

Teenagers Grieve, Too!

In 1983, at the age of 20, my life was suddenly changed forever when my 17-year-old brother, Scott died in an automobile accident. His death was one of the worst things I could conceive of happening in my lifetime. My brother was part of my past and present, and I always expected this relationship to continue throughout adulthood. But overnight my two younger sisters and I no longer had a brother. Scott shared all the personal aspects of our family life and, in an instant, he was gone. His death was so sudden and unanticipated; I had no time to say good-bye. My brother was adored by his family and friends. He was the catcher for the high school varsity baseball team and quarterback for the football team. The baseball team wore black armbands for the season. There were many memorials dedicated to his memory, and we received numerous letters attesting to the magnitude of Scott's death. At times, I found these outpourings of support and grief uplifting; at other times, they were overwhelming and I felt guilty for having survived grief, my sisters and I often felt that our own grief and the opportunity to be heard, recognized, and essential response to the loss of a family member acknowledged and their grief incorporated into the grief after the trauma of suddenly losing a brother siblings who have no place to work through their and professionally. His memory inspired me to go experience constructively to help other surviving I decided it was time that someone looked at of my teens and my sisters were 15 and 19; it's no age group. I am now writing my doctoral dissertation family is one of the most painful events an individual can experience. Parents often express concern for the psychological well-being of their surviving children, but their own grief can make it difficult for them to help their surviving children cope with the loss. Although highly recommended by experts, few bereavement interventions are family-focused. My research will try to address that issue by looking at a way parents can help their teenagers as they all grieve a beloved family member. Over the past ten years, I have had the opportunity to provide counseling to many who have experienced the death of a brother or sister. The insights and feelings they have shared with me have helped me to shape my thinking and to better understand my own experience. I hope my work will contribute to our understanding of how to support families through the difficult task of grief.



- Heidi Horsley, M.S., M.S.W

Spring Holidays

Many special days soon are coming our way called Easter, Passover, Mother's Day and Father's Day. How do we react when non-bereaved people ask "How was your holiday?" We nod, we smile, we say, "Okay, just fine." But you and I know it's just a good line. No holidays are happy, for our sweet child has gone and our family togetherness plan is definitely wrong. So what do we do, how do we pay homage to those who celebrate that day. Our voices stay quiet and our stories are sad. We just have to get through the days that are bad. Eventually we do come up with plans A and B. Spending time with kind people who really do see we are desperately trying to give it our best. Our mourning style differs from all the rest. As survivors we reinvent our careers and our goals. Patching new ideas with our bodies and souls. We look for quiet places, safe harbor, and retreat. Sometimes we reach out, sometimes we take a back seat. But somehow through it all Springtime will renew a strong sense of hope that we will get through. With the blooming flowers, the greening of trees our strength returns and the harsh pain does ease. Let out your feelings and continue to grieve, soon you will see life's tapestry reweave.

- Lionel & Sandy Chaiken
TCF, Potomac Chapter

Human Pain

Human pain does not let go of its grip at one point of time. Rather, it works its way out of our consciousness over time. There is a season of sadness. A season of anger. A season of tranquility. A season of hope. But seasons do not follow one another in a lockstep manner, at least not for those in crisis. The winters and springs of one's life are all jumbled together in a puzzling array. One day we feel as though the dark clouds have lifted, but the next day they have returned. One moment we can smile but a few hours later the tears emerge. It is true that as we take two steps forward in our journey, we may take one or more steps backward. But when one affirms that the spring thaw will arrive, the winter winds seem to lose some of their punch.

- Robert Veninga
A Gift of Hope: How We Survive Our Tragedies

In reality we never lose the people we love, they become immortal through us. They continue to live in our hearts and minds. They participate in our every act, idea, and decision. No one will ever replace them in spite of the pain. We are richer for all the years invested in them. Because of them, we have so much more to bring to our present relationship and all those to come.

- Leo Buscaglia