

COMFORTING GRIEVING PARENTS



GAINING WINGS

FIND PEACE AND JOY IN GRIEF

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I. Introduction

My dear grieving mom and dad, it is not by accident that you bought this book. You wanted some solace in this trying time. There comes a time during the grief journey that we decide to break the cycle of pain and say, "I want to feel happy again yet keep my angel's memories alive." And that's the day you choose to continue your grief journey for the better by choosing the road to peace and joy.

Let me give you the comfort that you need. Let this e-book be a safe environment for you to be in touch with your true feelings. I'll be here to guide you throughout the process. The worksheets will help you with the journey and the promises of God from the verses of the bible. The exercises will help you voice out what you want to say from the deepest thoughts of your mind and innermost pain from your heart as you note them one by one. What your situation is right now and how you want to move forward from it will determine how much you can get from this book. Once you have applied the ideas in this e-book to yourself, you will see its impact on you and others if you choose to do it. You can then move forward either alone or by helping other grieving parents to move forward as well.

I know what it's like; I went through the same thing. Before I realized the meaning of losing my baby boy and found peace, I spent a lot of time crying, feeling guilty, and questioning God for what happened. Most days, I listen to Christian songs and read Christian posts to find comfort. Other times, I get counseled by elders of my Christian community. I even joined

private groups of grieving parents for social support. The problem was not them; it was me. I was not ready to accept my baby boy's death. No matter what I do, I never thought of finding meaning from my loss.

I visit his graveyard every day. In that way, it lessens my guilt of losing him. I have a problem sleeping at night that I chose to drink alcohol to help me numb myself to sleep. I never felt any relief from my pain, though. So, believe me when I say I know what it's like to cry all the time, to question God, "why me?" when I've been a good Christian and wanting your child back desperately. It wasn't long ago that I was struggling with guilt. My anxiety about losing another child keeps me awake at night to check and see if they are still breathing. Drinking alcohol was my choice to have a proper sleep then. But when God finally blessed me with wisdom and discovered that I could find peace in this journey of grief, nothing could stop me from wanting to reach out to grieving parents like me. It would bring me pure joy to lift even just a little of their emotional burden or lessen a little of their anxiety. To bring comfort to their painful days or even an hour of their agony will empower me to continue with my mission. Moreover, it will bring me peace if I can educate others who have never lost any child to be more considerate and to care for us grieving moms and dads.

I will not say it's going to be okay. I will say what you're going through is difficult, and I hope it could have been different. These are the exact words I wanted to hear myself from others. Take hold of my outstretched hand, and let me help you find peace in the pain you are in right now. I won't push it if you're not ready but if you have settled in your heart and

mind and found the meaning of your loss as you go through this book, let me help you find joy in your loss as well. With all sincerity, please live your life to keep your loving child's memory alive with you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually healthy. You owe it to yourself, your living children, your spouse, and most of all to your child in heaven.

When I found meaning in my son's death, I thought of other grieving parents and how they are coping. I thought of how society perceives our phases of grief and our ways of grieving. Sometimes people expect us to get over it right away while others judge us.

I love you. Perhaps you do not hear these words often, but you deserve all the love. It may not replace the void inside you, but it's a reminder that there are people who will love you still. When you have advocacy in your child's memory, many will love you and the reason behind your advocacy. They will be thankful because, from your loss and your pain, they found hope and happiness. What joy would it bring if you could help others, and they will celebrate your child's memory because they are grateful? It would help you and the people around you move forward.

Let us help each other. Please help me help you, for I will never stop doing what I do. Our journey in grief never ends, and knowing the meaning and purpose is the best road to take to peace and joy. I've crossed the path already. Let me help you travel your course as well. I'm not here to heal you; I am here to lead you to reach a greater depth of insight so you, too, can achieve peace. Did you ever get stuck on something in your grief process whereby creating panic and fear? Just like how I got stuck into the

anxiety of losing another child? What we think the most will lead us to feel them. Fear and anxiety are the emotional consequences of what we play in our minds as the possibilities of happening. We created the emotions because we constantly thought of them. Let you be a part of my joy and me your catalyst to achieving peace. Let me reach out to you as this is my mission and the meaning of my baby's death. Let my words embrace you, and may God's promises be the pillow that helps you sleep tonight and the rest of the nights to come.

II. God's Home

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Revelation 21:4

King James Version (KJV)

Life matters. We are passerby in this world. Let us thank Him for choosing us as our child's parent no matter how short the time may be. Let God remind us every day that our angels are finally home.

A Piece of Me

Wherever you are, my love

You brought a piece of me with you

I would willingly be broken

Knowing that you are happy in heaven

Don't forget my love for you

No matter how short the time

You had been a big part of me
And that will remain now a memory

Kisses to you, my little angel
Kisses, I never even got the chance to make
You went home to God so early
I was not allowed to stay with you, not even for a day.

My eyes are welling in tears as I wrote this down
It will not go dry when it comes to you
Your memories will help me live
The few ones that God wanted to give

Although you are physically gone
I know you are forever here
Though a piece of me is lost
Losing you, dear baby, gave me meaning and purpose.

I will serve other parents who grieve
I will help them find peace through you, my sweet
Serving them will fill the void in me
As I keep you alive with joy for them to see

I dedicated the poem to my baby boy and his twin, whom I lost at ten weeks. It was surreal. It took like a month to sink in that I was carrying twins, I could never imagine. I was doubtful whether I could make it through at first but having them motivated me to be better at taking care of myself during the pregnancy. My love overflowed because there were so many blessings. Unfortunately, one of them stopped growing at eight weeks but still had a heartbeat. When I came back at ten weeks, I heard only one heartbeat. When I could no longer hear the heartbeat during the scan, my mind went blank, and I was out of air. Yes, there was such a feeling. I didn't want to believe that I had lost one at first. And I looked forward to coming back for a check-up, hoping to hear that heartbeat once more. I asked my doctor if it was my fault, she said no.

Losing one of the twins in the first trimester was better than carrying both and delivering prematurely and having to lose both of the babies at the end and me at a critical stage. I always have pregnancy-induced hypertension that leads me to give birth earlier than usual. I delivered my firstborn boy healthy at 36 weeks through C-section. My second child, a daughter, at 34 weeks. She had intrauterine growth retardation because of my high blood pressure. She stopped growing until they decided to do a C-section at 34 weeks because my placenta could not feed my baby anymore. I held on to what the doctor told me in my third pregnancy. It was the only way to stay strong in mind and body to keep the remaining baby.

One of my twins made a sacrifice.

What made me accept the loss of my baby was that he or she made a sacrifice for me and his or her twin. I didn't know the gender then, but I wanted to think that she was a daughter. And that I was carrying a girl and a boy. It was wishful thinking, yes. My little angel loves mommy very much that she had to leave for her brother to live. I held on to that thought with pain.

I muster the courage to stay strong for the remaining baby. I took more care of myself. Unfortunately, my blood pressure started to rise at 20 weeks which was earlier than expected. The tablets given to me could no longer settle my blood pressure even when I took high doses. I got admitted at 22 weeks. After more than a week, I was transferred to another hospital with NICU if I delivered early. And at precisely 24 weeks, I had a medical termination of pregnancy. I suffered from HELLP syndrome, wherein my blood had hemolysis. My liver enzymes suddenly went up while my platelet count became low. I had severe abdominal pain, but I was not in labor. There was no contraction at all. I am a person who has a high threshold of pain, but my God, if there ever were a 20/10 pain scale, that would be it. My blood pressure went as high as 240/144 mmHg. I could not breathe because of the pain, and I started to feel sleepy because I was too tired. It was a Saturday, so they had to call the doctors in for an emergency C-section. I waited for more than 2 hours but not even once did it cross my mind that I would die. My faith that my son will make it through was strong. He was 650 grams when I delivered him.

My son has sacrificed himself for me.

I saw my baby boy on the third day since I stayed in the ICU for two nights. He was so tiny inside the incubator with a ventilator and other tubes attached to him. After a month, they removed his ventilator in the morning, but he needed it back in the evening. They thought he was responding well with the management, but then he had an infection in his gut that required an operation. They removed the infected part of his intestines, and they made a stoma. Five days later, they did a second surgery because he didn't respond to the antibiotics. Most of his gut was dead that they had to cut 60 cm of it. When the pediatric surgeon called me and discussed the events of the surgery with me, I was in denial. I still look forward to what I will expect when he grows up, how he absorbs the nutrients after removing a portion of his gut, and other things. I asked the surgeon a lot of questions. The only thing that I heard with all the answers was "Inshallah," if God allows it, we will discuss everything in detail in the future. Still, for now, we have to wait if he can make it through for a week. And if my baby will gain up to 3 kg, they need to do another surgery to close the stoma and connect the gut back together. They have to sedate him most of the time in the NICU because he will try to remove the tubes if he wakes up.

A day after his second month, he passed away. It was 66 days of life without me by his side. And in those days, I only saw him twice. Why? Unfortunately, I had Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA. I didn't manifest any symptoms, but I was a carrier. When the NICU staff knew about it, I was not allowed to see my son any longer. As per protocol, I need to have eight negative swab results from a different body

region for the three swabs after treatment. I understood them, for I also am a nurse. All the babies there in the NICU are vulnerable. I still went with my husband to the hospital every day, but I only stayed in the car parking to pray for my baby boy. One day, I went inside the hospital and prayed outside the main door of the NICU. My husband requested the nurses to see my baby, and they finally agreed but only for a short time and outside the room behind the glass window. They moved his incubator near the window so I could see him. I had difficulty producing breast milk, and I believe seeing my boy would help.

Meanwhile, I treated myself because I wanted to hold my son when he came home, and I didn't want to give him the infection. After treatment, I took my samples three times on different days as scheduled. The first and second swabs out of the three always come negative. The third, however, one of the eight regions would come out positive or trace. Three times of treatment was like that. I became frustrated, but at the same time, I was thinking there must be a reason which, of course, I don't want to entertain even when it is nagging at the back of my mind. On the fourth treatment, my MRSA report came negative. But it's already too late. My son has passed away.

"To everything *there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:" "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;"

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

King James Version (KJV)

Have you had events in your life that seemed to be coincidences? You thought it was all well planned. Well, the thing is, God has designed everything. Our story is God's story. Every single detail in our lives, from being born until our last breath, has been written. It is painful to think that even the death of our children is part of it and the agony we are suffering now is part of it too.

During the phases of grief, acceptance is the most difficult. It is we parents who should be buried by our children than bury or cremate them first. It is the most painful part of our lives. Nobody understands our pain but parents who lost a child. Others can offer comfort, and we can feel their sincerity. We are grateful for their support, especially if it's family. However, nobody else can be a true comfort than those people who genuinely understand us because they too are walking the same path as you and I.

Our children are blessings from God as we are to our parents. God chose us to be the person to care for them. He allowed us to be a father and a mother because God wants to teach us how to love as we care for them. He wanted to show us how to hope and pray when our little ones get sick and how to strengthen our faith and how to bargain with Him. Phrases like "please heal my baby Lord because if You do, I will serve the church" or "I will make sure to give tithes" are the most common. We love to bargain, and we usually do that when we feel like we are at our worst and the bottom of our lives. Being a parent teaches us to be angry and forgive when they start to rebel and be humble and proud of our children's achievements.

Sadly, some of us are taught by God how to grieve in losing our precious child.

We have missions here on earth—the purpose of serving not only our families but also others. Our children have the same. Their goal might be for us parents or the lives of other people. Your child may have suffered a rare condition, and you raised a campaign to make it known to others who might not know their condition yet until they read about your child's story. Then they could do something about it, or parents could do something for their child. Or it could be as common as cancer, and in memory of your loss, you raised funds to help those who suffer the same. Your child served as the instrument for others to live. God chose you to be the parent of that child. Those actions are what finding the meaning of your loss is. The realization that there is a fundamental reason behind your child's life and death. It's to make a difference for others through your pain and suffering, and from it, you will gain peace. And by making an impact on someone's life because you realized the purpose of your child is enough to bring joy into your life once more. And what brought you that joy? The same reason that brought you pain.

You have overcome your pain by being an instrument for others through your child's memories. You still grieve, yes but differently. No parent, I think, will stop suffering. I will not stop grieving for my twins. However, I will make a difference out of the agony of losing them. And this is my way of reaching out to other grieving parents. I will guide you to take a path towards peace and joy. I know my life will never be the same. How I live it from this moment of my life will not change the truth that I lost my

twins. However, living it with my loss and making a difference for others by bringing them comfort will be meaningful.

We do grieve differently. My way is different from yours. But that doesn't mean you cannot find meaning from it. Listen to yourself first. Find time to talk to yourself and dwell on the reasons behind your loss. Thinking about what you could have done to prevent losing your child will only make you blame yourself. Instead, think of what you can do for your other children, spouse, or other parents. Maybe the death of your child can help a parent to be cautious of their children. Raise awareness. The meaning I found behind mine is to help other grieving parents to look into the meaning behind their losses. It was not an easy path for me. It took an amount of courage to accept everything I've been through and surrender everything to God. My faith was shaken and tested. But I listened to myself, and most of all, I listened to what God has to say. Life is fleeting. If we have not found our purpose in living yet amidst all the trials we had, we will miss the mission sent for us to do. Losing my twins made me realize my purpose. I am a nurse, and it is a noble profession. I thought that was my purpose, serving the sick. That was until I experienced the most painful thing anyone could imagine. And that is to lose a child. I don't want anyone to feel the same pain. But if they do, I would like to be someone who helps them find meaning in their grief. This book will focus on it. Once they've found the essence, the purpose follows, and so makes peace. I found mine in writing this book, and I found joy in reaching out to you. This book is my mission.

Logotherapy

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, and psychiatrist established Logotherapy. After surviving the Holocaust, he realized that those who had a sense of meaning and purpose in life were the ones who survived much longer. He emphasized that man's motivator in life is his "will to meaning" even in life's most tragic and painful moment. In summary, there are five steps in the process of Logotherapy which I relate to grief:

1. A parent may feel empty and depressed over the loss of a child.
2. The therapist shows the parent that they are feeling the need to find meaning from the loss.
3. The parent discovers the meaning of the loss.
4. Of their free will, the parent decides whether to accept or reject the meaning and purpose behind it.
5. This newfound meaning will help the parent move forward in the grief journey, overcoming the pain and making a difference out of loss.

Logotherapy in itself is easier read than done. When you are still in conflict with your emotions on facing your grief, you tend to ask whether you can get through it? How do you get through it? Who can help you get through the process, or whether you prefer to get through it by yourself. Will you decide to take responsibility for the emotions brought upon you? You are at war within yourself.

When we take responsibility for our emotions, pains, and guilt during our grief journey, we become empowered and start to dominate these emotions. Instead of letting them weigh down on us, we face it, take responsibility for it, and conquer it. Unless we decide to take responsibility for ourselves, we will not be responsible for others.

Losing our child is never easy. We have to take responsibility for our emotions if we have other kids to take care of and a husband to support emotionally during the loss. Yes, acknowledge that you are grieving and embrace everything that comes with it, but never forget that there are people in your life who depend on you. It is so easy to get lost in pain. We tend to neglect our other responsibilities as a mother or father to our other children, a spouse, and a child to our parents.

When we overcome these hurdles in life, we become empowered to guide others who suffer the same way in life. Reaching reconciliation is like finding peace. Only then will we be able to find joy when we have reconciled with ourselves.

Unless we have a goal in mind for our future, we might find it challenging to take the steps needed to reach the point we need from our current situation and state of mind. However, it is going to be your choice to reach the peak of your journey. I am only leading you to it. Taking the step to achieve what you've envisioned for your life to be, knowing the meaning behind your loss, and taking action on it is going to be your choice.

When the time comes that we are also done with our mission here on earth, then we too will be called to go back home, in God's home where we belong. There, our loving children will welcome us. And they will thank us for keeping their memories alive by making a difference in our lives and the lives of others. We accomplished our mission.

III. Delivered Forever Sleeping

Twice the pain

Mothers endure physical pain during labor. But going through labor pain in grief knowing that your child will not be able to take their first breath is devastating. You'll be lying in bed with an empty baby cot beside you. It's heart-wrenching. Instead of looking forward to breastfeeding your baby, you'll be thinking of funeral arrangements.

When you chose to wait before the induction of delivery, you had the time and chance to talk to your baby while still inside you. You had that precious moment to live on for the rest of your life. Your grief journey has started.

Suppose you had the courage and opportunity to hold your baby in your arms after the delivery. In that case, you are one of the lucky ones. You will be able to treasure that memory; you will not look back and regret not being able to embrace your baby for the first and last moment.

The guilt of losing a baby even when it wasn't your fault can haunt you. Regrets of not being able to protect your precious one will always be there at the back of your mind. The feeling of being incapable, undeserving, and guilt will drive you to think of so many things. All these are part of the process of grieving. All parents who lost a child have walked the same path. If there are times when you talk to yourself, cry endlessly, and stare in the

open, don't think that you're losing it. Give time to yourself. You are the most critical person in this process. Just because everyone has moved on with their lives doesn't mean you need to as well. Never force yourself to be back on your usual self before losing your baby because it's never going to happen.

Why? Life will never be the same. Even the branches of a tree won't grow the same way after you cut it. Everyone who has the same shoes as us will never tell you otherwise. But, I can tell you this; life will still be full of promise. Grief is not a race, and there is no finish line in it. The agony may ebb away, but the memory of your loss will still be there, and you will still grieve as long you are alive, but it will be different. When you have decided to take a path of finding the meaning of your loss, go and take action.

1. Find a support group in your community to help you through the ordeal.

There are so many types of losses. Although the pain may be the same, only mothers who lose a child because of stillbirth will be the best people to support you. They understand that you are suffering twice the pain in the birthing process and grief.

2. Online support groups are beneficial.

I belong to the Mothers Grieving the Loss of a Child group on Facebook and many others. Parents in these groups are a gem. They

had been my strength and inspiration to take single steps every day during my grief journey. Nobody wants to be a member of these groups, but deciding to be a part of them is one way of taking responsibility for your emotions. Instead of letting the pain and other stressful emotions from your loss weigh you down, you dominate and take hold of them. This way, you can take better care of yourself in the process. The members in this community can feel your pain, and you can feel theirs. They truly understand you. And if needed, some will even offer their time to talk to you. You can raise questions, share what you feel, and provide help to others whom you thought might need you. The discussions here can either comfort you or trigger you, but it is entirely up to you to perceive others' pain and how you share yours. In many ways, it communicates well with you in your grief journey. It has been helpful for me, no doubt about it. If you haven't found any group yet, I suggest you join these groups.

3. If you have a good Christian community, let them pray for you, your husband, your kids, and the soul of your angel.

You can find comfort in the thought that other people are praying for your family. Prayer warriors are also crucial in your journey. It helps strengthen your faith and that of your household.

4. Find meaning from your loss by helping other mothers who need to undergo labor induction for stillbirth.

Be the person you want to have during your time. Console them in areas when you found it the hardest when you had your labor induction. You of all can understand them. You can make a difference in their grieving process. In this way, your loss has become someone else's instrument to help them in their grief journey. Becoming an instrument yourself and having other mothers and husbands thanking you for being the support they needed in their trying time will be rewarding. Not only were you able to come face to face with your loss, but you've also found peace by helping others out and eventually joy. Joy because you could give away a part of yourself even though you went through the same painful process. If you have reconciled with your loss, this is the best time for you to help others. You can only be responsible for the grief journey of others if you had been responsible for yours.

5. If by God's will He will bless you a rainbow baby, then you'll be able to give double the amount of love to the one you lost.

God's profound love will flow out unto you even in this trying time.

Born into heaven

An Angel Never Dies

Don't let the say I wasn't born, That something stopped my heart
I felt each tender squeeze you gave, I've loved you from the start.

Although my body you can't hold- It doesn't mean I'm gone
This world was worthy, not of me- God chose that I move on.

I know the pain that drowns your soul, What you are forced to face
You have my word, I'll fill your arms, Someday we will embrace.

You'll hear that it was meant to be, God doesn't make mistakes
But that won't soften your worst blow, Or make your heart not ache.

I'm watching over all you do, Another child you'll bear
Believe me when I say to you, That I am always there.

There will come a time, I promise you, When you will hold my hand,
Stroke my face and kiss my lips And then you'll understand.

Although I've never breathed your air, Or gazed into your eyes
That doesn't mean I never was, An Angel never dies.

Author Unknown

IV. Losing Not One But Two

Parents who lost a child understand the gravity of the pain you are going through. However, losing not only one but two children can be devastating. The heartaches it causes will forever scar you and the relationship you have with your family, friends, and workplace. It may seem that you are stuck forever in grief, and the path goes in circles. People can move on with their lives, and they will wonder why you haven't. It is hard to let them understand.

Nonetheless, you can always say to them I'm glad you are in a position that cannot truly understand me. Indeed, those people will change when they walk with us on the same path. It is hard to be with these people, but if we cannot avoid them in our lives, it is better to tell them to respect each other's path.

I lost one of my twins during the pregnancy. It took me time to accept it, but I strengthened myself for the one that remained. Then I lost my baby two months after I delivered him prematurely due to complications. It broke my heart. Nothing and no one could fill the emptiness it created. I'm alive, but I went through my days as if I was dead. I never want other mothers or even fathers to experience what I went through. If there ever were a choice to stop it, I would have chosen that option. Unfortunately, there was none. I don't want anyone to be in my shoes, for it is an uncomfortable and painful shoe.

Losing children months or even years apart is even more challenging, I believe. You will relive everything once again, from receiving the news to waking up the following day realizing that it was not a nightmare. When you finally get the chance to be emotionally stable and immerse yourself once more in society, you will have to face another painful loss. It will be another struggle for you. You will need all the support from your family and friends, which will be challenging, and mostly, you're back to square one. People may think that you can do much better this time, but goodness, it is the most insincere and insensitive thought. I understand that you will be more triggered, more traumatized, and more devastated. Coping will be a lot harder. It would help if you worked hard for yourself emotionally and mentally. Talk to someone and never try to suppress your emotions.

In this life, trials live among us. Unfortunately, some of us experienced losing our children. Our faith will shake, and we might question God in all of this. But always remember that God will always be there with us amidst the adversities in life. It would be a hypocrite of me to say I didn't go through the ordeal of questioning God. I, too, threw questions at Him. I may not be a perfect Christian, but I did lead a life according to His teachings. Yet, in all those good deeds and service to the church and brethren, He still broke me into pieces.

Refining silver

"And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

Malachi 3:3

King James Version (KJV)

Ever wonder how one refine a silver? A silversmith has to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames are the hottest to burn away its impurities. He has to sit in front of the fire, enduring the heat the whole time refining the silver. He has to keep his eyes on the silver, or it gets damaged when left too long in the fire.

How does a silversmith know when the silver is fully refined? When he sees his image in it.

We are the silver, and God is our silversmith. Putting us in the hottest spot of our lives means God is refining us from our impurities. To be in our place when we lose our child and in agony seems as if God forgot us. Nobody should suffer this kind of pain, but we did, and we feel so alone in the process. I like to believe that my faith has always been strong. Losing my baby boy after losing his twin was too painful to accept that I questioned God why? I was never perfect, but I had lived my life in ways acceptable to God. I felt that God was not there. However, like how the refining of silver is, the silversmith always kept an eye on the silver. He endured the heat throughout. We may feel alone, but we are not. God is

always present in our lives yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Whatever life brings, God never forsakes us.

My mantra in life is "things happen for a reason." Not all would agree to that, but this mantra has helped me. It brought me back to listening to God's words and accepting that I am not in control of my own life and the lives of others. As much as I want to take hold of everything and blame everything, nothing changes what happened. Feeling guilty about it and blaming me will not bring back what I had lost. So, I say let us lay down our burdens to Him, for we cannot make it on our own, and there's nobody else we can lay all of it to. All the processes are necessary so in the end; God may see His image in us. It sounds unfair that we need to live in grief in the process of refining. Of all the trials God can give us, having to deal with the loss of our child has to be it.

Nevertheless, let us trust Him. Moving forward in grief is our life's story. All the joy, the pain, and everything else that comes with it makes it worth living. You might not appreciate its worthiness now that you are still trying to take responsibility for your emotions in the grief process. Still, eventually, you too will be able to reconcile with yourself, move forward with your grief, and help others out in theirs.

When we have been refined just like silver, let us make sure that other people see God's reflection in us. Let us be instruments in helping others. When you decided to donate your child's organs and help others live, you and your child were already an instrument to someone else's lives. You had made the life of the organ recipient and their loved ones better by giving

them a second chance in life. Knowing this will help you move forward in life with peace of heart and mind. When you have the money to help others in need, regardless if related to your child's death or not, it would lift something in you. Small acts of kindness would somehow keep the wheel turning, allowing some pain to ebb away in the process and finding value to what's left behind. Pain is not something tangible, and no one can measure it as well. The ability for it to lessen is entirely up to you. How you face the loss and the pain it brought you, and how you deal with it will equate to doubling it. When you extend your pain threshold, maintain the amount of pain, or even get it down to how it is in the present will benefit you.

You see, God had already refined us. There's no turning back from it. We had been painfully heated just like the silver. What we do onwards after the refining will then define us. Are we going to accept the truth of what we went through and lead a meaningful life out of it, or do we decide to get stuck in the process of refining? We get to feel the heat all the time; the pain and the suffering will lead our lives. The process is complex, and it will not be the same for each of us. The refining outcome depends on our will to stay strong regardless of the pain and other significant factors such as family support and friends. Time to grief and expectations for ourselves and others' expectations for us, which give us pressure to be well, are critical points in the outcome.

V. Grief Fog

The most painful part in life is probably when a parent receives the news of their child's death. When you get that phone call, you'll get your first cry. A cry you'll never forget. It's a long hold of breath followed by a shrill scream. Others would describe it as a scream cry. You probably drop to your knees while crying your heart out. You can barely breathe. Your mind is either blank or full of questions. If you can go to where your child is, you would have done so immediately no matter how, no matter what the time.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Romans 8:18

King James Version (KJV)

I know exactly how it was

I did the mom cry. I held my breath, screamed, and cried; it was the most painful thing. I remembered the exact spot where I received the news. I remembered how I held my chest with both arms because it was as if I was running out of air. It is engraved forever in my mind.

My husband made all the necessary arrangements, everything from the hospital to the funeral. Documentations are complicated as an

expatriate. He processed all the required documents from the embassy and the designated offices where we are residing. We must complete all the requirements for the burial of our baby in their land. On the other hand, I took care of our two other children at home. Everything was so hazy for the both of us; it's like going through it all like a zombie. We had no other thoughts in mind but to finish all the process so we could bring our child's body to rest. A single day delayed because of things that are out of control is frustrating. It was a weekend, so there was no office to release the body. There was a system problem from the hospital wherein they did not register my son on his patient ID. He was still under me as the mother, yet they discharged him because of death. Then, they have to solve how to make a new patient ID for someone who has already died. The system has to be fixed by their IT staff. Our baby has to stay in the morgue for three days due to these delays. Our head was among the clouds, and our hearts on the ground trampled on many times. I felt like I had a raw wound in my chest for which it was salted and blown with the heated wind.

When we finally laid our baby to his resting ground, it was just me, my husband with my two kids and three of our friends. No families with us because we are away from our homeland. No priest to officiate the burial because of COVID restrictions. It was heartbreaking because there was no proper service for my baby. It was short and unreal. But I lifted it all to God, for He is the highest priest after all. He ended my baby's suffering on earth, so my angel can rest and be at peace; God will surely welcome him home now along with his twin. I hope and wish that my son knows how much his mommy loves him. And that as much as I want to take care of him, circumstances wouldn't allow us to be together. My time will come to meet

him again. Still, for now, I am left with a mission to be more kind and loving to my living children and spouse. I realized that we need to celebrate life for it is uncertain and value my twin's loss by advocating for other grieving parents.

Memory loss

I was still on leave for a few weeks after my son died. Since we didn't have anyone to help us at home in the meantime, I took care of my two kids. I noticed that I kept forgetting things, even the simple ones that I used to do before. I was having trouble remembering whether I had already taken my medication for hypertension or if my children took their vitamins for the day. When there is something I need to list for shopping, later on, I always forget to do it until the day of shopping comes. And even when I go shopping with a list on hand, I only remember those I forgot when I am at home placing the items I've shopped in place. I felt like my brain managed to shut down by itself. The trauma that I've been through has strained my neurons to cope with all of the stress, and it has stopped me from thinking about other things, especially the simple ones. My brain managed to choose which one it was willing to face and which wasn't. I even forgot my mobile number at times, and more often, I forgot if I closed the main door of our house that I had to get out of bed to check it. Funny as it seems but the worse thing is when I'm already back in bed after closing the main door, I would still have an irritating thought of getting back up to close it. My mind knows that I just closed it, but part of it doubts whether I did it. It was frustrating and mentally draining.

In most cases, when we have a family discussion, my husband would ask me if I remember a specific event or particular scene. I couldn't respond to it because I don't remember it happening. Then he would ask me why when at times it was either me who told him about something which I entirely forgot or I was in the scene which he assumes I should remember. Unfortunately, no matter how I try to juggle my mind with what he says, no memory comes back. It was all suppressed.

What I did to help me out:

1. I list all the empty or almost consumed items on my notes on my phone right away to ensure I do not forget them on my following shopping schedule.
2. I often pass on essentials in the supermarket to remember if I need one at home, even if it's not written on my list.
3. I will send the same list to my husband. Two heads are better than one. We can spread out and save time too if we go shopping together.
4. I drink my medications simultaneously and in the same place every day and with my children. The same goes for my children's routine necessities like brushing their teeth before going to bed and washing up. I set specific timings for their rituals to ensure that I won't forget about them.

5. When I go to a particular spot at home, then forget why I'm there, like opening the fridge, for example, and yet I forget why I opened it. I retrace my steps to remember, and if I still can't, I leave it. The more I tried to think, the more I would not remember. So, I stopped wasting time and energy. Don't be too hard on yourself if you become forgetful.
6. I even set my own time for praying because, sad to say, even that I forget too.
7. I missed doing certain things for my husband. I don't want him to feel neglected in this trying time, for he too suffered a loss. However, he is not verbal about his feelings and tries so much to hide his pain. So whenever I do something for myself, like making coffee, I make sure to offer him. Or if I make tea, I'll make for two. If I drink vitamins, I'll give them as well. This way, I didn't miss my usual offer for him, and he would still feel cared for despite my struggles. I know that I am mentally unstable and weak, but it should not stop me from taking care of my family.
8. I make sure that each time I open my phone, even at work, I will send a message to my husband first asking how he is. I should extend my comfort to him too. These small things are taken for granted easily, especially nowadays that we are grieving. However, they are the ones that give the most impact to each other, knowing that your spouse will always be there. Having my husband allowing me to cry and

supporting my emotional needs has helped me not to get stuck in the process of pain and guilt.

9. At work, I conditioned my mind to have a daily routine if it is something new because my brain has difficulty processing further information. My brain seemed to block any other information, especially those that would bring me stress.
10. I put sticky notes, old school style but helpful, or tell my colleagues any vital information. Hence, if I forget about it, they will either remind me to do it if it's something to be done or do it themselves if they are free. I thank God that they are very supportive of me.
11. I do new procedures learned many times so I can gain my skill set back. Practice makes progress, and practice makes permanent for me.
12. I saved my mobile number on my phone. I never did before. I'm not sure if other people do it, though. Now, I realize how helpful it is.
13. When I doubt whether I lock the house's main door, I always ask my husband to check if it's closed. More often, I let him close the door himself, so I will not stress myself thinking if I did lock it or not.

These might be simple things, but it is helpful for someone who feels like floating during the day with memory problems.

It's a process. There should be no pressure.

People around you may already be giving you pressure to get better. Others may not be verbal about it, but still, you can feel it shown in other ways. Nevertheless, be kind to yourself. Of all, it is you that should not put pressure on yourself in the process of grief. When we have a wound like a scraped knee, it does not heal the following day. If we have a sprained ankle, we cannot expect ourselves to walk immediately without pain. It takes time for these physical injuries to heal, and it needs medical attention and personal care. How can grieving be any different? Our mind has received shocking news, a painful blow mentally. Expectedly, there should be dysfunction, and it will take time for it to recover. And even if it has recovered in time, the scar will always be there as a reminder. Be kind to yourself even when sometimes your mind floats among the clouds. The mind works on things that you want to think. If you think about the loss most of the time, you will feel all the pain, regrets, guilt, and other emotions that it brings most of the time. If you allow it to rest even for a while, the brain will not let you think of anything. It's sleeping even if you are staring into open space.

Our body copes according to whatever it receives. So does our mind. It will try to avoid factors that will trigger the pain, such as places, things, scent, etc. But suppose you dictate it to face the pain like visiting the graveyard or taking out something of your child's and thinking about them. In that case, you are allowing yourself to feel all the emotions it brings. Our mind is selective on whatever it will enable us to face depending on how you dictate it. However, I'm not saying that you should not visit your child's

grave or celebrate your child's memory. It would help if you commemorated it because it is part of the grieving process. There is nothing wrong with that.

Nevertheless, it is unhealthy on your part to continue doing something that makes you conflicted. The first step you should do in this grief journey is to acknowledge your loss and how it affected you emotionally, psychologically, mentally, and even physically. Accept what gave you conflict to help you move forward. Suppose you do something that stirs negative emotions and thoughts in you continuously. In that case, it is the only thing that your mind will ever focus on, affecting the rest of the body. It will eventually lead to sleep deprivation, loss of appetite, bowel motion problems, hair loss, etc. Constant exposure to this kind of stress will affect you as a whole, losing the person that you are in time.

Please take responsibility for your emotions, feel and embrace them, but don't let them weigh you down. It is hard, I know. I consulted doctors and a psychologist, took medications, and did yoga. I studied Logotherapy and enrolled in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT. It helped me realize that I am the only one responsible for myself. To move forward in grief, I should learn to be accountable for my emotions and conflicts. I acknowledge that I can do nothing with the loss and realize that if something happens to me, what will my children and husband feel? If I gave in to depression and succumbed to the agony, what would happen to my family? I made choices in my life and work that would prevent me from slipping into the depth of my depression. They say there is a thin line between sanity and insanity, and it's true. It is so easy to give in, especially

when you are tired and the people around you have a lot of expectations. My will to live and be a mother to my two kids and a wife to my husband has pushed me to face my conflicting thoughts. Only through overcoming these hurdles will you be able to reconcile within yourself. You can then take care of your loved ones.

I avoided my Obstetrician for a long time. Since we worked in the same hospital, we saw each other in the corridors most of the time. What I did was face it eventually. I allowed her to get in my mind so I may meet her there. Since I dictated that she can be a part of those selections that it's alright to face, I don't feel as triggered as before. I also found that thought blocking is good for me. At first, I was unaware of it. Still, eventually, I noticed myself humming songs and even singing them but not too loud for others to hear. I did this when exposed to babies crying, mothers playing with their babies in front of me, seeing my Obstetrician, and anything related to my loss. The songs that I need to hum or sing are blocking thoughts of loss and the pain it brings. If the trigger were in front of me for a long time, I would leave. Because why should I allow myself to deal with the pain in public when I can remove myself from it? Being a nurse, I get exposed to a lot of pregnant ladies and babies with their moms. I can face them without realizing my loss like I am on autopilot caring for them. Nonetheless, when the babies cry and the parents cooed and played with them, it reminds me that it could have been me doing the same. Sometimes, we need to expose ourselves, though not often, to our triggers. Yes, it will stir painful emotions in us, but it also helps us move forward. It is a form of mental conditioning. One time, I assisted in circumcision. My good friend and colleague was my shield. She helped me develop courage. She was very

willing to do the task for me though it was her first time. My responsibility as a nurse and my gratefulness for her thoughts gave me the courage to do my work efficiently. She was there with me. She never left me alone. She was scared. She said she would never do it again, but she was calm and composed during the procedure and looked after me the whole time. I was struggling the entire time as well, but I kept it bottled up. I thought to myself, if I will not face this now, when? I have to help myself as much as others are doing their best for me. I realized that day how powerful our minds could be. When it needs to focus on a task, it can eliminate all the fear and shoves down all the thoughts of "what if I can't make it?" That lone task gave me power over my fears and the feeling of being incapable. Give yourself time. Expose yourself to triggers one by one.

Never get bombarded by them. It will not end well for you. Expose yourself only if you are ready to and not because someone forced you. Don't be scared to say no even at work because you are the only one that can help yourself best. Life is full of choices. If you know it is not mentally good for you, speak what is in your mind. You are the only one that can help yourself. How would others understand if you didn't tell them your side, fears, and struggles? If they still push you to do something that will hinder your progress in helping yourself in the process of grieving, make a choice. Your sanity is important than work or other obligations in society.

VI. Suicide

I almost died. I sacrificed my son so I may live.

Instilling these thoughts in my mind is feeding me with guilt. Blaming myself for what happened has left an imprint in me that I was not a good mom. God took my baby boy away from me because I deserved it. I deserved all the pain. I believed in it because *I wanted to because I chose to.*

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

King James Version (KJV)

Some of us may feel like it is easier to slip into death to meet our loved ones. It is so easy to embrace death when we are grieving. Suicide will even cross our minds. I welcome death right now when it comes naturally. That way, I wouldn't sin, and my family would not be as devastated.

I never had the guts to take a driving lesson because I'm too scared of road accidents. Now, I welcome the thought of dying in a car accident. I took classes and overcame my fear of death. Now, I have the license to drive. Nevertheless, let us take hold of our thoughts. Let us ask ourselves, if

we too die, how will our family take it? What will happen to our children? How will our spouse feel? Who will take care of our loved ones when we die? What would our dead child think of us when we follow them through suicide if we opt to do it? Now, we are suffering as a parent after losing a child. The pain is beyond what we could imagine. How do we think our family will suffer if we die? Somehow, if we put these questions to our heads, we will be grateful that we still live even in this pain.

For the angels you lost through suicide, on the other hand, you should not be hard on yourself as a parent. I'm sure there are times you thought to yourself, what were the signs leading to committing the act, and what was it that you could have done to prevent it. Plus, the thought of whether your child will be forgiven and if they will go to heaven. This is common for Christian families.

Pope Francis said God forgives those who had suicided. As a parent of a child who took their own life, you should take comfort from this. Who are we to say who goes to heaven and hell? Just because we go to church and read scriptures doesn't guarantee that we go to heaven, for it is by the grace of God that we can go home to His home and no other.

Sinners go to hell. That is what we read, we see, we hear everywhere. Nonetheless, suicide is not a sin. It is the outcome of mental health illness. Those who took their lives ended their pain and suffering because their condition pushed them to do it. One can have a mental illness, as some can have cancer. There is a thin line between sanity and insanity, and it is so easy to slip into the other side if people push us too hard. For someone who

has a mental illness, a small trigger, pressure, and objects to end a life are all they need to finish the act. It would have been a difficult choice to make for them and even more difficult for their parents to accept.

For those who judge, please don't give any more pain to grieving parents, for they already suffer enough. Instead, make your presence known by lending your ears if they want to talk and vent out their pain.

One Wish

If I could have one wish in this world
I would stop all of the suicides
And take them down a happier path
Now their mental illness they have to hide

So many people don't understand
The misery that's in their heart
Men and women of all ages
Have such pain that their illness brought

If you haven't walked in their shoes
Then don't think that they're selfish and weak
Because that is so far from the truth
Just joy and happiness they seek

So much suffering they deal with everyday
Down a painful road they've been
Just needing someone to talk to
But they don't have any friends

Some friends seem to back away
From someone that's always sad
They don't have any idea
Of the kind of life they've had

Reach out to people that really need help
They're hurting and needing someone
It might even hit close to home
It could be your daughter or son!

By Donna Carpenter

Grief is love that we can never give to the person we wanted to give it
to because we never got enough time and chance.

VII. Some Days Are Harder

“Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.”

Psalm 31:9-10

King James Version (KJV)

“This is the worst thing that ever happened to me. What did I ever do to deserve this?” I always cry this in my head. However, I keep telling myself that so many others had walked the same path before me and survived the agony. I listened to my inner thoughts, and crazy as it may sound, I had conversations with myself. Yes, I had daily conversations with myself. I asked how I felt today. Usually, I feel like there’s something heavy in my chest with no physical pain. I drink a cup of coffee in the morning and ask myself what I’ll do for the day if I’m not going to work.

I’ll think about my children, the routine care I need to do for them, and the house chores required to accomplish. I think about my spouse and how he’s coping with his grief and work. I think about my visits to the cemetery. Other than those, there’s nothing left to think at all. Yes, I forgot to think about myself. We often lose sight of our own needs because our hands are full of household responsibilities. In my case, I felt like my mourning was cut short because I had to be strong for my kids and keep

everything around me going. It was a dangerous thing on my part. I thought that settling things accordingly in my family day by day was helping me in my grief journey, but it was not. At night, when everybody's asleep, I lie in bed and remember my baby boy. How happy would I be to be caring for him? I'll have sleepless nights again, but it will all be worth it. His big brother and big sister will be glad to see him. That's the time all the pain comes rushing. All the emotions of guilt, regrets, and fear of losing my other children will bombard me. Why? Because that's the time when nobody needs my attention, and there's no task to do. I only have myself. It was unhealthy. I wake up in the middle of the night checking my children to see if they are still breathing. I had anxiety about losing them. I still wake up in the middle of the night until now, but I no longer check if my children are still alive. I managed my anxiety, and I know they are safe. It's so difficult to break some habits when we grieve, primarily related to the fear of losing another child. However, we can make a new one. We can set a time for ourselves. You can learn a new set of skills like painting, sewing, or knitting to shift your anxiety.

Yoga, tai chi, Zumba, or any other exercise also helps release all the stress hormones. Give some time to yourself. It's challenging to think about yourself, especially if you're a mother with very young children; it seems like 24 hours is not enough to keep the household together. House chores delayed for the day is not a loss of time, but it's something you gained for yourself. Be kind to yourself. You will be more productive when you do so. I encouraged myself to take steps one at a time. The grief journey I am taking right now is the worst a parent could ever have. Nobody should ever take this path, but some of us are unfortunate enough to be sailing on the same

boat, paddling on our river of tears. Scream if it helps you let go of the pain. Cry if it releases all the emotions you've been trying to hide. Take time to listen to what you want to say to yourself. Always be kind to yourself. You deserve all the time and love.

Some days are harder. Some days are not. Let us drift together and find comfort in the memories our angels left behind. We need to be strong for the living kids that we have, for our spouse, and most of all for ourselves. Our angel in heaven would want the same for us. With this in mind, it will somehow help us ease the pain and move forward in grief.

Tips to help you move forward:

1. Share to your support system your struggles.

Other people, especially family, will understand you better when you share your thoughts and emotions. Tell them what gives you stress and communicate to them what comforts you. In this way, they know how to refrain from making you more anxious than you already are. Also, they would know what to do if you ever have anxiety attacks.

2. If you can't talk to your family, find a therapist.

If it's difficult for you to open up to your family, hire and talk to a therapist. It would be best if you spoke what's in your mind; otherwise, it will only weigh you down.

3. Find a support group.

If there's a support group of grieving parents in your local community, join them. If you can't find one, enter online. It is a group where people listen to your struggles, heartaches, regrets, and guilt. If you want to share any pent-up emotions and thoughts, they are the people who understand what you are going through.

4. Share the story of you and your angel.

If it helps you to share your story and the child you lost, then share it. Share how amazing your child lived their life.

5. Do something in their honor.

You can sing a song, travel on their behalf, or raise a campaign for your child's honor.

6. Learn more about them through other people.

Please find time to talk to your child's friends, teachers, colleagues, and other people with whom they connected before. You will be surprised what memories you can gather from them that are precious.

7. Remember the messages you sent to them and the messages you would have wanted to send.

If this helps you in accepting the truth of your loss, do so. There is no hard rule on how to grieve.

8. Reply from their perspective.

When you send a message on their phone and still have the phone with you, you can reply from their perspective. If you dare to write it, respond with words of comfort, words of love, and a goodbye message. It will most likely give you closure on the conflicting emotions you are going through.

9. Write love letters to them.

If you had been doing it before when your child was alive, then why stop now. You can write a goodbye letter and say all the love that you never got the chance to speak. If it's your first time, strip yourself bare in this letter and think that it is the last conversation you can have with your child.

If it's emotionally draining, stop. If it's helpful, continue. Respect your feelings if you're angry or sad.

Even when we are on lockdown or quarantined, we should still help others who are mourning. Traditional funeral rituals with family and friends are no longer allowed in this time of the pandemic. Let your presence be known through a virtual session or call instead. Anything is better than nothing. Even a simple message sent will go a long way for the bereaved.

VIII. Grief- A Dark Forest

Accepting the death of our child is easier said than done. No parent would ever think one end is acceptably better emotionally than the other. If death is being shoved on you suddenly, you never even got the chance to hug or kiss your child that day, or if you anticipated the grief, death is the same. And nothing could ever stop us from feeling the pain.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Philippians 4:13

King James Version (KJV)

I believe you will have regrets during a sudden death because you didn't know that your child would leave this world. You could have made their favorite meal, spent quality time, and let your child know of your love so they will have memories to take home to heaven. You never got the chance to say goodbye. It's a wrecking ball hitting you at one time. The news shocked you, shattered you, and numbed you physically, emotionally, and mentally. You are torn beyond repair the time you receive the devastating news.

On the other hand, anticipating the death of your child may not be like a wrecking ball. It's like gangrene. It eats you day by day. If you leave it, a part of your body with the necrosis may need to be amputated. Knowing

that your child will die at any moment is making your life miserable. No parent should ever anticipate anything like it. The pain, the guilt of not protecting your loved ones, and the inevitable future are thoughts that are like a roller coaster in your mind-affecting your life. There are ups and downs in your mood. There are times when you want to watch a movie with your child, do things your child enjoys and be active, and there are moments when you want to stay in bed and cry. And once death finally comes, a part of you is dead. That part had been gone even before your child was pronounced dead. Yet, you just lived with it but receiving the news of death takes away that destroyed part of you, burying it or cremating it with your child.

Either of the two is never going to change the fact that you are left incomplete. You have a broken piece of you that had died. Living after a loss will never be the same. There's a hollow that nobody can ever fill. The only way is to accept the reality that our loving child has left us. And even if we don't want to admit it, we don't have a choice. They are gone physically. Yes, physically, but never in our thoughts. Our love for them will keep them alive, and we will never forget and always honor their memories. You cannot expect to erect a wrecked house after a month or two. It needs planning before a skeleton structure is in place.

In the same way, a limb amputated from gangrene needs time to heal. Everything does not happen by itself. There are other things to be considered in building another house, like hiring contractors. For an amputee, the person needs an occupational therapist to aid him function in doing activities of daily living without a limb. Why should losing a child be

any different? Just because we look complete on the outside does not mean we are not lacking inside? Why does society, friends, and worse, some of our family members expect us to be well after a week, a month, or a year? Don't they know that grief is like a dark forest too? In a dark forest, you see different shades when you go in. Lights are coming in between the trees. There are shady areas that may seem scary; you don't know what wild animals are there. There are broken trees, humps, and bumps. But, there are also sites where you feel the stillness of the forest, calming and relaxing.

Grief is like this. Scary thoughts of suicide will be there because others may want to give up. It is so easy to let go and slip away from reality to end all suffering. There are better days, you see some light allowing you to smile, and there are ugly days wherein you prefer to stay in bed and cry. Sometimes, one may feel calm, contemplating the outcome of the loss, embracing the truth of death. It is a journey with humps and bumps along the way. The central core of overcoming the painful part of grieving is how to go through all the hurdles. When you need to go through it and why it's needed. These areas in the forest, we can easily get lost in it. How you want to get out of it is your decision. Other people can lead you out, yes. However, the initial step has to be yours. If you want to hide in the dark, stay inside the relaxing part of the forest and slip reality, or step out of it is entirely up to you. Remember that you need to take hold of your emotions and realize the conflicts within you. Are they guilt, regret, triggers, trauma? Once you have faced them and reconciled with them, only then will you find peace within you.

I know there will be a lot of conflicting emotions for us who are grieving, and I don't expect you to face all of them together. Take a single step one at a time if you want. If it helps you better, then do so. Nobody should tell you otherwise. Nobody should dictate that you need to accept everything because it's the will of God, and you will be fine after three months. My Psychologist told me these exact words. I never went back to her after that. CBT has taught me to deal with my emotions and take responsibility for it. I applied what I learned to myself.

I never gave myself the pressure. Although people at work gave me tension and stress, I learned to speak up. Otherwise, if I won't, I only suffer the anxiety, and it's not a joke to have it. They would never know how it feels, but you do. I need the clarity of my mind to keep me sane. People around you who never suffered child loss will never understand you, especially when all they think about is someone needed for the job. Whatever mental stress you have will never cross their mind unless you give yourself a chance to talk about it to them. I took responsibility for my emotions by letting my colleagues know how I felt to help me out. Unless you explain your struggles to them, they will never understand. Whatever you share will be kept in confidence, and you can guarantee it yourself by telling them the same thing. You would not want to declare in public that you are mentally unstable. At least let your superiors know.

Value yourself. There's a saying with a thought that goes if you die for your work today, your employer can easily replace you the following day. It is true. If your job pushes your limit and puts a lot of pressure on your grieving process or hinders your progress in your grief journey, then better

decide to let go. If you know that you cannot function as expected in the task set upon you because of your grief, and the particular job will only set you back to square one in your progress to move forward, then leave. If your superiors and employer will not understand you, it is better to decide for your health.

How do you value your life?

What is more important to you? Do you value yourself and your sanity? How will your family cope if you lose yourself because of pressure from work?

Grief is a dark forest. Sometimes even the lives we live are too.

IX. Misconceptions of Grief

Grieving differs from one person to another. The gravity of grief also varies on how closely attached you are to the person you lost. People who suffered the loss of a loved one are the ones who truly understand what the bereaved is going through, for they share the same journey.

However, there are still misconceptions of grief.

1. The pain in losing a spouse is the same as that in losing a child.

It is not rational. Each grief is different. Losing a child is the most devastating, especially for a mother. But, that does not mean that other losses are less meaningful, painful, or important than the other.

Please don't compare your loss and coping with that loss to the other grieving person even when you suffered the same loss. When you comfort someone who just lost a child in any way, it could be a miscarriage, stillbirth, accident, or suicide, lend your ear. Say you understand what they are going through. That is more than enough.

2. Dying at the hospital is better than dying at home with you.

It does not help to tell the bereaved that passing away in the hospital where the medical staff could attend to the dying baby with quality care until the end of life was better.

It was better there than you finding your baby blue one day at home. The guilt will be even more.

The comparison is worse.

Although from the other person's perspective, this was given in all sincerity, for us grieving parents to compare the way of dying is irrational. The endpoint is still death, which is why we are in pain at the moment. Trying to comfort us in this way would do no good.

Hugging us and letting us break down will be more appreciated at this point.

3. When you are smiling and replying "I'm fine," when asked how you are do not necessarily mean you had moved on with your life.

Some offices or workplaces have this culture where you ask everyone around you how they are with smiles on their faces. I work in one. Although grieving parents may say "I'm fine," in reply, it does not mean they are. They most probably say it in response because they prefer not to talk about the situation to you.

4. It is essential to stay strong.

Even if you cry and be weak, it is alright. Give yourself a moment to break down and let the pain, guilt, regrets, and everything you keep inside

and want to let out be out. There's no need to keep a strong demeanor when you feel the exact opposite on the inside. Let the people around you, especially family and friends know how you feel and see how vulnerable you are. They will understand you better. Being broken may mean physically, mentally, and psychologically vulnerable, but it does not mean being weak in spirit.

5. You will get over it in time.

No grieving parent would want to get over the loss of their child. A parent fears forgetting the memories of their child as the years pass by. That is why they want to hold onto them as much as possible, making it more difficult to ease the pain.

“Moving forward in grief” is a better term. I believe you can encourage a parent who loses a child by telling them these words. In moving forward, you bring along all the memories and the emotions with you. Getting over is entirely different.

6. We will upset other people at work if they see us cry, especially those who are also emotionally unstable.

There are triggers around us that remind us of our loss. Responding to these triggers may include crying. If we can hold it until we reach the toilet to cry, it's good. However, if it's challenging to hold it in, then why not cry? All of us are entitled to be emotional. Nobody should stop you from doing so. Humans are emotional beings. We just suffered the most painful

loss as a parent; people at work must respect it. You can excuse yourself and take time to freshen up.

7. I hope you get better.

Grief is not a disease that you need to be better. Others don't realize that grieving is an event in life that affects the person for a lifetime. It's like getting married or having children. There's no turning back from it. It marks you for a lifetime.

X. Losing A Child Is Not A One Day Event

We may have the same pair of shoes. Some have worn them over time that they got used to it and became comfortable. Others are still new; it's giving them blisters that are painful to bear. It is a perfect metaphor for the grief journey.

It took time for me to get used to my new shoes. There were times that I started to get comfortable, but then another blister appeared, and I will bleed. There were days I wanted to go barefoot, stretch my toes a bit, or get new ones, but then it was tough to remove my shoes. It's glued to my feet now. My toenails started to be deformed and callous formed in my feet. Constant friction and blisters that come and go gave me scars. There were also scars from my previous cuts. Still, I wore the same shoes. I could not get away from it no matter how I tried. I ran away with it. Sometimes, I ran away from everyone with only my shoes on. I could go barefoot, but the shoes remain. They were giving me pain and comfort at the same time because nothing else could provide any emotion at all. These new shoes have consumed me at the moment, and they are all that mattered.

My journey was a difficult one. I hope others will never get to wear the same shoes. I never want anyone to be on this journey either. Another path is better than the one I have. I wish it would have been different for me. Another pair of shoes, something more comfortable, would be better.

Nevertheless, I look down at my feet. I see love. I see tears. I see broken soles. Even when my shoes give me pain, I love it still. I will hold on to them forever, never let go. I intend to keep them for the rest of my life.

Some of us may have overcome the grief and wear new shoes but still kept the old torn ones because they served as memories that should be kept alive. Having new shoes on doesn't mean they forget. No, it just means they're moving forward without it on their feet. The old shoe is kept permanently. They will wear them once in a while but more often kept as a treasure. There should be no judgment for those who wore a new shoe, for behind that new one are disfigured feet that bore the devastating weight of the previous shoes. Likewise, others move forward with the same shoes. People should never judge someone who still prefers to wear the shoes on as unable to move forward with grief in life. They love now the peace and joy that the shoe has brought upon their lives. The shoes must have made a big difference to the person and other people. They need to be worn all the time to keep the wheels turning and be a testimony to others who received new shoes.

I still wear my shoes on. I don't know if I ever get to find a new one. But I had decided to make use of my shoes. I want my shoes to be a guide for others who have just started to wear theirs. New shoes always give blisters, especially if it's new and doesn't fit and if given suddenly, not when you expected them. Others received the shoes expectedly. Thus, they know it fits well. However, that doesn't mean it would be comfortable to wear. Expecting the death of your child will never be a comfortable feeling. Expectant death does not make it any less painful than those who received

the news suddenly either. And having to bear with all of the conflicting emotions that come with losing a child is not a one-day event. It is a lifetime. And I'll make sure to use my shoes as an instrument in this lifetime.

XI. Memory Garden, Seat and Room

Are you one of the moms who go to the graveyard of your child to water the flowers and grass every day, write to your child's journal and use your child's phone to send you a message? Maybe you thought you might have gone crazy. Well, my dear grieving parents, you are not alone. Most, if not all of us who have lost a child do that. Maybe not the same as yours, but we have certain rituals to keep them with us as if they're still alive. It is a normal phase of grieving. I don't think there is any parent who skips this part. We have different time table in passing by the step. I used to go to the graveyard every day, and if it were closed, then I'd stay outside the gate to pray for my baby boy and let him know I was there. I'll always be with him, whether in that graveyard or at home in my altar, praying for him.

Some of us want to keep letters and write to our child in heaven while others go to places our child used to visit. Some celebrate their child's death by releasing balloons, butterflies, tossing flower petals in the river or ocean, etc. There's nothing wrong with this. We are grieving parents. We are entitled to feel these emotions and more entitled to celebrate the memory of our child.

My goal in writing this book is not only to comfort grieving parents like me. I want to be an instrument for others, be their voice, and advocate for the different phases of the grief journey. Through this, I found the meaning in my loss. By doing so, it brought me peace. The hours spent in it and the emotions I've bared myself to you who is reading this now helped

me. It helped ease my anxiety and gave me the goal to reach out to people to help them find their meaning. I have envisioned myself comforting those who needed comfort. I also wish to lead those who want to take their single step in their grief journey so they, too, can move forward in their grief and achieve peace and find joy from their loss if they decide to make a difference. If helping others out helped me in this journey and brought joy to me by writing this book instead of staying in pain, you too can reach out to every grieving mom and dad. Decide for yourself. May the imprint of grief in us be imprinted to others as comfort, peace, and joy.

I will also share this book with others who are not grieving from losing a child to understand the grieving process and acknowledge our feelings. In this way, they will have the idea of how not to set expectations on us. And that there is no such thing as getting better because we don't have an illness that needs treatment. Nobody wants to be an emotional burden to anyone. We only need time to pour out the love we can no longer give to our dead child. Such is what they need to understand. We don't have time anymore. We need to go through this process to comfort ourselves, give all the love, and reminisce all the memories. We need all these to keep them all in our hearts, so it's easier to accept and move forward in life.

My baby boy's death has strengthened me spiritually. My faith was, of course, shaken. But I prayed hard to God for wisdom to discern why I had to lose one of the twins at ten weeks of pregnancy and take my son two months after delivery. He could have just left me with one, but He also took my baby boy away from me. It was hard, and it took time for me to accept things. I had to overcome all the hurdles that are too many to mention. It

brought too many scars and so many guilt and regrets. Being an instrument to my fellow grieving parents not only through this book but most of all in faith, I can say that my heart still burns with joy.

Grief has no time limit. If a grieving parent decides to celebrate the memories of the child they lost, please be considerate. Celebrating it does not mean the person has gone crazy. It just means love, as simple as that. Please don't put any more color or meaning into their actions.

Honoring the memory of the child a parent lost through a garden and a seat, mural, trees, or whatever tangible things it may be, is something that needs to be respected. Some prefer to keep the room and things as they are even if years have passed. It is fine. There should be no judgment there. Let them keep the memories alive through these thoughts of honor.

There is a saying from an unknown author that has impacted me and hopefully to others who have set high expectations for grieving parents.

"Before you tell a grieving parent to be grateful for the children they have, think about which one of yours you could live without."

If you want to keep posting pictures on your social media, do so in memory of your loving child. If doing so helps ease the pain away, post as many and as much as you like. I kept my profile cover on Facebook, still the Christmas party of 2020, because in that photo, we are complete. My twins are still part of that photo; they're still inside of me. I also kept the profile picture because even when I had already lost one of the twins in that

picture, the remaining baby boy was still inside me. I was not allowed to take photos of my son when he was in the NICU. It was against their protocol to take baby pictures even if you're the parent. At least through this platform, I still celebrate their presence in my life.

Some people think that once we accept the death of our child, we don't grieve any longer. This notion is wrong. We carry the grief for the rest of our lives, for we are a parent. Nobody wanted to lose a child. Nobody wanted to be in the same position as we are in, not even those who made judgments in our grief journey.

So my dear parents, celebrate your angel however you want and whatever way you choose.

"Love is the fabric of a life well-lived. Grief is the tapestry of a life well-loved." - J.B. McPhail

XII. Ugly Cry Days

“Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

King James Version (KJV)

One fear of parents later on in life, even mine, is when we forget the memories of our angel. I don't have much, but the reality of conceiving twins and the moments I had in the NICU with my baby boy will remain a treasure for me. Some of us were able to find meaning from the loss and have moved forward with our lives. Meanwhile, keeping the memories of our children alive in so many ways. Yet, some may still be stuck in the process of grieving. Like in a quicksand, each time you struggle, you sink all the more. You chose to stay in the quicksand for fear that if you get out from it, you might not be able to remember the memories of your loving child. Suppose you don't feel the pain and other emotions that come with the loss. You fear that you forget. Unfortunately, this thought will not allow you to move forward even if you want to. Be responsible for your fears and take action. Only by taking responsibility for it will you break free from the cycle of the conflicting emotions that are making you sink.

We so desperately wanted them to be with us, and they are and will always be in our hearts no matter what. Not thinking about them for a moment in a day does not mean we don't love them and forget about them. It should not create fear and guilt in us. The love we share with our children is something intangible yet exists, and that stays with us even after they leave this world. The memory of our child's life will always give us happiness as much as their death gives us pain. Grief is not a different feeling. It is part of the rest of our emotions. We cannot say that when we start to smile or feel happy, we are no longer grieving. Sometimes, there are tears behind our smiles and laughter that other people don't need to know about or see.

Nevertheless, society has made an impression that if we act like our usual selves and never see ourselves break down and cry, we are already better. They assume that we got over our loss because we were able to immerse ourselves back in society. They should never see grieving parents like that. It pains me to make them understand. We are not asking for special treatment because we only want to grieve. Again, we don't want to be an emotional burden to anyone. That is why we immerse ourselves in society to earn a living or meet other obligations for our family and community after a while.

Grief is an emotion like loving. You can never take away loving from you. Then you can never take away grief as well. Falling in love is a significant event in our lives which we can never forget. The death of our children is an important event, and grieving over our loss is something we can never move on to. You don't expect someone not to celebrate their

wedding anniversary every year or their birthday and tell them to move on and get over it. So how is grieving any different? Just because your child no longer lives does not mean they never existed. They're out of your life that you need to move on from it. If you meet insensitive people that criticize you and question your ways in grieving, you can always tell them, "What if it was your child or what if it was you? How do you want to be celebrated by your loved ones when you're gone? One can never truly understand grieving parents unless they walk the same path as us.

You can never move on. The only way is to move forward. Death is inevitable. We, too, may die now or tomorrow. We cannot tell. But what can we do? We can try to remind each other that there are things that we cannot control. And the pain from losing our children are wounds that can never heal. All we can do is help each other understand that grief is not always about pain and crying. It also means having happy days. Reminiscing our children's memories is one way to keep them and us alive. It's a series of mixed ups and downs along the way, especially when there are triggers we cannot avoid as we move forward with our lives. Everyone needs to know that a grieving parent can also smile and laugh again. It may take time, but it will come, but that doesn't mean that they've moved on. It just means that they've moved forward.

13 things a Friend Can Do to a Friend Who Grieves

1. Let your friend feel your presence, whatever way it may be.

If your grieving friend does not want to talk or share anything yet, give them the space they need. The moment your friend has decided to share, at least your friend knows that you are there.

2. Listen with all sincerity.

Be compassionate. When you listen with sincerity, your friend will trust you in their feelings and thoughts no matter how dangerous it may be, like welcoming death and suicide.

3. If you haven't had the same loss, acknowledge that you don't completely understand what your friend is going through.

Being honest about it is more comforting than receiving comments and advice from someone who does not entirely understand the process. It is best to realize that there are thoughts you need to keep to yourself, knowing that it will hurt your friend more if you say it even when you have their best interest at heart.

4. Don't put expectations on your grieving friend.

The pressure from other people and society is more than enough to carry. Try not to add to the burden. The pressure on getting better may

force the person to avoid things or run away from them. It affects them to take time to immerse themselves in the process of grieving and going back to society at their pacing.

5. Always check on your friend.

Giving them the space they need in grieving is okay, but not too much. It is essential always to let the bereaved know that you are there without putting pressure on their progress.

6. Ask how they feel.

It is different when you wait for them to tell you how they feel than that of making an effort to ask them how they are and listen to what the person has to say, especially if they need something. There are days when they want to talk about the loss and hesitate because you might not want to talk about it.

7. Don't avoid talking about the loved one that your friend has lost.

Suppose your grieving friend has opened the topic of their loss. In that case, it means your friend took an amount of courage to open up whatever conflicting emotions they have to share with you, even when it means reliving the pain. Remember to help out by lending your ear and heart. A person who grieves needs someone to talk to. It is very much appreciated, no matter how little the time, especially if they feel how genuine you are.

8. Don't make everything about you.

There are times when you also want to share about yourself. Please do not attempt to direct the discussion about you unless they ask. The grieving mind of your friend has too much to process about their situation.

9. Never interrupt them when they share their feelings.

Please don't cut the momentum of sharing their thoughts and feelings. They might never reach the same peak of emotion again and may try to suppress the same stress for another time until they will get the courage to share.

To be interrupted midway while you bare yourself to someone pouring out all the emotions that are kept and buried inside, the conflicts, guilt, and regrets you have is rude.

It is the same for them and even more difficult because of the agony they have. It may stay there for a long time, or the mind might decide to ultimately bury it, which is unhealthy. It may cause anxiety and triggers in the future. Let their feelings flow once they start to share, and once again, please lend your ear.

10. Never judge.

Your friend might have a different perspective and beliefs. Never judge them if it doesn't coincide with yours. Do not impose your opinions on your friend, for it may hinder their process of facing the loss.

11. Don't attempt to minimize the pain.

Remember that the pain in losing someone, especially that of a child, is unfathomable. Nobody can explain it, so trying to comfort them in a way that can minimize their pain is entirely unhelpful.

12. Please don't make them feel like they are an emotional burden.

It is the worst feeling a grieving friend will ever feel from you as a friend or anyone else for that matter. It would feel like what they're going through is unimportant. Losing a child is not insignificant for a parent. It is everything. They will never see their child, it should matter, and nobody should make them feel otherwise.

13. Never fake it.

If you are sad about what happened and feel sorry for the loss, show it. Never fake it. Even if you don't completely understand the feeling because you haven't lost a child, never fake the condolences you sent to the bereaved.

20 songs you might want to listen to

1. Talking to the Moon- Bruno Mars
2. Winter Bear- Coby Grant
3. Scars in Heaven- Casting Crowns
4. No One But You (Only The Good Die Young)- Queen
5. Love Never Fails- Brandon Heath
6. I'll Find You- Lecrae
7. Carry You- Ruelle, Fleurie
8. Jealous of the Angels- Donna Taggart
9. Dancing in the Sky- Dani and Lizzy
10. Miss You All The Time- O.A.R.
11. Borrowed Angels- Kristin Chenoweth
12. Butterfly Fly Away- Miley Cyrus
13. Under Your Scars- Godsmack
14. Gone Away- Five Finger Death Punch
15. Fix You- Coldplay
16. How Long Will I Love You- Ellie Goulding
17. Make You Feel My Love- Adele
18. Somewhere Only We Know- Keane
19. Let Her Go- Passenger
20. Over The Rainbow- Israel Kamakawiwo'ole

XIII. Others Don't Get The Right To Say Get Over It

I'm a nurse in the Outpatient Department; they pull me out to send a patient from the ward to transfer to another hospital. They chose me because I worked in the ward before I got pregnant. My Supervisor asked my colleague and me why we were crying. "Why now? I know why but looking like that will make the patient upset. She's already upset with her condition, and if she sees you like that, you will make it worse", she told me in my face. I pulled myself together, went inside the room to check on the patient, and received my Supervisor's endorsement, deep inside though I was breaking. It crossed my mind not to go, but I went anyway, for I wouldn't want my work affected by my emotions.

It hurts when people expect you to get over your loss. Mine was barely five months, and I am better, to be honest. I found the meaning of my loss and am making sure to help other grieving parents like me find meaning and peace in theirs. Sure there are still triggers that are hard to stop or evade, but I found myself blocking my thoughts or distracting my emotions.

Before that, our head of nursing also asked me to help the maternity staff take care of the babies. It was barely three months after I lost my baby, my mind just froze, and I could not even think of anything and just cried. I had a breakdown. She was sorry why she even asked. The irony here is that she lost her twins too. Her life had spiraled down, affecting her marriage and relationship with her children, and she does not want it to happen to me as well, she said. It took her years to move forward. She kept telling me

she genuinely understood me. Well, if she did, she would not have asked me to help the maternity ward in the first place, knowing I just lost my baby and everything is just so raw, and I'm still struggling to keep myself afloat.

I had accepted my loss, and I am at peace with it because of my faith, and writing this book is bringing joy to me, knowing that I'll be able to help other grieving parents. It helped me move forward every day because I finally found the meaning of my loss and purpose. However, what she did was not helping me in moving forward. She tried to pull me back by exposing me to my triggers, like putting salt in my wound. I was just glad that she returned to me to say that she found another staff to cover. I am still grateful for her kindness, though. I know she had my best interest in mind while still doing her job. I also wish I could be as strong as her.

Understanding our feelings and coping up with them to move forward will take time. Sometimes we do so well that others would think that we can face our triggers already. Still, when we get exposed again, not on the time we set for ourselves, we come crashing back down.

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Joshua 1:9

King James Version (KJV)

XIV. Drifting Through Each Day

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."

Romans 8:28

King James Version (KJV)

Here are some questions that arise when we go back to work?

1. Will I be able to answer my colleagues honestly when they ask me how I am? Will I break down in front of them when I answer this question?
2. How will I react to triggers that remind me of my loss? (I'm a nurse, and I will be seeing babies and pregnant women when I get back to work. I had twin pregnancy. I lost the first one at ten weeks and the second baby two months after my premature delivery due to complications in the gut and lungs. This question will hit me real hard.)
3. Will my colleagues understand what I'm going through?

Many more questions will hit us once we go back to work. There will also be questions we might not expect them to ask. It will lead to anxiety on our part, for we are not prepared to answer them.

Some of us will go to work because we could not figure out how to be a mother to our other children. We needed the distraction. On the other hand, I was too preoccupied taking care of my 6-year old son and 2-year old daughter that I had no time to sit and process all that had happened. My mourning was cut short because I had other responsibilities at home. Although, sometimes, I thought it was an excuse to run away from mourning because I was still in denial of the reality of losing my newborn. Everything is surreal.

The anxiety of facing all the people and the questions and condolences that come with it are inevitable. While people are sincere on how sorry they are for your loss, most will never truly understand what you're going through unless they lost a child as well. I avoided people I knew would ask me about the situation until I was ready to talk about it. Although, you can never prevent them forever, nor can you avoid the topic with them. Unless you have faced conflicting emotions, it is best not to let other people put pressure on you. Otherwise, it would be difficult for you to take responsibility for your grief. People are going to give you advice left and right. Some you are willing to accept, some make you feel worst. However, take time to listen to yourself first, for the only person who can help you out in this journey and the only company you have is you.

Initially, you will drive each day like a zombie. Everyone in this journey will tell you that you are not alone. However, take one step at a time. Give yourself some time and learn to process your thoughts and emotions. Learn to listen to yourself. If you want to cry, cry. If you want to sleep, sleep. However, assess yourself from time to time and check which

one is helpful to you and which one is not. In this way, you know when to ask for professional help when needed. Never disregard your doubts about your feelings, fears, and responses to your daily dealings with people. Learn to acknowledge all your emotions and take responsibility for them to help you reconcile within yourself. Day by day and one by one, you can overcome the hurdles. Life is still full of promise. You need to take it slow and be more kind to yourself. You deserve all the love and kindness after what you've been through.

XV. Forever Alive

Finding clarity in your grief will help end your agony? For real? No. Pain will always be there as you move forward, living in grief. However, I can promise that you will find peace and comfort once you have found clarity in the meaning of your loss and taken action from it. Managing to help others despite your loss and the pain you've been through will lead you to joy. Meanwhile, learning to understand the reason why your loving child needs to go back home to God's loving arms will give you the comfort you need.

I questioned God before why my baby boy was taken away from me after taking the other twin at ten weeks. However, after praying hard for wisdom every day, He finally answered me. He introduced this pain to me, this loss, so I can relate to parents who lost their children and be their voice and advocate. I prayed for a miracle of healing for my son that God did not answer. I realized that the testimonials I've wanted to do for that healing were not the testimonial He envisioned for me. The testimonial will be how I got through the agony and turned it into joy. I have become an instrument for other grieving parents so I may help them in their journey. How? By writing this book. The content here is my testimony. I keep my babies forever alive by reaching out to other grieving parents and helping them out from the quicksand of pain into finding peace and joy in the process of grief. Also, I hope they too will become instruments to others in need.

I see grieving parents in my social support group creating resorts for grieving parents. Others find joy in painting once again with their child's memories. One mom also decided to make a show on a radio station that will allow grieving parents to share their child's stories. It will help them pour out their pain and move forward through gaining social support from those who listened.

I had made a list of avenues where you can direct your grief into something meaningful. They might inspire you to shift your pain and gain peace and joy by going through and becoming an advocate like the other grieving parents on the list.

1. Knit

www.ververecruitment.org

This organization receives donations of knitted items such as blankets, soft toys, clothes, and other knitted stuff to help support people and families of the bereaved affected by COVID. It may be a small thing for people who haven't experienced grief before but for someone grieving, receiving these items eases some of the pain from the loss. Likewise, for the one who made it, the feeling of being able to take part in helping out someone else in their grief is a reflection of peace and joy.

www.knittingforcharity.com

If you are into knitting, Bridget's Cradles is a unique knitting charity helping out bereaved parents and families ease out some pain and bring out the love for others despite the pain. It is precisely why Bridget Cradles was created, born out of love from a tragedy. They know the comfort we need and what we can give back because of the pain that we suffered. If you love knitting and want to volunteer, fill their form and they will send you a pattern and document with their set of guidelines.

knitsofgrief.blogspot.com

This website is one of those dedicated to the loss of their child. Rebecca knits to celebrate her child by giving out knitted blankets to hospitals to bring a moment of comfort, warmth, and peace. She and her husband are an inspiration to other grieving parents on shifting the pain into making a difference to the community.

2. Sew

thesewcialists.com

If you are into sewing, visit thesewcialists.com and get inspired on how they managed to move forward from their grief through sewing and how they impacted others through it.

www.mourninghope.org

Have you made a comfort pillow in memory of your loving child? Did it help you in coping with your grief? Have you sewn other things in their memory? Are you willing to help out other bereaved families with your talent?

If the answers to these questions are yes, then reach out to Mourning Hope and bring hope to those, who walk in this challenging path that we are on at the moment. You know them better because you are experiencing the same loss and pain. Since you have the talent, please share them with others. Helping them helps you in your journey as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L8YQ2-ObIg>

If you are into vlogging, you can check this video, which may inspire you to start your tutorials. Hopefully, it will help you in coping. At the same time will reach out to others who are grieving and sew and somehow lift their spirits and be a ripple of comfort. You will inspire them, as Jess Oklaroots may have inspired me in this video.

3. Illustrate

If you are an illustrator, doing what you love will help you out in your grief and others. In a group where I belong, one member there is an illustrator, and if members post their child's pictures asking to add wings

on them, she will put wings on the images. The wings look so lovely in those children. It looked as if they were at peace when you saw those pictures with wings, especially if the background is with clouds as if in heaven. Of course, those alone helped the grieving parents in their pain, and they value the work that the other mom, an illustrator, made for them. Being able to give joy to someone in grief, no matter how simple, will reflect on you as well.

4. Paint

Paint your child to keep the memory alive indefinitely. The painting process, the time you spent on it, the colors that bring the canvas to life coming from your emotions are like giving your feelings an avenue to speak. You will visualize what your emotion is trying to say. And with that, once the painting is done, you can touch it. The output will always be a reminder of what you've been through. For others, it may serve as the last conversation with their child.

You can rent a gallery and showcase your paintings related to your loss and memories of your loved one if you want. Curate the event as per how you would like everyone to remember your child. You can raise funds and give the money to a charity where your child would feel strongly to advocate if they are still alive.

5. Hold an exhibit

Just like above, you can showcase anything that may relate to your children, such as photos, achievements, projects, and other memorabilia. It does not necessarily mean in a big hall. You can do it in your local area and even in your backyard if you have one. It is not about other people. It is about you and the one you love whom you lost, and you just wanted to celebrate their memories.

6. Be a speaker – TED

Be a motivational speaker. Nora McNerny was on point about grief during her sharing in TED. You don't need to be on TV or do a vlog like her to be a motivational speaker. You can do one-on-one with someone who is struggling or do a group session in your local community to help them in their grief journey. Inspire and motivate others in their most vulnerable state of mind and body.

7. Make blogs or vlogs

When you tell others about your journey and how you manage to live your life well, you can inspire others to do the same. Blogging and vlogging about ways to ease out your pain through knitting, painting, baking, etc. at the same time, teaching them the skill will be a wonderful thing emotionally and mentally for you and your audience

8. Provide therapy sessions

You can become a therapist to someone, especially if you have the credentials and the testimony on how you have overcome everything. You will be the best example for them. People grieving need someone to talk to. Who can be the person to guide them in their grief journey than the one who walked the same? It is essential not to keep all the struggles and pain within. Otherwise, there will always be an avenue for depression and other emotional and mental instability. It is where you come into the picture, providing therapy sessions tailored to those who need it.

9. Hold group sessions

Some people are not comfortable talking about their emotions alone and would prefer to be in a group. Knowing that other people suffer the same way and that they are not alone in the grief journey would allow them to open up more to others about how they struggle. One can learn from another in terms of coping. Building this kind of relationship will let them trust others and give them courage to take responsibility on their emotions.

10. Make a campaign

You could be a catalyst if you chose to. Make a difference by making a campaign related to how you lost your child. The campaign could be about the disease, against violence, suicide awareness, etc. Creating a campaign can raise awareness and educate people along the way.

11. Make a website for others to visit.

You can make a website to celebrate your child's memory. Other grieving parents can read your blogs, learn from your vlogs, and support you in your campaign if you have one.

12. Write a book

Like me, you can write a book about it. You can pour out all your thoughts and emotions into it. Just as writing brings comfort to you, it will also bring comfort to the ones reading it.

13. Write a poem and compose a song.

If you want to write a poem and make it into a song about your child, do so. Nothing and nobody can hold you back from celebrating your child's memory in whatever way you want. There will be other grieving parents who will find comfort in your composition because they will feel your pain and know your struggles. They might connect more on your composition and decide to use it in their platform related to grief. The same way as I did in one of the poems I shared, I asked permission from Donna Carpenter for it to be part of my book.

14. Be an advocate

Be the voice for others who cannot even voice out their thoughts of grieving simply because others have too much expectation from them. I

believe that no single soul does not want to talk about the loss to anyone. Be there for someone and let others realize how important the grieving process is. The people close by, like family and friends, should be the first ones to support the grieving person.

15. Double your love for your other children

I believe that some of the pain we have as grieving parents is the love we cannot give to the child we lost. One way to ease this pain is to provide this love to our other children. It will help them help us in our journey.

16. Provide testimonials

Nothing is more substantial than testimony from someone who suffered the same loss and moving forward with it inspiring other people to do the same. You can share your testimonies in the church to strengthen other people's faith. You can share them in grieving groups to help out people who recently suffered the loss. Either way, you can be an instrument to someone.

17. Support a charity organization

Samaritanspurse.org

This organization allows you to donate through their Operation Christmas Child using average-size cardboard or plastic shoebox. You can

either use your own or order from their website. You can put essentials and other items you want to give that you think might be helpful for the child. It helps the dread of facing the Christmas holiday without your child by giving gifts to other children as if you're giving one to the one you lost.

www.littleprincess.org.uk

When you visit this website, you will see how you can support through a donation. You can choose to donate money for fundraising for cancer patients or donate hair for those who experienced hair loss from chemotherapy.

Savethechildren.org

If you want to sponsor a child anywhere in the world, visit this website. If you think you will feel more empowered this way in your grieving process, then take action by sponsoring a child and find joy in doing so.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

1 Corinthians 13:13

King James Version (KJV)

Let other grieving parents feel your love for the child you lost. Let them also think that instead of deciding to stay in pain, they can find joy by helping out those who are suffering by showing how much you love your child in ways that have helped you move forward in grief. Be an example for them, a living testimony.

Let us help each other. Our grief journey will never be the same. It is OK to take time to mourn. Grief is not a race. Nobody will also get over it, and it stays with us as long as we live. However, the agony it brings can change. Writing this book for parents like me helped that agony to shift. I am at peace with myself, and the guilt I had has been lifted knowing that I can make a difference in someone else's lives through this book. It leads me to a path where I can help others, and by that, it brings back a smile to my face and joy in my heart. I have faith in myself now. I know the loss I had and the agony I felt gave me the wisdom to serve others. And I intend to reach as many grieving parents as possible to help them out in their grief journey. This book will be the first to get them, but it will surely not be the last.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:” “Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

King James Version (KJV)