

THE PARENT Journey

a *Grief Haven* newsletter for bereaved parents and those who support them

april - june 2011

finding peace in a tree garden

by howard gelbman

Of all the experiences life has brought my way, none has been or will ever be more important or challenging to me than facing the loss of two of my children.

We will all have to face the loss of loved ones at some time in our lives, but, in my opinion, no loss can compare to the death of a child, regardless of that child's age. When someone hears the word "child," they often think of a minor or young person. The fact is, regardless of a person's age, he or she is someone's child as long as his or her parents are still alive.

I share my story with you from a position I wish I were not in, and that is that I, too, am a bereaved parent. Within a span of five years, I lost two of my three daughters. My oldest daughter, Terry, passed away in 1997 in her sleep from natural causes. She was only 38 years old. She had no known previous medical problems. And my middle daughter, Lisa, passed away at the age of 40, five years after Terry, in 2002, after a two-year battle with colon cancer.

Throughout my life, I have always approached difficulties in a more pragmatic and realistic way—that has always been my nature and where I am most comfortable when life throws challenges my way. So that is how I have approached the passing of both of my daughters.

Terry and her husband, David, owned a home in Kissimmee, Florida, and, in the early

90s, they purchased a travel trailer to tour the country. They stayed with me in Key Largo from 1995-1997, leaving to go back to Kissimmee in April of 1997.

On September 25, 1997, just five months after Terry and her husband returned to Kissimmee, I received a phone call from my daughter, Lisa, informing me that Terry had passed in her sleep. Obviously it was a total and absolute shock! As I now look back, the only emotion I can remember feeling is one of complete numbness. That numbness was one of my saving graces.

Most of the first week after Terry's passing is a blur. I recall that Lisa wanted Terry buried in Miami, so we were busy making those arrangements. If I had to identify my emotional state at that time, I would say it was one of deep sadness and an overwhelming feeling of loss. Because of my pragmatic and



Harold Gelbman



where hope resides

Rebuilding Again

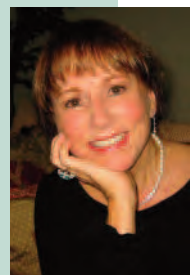
Norman Cousins said, "Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live." As bereaved parents we know that, after the death of our child, one of the greatest challenges we face is to learn to live and thrive in life again and not merely tolerate our lives; i.e., we know that life is meant to be embraced and lived, not just endured. So we work hard at rebuilding our lives so that we will once again experience life's meaning and joy. We also know that this is not something that comes quickly and that it takes a whole lot of love and support from others to help us get there.

There is a group of bereaved parents I have met over the years who have a unique set of circumstances with which they grapple, and those circumstances often leave them abandoned by others, sometimes even other bereaved parents. I'm talking about mothers and fathers who have lost more than one child. That is why we are dedicating this issue of the *Parent Journey* to them. These parents desperately need our love and support, even though it might be scary to even think about such a thing. Please DO read their stories, for they experience abandonment on a whole new level.

After reading this newsletter, please feel free to write to these parents and share your love and support. Their stories and resiliency will amaze and inspire you.

P.S. The Sibling Voice is a newsletter for everyone, not just siblings. Please be sure to read this amazing newsletter written by siblings of all ages. It will give you great insight into what siblings go through and how to support them.

~ Susan Whitmore
founder & president



realistic approach to everything, my way of dealing with Terry's death was to find a reason. For me, trying to answer the question, "Why?" which comes with no answer, was an approach that didn't work for me. So I turned to the questions I felt "could" be answered, and those were the "what?" questions. What happened to Terry? What was going on inside of her that was overlooked? Also, what I avoided were all of the "coulda," "woulda," and "shoulda" thoughts and comments, because I learned early on that they led nowhere, accomplished nothing, and made me feel even worse. I did try other things, such as visiting the cemetery, but those other things provided little or no comfort.

Even though it was five years later and life was moving forward, it seemed to me that it was just the "the next day" when we received Lisa's cancer diagnosis. I went with Lisa and her husband for the diagnosis and supported her through her surgery and chemo for the next two years. The immediate diagnosis from Lisa's doctor was that her colon cancer was Stage 4 and terminal, with a chance of her continuing life for another two to five years. I remember Lisa bravely carrying on for those two years. She once said she was thankful for having two more years with her only child. He was nine when she passed away.

Like me, Lisa was highly structured, and she left specific instructions regarding what she wanted for each of her family members. I am thankful that I encouraged her sister, Ilene, to come down from Pennsylvania and stay with Lisa the last two months when Lisa was at home and on hospice care.

When Terry died suddenly in 1997, it was as if someone dropped a bomb on me and shattered my life. When Lisa passed, which was no less painful, we at least had time to adjust over the two years she was battling cancer.

The first year after Lisa's passing was tough, yet, as you know, Mother Nature and my own grief process helped me move from those thoughts that I dwelled on 24/7 to shared and happy memories of my times together with my daughters. While I continue to have my personal ups and downs, I deal with them as they arise and live moment to moment.

What has given me the most comfort and support was creating Children's Memorial Tree Gardens, Inc. This happened as I began my search for a physical place to memorialize Terry and Lisa's lives. As I searched for that special place, all I could find were names on a

wall or brick pavers or a dedicated plaque in some far-away place. What I wanted was a place close to home, and a place that would be dedicated to the celebration of their lives, not the moments of their passing.

I came up with the concept of a children's memorial tree garden as a place where parents could actually plant a tree in loving memory of their child and include a plaque with a written dedication at the base of that tree. Symbolically, the growth of their tree would represent the future their child had been denied by death, and a tree garden would give everyone who loved that child a place to visit whenever they wished, without having to drive long distances. From talking with other parents, I learned that families who have lost a child have a unique bond. I have learned that most don't really like visiting a cemetery. Many parents have elected cremation and the scattering of ashes, yet that leaves them no place to express or share their feelings. Children's Memorial Tree Gardens would provide that special place.

So, with limited funds, I approached my local government with the memorial garden concept and asked for a dedicated area within what is known as a "passive park." A passive park is one that does not contain activity sites, such as pools, playgrounds or athletic fields. It is a park that is used by the public for picnics and generally includes nature trails. After much discussion with my local government, we reached an agreement that our



Howard's daughters: Lisa (left) and Terry (below)




*“Within a span of
five years, I lost two of
my three daughters.”*

organization would supply the trees (if none existed), plaques, tables, benches, and plants. Also, we would create walkways through the Children's Memorial Tree Gardens areas. The local government would then provide the maintenance of the area, and all of the improvements made would belong to them.

That is when the Children's Memorial Tree Gardens were born.

There is no way I would have been able to bring this project to life without the support and donations of a whole host of volunteers, from parents who had lost children to landscape designs by a landscape architect, to local high school students who built a gazebo and butterfly garden and created a memorial book, to regular, everyday citizens who



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donated time and money along the way. People were capturing my vision, and it was exciting to see it coming to fruition.

Our first garden was designed to include 11 trees and has now expanded to include 50 trees. Our Florida Keys, a string of islands 112 miles long and a mile wide, gives us a lot of room for growth. To date, we have four tree gardens, and each one is about 25 miles apart. These four Children’s Memorial Tree Gardens fulfill my desire for parents to be able to plant a memorial tree near their homes and honor the lives of their beloved children, as well as give some special meaning to the lives that my daughters, Terry and Lisa, lived.

By an act of Congress, the second Sunday in

December has been deemed “National Children’s Memorial Day.” Each year, parents and families gather for a balloon release and candle lighting service in honor of the child they have lost. The public parks are open year round, and many of the parents and families gather for private picnics and share remembrances of their child, which supports our motto: *They will be remembered.*

The serenity of a tree in one of Children’s Memorial Tree Gardens honors and memorializes a child and provides a special place where parents can sit, remember, and observe the growth of the tree as it gets larger and looms over the specialized plaque. Also, it is where parent can share with other parents who are there.

If you are a bereaved parent, or know of parents who have lost a child, I invite you to visit our web page at www.childrensmemorialtreegardens.org for complete information about either creating a Children’s Memorial Tree Garden in your area or planting a tree in one of our already-existing gardens.

So where am I today, and how am I doing? Here is how I would sum that up: I gained the most peace of mind from developing the Children’s Memorial Tree Gardens program,

which, for me, is the equivalent of the griefHaven Newsletter. I have found comfort in the process of reaching out and helping others, and I get so much more from doing that than I could ever give.

There is not, and will never be, any “one size fits all” book in dealing with the loss of a child. Each parent and family has to find their own way to accept the finality of the loss, find their own ways of rebuilding their lives, and, hopefully, be able to eventually revel in and remember the happy times shared between them and their child.

My motto about living life now is: *Make the most of today. You may not get a “do-over” tomorrow.*



The Gelbman family in 1995: (top row) Lisa, Ilene, and Terry (second row) Danny (third row) Erica and Christopher (fourth row) Douglas

Children’s Memorial Tree Gardens, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Participation in the CMTG program does not require any political or religious affiliation.

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From the time Bo was born, he was curious, thirsted for knowledge, longed to tap into anything, and everything, and was growing, learning, and expanding.

He loved life, his family and his friends, and there wasn't a thing he wouldn't do to make sure everyone was having a great time. He brought his sparkling personality and laughter into every gathering, changing stale, stagnate energy into circling balls of light. When his radiance dimmed to a flicker, he resorted to his talents to recharge his spirit.

Music and art were Bo's vehicles of release. He was a gifted artist, played the piano, switched over to the saxophone, and found his passion playing the guitar. It was through his art and music, the rhythm of his soul, that his spirit was rekindled. He found solace while embracing his gifts, turning inward and tapping his true heart's light.

But music and art weren't Bo's only interests. When all his friends had turned away from their faith, he explored the realms of religion and spirituality. He searched for his soul's answers in the Bible and through the study of Hinduism and Buddhism.

My fondest memories with Bo occurred while he was in treatment. We would sit on a large rock by a bubbling brook and talk for hours about spirituality. It was during those times I saw my son's true essence emerge, his shining soul's light. I listened as Bo spoke of his challenges upon his release from treatment. He knew what he should do, but had doubts if he could embrace that path at such an early age. He revealed his deep wound, the need to be loved by those he loved dearly, and mentioned that drinking and drugging filled that empty hole inside of him, temporarily erasing the pain. We discussed a variety of options, searching for a better solution to the intense void he felt inside. He didn't know if he had the strength to continue fighting the same battles, but he promised to try.

Wanting to support my son every step of the way on his journey, I suited up and showed up at Nar-Anon and Al-Anon. It was inside those dark trailer walls, filled with other distraught beings searching for answers, for direction, that I learned a powerful life-altering lesson. I realized that my growing up in an alcoholic family had repercussions. I watched and learned from my mother, an



Bo and Pattie on that special rock where they would share for hours

enabler, and stepped right into her shoes. At that point, I was faced with a choice—to keep living the way I was living, expecting different results (the definition of insanity) or making the necessary changes needed to turn my life around. Stepping out of the old and into the new wasn't easy. I left a marriage of twenty years, which created its own set of challenges. But I knew I had to heal in order to become my true authentic self—that then and only then could I help those I loved.

Years passed, and Bo and I continued to talk about his ongoing struggles. January, 2004, I received the dreaded “call” no mother is ever ready to receive. At the ripe age of 22, Bo passed away. He was partying with his friends and decided to play it safe, booking a hotel room for the evening. When it was time to check out, his friend tried relentlessly to wake him, but there was no sign of life left in him. The combination of drugs and alcohol took a toll on his body: he had taken his final breath.

The days that followed were the hardest days of my life—seeing my son lying lifeless in a coffin... watching his best friends carry his

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casket down the aisle... listening to my younger son's eulogy... all of it so surreal.

It's been seven years now since Bo passed away, and there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about him or talk to him. The depth of the original pain has dwindled with time, yet the heartache remains, and I still long for one more yesterday... one more hour on the rock.

My true healing began when I wrote and illustrated the book, *Believe*, and the Spanish version, *Creer*, which I dedicated to my son, our family, and all families who have or will walk in these same shoes. Every blot of ink, every word written, was guided and inspired by Bo. He wanted more for me than to merely exist—he wanted me to heal so I could continue to live my life fully, soaring into life's beauty and embracing my path.

Believe is a simple book, but the messages are powerful: embrace the grief and pain, which never dies, yet lessens with time; create a new relationship with your loved ones, which is of paramount importance; find the gifts your loved ones left behind and hold onto them instead of the pain; honor your loved one's courageous journey on earth; and celebrate their spirit. Keeping the essence of our loved ones alive keeps the channels open between us. I believe they hear our soft-spoken words of endearment, feel our gut-wrenching pain, wipe away our tears, and rejoice in our undying love.

On Bo's heavenly birthday, I release balloons, one for each birthday. I clutch the balloons, fill them with my heart-felt wishes, and then release them with love. I believe in my heart of hearts he plucks those multi-colored dancing balloons from the azure sky, rushes back to his party, and decorates his space with those gifts of my heart. Who we are never really dies. It just changes form.

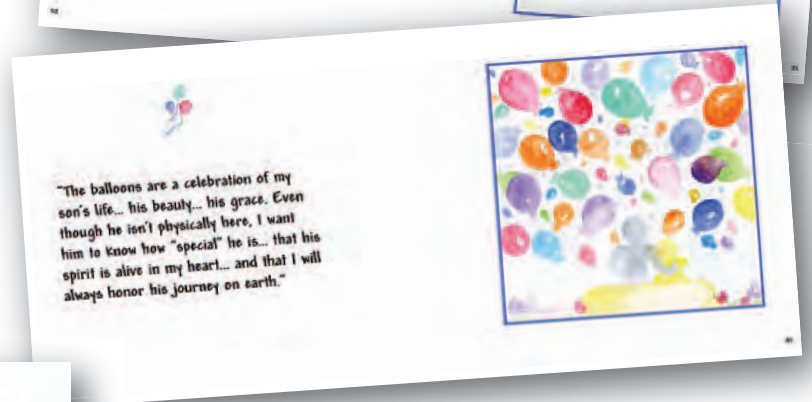
Bo's challenges on earth forced me to take a good look at myself, to go inside and do some real soul-searching. He was and continues to be my greatest teacher, and I am forever indebted to my boy. I am who I am today because of him. What greater gift can a child give his mother? And so it is.

Though his voice is quiet, his spirit still echoes.

Pattie Welek Hall is a mother, a writer, and an illustrator. Pattie resides in Charleston, S.C., with her dog, Emme, and is the proud mother of three wonderful children.
<http://pattiewelekhill.com>



ABOVE: Pattie's book inspired by her son, Bo
RIGHT: sample pages from *Believe*
BELOW: Bo



Believe is a story about the loss of a child...
a heart's healing journey...
and the bond of a mother's love.

You may order *Believe* on the griefHaven website or by contacting Pattie directly at <http://pattiewelekhill.com>

chantica and gabriella

by suzanne camejo

On the computer monitor, a swirling abstract pattern dances across the screen. It floats against the dark background of glass, flitting and diving. Instantly, all I can think of is my amniocentesis at five months when I was pregnant with Gabriella and well over 35 years old. The doctor at UCLA, and one of the inventors of the process, said it was impossible to get a read on the baby who swam back and forth in my womb like an excited fish!

It's that way with everything. Whatever I see, hear or touch is imbued with multiple memories of my darling Gabriella. Each day, hour and minute is rife with memories of her talking intently on her BlackBerry, texting, making a smoothie, sitting in her Camry not letting me get out until I listened to the words of her favorite song, cuddling her dog, a tiny Chihuahua that she had since it was a baby pup, or chiding me for my slowness at grasping one of her hipper concepts. She was constantly saying, "MOM! You are such a blonde!" while laughing her contagious laugh all the while.

Now when I bend down low to look for some food item in the depths of the cupboards, I often come up weeping, having discovered a box of Thin Mint cookies or Italian pasta she squirreled away so we adults wouldn't consume it. Reaching among my jars of condiments recently, I found the bay leaves she tied carefully with string—the ones she purchased in the market when she was in Tuscany and brought to me as a special gift. These are sacred objects now; just like her room and everything she owned.

How CAN she be gone? "Gabby, where are YOU?" I find myself repeating her name in various incantations in the steam room in the gym. It is usually empty. Talking out loud is important, I think, because how can our lost ones read our minds? "Gabriella, I miss you! Gabriella, answer! Gabriella, come to mama. Gabriella, come home! Gabriella, I'm sorry! Do forgive me! Gabriella, I love you, I love you, I love you!" I say one of these ten times each like a prayer, a rosary, a mantra, without fail.

Dark mud and dry earth stain my nails, since digging and weeding and planting helps me divert my obsessive mind from constantly replaying the accident, the horror, the reality of my loss. I have her bloodstained diamond

earring, testimony to the terrible truth.

Gabriella was just 22 years old on January 11, 2009, and in her last three months of college at the Maryland Institute College of Art. One month later, on February 15, 2009, she was struck down. On the Dean's List every year, Gabriella blossomed into the artist we all knew she would become. Her work, mainly life-size self-portraits and sea-themed designs, remains for me to share with the world and merchandise for her foundation, The Gabriella Giselle Camejo Foundation.

Gabriella was a child born into a world of grief. Her sister, Chantica Giselle, was killed when she was 16 years old. An SUV she was riding in rolled over, and Chantica was thrown out the window. Chanti was traveling to the Venezuelan rainforest with irresponsible friends who managed to turn the



Gabriella and Chantica

Toyota Land Cruiser over while there was no other traffic anywhere near them. Chantica was buried in Caracas where we had lived for ten years. My ex-husband, her father, was unable to contact me, or so he claimed, and since there was no embalming in Venezuela, Chantica was quickly buried there. The horror of that phone call arrived while I was making

A white Egret (photographed by Suzanne) that often hangs around her yard brings her comfort and joy



"The solution is
finding a way to see her,
hear her or feel her, even
if it's just for moments."

brownies at my sister's house in Boulder, Colorado on Christmas holiday with young Gabriella. Gabby was only 11 months old. It was years before I could ever even see a brownie without nausea overcoming me.

What was so different about Chantica's death was that I never had the closure of her burial or a last good-bye, and I was caring for Gabriella, who was only 11 months old at the time.

Gabriella grew up in a climate shrouded with grief and sadness. After Chanti's death, there was no way I could love Gabriella the way I did my first-born genius, Chantica. It felt like a betrayal not to honor Chantica above all others. Since she did not have the opportunity to live and thrive, it was up to me to champion her. Fierce loyalty to Chanti's memory expressed itself in the many photos and mementos all around the house. After a hot shower or bath, I never failed to write messages to Chantica in the steamy mirror. Gabriella grew up seeing this—and finally understanding it—though it took me years of therapy to deal with loving her in the same way I had Chantica. Not only did they have different fathers, but different backgrounds, personalities, and abilities. Both loved horses and art.

Luckily, Gabriella went to University Elementary School, Corinne Seeds School, one of the few laboratory schools in the United States, situated on the wooded and beautiful UCLA campus. A wealth of assistance in the form of free therapy was constantly available to us from Dr. Gerry Laganew and Dr. Jill Waterman, among others. By the time Gabriella was about eight or nine years old, I began to fall in love with her as a mother should; even more so.

Gabby's father was only sporadically in her life, so it was Gabby and I, struggling together, as my career began to take off. When my client won the Oscar in 1994, we were able to enjoy that success together and fully reveled in all that it brought to our lives.

Every penny I made was spent on all the best for Gabriella: clothes, trips, parties, sleepovers, tutors, vacations, camp in Maine, and a great library of children's books. My career was such that I could participate almost full time in her classroom. Parent participation was at its peak in the 90's.

Gradually, as the years progressed and my involvement with my young and emotionally needy daughter grew, I began to realize that Chantica's death seemed to be almost like a figment of my imagination—something that didn't seem to have really happened at all.



Gabriella

“Our love affair as mother and daughter was so hard won, and I believe that makes it much stronger than most mother daughter relationships.”



Chantica at age 16

Somehow, somewhere, after the ten-year mark, I had found and embraced a rationalization that also helped me to go on and be there for Gabriella. In Chantica's case, the rationalization was: “She was far too sensitive for this earth, and she loved animals too much to be able to endure their slaughter and torture at the hand of man.” With that thought, I was able to slowly become more and more involved with Gabriella's life and my own. Together we honored “Princess Chantica” in various ways, such as making a cake every year on her birthday, July 29. We lit candles and sang to her. I still wrote Chantica's name in the steamy mirror after bathing, but life had moved on.

All of this must have impacted Gabriella, for as she grew older, she became fascinated by Chantica's short-lived and charmed life: on yachts in Spain and the Caribbean, skiing in Switzerland, going to the opera in Paris, staying at five-star hotels, riding in horseshows, and being the wealthy daughter of one of Venezuela's highly prominent society members. I was always feeling guilty and sorry I could not give Gabriella that kind of privileged life that Chantica had. But I made it up to her in every way that a single mother could, throwing “high tea” parties, renting roller skating rinks, making elaborate Halloween costumes, reading stories every night from her library, opening our home so she could have her friends visit all of the time—making our home a fun place where her friends wanted to visit—and watching her favorite black and white vintage movies with her.

Just before Gabriella was killed—an SUV hit her while she was walking with a friend in a crosswalk one night—Gabby put Chantica's framed pictures up in her room. Chantica's photos stared down at Gabby while she slept in her queen-size bed beneath mountains of down quilts. She always looked like a giant fluff ball when she slept, safely wrapped in clouds of down. I believe that Gabriella began to understand the gravity of what had happened to me and to her brilliant sister. She used to say, “I know you love her more than me, Mom.” I would assure her over and over again that that was not true. Yet it seemed, at barely 22 years, she did understand my long, tortuous burden of rebuilding life without Chantica. Gabby missed her sister so much—missed having that wonderful sister, who, although 16 years apart, would have been an integral and influential part of her life.

Now Chantica has taken a back seat to her sister, and Gabriella dominates my inner life.

Our love affair as mother and daughter was so hard won, and I believe that makes it much stronger than most mother and daughter relationships.

All Gabby thought about was pleasing me. As we struggled through court battles, financial ups and downs, school problems, and self-esteem issues, our bond became impenetrable and stronger than iron and steel.

We talked three to four times a day, texted regularly, sent photos back and forth, discussed every detail of our social lives, including her classes, papers, art projects and inner-most thoughts while she was at college or at home. She longed to be at home. Two Capricorns, she and I, so very much alike in our love of home, cooking, art, and stability. In fact, Gabriella decided to legally change her name to Gabriella Giselle Camejo when she was sixteen because she was fed up with her father's lack of relationship and wanted to have Chantica's middle and last name.

Every day I stagger with the weight of her loss and the shock that she, too, was taken from my life. Trying to fathom whether or not there is some grand design, some master plan, like in the movies *The Adjustment Bureau* and *Sliding Doors*, or as stated in the Bible or outlined so eloquently in the Buddhist texts, I find myself delving deep for answers, opening myself up to any kind of spirituality that may offer a solution. The solution is finding a way to see her, hear her, or feel her, even if it's just for moments. *The Lovely Bones* is a book and film I related to because it pictures an afterlife I could embrace and feel some comfort from, just as I could in *What Dreams May Come*, a film Gabriella also saw and loved.

I cling to the words of Deepak Chopra, listen carefully to Stephen Hawking, and am keen to signs from numerology, philosophy, or chance. I am absolutely open to anything.

Deepak wrote to me after a long while when I questioned him, "What about the death of my child?" He said perhaps she was hit by that woman in the SUV because she was meant to stop that woman from going out the next day and hitting a school bus filled with 30 children—that perhaps Gabby's path was to save the others, the larger number of children.

I am completely open. I listen to everyone and take in every possibility. After all, the truth could be anywhere and come at any time from any one.

In the hallway of our home sits Gabriella's large crystal wine goblet filled with clear water

and containing two black Obsidian stones. An Indian woman in Ojai told me that those stones and the water draw the dead to us when they are lost. I keep it there... just in case. With the coming of each fall, marigold petals are strewn along the path to my house, and the driveway, too, in order to help Gabriella find her way back home...just in case. At the end of each October, on the Day of the Dead, I celebrate like many Mexican families by making an altar for my girls and inviting them home to celebrate with me. I believe they often do visit. Uncanny scratching on the doors and windows, wonderful dreams, and knocking sounds for which there is no explanation have been witnessed by me on that night. A white Egret often hangs around in my yard. She boldly struts through the grasses and makes herself known to me, either in my own yard, over my head in full flight in Malibu, in Simi Valley, in the woods along the trails, or along Pacific Coast Highway where she stands calmly right next to my car just looking at me. These sightings provide me comfort and joy. She is near.

Who's to say there is no parallel universe? Even Stephen Hawking says time travel IS possible. We just do not know how to come back yet, he says. And what about cloning?



Suzanne and Chantica

Yes, I have locks of Gabby's hair. But who will be there to mother her?

Yesterday when I called in to pay my phone bill, the electronic voice gave me a confirmation number: 444. A friend of mine in grief who lives in Texas has been told by a learned sage that a series of three fours in a row means that communications are open with our lost loved ones. Sometimes it is on the clock that I observe these numbers, sometimes in the car on a license plate ahead of me, sometimes at the gym on the "mph" of an elliptical trainer, sometimes at a gas station, sometimes on a menu... each time I will call to Gabriella! Out loud, with all my might, to be certain that she can hear me. I tell her everything I can in those short seconds. It is enough to make my day. Sometimes that is all I've got, and for those few short seconds, I am so grateful.

“Every day I stagger with the weight of her loss and the shock that she, too, was taken from my life. Trying to fathom whether or not there is some grand design, some master plan...”



GREASING THE COOKIE SHEET

—written by Suzanne Camejo
Gabriella and Chantica's Mom

Greasing the cookie sheet,
First time in 18 months.
Each stain rife with memories
Where the butter or the chocolate
Baked on brown, now etched into the aluminum;
Like the most valuable print I could possess,
Never to be scrubbed away.
No saint or virgin weeping but
My own Pollock and de Kooning
Priceless now.

My reluctant martyr, fascinated by
Frida as a bleeding doe pierced by arrows;
Little did we imagine ...
As she rubbed the butter in;
I recall her long, slender fingers that
Grew from baby soft to graceful,
Stirring the batter with glee,
Licking the wire beaters each time.
Quiet in thought,
Always observing, watching,
Listening.
Every single movement
I made, what I said;
A lesson; each action an
Influence for life.
All my unique mind's gifts,
Even my quirks,
Transferred patiently,
Downloaded
Day by day, year by year
She selected only the best of me,
Editing out the
Vices and vituperation;
A purer me to carry on,
A legacy all ours!

Talk about pride!
I bust open with it.

Now, instead, I hold a baking sheet,
Blotches of burnt sienna,
Umber baked on
In smooches like her
Lips, pooched and full,
Every stain a kiss!
Her chocolate chip cookies long gone
Eaten with zeal and pride
And the tin tucked away in the cupboard,
Un-wiped, perhaps just rinsed.
Ah ! the treasures she left
Despite my scolding,
"Gabriella! Remember to scrub the pan
after you use it!"
Are here for me.
Bending over
Studying the metal
Like a map to where
She might be,
Like a journal written
By her hand, left behind
"To lead you to me,
Mom," to help
Me find the way, the code,
A path
That has been blurred
By tears
Overgrown;
Weed choked with
Sorrow;
Temporarily
Obscured by grief and
The thick mist of
Eternity.

max the happy caterpillar

a children's picture book by kathy archibald anderson

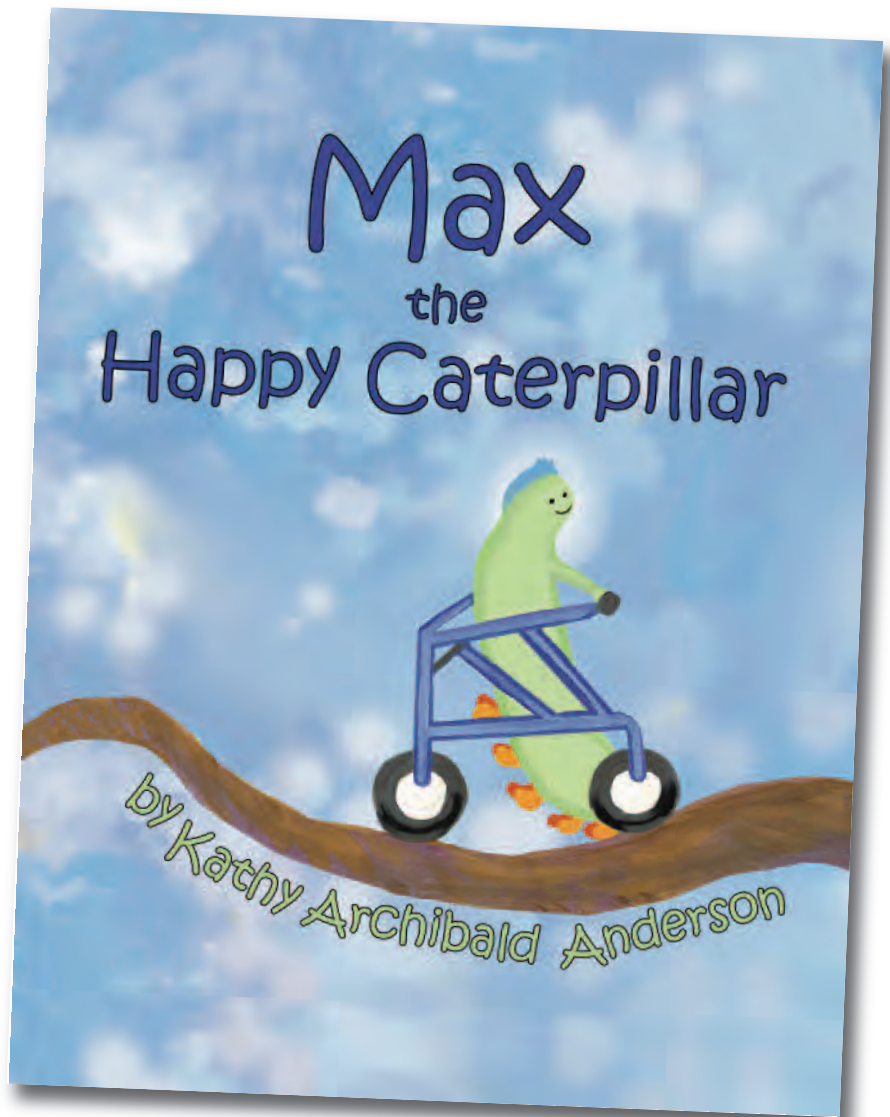
How do you explain death to a child? *Max the Happy Caterpillar* is a simple metaphor which engages the reader with little Max who, despite special challenges, is a very happy caterpillar. One day, when little Max doesn't feel well, his mom wraps him in a blanket she calls his cocoon. When it is discovered that Max is gone, everyone becomes sad. But Max is not really gone because Max the happy caterpillar has become Max the happy butterfly.

Max the Happy Caterpillar (Paperback)
A Children's Picture Book
8.5" x 11" paperback, 36 pages

The main subjects of this beautifully illustrated children's picture book are disability, death, and loss; yet the author makes this a happy story. Max the Caterpillar (based on a real boy, Max) is born with feet that are backwards, but that doesn't slow him down one bit. He's loved immensely by his family and friends. One day Max gets sick and is wrapped up in his cocoon. When his family discovers that he is gone, they cry for their loss. This is not the end of the story though. Using the metaphor of a magnificent butterfly coming to life out of the death of the caterpillar, the author focuses on the joy and freedom Max now experiences and the great love he will always have for his family.

For those who believe death is not the end but struggle to explain this to a child who might be dealing with the passing of a loved

one, this is a wonderful resource. The book is moving, but never overly sentimental. It is suitable for and can be enjoyed at any age. Younger children will love the pictures and identify with all the fun Max has with his family and friends. They'll be touched by the sorrow his family feels at his loss, but quickly be able to recognize how happy and beautiful Max the Butterfly is. Parents of older children will find this book can be a springboard for a deeper discussion and understanding of death and beyond.



You may order *Max the Happy Caterpillar* on the [griefHaven](http://griefHaven.com) website in the bookstore section. It is also available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon.com and Maxstorybook.com

Hey, parents! Remember to also read the *Sibling Voice* newsletter so you can better understand what siblings are going through and how you can better support them.

After launching our first Sibling Voice in January, we received wonderful comments about a "deeply needed, meaningful, and helpful newsletter." However, I was surprised when I asked some parents if they had actually *read* the Sibling Voice, and they said, "No. I thought it was just for siblings."

Both the Sibling Voice and the Parent Journey are written for everyone, since they are both designed to provide: (1) love, hope, education, and support for siblings and parents; and, (2)

education for absolutely everyone else so others will know what siblings and parents go through AND what others can do to be a positive part of the process as the bereaved rebuild their lives.

Educating oneself about grief and all that the grieving process entails is as important as educating oneself about a newly diagnosed disease. If you or someone you love were recently diagnosed with a disease, the first thing everyone would do is learn everything known about that disease. But the process the bereaved goes

through requires equal dedication and education. That is where our newsletters come in. And when dealing with the death of a child or sibling, the education becomes essential, since the journey is so difficult and continues throughout one's lifetime. So, to everyone everywhere, please read all of our newsletters so you, too, may understand and know how to give the love, support, and hope that will truly make a loving and healing difference in the lives of those you care about.

we would love to hear from you!

Please contact us at griefHaven by email, letter or phone

We would love to hear from parents, siblings, family members, and specialists.

Would you like to contribute to a future newsletter?

Do you have an idea of something griefHaven can do or provide that will help you and others on this grief journey?

Do you know someone who would like to contribute?

Would you just like to share something privately?

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Remember: We need sibling stories, poetry, artwork, or anything a brother or sister is willing to share. Any age is great!



where hope resides