

## Mother's Day Madness - Day 5

### Kidnapped!



My friend Chaplain Terry Morgan wrote a book which he titled, "What to do When Grief Kidnaps Your Soul." What an accurate description of what the death of our child does to us! It's like we disappear from life, and those around us wonder if we will ever come back again. I've heard adults whose sibling died when they were young say that they not only lost their brother or sister, but their parents as well, because their mom or dad couldn't quite get back into life again. Child loss changes a marriage relationship. Sometimes people are consumed by their grief for so long that they no longer recognize each other and find that they've grown apart. Friends become uncomfortable around us... they don't know what to say any more.

Unlike a kidnapping where the person disappears and people hope for their safe return, when our soul has been kidnapped by tragedy, we are still visible to those around us. They see us and wonder how long it will take before we will get over it and return to our "old self." It's confusing to everyone... even us! It's as if we become the walking dead because we feel empty and lifeless inside. We maneuver through the day without seeing what's going on around us because our mind is held captive by our grief.

Some people say, "Time heals all wounds," or "Just give it some time, you'll get over it." They're confused, aren't they? The truth is, time doesn't do the healing. It's what we do during that time that allows healing to take place so we can get through it. One of the difficulties is that there is nothing we could have done in advance to be prepared for losing a child. What we need to know about dealing with grief has to be learned while we are struggling.

So where do we start?

First, I'd encourage you to take care of yourself. Eat healthy, drink healthy fluids, rest (even if you can't sleep), and don't try to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol. As your strength returns, get some exercise. It relieves stress and gets you moving again, even if it's a short walk around the block.

Next, learn about the grieving process. Talk to people who have been through it. Attend a grief support series, the kind that teaches about grief in a systematic way such as *GriefShare* or *Journeying Through Grief* (Grief Toolbox). Read about the grief journey... there's a wealth of knowledge between the covers of the thousands of books that have been written on the subject. There are endless resources on the Internet for bereaved parents, and some on-line support groups are helpful. There are also radio programs like "Hope, Healing & Help" ([www.hopehealinghelp.com](http://www.hopehealinghelp.com)), and "Open to Hope" which also features video recordings ([www.opentohope.org](http://www.opentohope.org)). This may sound odd, but there are many movies and television programs that include grief situations that we may not have noticed before. In my opinion, most of them are pretty accurate in their portrayal of grief. They won't teach us all we need to know about grief, but by observing these situations, they will help us figure it out for ourselves.

Connecting with other bereaved parents who truly understand and are a safe for us is important beyond measure. When we are with people who understand, we don't have to wear the mask that says, "I'm ok." We can just relax and be ourselves. In time, you may be the "safe place" for someone else who is newly bereaved, or even someone who has stuffed their grief and is now looking for help.

The good news is, we are created to be resilient. We are survivors. Most of us want to get through it and we don't want to give up. We may feel overwhelmed for a time, and we may feel pushed back by those waves of emotions, but we are inclined to get back up and keep moving forward.

The death of a child will change us forever. We may look the same on the outside, but we will never be the same on the inside. It will change our perspective on life, hopefully for the better. It will make us stronger. Arleah Shechtman, author of "My Beloved Child, My journey since the death of my daughter" said, "The biggest surprise I've had after Sharon's death is that my grieving has opened me up to all that is beautiful and wonderful about this world. My appreciation for others and their struggles is greater, and I stop to smell the roses more often - something I call 'living from the gut.'" If you're reading this and you're new in your grief, you may be doubtful that you'll ever feel this way. I think, though, that in time, you'll be surprised at how true this will be for you. Later in her book, Arleah Shechtman goes on to say, "It might comfort you to realize that the life you build from this point on wouldn't have been possible without the love you felt - and still feel - for your loved one. In a very real way, he or she is still a vital part of who you are."

When a kidnapped person returns, they are not the same person they were before. If you reach out for help and do the work, you will be able to figure out who you are again so you can function as the new person you have... or will... become. Yes, it's true... grief does kidnap your soul... but it doesn't have to be forever.

Click on this link to the [Hope, Healing and Help Radio Program](#) facebook page, look for this post, and share what has been helpful to you in your recovery from your loss. Visit the website for the [Sac-Placer County Chapter Bereaved Parents](#) to view and print the articles in pdf format.