

Mothers

May 2018, Volume 24, Issue 5

Dearest Mommy

By Joanne

Dearest Mommy,
When you wonder the meaning of life and love
know that I am with you,
Close your eyes and feel me kissing you
in the gentle breeze across your cheek.
When you begin to doubt that you shall ever see
me again quiet your mind and hear me,
I am in the whisper of the heavens
speaking of our love.
When you lose your identity,
when you question who you are
and where you are going,
open your heart and see me.
I am the twinkle in the stars
smiling down upon you,
lighting the path for your journey.
When you awaken each morning,
not remembering your dreams
but feeling content and serene,
know that I was with you
filling your night with thoughts of me.
When you linger in the remnants of pain,
wholeness seeming so unfamiliar,
think of me and know that I am with you,
touching you through the shared tears of a
gentle friend.
As the sunrise illuminates the desert sky,
remember our time together, all too brief,
but ever brilliant,
when you were certain of your destiny
and know that moment in time
was created just for us.
Dearest Mommy, I am with you always.

Excerpt from Dear Cheyenne: A Journey into Grief

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore has a fourfold relationship with bereavement. She is herself a bereaved mother: her newborn daughter died on July 27, 1994, and that single tragic moment catapulted her unwillingly onto the reluctant path of traumatic grief. For more than two decades, she's devoted herself to direct practice with grief, helping traumatically bereaved people on six continents. She's also the founder of an international nongovernmental organization, the MISS Foundation dedicated to providing multiple forms of support to families experiencing the death of a child at any age and from any cause, and since 1996 has directed the foundation's family services and clinical education programs. Her most recent book *Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief* is available now.

A monthly publication of Brief Encounters, www.briefencounters.org

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of
pregnancy and infant loss

Upcoming Events

NOAH'S QUEST MEMORIAL BRICK WALKWAY

Purchase a brick in memory of your baby or babies to be placed in the memorial walkway at Sandy Bluff Park. Each brick can include up to three lines of text. You may also choose a graphic for an additional charge.
\$50 suggested donation

Visit www.briefencounters.org/bewp/home for order form and payment.

Questions? Email newsletter@briefencounters.org

NOAH'S QUEST

5K, 10K, Walk/Run, and Kiddie Run

June 23rd, 8am - 2pm

Sandy Bluff Park

36910 Goldenrain Street, Sandy, Oregon

A benefit for Brief Encounters, for everyone who has lost a child or the hope of a child, and for those who care.

Registration begins @ 8:00am

Opening Ceremony @ 8:45am

Registration Fees

\$30 by Friday, June 22nd

\$35 the day of the race

\$5 Kiddie Run

Ages 6 & under free unless running the 1K (\$5)

Proceeds benefit Brief Encounters Support Group

Contact information:

Carol Cohen 503-475-2347

ccohen@cityofsandy.com

Register online at www.ci.sandy.or.us

(Select Online Registration under Quick Links then view Community Events under Register Now)

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From the editor...

Mother's Day is one of the harder holidays for me. Seems like everywhere we go, there are babies, children, and large families. Restaurants filled with happy people celebrating and seemingly oblivious to loss. I've learned that's very unlikely to be true. For all I know, that's how our little family appears to others whose hearts are broken. And all day I am acutely aware of the little girl who is missing. Her sister will probably sign the card for both of them and keep my heart warm and put together all day as she does every other day of the year. Yes, this year will be hard like all the rest before and those to come but when I find myself silently cursing my fate and those that appear more fortunate than me, I'll try to remind myself I'm not alone in this loss. Just learning to carry it with grace like all those who came before me.

Shannon Stemm Patel
mother of Charlie and her big sis



Upcoming newsletter topics...

June

FATHERS

Father's Day can be a painful time for fathers who have lost some or all of their children. Fathers are always fathers, even if their children are not here with us. As a loss-daddy how do you parent your baby/babies? What makes you feel like a dad?

July

MARRIAGE AFTER LOSS

Everyone grieves differently. No matter how many times we remind ourselves of this truth it can be difficult when our spouse/ partner/lover is on another page, book, or bookstore across town. Please share your experiences of grieving together and grieving apart.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome and encourage submissions to the newsletter. Submissions may be published anonymously if requested. Sharing your story can provide healing and comfort for you - and other parents. The editor reserves the right to edit and select from the materials submitted. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Brief Encounters, but those of the individual authors. Please send titled articles and submissions to: newsletter@briefencounters.org

Newsletter printing provided by AnchorPointe

I am a mother every day

My arms ache for a child lost

My heart breaks for a child loved

My hand reaches for a child absent

My love whispers for a child gone

I am a mother every day.

-TheGriefToolbox.com

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: www.briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Facebook: [private/closed groups Brief Encounters](https://www.facebook.com/private/closed/groups/Brief-Encounters-Pregnancy-and-Infant-Loss-Support-and-Brief-Encounters-Parenting-After-Loss)

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss

Established in 1992 by a group of parents, Brief Encounters is a non-profit, non-sectarian support group for parents whose babies have died before, during, or after birth. At informal, mutually supportive meetings, bereaved parents and their families share their stories, discuss issues that arise from pregnancy and infant loss, and remember their children. Through talking or just listening, we learn what grief is --- and how, through understanding and caring, we heal.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AND STEERING COMMITTEE

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LOVE GIFTS

Please send Love Gifts and messages to 2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212. For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 10th of the prior month. Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors by using the form on page 5.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR REMOVAL FROM MAILING LIST

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED: INCLUSIONS OR CHANGES

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at megan.k.wright@comcast.net. For children to be remembered in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive your request by the 10th of the prior month.

SAFE ARRIVALS

Please send Safe Arrivals to newsletter@briefencounters.org.

Mother's Day is Here. Again.

By Harla

Mother's Day is here.

I wish people knew that this day, now over-commercialized, over-sentimentalized, overblown and over-filled with spending, obligation, and long waits at any brunch-worthy restaurant, was first created by and for bereaved mothers who shared it with all other mothers. They started it not to elevate to superiority the mother and her role in family and society, or even to simply honor motherhood.

Did you know that the women who started Mother's Day were actively working to help lower infant mortality rates? That they protested the wars that had taken the lives of their sons? That they were working to form bonds with other mothers whose children were also lost to war?

Headed by West Virginia activist Ann Jarvis, a bunch of bereaved mothers got together for peace demonstrations. They held work days for service. They tended wounded soldiers from both sides of the Civil War that ravaged our country and left hundreds of thousands dead. They organized picnics for pacifism and worked to unite the country in hopes that no one would ever again lose a child to the horrors of war.

In 1870, one of their members Julia Ward Howe, best known for composing The Battle Hymn of the Republic issued a "Mother's Day Proclamation" calling on women to take a more active political role in the promotion of peace and the ending of wars.

She wrote, "Arise, all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or of tears! Say firmly: 'We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies, our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.' From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says, 'Disarm, disarm! The sword is not the balance of justice.'"

Mother's Day is one of the most difficult days of the year for me. It is for many people. Mothers without their children, children without their mothers. Mother's Day can be painful. For sure it is one of the most difficult days of the year in the continuing cycle of my grief calendar. We are a family of four that looks to all the world like a family of three. My child is not an only child, though she appears to be. She lives without her brother as a physical presence in her life. I don't think it's always easy for her.

It's impossible to truly find the words to adequately express the pain and longing that continue to be part of

daily existence without my son's living and growing presence in this world. He would be 12 years old on his birthday this year. It is difficult for me to imagine what he might look like. I wish I knew what kinds of things he would like to do, what subjects he would like in school, what he would like to eat, what he would not like, who his friends might be. I also have a living child; our spirited, funny, smart, beautiful, creative, inquisitive, talented 9 year old daughter. I am profoundly grateful for her presence in this world and in our lives. Her presence does not negate his absence.

I am a mother to two children, one who is alive and one who is dead. My motherhood for both of my children is special and sacred and also totally ordinary. I am a mother among many mothers. Early on in the searing and raw pain, I felt a deep connection to the many bereaved mothers who I realized existed in the world all around me and those who had already grieved the deaths of their children for millennia before me. I was neither special nor alone, and this realization brought me strange comfort and a sense of timeless connection.

Bereaved motherhood is worthy of being acknowledged, honored and recognized along with every other kind of motherhood. Knowing the mothers who began Mother's Day did so in their grief, in their hope of stopping the ravages of war that took so many of their children makes this sense even more profound.

I want to take it back. To take Mother's Day back to its origins. I would love to see a world where we are not treated or seen as separate because of our grief. Or avoided or pitied. I want acknowledgement on Mother's Day for mothering both of my children, living and dead. With all my heart, I want all bereaved mothers to be acknowledged as the mothers they are, we are, on Mother's Day--along with all other mothers. We are all mothers and should be honored as such.

This Sunday, on the traditional Mother's Day, I will remember this day created by bereaved mothers; those who sought to make meaning of life after the deaths of their children, who looked to promote peace and togetherness in their world.

As Julia Ward Howe said, "We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs." Her plea touches my heart. Her plea, their movement, was an incredibly personal way to try to achieve global peace. Most people do not know the origins of Mother's Day. I wish everyone did.

Regardless, Mother's Day is upon us. Whether we want it or not. Whether we get to be with all of our children

Continued on page 6



Love Gift Donation Form

Enclosed is a donation of: \$
In memory of:

Message to be included in the newsletter with your
donation acknowledgement:

Birth date: Death date:

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Please consider your employer's matching gift program when submitting a donation. To receive a receipt, please provide your return address:

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Name(s) of Parents:

Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors or omissions by sending your Love Gift message with this form. Please **do not** send your message separately to the editor or database manager. Thank you!

Send form and payment to: 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, OR 97212

Checks can be made payable to Brief Encounters.

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Please note: For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a particular newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 15th of the prior month (example: June 15th for July issue).

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS is a non-sectarian, non-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3), Federal ID #45-4822283.

My Friends All Have Kids: A Story of Bereaved Motherhood

By Robynne

I never predicted that bereaved motherhood would be my life. I didn't even always want to be a mother. When I was younger, I often felt awkward around kids. Still, I somehow always drew them to me. In family photos from our long weekend reunions, I always have at least one cousin climbing on my lap. Several of them followed me around continuously at extended family gatherings. They were an adorable alien species I didn't quite understand.

By the time I found out I was pregnant, though, things had changed. In my late twenties, my mostly non-existent desire for children turned into a biological yearning. Most of my friends already had kids, and I adored them. I found them interesting, wise little people in touch with something we adults have often lost in ourselves. I couldn't wait to have one of my own.

My friends were ecstatic for me to join the ranks of motherhood with them. I've never seen so many people excited about a baby, as they were about Zoë. And I was, too. Being pregnant felt natural after all. Like I was born to do it.

I never imagined that at the end of my pregnancy, bereaved motherhood is what I would be initiated into. After a baby shower and blessingway, and a full 40 weeks of pregnancy, I just wasn't prepared for that outcome.

If I heard the term "stillbirth" before I had Zoë, I don't remember it. I believed if I took good care of myself during my pregnancy, and did everything I was told, things would turn out okay. So I ate right, walked every day, and practiced prenatal yoga. I trusted the power of positivity, visualization, and prayer. Every evening, I listened to guided meditations and envisioned an easy, natural birth. I pictured the position my baby needed to be in. Every day, I spoke to her, reassured her, and told her how much I loved her.

I don't regret doing those things. They fostered a relationship with my daughter, infused with love and care. But you definitely won't hear me say, "Everything happens for a reason" ever again. Or, "Just think positively." I don't believe we can always control what happens to us by our behavior or state of mind. Good things don't always happen to good people. I wish it worked that way; I just know from experience that it doesn't.

My friends all still have kids. And I've yet to have the opportunity to try again. They've had their trials and challenges, too, though. Divorce, health issues, miscarriages, living in war zones – I'm not the only one who's had difficult circumstances to overcome. So, I don't begrudge my friends the joy their children bring into their lives, even though I long for the same. Bereaved motherhood has been my cross to bear, but it could've

easily been another trial. There are very few of us who aren't given something to struggle against in this life.

Living with the grief of bereaved motherhood feels like learning how to surf. I have to learn the tides, respect the ocean, find a tenuous balance between control and surrender. I really have to use my core muscles. Time and practice have made me better at riding the waves of grief, but it didn't come easily. The days where I'm on top, I feel free. The exhilaration of fresh air, sunlight, and joy running through my veins can be heady. But sometimes, I still wipe out.

I remember holding Zoë in the hospital, the morning after I gave birth. The brilliant summer sun shone in through my hospital window where I lay holding my still, silent baby girl. She wore a pink, knit cap I received at my baby shower. She was bathed, diapered, and swaddled in a clean, pink blanket. The nurses had done their rounds, and my family had not yet arrived for visiting hours. I was alone. I could almost pretend she was only sleeping, that these precious early morning hours were all ours. That soon she would wake and want to nurse. In my fantasy, the last 24 hours had been just a bad dream.

Only I knew that wasn't true. My beautiful, perfect daughter was gone. But in that moment of sacred silence, with the sun streaming in on us, I knew that I would survive. My heart was broken, and I would never, ever be the same. But I would survive. Bereaved motherhood is not what I prepared for. I didn't choose this. But it is my life, all the same. And there's something in me that is stronger than loss. It's stronger than heartbreak and the unimaginable grief of losing a child.

I believe that thing is Love.

Originally posted on StillMothers.com

Robynne Knight is a writer, educator, and acupuncturist who lost her daughter, Zoë, to stillbirth in 2011. She is passionate about sharing her experience with grief and loss, and helping others find growth and healing through her writing, private practice, and sharing support and resources through The Zoë Project.

Mother's Day is Here. Again.

Continued from page 3

or with our mothers or not. However we feel about it, it is here.

To all mothers who are without their children, to all children without their mothers. I wish a peaceful Mother's Day and send love.

*Karla Helbert is a bereaved mother, psychotherapist, yogini, reiki practitioner, and award winning author. She has a private psychotherapy practice in Richmond, VA where she lives with her husband Jamie, and their daughter Lula. She is a MISS Foundation chapter facilitator and certified Compassionate Bereavement Care provider. Her next book, *The Chakras in Grief and Trauma*, will be published this October 2018.*

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS MEETINGS

Our support group meetings are a safe place to talk about your child, your loss, and your grief. You are welcome to share, or just listen. A facilitator guides the meetings.

For more information or directions, please call 503-699-8006.

PARENTS OF INFANT LOSS & PREGNANCY LOSS, INCLUDING EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

May 14, June 11

Contact: Rachel Murfitt (RachelM@briefencounters.org)

This group also meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm

May 22, June 26

Contact: Daniele (DanieleR@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF PREGNANCY INTERRUPTION DUE TO MEDICAL REASONS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you. Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00pm

May 24, June 28

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF SUBSEQUENT PREGNANCIES, ADOPTIONS, & PARENTS TRYING TO CONCEIVE

Babies welcome. Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00pm

May 28, June 25

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

All meetings held at The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

RESOURCES

Brief Encounters Online

WEBSITE

The Brief Encounters website www.briefencounters.org is a great resource, including past newsletter issues, upcoming events and announcements, helpful links, numerous resources, support meeting information, etc.

TWITTER

@**briefencount** (twitter.com/briefencount) is the Twitter handle to follow for news and helpful links and information about pregnancy loss, infant death, and grief resources.

FACEBOOK

Brief Encounters Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and *Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss* are the names of our private/closed Facebook mutual support groups. Because they are private, each group requires approval to join, and posts are hidden from anyone who is not a group member.

Please remember to take the usual precautions to protect yourself when using any social media outlets, keeping in mind that online communication is never completely private or secure. And remember that everyone who posts or reads will be in different places in their grief, so let's all be mindful and considerate. You can find articles about online safety with a quick online search. Be safe.

Counselor Referrals

Not all counselors are familiar with the issues that parents face after the death of their baby or during infertility treatment. If you feel like you would like to talk with a counselor, listed below are individuals who have been recommended to us by parents in the BE community.:

- ♥ Gaby Donnell, LCSW, Inner NE Portland
503-287-2295 www.mootherootscounseling.com
- ♥ Teni Davoudian, Ph.D., OHSU
503-418-4500 www.ohsu.edu
- ♥ Britta Dinsmore, PhD, SW Portland
503-913-4791 www.brittadinsmore.com
- ♥ Adria Goodness, CNW, PMHNP, SE Portland
503-224-3438 www.adriagoodness.com
- ♥ Rachel Starck, LPC, North Portland
503.929.2773 www.thethrivingmama.com
- ♥ Laurie Cox, LCSW, NE Portland
503-819-6354 mootherootscounseling.com/laurie-cox
- ♥ Lauren Marie Barthelemy, LPC, SE Portland
412-715-2391
- ♥ Debbie Bensching, MSW, LCSW, SW Portland
503-944-5032 DebbieBensching.com

- ♥ Tina Lilly, MS, Inner SE Portland
503-380-0424 www.foryouaremadeofstars.com
- ♥ Ava M. Stone, Ph.D., PC, SE Portland
503-279-8160 www.pacificcenter.org
- ♥ Tara May, PhD, Vancouver
360-904-1008 www.taramay.com
- ♥ Nalini Kuruppu MSW, LCSW, North Portland
503-753-9157
- ♥ Kari Maljai, LPC, SE Portland
503.936.7658 www.pnwbh.com
- ♥ Brooke Noli, MFT, Inner NE Portland
971-645-1180 portlandbirthcounseling.com
- ♥ Brynna Sibilla, LCSW, Inner NE
503-280-1101 www.psychotherapyportland.com
- ♥ Jennifer Singleton, PhD, PC, Downtown,
503-242-1558
- ♥ Lynne Phillips-Werbel, LCSW, Beaverton
503-690-9119 www.wildwoodpsych.com
- ♥ The Dougy Center (for bereaved siblings)
503-775-5683 www.dougy.org

Editor's note: We would appreciate receiving suggestions, changes, or corrections to any of these resource listings; please send them to the editor at newsletter@briefencounters.org

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy
and infant loss

2116 NE 18th Ave.
Portland, OR 97212

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Mothers

Change of Address or Removal from Mailing List

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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See page 7 for a detailed schedule

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May 24, June 28

PARENTS OF SUBSEQUENT PREGNANCIES, ADOPTIONS, & PARENTS TRYING TO CONCEIVE

Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00pm

May 28, June 25

All meetings held at The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland