

Weathering the Fog

By: Jordan Langley Source: www.hellogrief.org

I ended up donating my terrycloth robe to charity. I couldn't stand to wear it again since my aunt and uncle visited our house and sat me down to tell me my dad had taken his own life. My growing belly stuck out of the middle of the robe and I sank lower and howled with my whole body.

The robe bore the scent and memory of that moment and it had to go.

organizations. Of course we ask you to choose HOPE FOR BEREAVED!



Suicide carries a social stigma. Movies and television are filled

with modern Shakespearean tragedies. The "tribute" magazines stacked on store shelves endlessly exploit suicide victims. Why? How? Questions need answers, now, now, now.

In its simplest form, suicide is an act of killing oneself. The hurting person feels that, *in their own mind*, the solution to all problems would be to die. They believe they are relieving the pain in themselves and the people around them. Afterwards, the act is no longer singular. The web of the loss spreads, reaches out its tentacles and changes lives.

I've learned it's how you handle the outcome that makes all the difference.

The death of my dad formed a gray fog over me. I was pregnant with my first child at the time and I since had married and lived across town, I saw only the façade he put up in public. The shock of his suicide actually stopped my morning sickness for 48 hours. I had no idea he'd been suffering.

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| Share Your Story ~ Underwriting ~ Opportunity If you would like to submit an article to appear in the HOPELine Newsletter, please send it to Kelly O'Neill-Rossi, HOPELine Newsletter Editor, at krossi1@aol.com. We are looking for articles that inspire <i>hope, help</i> and <i>comfort</i> the bereaved. Each month, HOPELine is sent to 1,200 families throughout Central New York and the United States. If you would like to underwrite the cost of the HOPELine for a specific month, please contact Pat Kriesel at HOPE at 315-475-9675. It costs \$450 to underwrite the newsletter. Your donation will fund 100% of the expense of a newsletter for a month. You may include a special dedication to your loved one. Thank you for supporting the HOPELine! | Feature ArticlesPage1-2:Seeing Through the Gray FogPage3:Grief Insight from Gloria VanderbuiltPage4:There Are No Stages of GriefPage5-6:Director's PagePage7-8:Love, MarkPage9-10:Questions at the Grocery StorePage11:Support Group CalendarThe purpose of this newsletter is to help those who haveexperienced the death of a loved one.Each month, weshare information and ideas from bereaved people andprofessionals to help you through your grief journey.Please know you are not alone.HOPE is here to helpyou.To talk with a compassionate, caring professional,please call us today at 315-475-9675. | | | | | |
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As with most deaths, friends and family came to our aid with prayers, pot-luck dinners and offers of "anything we can do to help." We were so grateful and really could not have started the healing process without them.

The fog continued to follow me long after the phone calls grew quiet. I'd been a daddy's girl and my unborn child would never know the wonderful man who pitched softballs to me or spun yarns at the kitchen table, sparking my love of story writing. The world continued to turn, school bells rang, airplanes departed, but my heart still beat slow and ached for my dad.

What was surprising were the people who lacked self-control of their own curiosity, harshly prying into our family life even before offering a heartfelt condolence. Within the first week of my dad's death, my family and I received the following comments:

"How'd he do it?" All of a sudden, everyone was a crime scene investigator.

"Why? Was he seeing another woman on the side? Did he have a gambling problem?" Neighbors we hadn't talked to in years wanted the inside scoop. Co-workers wanted a piece of the drama.

"Did he leave a note?"

I couldn't believe the audacity! The shock was so fresh from my dad's death and I was in such a vulnerable place, that when these comments were made to me, I then worried about *those* aspects, too. The extra anxiety was unhealthy for my baby and often in suicide, as in our case, questions of my dad's last moments, his feelings, would never be answered.

The best way to get through that time was to distance ourselves from those busy-bodies that didn't "get it." We had lost a wonderful husband and father and to focus on anything more than that was counter-productive to the healing process. We may have lost relationships along the way, but in hindsight, we wouldn't have wanted to stay friends with such insensitive people.

Now I don't mention the suicide of my dad often. The stigma lives on and I feel that others might look at me crossways and judge me somehow, like I'm unstable too and might jump off a cliff at any moment. But I'm proud to stand up for my dad's memory and revel in our past. I try not to think of the future he could have had.

Every time someone said "only time would heal my pain," I wanted to smack them in the face. I didn't want to feel better. I never wanted to get over my dad. The gray fog gathered hail stones, lightening and lots and lots of rain. But ultimately, they were right. I don't sob until my ribs hurt anymore. I've added another child to a very fulfilling and distracting life. I smile.

That doesn't mean birthdays, holidays, a movie clip we laughed at or the melody of our father/daughter wedding song, are any less painful.

It means I can share my experience of suicide with others and say, "You're not alone. My loved one was hurting inside and took his own life, too. What a terrible, terrible situation. That doesn't mean *you* are crazy. Don't listen to what thoughtless outsiders say. Wrap friends and family and counselors around you and let them be your armor. Tears release chemicals that help your body. Cry and get rid of them, if you must. One day, you'll think positively about something again. A commercial on television, the dog trotting across your yard, double scoop ice cream. Mark that down in the history books. Healing takes time. Feel free to smack me."

GRIEF INSIGHTS FROM GLORIA VANDERBILT

By: Victor Parachin

Though Gloria Vanderbilt was heir to the Vanderbilt fortune and although she enjoyed great success as a fashion designer, her life has not been immune to a variety of tragedies.

One of the most painful took place in 1988 when her 23 year old son, Carter, ended his life by suicide. Gloria's other son, who was a college student at the time, is television journalist Anderson Cooper. Together she and Anderson recently published, The *Rainbow Comes and Goes: A Mother and Son on Life, Love, and Loss.* In it she writes about the death of Carter offering these insights about loss.



The loss of a child leaves a very deep wound. While the death of any loved one is

profoundly painful, the death of a child combined with the act of suicide is even more agonizing. "I have heard it said the greatest loss a human being can experience is the loss of a child. That is true," she says. "The person you were before, you will never be again; it doesn't just change you, it demolishes you. The rest of your life is spent on another level, the level of those who have lost a child."

- * One learns to live with the pain. Vanderbilt didn't feel that her pain lessened but became "different" saying "it's not something that goes away or fades into the landscape. It is there forever and even, inescapable. I have learned to live with it."
- * There are recurring dreams about her son. The times when Carter appears in a dream are bitter sweet. On the one hand they are appreciated encounters. On the other, they are reminders of what is missing. "Carter is not here. He has no brilliant career. No loving wife he is crazy about. No son...no daughter. He exists only in memory."
- * Talking about her son is desirable. A friend said she was hesitant to bring up Carter's name and speak of him. However, Vanderbilt said it made her happy to talk about him. "It brings him to me. He is not forgot-ten."
- * Holidays were 'celebrated' differently. After Carter's death neither she nor her remaining son Anderson Cooper, had any desire to observe Thanksgiving or Christmas in any traditional way. She and Anderson came together and always went to a movie. For several years they managed their way through the holidays by being together in silence in a darkened movie theater permitting themselves to be distracted by entertainment for a few hours.
- * No one escapes suffering. "We are not meant always to be happy, and who would want to be?" she asks. "Happiness would become meaningless if it were a constant state. If you accept that, then you will not be surprised when something bad occurs, you will not gnash your teeth and ask 'Why me? Why has this happened to me?' It has happened to you because that is the nature of things. No one escapes."
- * Joy is always possible. Though she lost her son, Vanderbilt still feels "there is so much to be joyful about." Joy is something she has trained herself to see and experience. "Know friendship; being able to really talk with someone who has a problem and say something that will help; waking up in the morning, looking out and seeing a tree has suddenly blossomed – what joy that brings."
- * Hope is present despite loss. Quoting British poet William Wordsworth "The rainbow comes and goes..." Vanderbilt cherishes the symbol of the rainbow as one of hope. "I find it reassuring knowing that the rainbow comes and goes. It helps me accept the way things often are. In every life, you have moments of blinding beauty and happiness and then you land in a dark cave and there is no color, no sky. Then the rainbow returns."

There are no "stages" of grief

By Victor Parachin M. Div

Unfortunately, some people (including professional counselors) promote the mistaken idea that there are well defined "stages" of grief that every person goes through. This rigid approach to the bereaved is unfortunate and misleading.

It's much wiser and more accurate to suggest that there are phases of grief recovery that are common to many, but not every, person who is grieving.

For example, the bereavement authority Colin Murray Parkes described four phases: numbness, pining, disorganization, recovery.

Another example comes from Dr. William J. Worden, also a grief expert who cites four "tasks" of mourning which most, but not all, grievers experience:

- * to accept the reality of the loss
- * to experience the pain of grief
- * to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- * to withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship

Still, another approach was offered by Swiss American psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her immensely popular book On Death and Dying. There, she outlined a five-stage process which many, but not all, experience: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

Her five "stages" were written about those who were terminally ill and in the dying process. Unfortunately, her "stage" theory was hastily adapted and applied to the bereaved, very few of whom felt their grief matched the five "stages."

There are many other models of grief recovery; some have three steps, while others have as many as seven or 10. The issue with pre-determined stages or steps is that they seldom are found in the experience of grievers. Recently, researchers from Yale University tested five stages of grieving. As lists of the five stages vary slightly from source to source they settled on examining disbelief, yearning, anger, depression and acceptance. For three years, they collected data as part of the Yale Bereavement Study—in total, 233 people were interviewed approximately six, 11 and 19 months after a loved one (usually a spouse) had died.

Those whose relatives had a violent death or who were suffering from what is known as a complicated grief reaction were excluded. The resulting picture was more complex than the five stages would suggest. The researchers found that acceptance was the strongest emotion throughout, while disbelief was very low. The second strongest emotion throughout was yearning, and depression was more evident than anger at every stage. Also, emotions did not follow the form of an orderly sequence.

After six months, the researchers found that all negative emotions were beginning to decline. This is good news for grievers but it doesn't mean that people were somehow "over it." It's common to miss the deceased profoundly for years to come, but their research reveals that most people do adjust and adapt to the loss.

Whenever you come across any theory about grief stages, keep in mind these two realities about grief recovery. The first is that some people do find that elements of their own bereavement experience corresponds to some elements of these models. However, a bereaved man or woman may not go through all of the stages in any grief recovery model. Furthermore, very few grievers go through the "stages" in any sequential order.

The second reality is that we're all different. Just as we have different tastes, views, ideas, understandings, we humans all grieve individually and in accordance with our unique personalities. That's why the best advice about "stages" and "phases" is this wisdom from author *Sue Mayfield in her book First Steps Through Bereavement*: "Everyone is different. If your bereavement doesn't fit any particular pattern, don't worry. It doesn't mean you're not normal. It just means that you are you. Do it your way."





Dear Friends:

This is a very exciting year for HOPE as we celebrate **40 years** of serving the grieving children, teens, adults and families of our community. Our major fundraiser is our annual **Celebration of HOPE** dinner. This year the Celebration will be held on **Friday, November 2nd at the OnCenter**. The committee is planning a very special evening in loving memory of Mary T. Schoeneck and honoring Wegmans. This year our Community Co-Charis are Jeffery & Dorothy Booher, of B&B Lumber. The Celebration is a fun-filled evening with our popular silent and live auctions. We hope you will join us for this special event.

Please consider sponsoring or hosting a table at this years Celebration of HOPE dinner. Your support of the dinner is important since the dinner raises 1/3 of our annual revenue. HOPE does not receive annual institutional funding from any source. Your support will raise awareness of the dinner and enable HOPE to continue providing our core services (counseling, 12 support groups and monthly newsletter) at no charge.

The staff and volunteers are busy providing our services to the bereaved. We could not offer our core services free of charge without your help ~ YOU TRULY MAKE A DIFFERENCE for those struggling with grief. We are blessed to count you as friends ~ THANK YOU! Best wishes for a renewing, safe and relaxing rest of the summer.

LOVE & HUGS!!! Therese



- Howard A. Drescher Foundation for \$5,000 donation, it is a tremendous help!
- Jim Sollecito and his staff for maintaining the gardens and replacing plants at HOPE's Center
- St. John's Church of Liverpool for \$500 donation
- Michael & Melanie Sheridan for \$500 donation which will be matched
- Circle of Friends donations: <u>\$100 Donations:</u> Mimi Kohlbrenner, Frazier Hunt, Janice Gregory, Nancy Lawler, Robert Ludlow, Marv Hahn, Susan Edwards, Bill & Laurie Smiley, Jack Dee, Don Mawhinney <u>\$200 Donation</u>: Jerry Mager
- Coffee Donation from Jane Kwasigroch
- Highpoint Lawn Service for donating summer lawn treatment at HOPE Center

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED FOR Celebration of HOPE on Friday, November 2nd Any item or professional service you would bid on is welcome: Sporting Goods * Electronics * Outdoor/Garden Housewares * Children's Items * Antiques * Event Tickets Getaways * Gift Certificates * Art * Toys * Jewelry Restaurant, Golf and Grocery Certificates are very popular! As a family, office or support group of friends, pick a theme and FILL A BASKET! NEW items that you have received but don't need or use. Donated items may be dropped off at HOPE's Center. Call HOPE today for a solicitation letter on HOPE's letterhead. Donated Bid items generate income for

HOPE which is a tremendous help! Items welcome during September & October ITEMS DUE BY OCTOBER 15, 2018

DONATE "IN MEMORY" Silent Auction items or baskets may be donated "in memory" of a loved one. If you wish you may include a short write up and/or photo with the item. Items or baskets should be at least a \$40 value, gift certificates can be \$25 or more

26th Anniversary of the Butterfly Garden of HOPE Memorial Day, Monday May 29th Our Special Thanks and Recognition To:

- Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, 2018-2019 Garden Sponsor
- Rabbi Daniel Fellman, Temple Concord
- Boy Scout Troop 620, Liverpool, NY
- Dan Cummings, News Channel 9
- **o** Charlie Lewis, Bagpipe Musician
- Senator John DeFrancisco
- ♦ Michael Grimm Landscape & Tree Service ♦
- **Sollecito Landscaping Nursery**
- Jeanette Peterson, Flower Coordinator
- Brian Smith, Excellus Team Liaison
- David Abdo, East Coast Companies

- Bill Lansley & Dale Grinoles, Onondaga County Parks Department
- Joel Potash, Cornell Master Program
- Bradtke Greenhouses, LLC
- The Spirit of Syracuse Chorus
- Marvin Hahn, Volunteer
- Bill Campagnoni, Volunteer
- Joe Trojnar, Volunteer
- Nate Tarbel, Volunteer
- Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency
- Volunteer Teams from: ADP, Berkshire Bank, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield & Key Bank

A Very Special Thank You to <u>Kathy Cardina</u> for doing a great job managing the garden. Kathy works hard at the garden spreading mulch, composting the flower beds, raking, planting and deadheading. Kathy also schedules the volunteers throughout the season from clean-

up to raking the autumn leaves.

In addition she is always available

to support our staff with patience and her generous spirit! Thank you Kathy!!!





In Our Thoughts and Prayers: Please keep Bob Kriesel, Kathy Spencer, Rita Stein,Anne Hayes, Christy Dannible, Beth Putnam, Vicki Krenichyn and their families in your prayers.



Dear Friends,

Every person leaves a = LEGACY =. A legacy is what someone gives, or hands down, is to others, usually when they leave a place. A legacy is built over time, and will include a person's past. A legacy can be material things, such as money see left in a WILL a. Much more importantly, a legacy is what each of us leaves behind for other people when we die. What do we leave behind when we die? Many things! ONE thing we leave behind are memories or on How will people remember : [] us? Will we be remembered as being NICE ? HAPPY ? ANGRY ? or something else ? Another part of our legacy is what we taught others. Did we teach others how to be KIND, LOVING B, or something else? Will our legacy show that we were GENEROUS, HELPFUL, for something else? ; What LEGACY did our deceased loved one leave for us?: " My Friends, a good " excercize on our griefjourney # ? is to explore our loved one's legacy. We will discover reasons why we miss them, and perhaps some things we wish were different. III We can then understand For that we build our own legacy over a long time. Att The legacy we leave behind for others is made by how we live TORAY and EVERY DAY. Like our deceased loved one gave to us, the most important gifts How we can give to our loved ones is a beautiful life and LEGAY. B Love, MARK = &

Questions at the Grocery Store By: Bart Somner

The days that immediately followed my 10-year-old son's death, perhaps there was nowhere more terrifying than the grocery store – the place I had spent countless shopping excursions begging my son and his little sister to stop running.

Begging them to be polite and think of the other people in the store who were trying to shop and not to consider the store a playground. My son always got it and tried to rein his sister in, but she'd needle him a little, and before the second hand had gone full circle, they'd both be doing what I asked them not to.

He knew I'd be annoyed, and it always made him feel bad, but they had a special bond, those two. He was the protector, he knew what would make my wife and me mad and what wouldn't, and most of the time he knew where the line was they shouldn't cross.

I noticed in the days after his death, his sister had to learn where "the line" was. It wasn't where it used to be, and it was not where it would be in a month, 6 months, 1 year, 5 years. But those battles of wills and rules were the good memories of shopping.

The truth was they were great kids, usually helpful, always full of life, who, even if they didn't always follow them, knew the rules. We had taught them that.

No, the terror of the supermarket wasn't the memories so much; it was all those other people. The ones shopping who would make eye contact.

Did they know? Did they know that one of the most special people in the world to me had been taken away? Did they know I was one fleeting memory away from flowing tears and crippling grief? Were they trying to put the face with the newspaper article they read, or were they one of the thousands at his vigil? Did their kid play football too, or had, or wanted to? Had they seen us around school? Church? The theater? Baseball? Softball? Work? Had they lost a child? A spouse? Parent? Sibling? Dog? Hamster?

And when that tiny wave of recognition clicks on their face, what then? Were they going to say something? Oh God, I hoped they wouldn't say something, but if they had to, please make it short and sweet.

Or maybe worse yet, they didn't know. How dare they? How dare they stand there and not throw their arms out and wrap me up? No matter how much it made my skin crawl to hug someone again at that exact moment, how dare they not know, and not try? Didn't you read the newspaper? Watch the TV news? The greatest little boy that ever walked the face of this planet has died. My little boy. How dare they not know that!?!

And that was just the other customers. The employees all knew my son. He always said "Hi." He was one of those polite kids who came to the bakery, asked for a cookie, and said thank you when he got one. When I saw the lady in the bakery and she asked how I was I couldn't tell if she knew or not. I wanted to tell her. But I figured I was finally past the "Let me tell you what happened and make you feel bad because I really feel like dying and I can think of anything I want more right now than to make you feel like dying too" stage.

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I just nodded and replied with "Hanging in there." She nodded. But, behind me I knew, only 20 feet from where I stood, was the sweet lady who worked in the pre-packaged meat and cheese aisle. She rotated the stock and gabbed with anyone who wanted to talk, and basically made shopping in that store a friendly experience.

Over the years she had become a friend. She was very proud of her children. And she loved my kids. I had walked in the week before, knowing that she may not have heard. There in front of shiny packages of Oscar Meyer Bologna, and Ball Park Franks, she greeted me with her usual smile.

I started to tear-up, realizing she hadn't heard. She sat down on the edge of the deli case and wept. Then she took my hand and we went outside and both wept. Again I was reminded that it wasn't just us that had lost my son. She came to the memorial. But every time I went back into that store, there she was stocking meats and cheeses. I'd pass, exchange a meaningful hand grasp, and move forward. There was nothing else to do.

As I'd continue, every face presented the same questions.

I started using a list, I had to, otherwise I would endlessly wander the aisles, looking at everything I had ever bought, thinking of my son. "Tuna," he used to reach down and hand me the cans. Hot Pockets, he loved them for breakfast with his preference in taste leaning towards the sausage, not bacon.

I'd see something he loved which we didn't usually buy, and into the cart it would go, I had to have one for him. Before I knew it I had a cart full of Cheetos, Garlic bread and Pringles.

So I'd get in line. Which checker was on duty? Oh no, not the manager. He had purchased the winning football raffle ticket from my son last year. He had played on the same football field 30 years ago when he was growing up that my boy died on. He loved my boy. I couldn't face him again. He'd understand.

I would also avoid the checker with the weathered face and gentle eyes. She always asked about the kids and I didn't want to go through it again. I mean really, what was the appropriate thing to say to "Where are the kids today?" "Oh thanks for asking, my girl is in school, and my son is in an urn on top of the piano. How are you?"

I'd find a cashier on the end I didn't know. Longest lines, but who cared.

I'd punch in my member number (my boy loved doing that for me). I'd open my wallet and absentmindedly pull out the credit card with the picture of the kids at the beach. My son was buried up to his neck in the sand, and his sister was grinning ear to ear, holding the shovel and pail. A great picture taken when we were camping that year. Inevitably the checker would notice.

Eventually, that credit card would start to bring a smile to my face, helping me remember the good times. But at first it was the last reminder on the way out of the store ... my boy was dead, my life had changed forever, and at least for the near future, the supermarket sucked.

Article printed from Hello Grief: http://www.hellogrief.org

August 2018

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|---|---|--|-----|-----|
| | | | 6:30 to 8:30pm <i>1</i> Young @ Heart | Fulton Meeting 2 6:30-8:30pm Death by Drug Overdose | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 6:30-8:30 PM Death by Drug Overdose | 8 6:30 to 8:30pm Survivors of Suicide | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 6:30-8:30pm General | 10AM-Noon Senior W/W 6:30-8:30 Support Groups • Bereaved Parents • Parents Infant Death • Youth whose sibling, friend or relative died | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 6:30-8:30 Young Widow & Widower 6:30-8:30pm Youth Whose Parent or Adult Relative or friend Died | 22 6:30 to 8:30pm Survivors of Suicide | <i>23</i> 6:30 to 8:30pm Homicide Support Group | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

- **HOPE** For those whose loved ones died by Drug Overdose
- **HOPE for Young @ Heart** Widow/widowers with no young children at home
- HOPE for Younger Widows, Widowers, Engaged & Significant Others (same evening as Parent Youth Group)
- HOPE for Widow/Widowers Senior Daytime
- **HOPE for Youth (Sibling):** Separate, age appropriate groups for children and teens whose sibling, relative or friend died.
- **HOPE for Youth (Parent):** Separate, age appropriate groups for children and teens whose parent, relative or friend died.
- **HOPE for Bereaved:** For any adult whose loved one, parent, sibling, relative or friend died.
- **HOPE for Survivors of Suicide:** For those whose child, spouse or friend died by suicide.
- HOPE for Bereaved Parents: For those whose children of any age died by accident, illness, (Same evening as the Sibling Youth Group)
- **HOPE for Parents** whose infant died by miscarriage, stillbirth or newborn death.
- HOPE for those whose loved one died by a Homicide.
- HOPE for Bereaved, Fulton & Oswego: (2nd Tuesday) 7-9:00PM Oswego Hospital, 110 W.
 6th Street; in Cafeteria Conference Room and the 4th Tuesday at St. Luke Health Services 299 E. River Road. For more information please contact Donna Lupien (315) 342-6326



for bereaved is a jewel

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<u>Summer Hours</u> HOPE's Center will be closed: on Friday's in July and August. We also will be closed Labor Day, Sept. 3rd. Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Syracuse, NY Permit NO. 713

August 2018

The journey of grief can seem bleak and lonely Look in front of you... there are others encouraging and guiding you Look beside you ... there are others on the same journey Look behind you ... there are others encouraged by you We are not alone on this journey.