not so soon
After someone killed him.
I couldn't tell you then
How this pain was so unreal
How I didn't know how to comfort
My mom
And how I didn't know if she ever
Would stop crying -
And how hard it is to stay strong
For your mother
Who lost her son
Or how hard it was to stay strong
For my other three brothers
Two younger than me
One who witnessed his murder -
And since I was only 20 years old
I couldn't tell you how much
My little brother meant to me
The words couldn't come out
With a lump in my throat
And I said "no comment"
But that isn't what I meant.

Connie Webb

"My Fallen Friend"- by Whyte Panther (Luigi Fiorino)

Where mere mortals tread
Footprints are left behind
In the trails of this gentle giant
Are found, only tender smiles

In the paths of the fiercest warriors
Memorials are built, their tales to recount
In the wake of this noblest of souls
Just the warmest of memories, no statues, no tributes, no doubts

In the midst of the madness of the every day
We reach for some semblance of hope
In the presence of his sweetest of natures
We have never questioned the meaning of home

Accomplished without any effort
No need at all to try
The essence of this man
Was too great to deny

He gave without reservation
It was just his noble way
In giving us all there was left to give
He left us a little saddened here today

With the heaviest of hearts
We now pick up his torch
Sharing his loving memory
And carrying it ever forth

Tonight we'll raise a glass my fallen friend
We'll share some tears instead of laughter
Together, my friend, we'll laugh again
When we meet in the hereafter

You will be missed by all my friend
More than you could know
Rest in peace my friend
Rest in peace

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

*I see the countless Christmas trees
around the world below
With tiny lights like Heaven's stars,
reflecting on the snow.*

*The sight is so spectacular,
please wipe away the tear
For I am spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.*

*I hear the many Christmas songs
that people hold so dear
But the sounds of music can't compare
with the Christmas choir up here.*

*I have no words to tell you,
the joy their voices bring,
For it is beyond description,
to hear the angels sing.*

*I know how much you miss me,
I see the pain inside your heart.
But I am not so far away,
We really aren't apart.*

*So be happy for me, dear ones,
You know I hold you dear.
And be glad I'm spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.*

*I sent you each a special gift,
from my heavenly home above,
I sent you each a memory
of my undying love.*

*After all love is a gift more precious
than pure gold.
It was always most important
in the stories Jesus told.*

*Please love and keep each other,
as my Father said to do.
For I can't count the blessing or love
he has for each of you.*

*So have a Merry Christmas and
wipe away that tear.
Remember, I am spending Christmas
With Jesus Christ this year.*

My Only Wish

Grief, my sole companion through the rain
Grief stays with me but ease no pain
Grief, the emotion I feel when I hear your name
Grief, I don't know if I'm still sane

My only wish every time the rain falls
Is that you'll remember that I'm still here
Loving you and waiting for your call
And when the sky begins to clear
I'll still be waiting after all

Dhainee Pfafflin

No death so sad

At some time or other, everyone goes through a crisis or tragedy but no one expects to go through the trauma of his or her child, parent, sister, brother, or closest friend being murdered. It can happen to anyone of any age unexpectedly which can in some cases lead to you or a member of your family becoming very ill.

For many, the worst time is when "all the fuss" has died down but the strong feelings remain. Everyone expects you to return to a normal life, but you know you will never be the same again. The world goes on much as before while inside you feel alone and that no one truly understands the pain and suffering you are going through.

We all have difficulty in taking in what has happened; everything seems so unreal. Many survivors describe it as "being in a dream" or feeling that it was happening to someone else, and not to them. You may find that you have painful pictures or intrusive memories of things that have happened. You may also have nightmares. You may find yourself going over what happened again and again - Like an obsession in feeling the need to know every detail of what happened and why it happened to your loved one.

One person can...

One person can make a plan, but many can carry it through.
One person can see straight ahead, but many can widen the view.
One person can mix the cement, but many can pave the road.
One person can lift the weight, but many can move the load.
One person can state a problem, but many can reach a solution.
One person can step back from trouble, but many can end the confusion.
One voice can sing the melody, many voices can harmonize.
One leader can inspire, but the followers must energize.
One set of hands can plant the seed, but many can plow the field.
One person can waste a harvest, but many can share its yield.
One mind can dream of victory, many hearts can brave the war.
One person can accomplish wonders, but many can do so much more.

(Unknown author.)

Remember Me

**To the living, I am gone
To the sorrowful, I will never return
To the angry, I was cheated
But to the happy, I am at peace
And to the faithful, I have never left.
I cannot be seen, but I can be heard
So as you stand upon a shore,
gazing at a beautiful sea – Remember Me.
As you look in awe at a mighty forest
and it's grand majesty – Remember Me.
As you look upon a flower and
admire it's simplicity – Remember Me.
Remember Me in your hearts, your thoughts,
and your memories of the times we loved,
the times we cried, the times we fought,
the times we laughed.
For if you always remember me,
I will have never gone.**

"Saying Goodbye" by Whyte Panther (Luigi Fiorino)

There never seems to be
A right time to say goodbye.
We never seem quite prepared.
That one more phone call,
That one more visit,
That last hug and "thank you",
They never do seem to arrive in time.

How do you let go
Of what you thought
Would always be
A permanent fixture
In your life?

In looking back over
A lifetime of memories
We sometimes feel overwhelmed
By their sheer volume.
So many different parts
Of our lives have been
Touched by and built upon
Times shared with loved ones.

Our lives seem somehow
Diminished, less vivid.
Sounds seem muted,
And music...
Just a bit more melancholy.
All of these things
Accompany the sadness
In our hearts.
We grieve and we mourn
The loss of the source
Of that little spark
That we will carry with us
Forever.

This time of sadness will pass.
All of the wonderful
Feelings and memories
See to that.
That sudden, unexpected hug
In the middle of nowhere.
That gentle smile glimpsed
From across a crowded room
That was meant just for you.
That grimace while scolding you
That quickly faded to a smile
Out of an immeasurable love for you.
A shopping spree.
The way they took a moment
To tenderly pat a dog on the head.
So many wonderful things
Cannot help but drown the sadness
That seems so insurmountable right now.

We will carry the spark of their love
Forever in our hearts.
It will be there on those days
When we feel sad and alone.
They come to us and somehow
Manage to comfort us
Just as they did in the past.
They are always with us.
So you see, there really is
No reason to ever
Say goodbye.

Seasons of Your Heart

Love truly, give fully
Though grief may come repeatedly
Embrace the seasons of your heart
And live life - totally

Maria Rosario Avanceña

SHAKEN

Your shaken with grief
Your shaken by death
Your shaken with horror
Your shaken with the cold
But no matter how you feel, life must go on
The word will not stop and wait for you
After all you are human
You are afraid you will be laughed at
Remember that everyone is entitle to there opinion
And you to yours
Move on and don't look back in the darker days when you were shaken by grief, death, horror,
and cold
Death, horror, and grief you have no control of it
But you have control of your emotions, feelings, and fears
Put a little laughter in your life
Learn to laugh from the inside out
Behind the mask you hide your face so no one can see how you feel
You are afraid of your fears and don't want other people to know how You feel
It's okay to feel the way you feel
Remove the mask from your face and let your fears and feelings be shown

Aldo Kraas

Small Mourning Pieces

No time to prepare
Shoved over cliff by sorrows
Float down now, gently

Grief comes as strong waves
Tide that never seems to ebb
Let it wash your soul

Nasty Opponent
Grief punches all breath away
Never a fair fight

No time for Heroes
Pain strips away a brave face
Wear no mask for now

Heavy stones of grief
Lighten them with memories
Friendships ease the load

Recipe for grief
Fold laughter into sorrow
Make a grief soufflé

Someone, unseen, cares
Patting shoulder from afar
Dwell in gentle thoughts

Some point you forward
Others put words in your mouth
Follow your own voice

Walking in grief's field
Plant dark flowers in the ground
Teardrops are the rains

Morning light is harsh
Wander away from sadness
Dreams infuse the night

Mary Havran

Take This Gun^{©2003}, by Greg Benedetto

A song written for families and friends of murdered victims.

CHORUS:

Take this gun away, I pray
Take this gun away
Take this weapon from my hand
Take this gun away
When I use this gun in anger or greed
Then my soul dies and my heart bleeds
Take this gun away, I pray
Take this gun away

CHORUS 2:

Fill my heart with love and peace
Take this gun away
Let violence within me cease
Take this gun away
There's another way, yes, I believe
I pay to God, my pain relieve
Take this gun away, I pray
Take this gun away

OPTIONAL VERSE:

I used a gun to steal a car
That car didn't get me very far
I got a gun to celebrate
The bullet killed a child of fate
I pointed my gun to steal some cash
To buy some drugs and get me trashed
I did the crime-now I'm doing the time
Doing times no friend of mine
Time to think about my mistakes
And the innocent lives that I did take

REPEAT CHORUS

Take time to talk

It is very important to be able to speak with someone freely, without judgment, about your child, your feelings and about your child's death. It took me almost a year before I could really manage my grief. You take it one day at a time and one day you will realize you have gone a couple of hours or a half day and then a day without breaking down.

I would have nightmares of my son being shot in the head over and over and I would pray that God did not let him suffer. Even after eighteen months, I still have a hard time accepting that my child is dead and he will not be coming home anymore. In a way I think that is how I chose to deal with Phillip's death, just never accept it.

For the first several months you cannot control your crying, it's going to happen and you have no control over the place or time. I took medication to help me sleep and for panic attacks. I developed a fear of being out by myself. My husband drives everywhere. This has been the case until recently and I am trying to conquer this fear.

Your life has changed; your mind is occupied only with thoughts of your child. You probably will not have the energy or the interest in activities. You cannot stand the thought of enjoying anything; your child has been murdered.

I can not stress the importance of having someone to talk openly with.

I searched and saved every article that was in the paper. I needed to know every detail that surrounded my son's death. I posted my child's picture in every memorial I could find. For the first several months all my husband and I talked about was "how did this happen"? Why was this man out on probation when he should have been serving a 10 year sentence? How did he get his gun with a felony record? I wanted everyone (and still do) from the Judge, who gave the probation, to the murderer who committed the crime, to the detectives that gave out false reports to the newspapers that it was a professional hit, it was drug related etc. to pay for the death of my son

I have yet to go one day without guilt, not necessarily guilt from what happened to my son but just guilt for anything over the years. Maybe I feel guilt over being too strict or maybe guilt over spending more on his brother etc. etc. Things will come back to me and I will think why I didn't handle that differently. Only parent who has lost a child understands. To have a day without guilt is a good day.

This hurts terribly when people you have known for years avoid you because you have lost a child. What are you suppose to do act like you never had a child. I am very proud of my child and always will be even if he is no longer on this earth.

I found that true friends listen to you no matter how often you talk about your child, because they understand and they care about you.

"Taken Too Soon" – by Whyte Panther (Luigi Fiorino)

At a time when the essence of life
should taste the very sweetest

When today's most difficult challenges
become tomorrow's fondest of memories

He was taken too soon

At one of the very first moments
when true potential just began to bud

When the hint of the beacon of his inner light
was about to illuminate so many hearts and minds

He was taken too soon

Tragically
life's sweetness eluded his tongue Tragically
his challenges now only remain our memories Tragically
this world will never realize his potential Tragically
now there is shadow instead of his young light

He was taken too soon
but only from our presence

Deep in our hearts
will he forever stay

Fathers of murdered children often say “my wife really needs this support group”

THE CULTURE OF GRIEF



What's to be done?

If grief is not only painful to your soul, but also bad for your body, how can we ease the pain and assist the healing that brings the griever through to the end of mourning?

Let's start by discarding the notion of a golden rule or a magic bullet -- each psyche, each grief and each death is unique. A normal grieving reaction in one case is not normal in another. Shirley Murphy, a University of Washington nursing professor, recalls the mother of a 17-year-old stabbing victim who could not have a knife in her house for six months after the murder. While that would be abnormal in some circumstances, she says, it was not in this case.

Often, parents of murdered children can't bring themselves to clean out the child's room, saying "you can't pack up your dreams in a box." Parents who force themselves to do that packing too soon, Murphy says, might be signaling a need for treatment.

Cultural roles greatly affect grieving. When Murphy offered group therapy to bereaved parents of murder and accident victims, she often heard, "I sure hope you can help my wife; she really needs this program." Even the younger men in her recent study showed the effects of socialization, saying "they must protect their family."

The symptoms of grief overlap with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder-- anxiety, depression and avoidance.

Warning signs.

When does grief bleed over into pathology? There's no hard-and-fast line indicating a need for professional help, but someone who still can't sleep six or eight months after the death may need it, Murphy says.

One major warning sign is numbness, flatness, and "absolutely no feeling whatsoever," says Wisconsin grief counselor Judy Koepl. At the other extreme, an inability to rise out of grief -- a pervasive, extended period of feeling low, with a tendency to isolate yourself, feeling hopeless, suicidal, or worthless -- may signal a slide into depression. In either case, professional intervention could be warranted.

Peer self-help groups come into play much earlier, where people who have survived a similar tragedy get together to talk, cry and remember. This experience gives what Murphy calls "normalization -- you begin to realize that you are not crazy... You feel the support of another who has experienced the exact same thing, and can see how other people are doing."

Information helps, too.

In a recent test of group therapy for parents of children killed by accidents, suicides or murders, Murphy added an informational component to the more traditional emotional support. Information covered topics like financial and legal issues, seeking support, understanding shifts in family roles, and coping with changes in the support network.

Her subjects, 261 bereaved parents contacted randomly from death certificates, ranked the information component just as highly as the emotional component. "People, especially men, told us they like the combination," Murphy says, "that it really helped to move from topic to topic. Otherwise, they tend to stay on the same thing over and over."

Emotional support groups are good, Murphy says (although they're not for everyone), but they can get stuck. "They keep focusing on the event [the death] rather than on how you can help another person get beyond it. They tend to take on a life of their own."

And while scientists can study and restudy the process of mourning, it will retain some of its mystery. As Murphy indicates, "It takes some people longer than others to get over a death."

How Long?

The length of the grief process is different for everyone. There is no predictable schedule for grief. Although it is very painful at times, the grief process cannot be rushed. It is important to be patient with yourself as you experience the feelings and your unique reactions to the loss. With time and support, things generally do get better. However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays and other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss. Taking care of yourself, seeking support and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope.

The Day God Called You Home

By Margaret R., sister of Guillermo Burrue! (4/16/1974 - 12/1/2010)

God looked around his garden and found an empty place,
He looked around the earth and saw your tired face.
He put his arms around you and lifted you to rest.
God's garden must be beautiful, he always takes the Best.
He knew you were suffering. He knew you were in pain.
He knew that you would never get well on earth again.
He saw the road was getting rough, and the hills were hard to climb,
He closed his weary eyelids and whispered "Peace be thine."
It broke our hearts to lose you, but you didn't go alone.
Part of us went with you the day God called you home.

"The Undefended Victim"

For me, no gavel, hammers
The Scales were never weighted.
My Crime was that of a victim,
My life, was the price I paid.

And when my life was taken,
Why weren't my rights read?
And the Statement, "overruled"
When they pronounced me dead?

I'll never hear my rights
Nor take the witness stand,
No attorney to defend me,
My fate was in a killer's hand.

Now the courtroom is crowded
As the defendant pleads the case.
With just the glimmer of a tear,
Cold eyes on a straight face.

But oh, that I could take the stand
If they could witness my last breath,
Could they live with the terror
That I went through in death.

If they could hear my pleading cries
And see the hatred in that face,
At last, we'd know, the scales had
"Been balanced" in this case.

If I could, I'd tell the jury
Exactly how it was,
The fear and pain that I went through
Struck down without a cause.

Did the jury carefully weigh it all
As they listened to the plea?
There were no emotions, showing now,
Just the hope of going free.

The final verdict now is in
As the defendant stands in tears
If only I had done as well.....
Given ten to twenty years.



The Wishbone

Our first Thanksgiving, November 1981. It had been only three months since Richards funeral, and six months since he disappeared. I still really couldn't believe he was gone. I struggled with depression, anxiety and overwhelming guilt. If only I had been a better Mother...

I decided to make Thanksgiving dinner. I wanted everything to be as "normal" as possible. I wanted to give my other children the holiday they deserved. Richard loved holidays.

I went shopping. I cried as I turned down each aisle. People stared at me crying in the store. I didn't care. I was on a mission. I got up early in the morning. I worked all day long, preparing a full holiday dinner. I cooked. I cried. The kids played with their friends. I cried. I set the holiday table; one less plate and an empty chair. I cried. I called everyone in for dinner. They were hungry but reluctant. I began to pray, thankful for what we still had. But my prayer soon turned to tears, then sobs. Missing him was just too much. Everyone began to cry. One by one we all left the table, the food untouched.

When I returned to put the food away for later, I found that the family dog had enjoyed a wonderful meal...ours! Paw prints in the mashed potatoes, drips of gravy everywhere. The Turkey carved by our four legged love. I cried again. At least the dog left the wishbone. My boys always took turns making a wish and breaking the wishbone. I asked them who wanted to make the wish this year. None of them wanted to. We decided to save it for Richard.

Christmas was just around the corner, another holiday dread. This time I remembered what I learned from Thanksgiving. I realized that I couldn't make things "normal". I had to create a new "normal". Old traditions were

too painful. I had to make new traditions. I had to face the reality of Richard not being with us. I found the wishbone I had been saving. I painted it with red nail polish and sprinkled it with glitter. When we decorated our Christmas tree, I hung Richard's Wishbone near the top. This began our new tradition. Every Thanksgiving we save the Turkey wishbone for Richard. Each year we decorate our Christmas tree with these wishbones.

One year, that pesky family dog chewed up all the wishbones on the bottom half of the Christmas tree. I was devastated. I asked my friends to help me replace them. Many people saved their Thanksgiving wishbones for me. This began yet another tradition.

Two years after Richard died; I met a new survivor, Gloria Fritz and her family. Her 7 year old daughter, Cathy, was brutally murdered on October 1st, 1983. Gloria soon became my new best friend. Gloria and I spent much time together over the years, sipping tea and smoking cigarettes, talking about our murdered children and hoping for justice. Gloria always loved Thanksgiving; she was a very loving, giving person. She had often held large Thanksgiving gatherings at her home. She said once the group was so large they had to move the tables outside, where they lined the entire driveway. The year after Cathy died, she just wanted family, but she invited our family to share Thanksgiving at her home. This began yet another "new tradition" for both of our families.

The Fritz and Leland families shared Thanksgiving together for many years, until October 11, 2000, when my very best friend Gloria Fritz died from Lung Cancer. That Thanksgiving we still gathered at Gloria's home to share all the wonderful memories. We saved the wishbone for Richard.

Just two years later, I too, was diagnosed with stage 1V terminal lung cancer. Most patients with this type and stage of lung cancer have a life expectancy of 6 to 9 months. I have been blessed with a miracle of living far beyond expectations. With the support of family, friends, faith, wonderful volunteers and dedicated doctors, I have been able to continue living and working. Now that my boys are grown, I would like to pass on this wishbone tradition to them. Now, more than ever before, I need more wishbones.

One year I wrote this same wishbone article for the Homicide Survivors newsletter, asking friends to save their wishbones for me. Several friends gave me wishbones. Some were large, some small, some painted, some with glitter and ribbons, and one that was especially beautiful, decorated as an angel, wings, halo and all.

Then one day a special person, I have never met, sent me something I will cherish forever. I received a small package in the mail, addressed to “Richard’s Mother”. Inside were two wishbones and a note. The note read:

“Dear Richard’s Mother,

Your letter in the newsletter brought tears to my eyes. My daughter was stalked and murdered in 1987. We made wishes on wishbones almost all of her life. At her funeral, I put a bag of wishbones in her pocket, and when I die, I will have my own bag of wishbones in my pocket. When we’re together again, we’ll play our game. My heart goes out to you. With Love, Irene’s Mother”

It has been 27 years now. I have been blessed in so many ways. Even through I meet most new friends because of the tragedies of our loved one’s murders, I feel blessed to have been able to experience the unique bond with fellow survivors. And I feel comforted to know that Richard and I will have friends in heaven to play the wishbone game.

This year, I again ask if you would save your Turkey Wishbone for me. Please help me decorate my Christmas tree with wishbones and help my family carry on our new tradition.

My wish for you is that you, too, will find new traditions that bring you comfort and joy in remembrance of your loved ones.

With great love,

Gail Leland



THIS IS MY CHILD

This is MY child!

I didn't bring him into this world for you to take him out just because he looked at you the wrong way. To think that this child now in danger of YOU, grew inside of me, kicking, moving, growing, living... anticipated and awaited with joy...

Even if it did mean I'd have to struggle just a little bit more to make ends meet.

But I could do it...because this was MY child. He grew inside of ME.

And his purpose in this life I gave him in the pains of my labor (of love) was not to die before he lived as long as me, when he could have if it weren't for YOU and the anger you carry in your pocket, with your Air Force Ones on your feet that you're not even wearing for the right reasons.

You KNOW that's not the way your mother raised you.

Learning to lift his head and say Mommy and Daddy (who cares which one he said first) and crawling backwards making me laugh and my heart smile.

Going to school looking the best I could do, learning his ABC's and riding a bike and telling tales and saying I love you Mommy when I kissed the boo-boo to make it better.

Seeing him make friends when he was too young to even know what a friend was and filling me with astonishment at the wonder of how this little person so new to this world could tell so much innocent truth just with his smile and his eyes and the things he does and the questions he asks.

That's MY child walking thru the world with fascination wondering what this and that is and making memories out of clay that I have to sit on my coffee table and explain to everybody what it is.

And I watch him in his first play thinking "What's he going to be when he grows up?" and such.

And he would grow up if he could cheat fate and avoid the interruption of YOU in his life.

You who have the capability and the opportunity to erase all the question marks defining his future in a split second of anger.

BUT another tragedy is... I realize that MY child could have been the one swallowed up in this dog-eat-dog-world only-the-strong-survive-world and end up robbing YOUR mother of HER child in a moment of anger or challenged ego...all because both of us gave birth to a child who had to leave the comfort and safety of our arms and dreams and plans and pride and joy just to fall victim to the enemy of their time a tiny lethal "thing" projected from an instrument of dream destruction encased in metal made to destroy the worthwhile product of the agony of the remembered labor pains of TWO WOMEN who ended up with nothing but sleepless peaceless weeping nights and pity and a small section in the newspaper announcing without fanfare the death of another POSSIBILITY..... because that's what you were to us, no matter which victim you were...OUR child. OUR dream. OUR hope... Shattered by the insultingly BRIEF CRACK of a GUN... that neither of us raised you to carry.

Diane Colburn Onley

Time, by Barbara Ann Craig (age 9, Oct. 6, 2003)

A clock ticking, dinging as it strikes the hour
When a hand will rise up against war.
When the bullies go quiet.
When joy will spread among fields of sorrow.
When hope arises where there is none.
When mud turns to fresh water.
When this happens only time will tell.

To Bereaved Grandparents

I am powerless. I am helpless. I am frustrated. I sit here and cry with her. She cries for her daughter and I cry for mine. I cannot help her. I can't reach inside and take her broken heart. I must watch her suffer day after day and see her desolation.

I listen to her tell me over and over how she misses Emily, how she wants her back. I can't bring Emily back for her. I can't buy her an even better Emily than she had, like I bought her an even better toy when she was a child. I can't kiss the hurt and make it go away. I can't even kiss a small part of it away. There's no band-aid large enough to cover her bleeding heart.

I used to listen to her talk about a boyfriend and tell her it would be okay, and know in my heart that in two weeks she wouldn't even think of him. Can I tell her it'll be okay in two years when I know it will never be okay, that she will carry this pain of "what might have been" in her deepest heart for the rest of her life?

I see this young woman, my child, who was once carefree and fun-loving and bubbling with life, slumped in a chair with eyes full of agony. Where is my power now? Where is my mother's bag of tricks that will make it all better? Why can't I join her in the aloneness of her grief? As tight as my arms wrap around her, I can't reach that aloneness.

Where are the magic words that will give her comfort? What chapter in Dr. Spock tells me how to do this? He has told me everything else I needed to know. Where are the answers? I should have them. I'm the mother.

I know that someday she'll find happiness again, that her life will have meaning again. I can hold out hope for her someday, but what about now? this minute? this hour? this day?

I can give her my love and my prayers and my care and my concern. I could give her my life. But even that won't help.

By Margaret Gerner ~ TCF

Village Of Hopes And Dreams

As we all come upon a death of a certain loved one
We all grief in the same way with our heads down.
As we all lose the championship,
We all grief in the same way with our heads down.
As we all fail a test, of which we tried so hard on,
We grief in the same way with our heads down.
As we all walk in the rain the same, so sad
The mood of the storm changes us
We all grief in the same way with our heads down.
As we all cry the same with blood-shot eyes, hoping no one sees us,
We all grief in the same way with our heads down.
As we all pray to God that this pain will stop,
We never think what we've done for him.
As I have lost something so great,
I lift my head to the sky
Pray to God that he will bless me with the opportunity
Of doing better next time.
As I learned from my elders the way you walk can tell a lot about yourself.
So I walk with my head up high, knowing God has sent his angels
To guide me in my path.
And if I did grief in the same way as others, with my head down.
I know that the Devil will be staring me down.
And as I walk home on this rainy day,
I pray that sunshine is on its way!
As I've cried in this stall,
I got on my knees and prayed to God to let these tears stop
With hopes and dreams I get from him,
Smiling each day because I know I am strong.

Rachel Martin

We Remember Them

*At the rising of the sun and at its going down,
We remember them.
At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
We remember them.*

*At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
We remember them.
At the shining of the sun and in the warmth of summer,
We remember them.*

*At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
We remember them.
At the beginning of the year and at its end,
We remember them.*

*As long as we live, they too will live:
For they are now a part of us,
As we remember them.*

*When we are weary and in need of strength,
We remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart,
We remember them.*

*When we have joy we crave to share,
We remember them.
When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
We remember them.*

*When we have achievements that are based on theirs,
We remember them.
When we fulfill their dreams, and our own,
We remember them.*

*As long as we live, they too will live:
For they are now a part of us,
As we remember them.*

Hebrew Union Prayer Book

“What I have learned during the first two years of grief”

The first year I learned how to scream and cry on the outside.

The second year I learned to scream and cry on the inside.

The meaning I guess is clear and I wonder how many agree with me. During the first year of grief, all I could do was cry and scream. I could not accept this had happened to my son and our family. During the first year, people were concerned and talked about Phillip and what had happened and when would we get justice? But after the first year, it seemed all the concerned people were gone. No one asked anymore about my son nor did they want me to talk about him. It made them uneasy. This is when I learned to cry and scream inside. The only true people who understand are the people that are traveling the same road of grief and to my sadness this road seems to be getting more crowded. I do not know what this 3rd year of grief will bring for us, hopefully we will see some justice for Phillip's murder I believe this will have to happen before we can start healing. I continue to keep my son's name alive in every way I can. I find if I can work on projects that are in memory of Phillip or any project concerning Phillip it helps me keep making it one more day.

Peace for another Day.

Debbie

**When will the murders of our children stop?
Why do our children kill each other?
Why do friends, acquaintances or
strangers kill each other?
Why are our children killing each other?
When will respect replace disdain?
When will love replace hate?
When will courtesy replace discourtesy?
When will tolerance replace intolerance?**

"Non-Violence is a way of life for courageous people." Martin Luther King Jr.

WHO AM I NOW, THAT.....

Darcie Sims, Bereavement Magazine, 888.604.4673 (HOPE)

Who am I, NOW? Who am I now that my child has died? Who am I now that I have survived the holiday season and find myself deep into the gloom of winter? Why do I feel so scattered? Why I am a thousand-piece puzzle when everyone else is so put-together?

Why does January seem so empty? Why do the seasons reflect my moods and why do I take on the cast of the weather outside? Just as the world is stiff and frozen outside my window, I feel dead and cold and scattered inside myself. WHO AM I NOW?

I managed to make it through the holiday season, though the 'hows' of that feat are truly beyond my recollection. I can't even remember eating the holiday meals. (I do, however, remember doing the dishes - again and again and again. Next year we're eating out or on paper plates!)

In those glittering days, I managed to smile and even to find a few moments of peace and joy; but here in the gloom of January, all I see to see are the scattered pieces of my life... cast before me on the card table, waiting for me to pick them up and make the picture.

But what picture do all these pieces form?

I used to think I knew. I used to know who I was and where I was going and how I was going to get there. But now, now in the chill of January, I can't even remember where the puzzle begins and I end.

I think I'm still grieving, and that surprises me! It's been ... (too long regardless of the time frame you insert) and I should be getting better. Why do I still ache from a sunburn I got years ago when we were together on the beach? Why is there still sand in my shoes and why does your name still stick in my throat? WHO AM I NOW that the memories grow cold in January's chill?

Am I still a mother if there is no child to tuck in at night? Am I still a dad if there is no one to loan the car keys to? Am I still a sister or brother if there is no one to tease? Am I still a human being, capable of loving and being loved, if the one person I loved more than anything has become frozen in time?

WHO AM I NOW that my child has died?

The gloom has permeated even my toes, and my whole body seems icy. Why can't January be warm and gentle - especially after the struggle of the holidays? I need some sunshine, some warmth, some help in turning over the puzzle pieces and putting them together. I need some spring.

But spring is a way off and I must (somehow) get through these days. If you're feeling like I am, perhaps these few suggestions will help you find the pieces to your new puzzle.

1. **Identify specific feelings.** Do not generalize. Try to figure out exactly what is bothering you. Look for the tiny grains of sand that are still hiding in the bottom of your shoes. Acknowledge them. Be honest with those feelings, whatever they are. If you're angry, be angry. If you're sad, be sad. Be specific in your sadness.

2. **Pick your worries.** Focus on only one worry at a time. Give up being worried about being worried. Prioritize your worries. This helps combat feelings of being overwhelmed and you can decide which worries to keep and which to send to your: a) mother; b) children; c) family; d) neighbor; e) enemy.

3. **Keep a picture or two of the sand castle where you can enjoy it everyday.** You may decide not to make a shrine out of your memories, but don't lose the joy that you had in making that marvelous moat! Keep the sand you found in the shoe - you just don't have to keep it there! That's what memories are for... a place to stash the important stuff we NEED.

4. **Become as informed and as knowledgeable as possible about this new world in which you live.** We fear what we don't know, what we can't see, what we can't touch. Read, listen, learn all you can about grief. It's not where you planned on being this winter, but it is where you are. Look around.

5. **Listen to everyone.** You will receive enough advice about how to do it (grief) to sink a fleet of battleships. Be grateful...at least someone is talking with you! But, FOLLOW YOUR OWN MUSIC!

6. **Be kind to yourself.** You survived the holiday season and now it is the beginning of another season, another way of living. Learn to forgive yourself for living.

7. **Set small goals first.** Accomplish them. Then, set bigger goals. Try starting with getting the garbage out on the RIGHT day. Then, open the closet...the drawers...the heart. Try going out. The next time you might be able to get farther than the driveway. TAKE YOUR TIME. It's a long way to the beach. You'll get there again...someday.

8. **Remember that life requires effort on your part.** Make friends with the vacuum, the checkbook, and the car. Become determined to learn to remove the box before microwaving the dinner.

9. **Don't wait for happiness to find you again. Make it happen.** Build another sand castle, maybe on a different beach this time. Don't lose the memories just because they hurt. Look at the pictures, listen to THE song, remember the love...you haven't lost that. How could you possibly lose the love you shared?

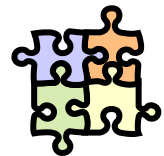
10. **Keep turning the puzzle pieces over.** But don't keep trying to put them back into the same picture. That picture is gone. There is a new picture to be made of those scattered pieces. Search for that scene. Search for the new you...search for the new person you are becoming.

11. **Don't forget how to dream, how to laugh, how to dance.** The music is different but so is the season. The room may be empty, but the heart is not. The spirit may be filled with sand, but the shoes remember the steps. One day at a time is OK if you can manage it, but know that some days all you can manage is one minute at a time. But minutes add up to years, eventually, and each grain of sand adds to the strength of the castle. Build the sand castle again...in only in your memory. Just because it's January, doesn't mean the beach is closed forever. Build your new castle in the middle of winter. Find the new occupant - the new YOU.

12. **Be gentle this winter season.** Turn the pieces over slowly, experiencing each piece as a newly found treasure. We can fill our days with bitterness and anger that the picture will never be the same. Or we can hope for the spring that will surely come if we let it.

I know there are good things on the horizon. Winter can't last forever. If those things turn out to be less than we hoped, we will simply have to make whatever we get into something livable.

Perhaps that is the secret to melting winter into spring. The challenge is to always carve out something beautiful from the icicle. There is joy in living...if we allow time in the winter to reassemble the thousand-piece puzzle.



**THIS POEM WAS WRITTEN BY DANIEL F. ARMENTA
MARCH 5, 1998, TAKEN FROM HIS JOURNAL
PUT INTO PRINT AFTER HIS DEATH, JANUARY 11, 2002**

Wiseman

**The foolish man builds,
His house on the sand.
When five feet away,
He had access to solid land.**

**The wise man builds,
his house upon a rock.
He'd surrender his life for his family,
Not the name of a street block.**

**The foolish man dreads,
The coming of the rain.
Washed away are his excuses,
Uncovered in his pain.**

**The wise man can withstand,
All of life's storms.
His priorities are non-negotiable,
and his beliefs are well formed.**

**The foolish man's world had fallen,
when the storm had passed.
In a world full of rock throwers,
he had built his house of glass.**

**The wise man's house still stands,
Many generations old.
Because he never wavered from his labors,
Or the truth in his soul.**

**The wise man and the fool,
Both know the right way.
The difference was one acted immediately,
the other waited for another day!**

Words are not enough.

How can I possibly explain the pain, agony, and suffering that I feel on a daily basis? How I am so jealous that other people can live day to day while I stand motionless and still, since the day of learning of Ariana and Tyler's murders. How can I possibly explain to people the tormenting misery that I experience every minute without my children? How I feel the need to tell everyone that I meet, that I have lost 2 children. I am exploding with so much pain that no one can see and even when I describe the pain, the earthly words can never seem to convey the true raw emotion.

It feels as though I am serving a harsh life sentence for a crime I did not commit. I am the victim of a cruel, heartless, violent crime. Never again will my life be the same.

How do I describe the unbearable, emotional pain that leaves my grief-stricken body physically exhausted everyday and the physical exhaustion that comes from the malicious nightmares that assault my brain every night?

Or how I have to grapple with the horrendous details of the murders. Knowing how much torture my children went through. Knowing that they were starved, beaten and left to die by someone who was supposed to love and protect them. Knowing that they were in so much pain and there was nothing anyone would do to help them. How scared and frightened they must have been. Let alone the pain from their little tummies hurting without food or water.

To know that my daughter's lifeless, decomposing body was found in a dumpster. And that my son's body is in a landfill and will never be found. To think that my children's bodies were thrown away like yesterday's trash. Not having Tyler's remains found will leave me in limbo, hoping that he is still alive knowing that he is not.

How do I possibly put these thoughts into words that everyone could understand?