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Chapters *turning the pages through grief*

Children fill our lives,
 mark the time, and
 change us in ways we
 cannot conceive of
 beforehand.



Written by Paulette LeBlanc
 Photo by Saulius Sutkus on Unsplash

What to Say?

Most people would agree that if you have lost a child, you know one of the worst forms of pain imaginable. Children fill our lives, mark the time, and change us in ways we cannot conceive of beforehand. If you have lost a child, you may be wondering why people are confused as to what to say, but the truth is, this is a relationship from which there is no moving on. It's all right to let people know that talking about your deceased child is one way to make sure that it will never be as though they did not exist.

I met a woman who had lost her eighteen-month-old daughter in an accident. When I saw it on the news, it took my breath away because my daughter was only a few months older at the time. I had no idea I would one day meet her and when I did, I felt overwhelmed with thoughts about how to bring it up. I had no idea what to say. How would I tell her that I knew the worst day of her life, because somewhere, a few miles away, I cried, mourned, and grieved with her family? I decided I couldn't just pretend I didn't know and told her I had seen news of the accident. I told her how sorry I was and asked how she was doing. I wasn't sure what to expect and she later told me she was very thankful that I talked about her daughter and family. She said that often people feared saying the wrong thing to her and chose

instead to say nothing. She said this made her feel as though her daughter never existed.

It can be unnerving to be around someone who is grieving the loss of a child, because on the heels of wanting to help, you may fear making them relive the worst pain most of us can imagine. If you find that you would, in fact, appreciate people talking about your child, feel free to address this directly. People may be avoiding the subject out of sensitivity to you, and inadvertently doing more harm than good.

If this was your only child, or grandchild, you may find yourself questioning your role now. Are you still a parent or grandparent? Of course you are. Even death cannot undo the bonds of family. That child, no matter what age, has made a lasting imprint on your heart and your life. If you have other children, you may choose to adopt some traditions to honor and remember the life of the deceased child. Some friends of mine choose to have a birthday cake every year on their late son's birthday. Other friends of mine take their children out on the anniversary of their sister's death. This might seem morbid to some, but to their family, this is a way of refusing to let that day be one of gloom. Whatever method of remembrance your family chooses, will

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MARCH
 2019



*Tears shed for another person are not a sign
 of weakness. They are a sign of a pure heart.*

— Jose N. Harris

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undoubtedly be right for your particular tribe. You need not explain your tradition to anyone who fails to understand it.

Losing someone you love is devastating. Losing a child is a particular brand of that devastation, most

...know one can know your grief the way you do.

of us wouldn't wish on our worst enemy. Please remember to reach out to others, if need be, during this season of turmoil. There are many support groups for people grieving children—though even in a similar situation, no one can know your grief the way you do. Above everything else, remember to be kind to yourself in this season of grief.

Paulette LeBlanc is an author, editor and freelance writer, who currently resides on the Gulf Coast of Florida. In 2019, her book "Consuming Fire" (Wipf and Stock)was released, and has articles published with Union Gospel Press.

* footnotes
Youngsters and their Grief



by Bill Hoy

When a loved one dies, acknowledging the role of children, grandchildren, or special friends can pay rich dividends in their emotional and spiritual growth well into adulthood. Here are some important considerations when there are young mourners in your family.

Come to terms with your own attitudes about death. If left to reach conclusions on their own, children sometimes assume that the tension in the home is their fault and that they have done something to cause everyone to be upset.

Be truthful. Children are typically much more at ease with the topic of death than are the grown-ups. We often assume “they are too young to understand,” but usually, children have already figured out a lot more than that for which the adults in their lives would give them credit.

Reach out for assistance. Do not attempt to “go it alone” as you seek to support your child or teen in grief. Instead, look to the help offered by school counselors, funeral directors and hospice staff professionals who most often know about the specialized programs for grieving children and teens in your community. Support groups especially designed for grieving youngsters provide them with the opportunity to connect with other kids their own age who are also dealing with a family death.

Whatever you do, do not allow children and teens to “go it alone” as they seek to make sense of death and the grief that follows. Reach out for support and help as you discover the best ways to support them even while you are grieving.

* Dr. Bill Hoy teaches at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is widely regarded as an authority on the sociocultural history of funeral rites, the topic of his most recent book: *Do Funerals Matter: The Purposes and Practices of Death Rituals in Global Perspective* (Routledge, 2013).

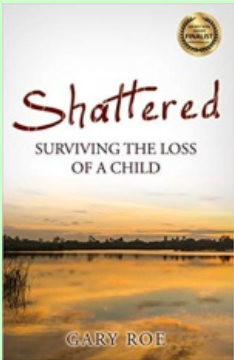
Shattered:
Surviving the
Loss of a Child

(Good Grief Series) (Volume 4)

by Gary Roe

Unthinkable. Unbelievable. Heartbreaking. Whatever words we choose, they all fall far short of the reality. The loss of a child is a terrible thing. Accidents. Disease. Suicide. School shootings. Murder. Natural disasters. War. No matter how or when, the death of a child (no matter what age) can shatter the heart. How do you survive this? Can you? *Shattered: Surviving the Loss of a Child* was written to help. Bestselling author, hospice chaplain, and grief specialist Gary Roe uses his three decades of experience interacting with grieving parents to give us this heartfelt, easy-to-read, and intensely practical book. In *Shattered*, Roe walks the reader through the powerful impact a child's death can have - emotionally, mentally, physically, relationally, and spiritually. *Shattered* is not a magic pill. The death of a child cannot be fixed. But comfort, compassion, guidance, and hope can be found in these pages.

(Amazon Review)



yagottalaugh



“Let’s say your potential boss asks you to communicate with him exclusively via his hand puppet proxy, Mr. Handsington. How would you handle that?”

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