

THE AFTER A DEATH SERIES

When A Child Dies



Photo courtesy Sandra Dupree (Argent Moon) Website: <http://www.spiritlightshunting.com/GraevastoneSymbols-ArgentMoon.htm>

*Everyone knows children get sick.
Everyone knows children get hurt.
Everyone knows children can die.
Everyone knows...but not really.
Why me? Why mine? Why now?*

We think it shouldn't happen; that children should never die before their parents. Unfortunately, it happens all the time. Baby birds lie dead under trees in the springtime. Rose buds form then fail to open. But one thing is certain: the death of a child is a terrible, frightening, intense experience.

There are so many feelings:

- Shock and disbelief – you feel as if you're encased in plastic.
- Sadness and tearfulness – turning into intense sorrow.
- Strangeness and new realities – people are suddenly different. You know who your friends are.
- Strength and determination – realizing you still wake up every morning and face a new day.
- Anger and even rage – shooting out unexpectedly and surprisingly.
- Guilt and regrets – we all think about the “could haves, should haves, and would haves.”
- Depression and apathy – no one can lose someone they love and not be depressed at times and feel as if life is over.

You are likely to grieve spiritually, questioning God, the Universe, and Fate.

You are likely to grieve physically, with aching arms and a tight throat and stomach.

You are likely to grieve mentally, wondering why, searching for reasons, reading books.

You are likely to grieve emotionally, with rages and tears and even with screams.

You may be embarrassed to cry in front of people, to break out in tears when you pass a favorite food in the supermarket or hear a certain song. Cry anyway. Take care of yourself. Cry when you need to cry – in the shower, on the street, into your pillow. It's not your job to make other people comfortable right now. It's your job to grieve your child. And it is a job. That's why we call it “grief work.”

Tell people what you need. Many will tell you to call if you need anything. That puts the burden on you and it also gives you permission to ask for things you normally wouldn't: someone to mow the lawn, do the laundry, pick up groceries. If you don't feel like going out, call someone to run errands and help around the house. If you want to be left alone – tell people. If you want someone to sit with you and cry with you, tell someone.

Some people will think you should be “over” your grief in a few short months, or even weeks. It won't happen. Just as you will never forget your child's birth, you will never forget your child's death. There are many things you can do to remember and honor your child's life:

Start a journal. There are many beautiful journals in gift shops and bookstores. There are journals just for parents whose child has died and there are the spiral notebooks your child took to school; not to mention your computer and printer. Record your child's life. Record your feelings every day or week. In six months look back and see how far you've come on the road to a new normal.

Plant a tree – or a rose bush or a garden. One family planted the sunflower their six-year-old son grew from a seed at school. They harvested the seeds from that plant and made a sunflower garden. Every year they harvest the seeds, put them in attractive little bags and send them to friends with a note in memory of their little boy.

Sunflower gardens have spread across the US in remembrance of Danny.

Wear something special. Put your child's picture in a locket. Find a pin that reminds you of your child. One mother took small toys, took off pieces and created a pin with a hole in the center to symbolize the missing piece in her life.

Have a reminder. You can have your child's photo made into an afghan or a photo pillow. You can take a piece of clothing worn by your child and have it made into a pillow or a teddy bear. Be creative. Everything you do to remember your child honors your grief.

Grieve Healthy. Kelly Osmont's son was kicked in the stomach by a horse and died some time later. Kelly could hardly drag herself out of bed in the mornings, but she was determined to honor her son by grieving healthy. She decided that in the year following his death, she would do everything she could to be fit, alert, and just plain healthy. When she woke in the morning and didn't want to walk, she imaged windshield wipers appearing on her eyes, wiping away the words, “Don't want to walk...don't want to walk.” Then she got up, put on her walking shoes and took her grief for a walk.

If you have other children, they'll be grieving too. Respect them and their grief. They are likely to be watching you intently. If they see you are sharing your feelings, “grieving clean” as one little boy said, they'll do better with their own sorrow.

You gave your child or children life, and you owe them two things:

Respect their grief and honor your child who died by living the best life possible and becoming content with who you are. That is not easily come by at first, but each time you think of your child, honor him or her by straightening your shoulders, sending a message of love, and being assured you will smile again and the memories will move from being bittersweet to precious. Your child wants a good life for you. Know that.

A Caring Gift to you from: _____