

A Prayer For Spring

Like springtime, let me unfold and grow,
fresh and anew,
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality of
sunshine and renewed life,
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me.
And as I recover from the insult of life's continuance,
I readjust my focus to include
recovery and growth as a possibility in my future.
Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it as the place where I grew my wings,
becoming a new person because of my loss.

Janis Keyser
UNITE Notes, Spring 1984



Professionally Speaking...

by Denise M. Paul MA, CT, CPCC

The Pearl – A Result of Hard Work

For many years I had the privilege of working as the Grief Specialist at a Center for Grieving Children in the suburbs of Philadelphia. I facilitated grief support groups for children of all ages who lost a parent or a sibling. The children and their caregivers were permitted to attend the bi-monthly support groups for as long as they liked. Some children stayed for as long as 4 years! On their last day we held a ritual that was called a “Rock Ceremony.” A small cloth bag containing 3 smooth stones and 1 rough stone was handed to the child and each friend in the group said good-bye and offered them wishes for strength and happiness in the future. The smooth stones symbolize the beauty of life, the parts of them that are shiny and whole, and the grief work that they have already done. The rough stone with its sharp edges represents the painful feelings and memories of the person who died. We always told the children that the smooth stones symbolized the work that they had already done in processing their grief, and the rough stone represented the work that they still had to do in the months and years to come. In truth, it takes many years of processing in order to integrate a loss into your life and make the grief feel less sharp and rough. However, for children who grieve very differently than adults, the symbol of the bag of rocks was very helpful and concrete.

The concept of a stone being smoothed by hard work led me to investigate the process that is involved in making a pearl. The process of forming a pearl inside of an oyster begins when a particle, or what is referred to as an irritant, gets inside the mollusk. Once the particle becomes trapped, the oyster begins to coat it with thousands of layers of a substance called *nacre* as a defense mechanism. The *nacre* is also known as mother-of-pearl and it coats the irritant, which is most likely a grain of sand. This process takes approximately two to four years to complete before a beautiful iridescent gem is formed. An important point to mention is that the oyster has the ability and the choice to reject the particle and spit it out, therefore never having to deal with the hard work of forming a pearl. It is only in accepting the pain/the irritant and working on it that it becomes a thing of beauty.

Pearls are the Product of Pain.

Every pearl is the product of an oyster that has been wounded by a grain of sand. Like an oyster, you too have been deeply wounded. Your deep wound was the death of your baby inside your body. Your body and mind, like the shell of the oyster, try to build defense mechanisms to your pain, while trying to heal from the trauma of the intrusion of death. Your wound is your pain and sorrow. If that wound is not acknowledged and covered with layers of love and attention, then it will never heal. The pain of losing your baby lies deep within you and it will take years of honoring that pain and tending to its impact on your life in order for you to heal. Grieving is a process, just as forming a pearl is a process. Here are some ways that you can layer your wound in a purposeful way to find healing:

- ~ Attend a grief support group, like UNITE, Inc. where you can share your feelings with others who have had a similar loss.
- ~ Wear a piece of jewelry with your baby’s name or initial on it.
- ~ Light a candle in memory of your baby.
- ~ Plant a tree or flower garden in honor of your baby.

- ~ Get a memorial tattoo in remembrance of your baby.
- ~ Donate hand-made blankets to a hospital in memory of your baby.
- ~ Write your thoughts down in a grief journal.
- ~ Talk about your feelings with a trusted friend who understands what you are experiencing.
- ~ Visit the cemetery if your baby is buried.
- ~ If your baby was cremated, create a special spot in your home to honor your baby's cremains.
- ~ If your baby was so small that you have no tangible remains, then place a statue or some symbol of their life in your home.

It will take years and years of painful grief work for you to process the pain of your loss. Ultimately, my wish is that you remember your baby with more love than pain, and that your pain is transformed into a precious pearl.





**UNITE Support Group
for
DADS ONLY
Beginning May of 2021**

**This new support group is for fathers
who have experienced the loss of their baby through
miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy,
stillbirth, or infant death.**

**“Grieving Dads”
2nd Tuesday of each month
7:00pm – 8:30pm
Virtual by Zoom**

**The group will be guided by
trained co-facilitators,
Simon Hindle and Matthew Sklar
~fathers of angel babies
Charlotte and Maya~**

Please register on our website www.unitegriefsupport.org
or by calling Denise Paul 215-260-0389. Simon or Matthew will call
you prior to your attendance.

The NASH Foundation

Nash's Angel Spreads Hope

After a mostly perfect pregnancy, my husband and I lost our first son, Nash Ryan, at 36 weeks due to a very rare pregnancy complication called Acute Fatty Liver of Pregnancy (AFLP). Not only did it take our son, but I spent several days fighting for my life in the hospital, as well. It was a traumatic and upsetting time for our family. We left the hospital with a box instead of a baby, and came home to an empty house with a closed off nursery. It took time, but we slowly began to pick up the pieces and realized that we needed to carry on our son Nash's legacy to help us heal.

Throughout the next few months, we began the process of starting a nonprofit in his honor. It took awhile to come up with the perfect name, but we decided on The NASH Foundation (with Nash's name doubling as an acronym for "Nash's angel spreads hope"). Our mission was simple: raise awareness about rare pregnancy complications, as well as, pregnancy and infant loss in general, and support those suffering from similar tragedies. We hoped to one day be able to purchase a Cuddle Cot for the hospital where I delivered Nash and where my life was saved: Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia.

We began planning our first fundraiser, which was scheduled for Nash's first heavenly birthday (6/19/20), and I sent out donation letters in early March. Needless to say, things shut down days after sending those letters and our event was postponed a year due to COVID. However, we still found ways to raise funds - the Facebook fundraiser I did for mine and Nash's birthdays in June 2020 raised \$8,519! We've also done other small fundraising efforts, and were lucky enough to be chosen by another nonprofit to receive funds as a part of their giving week during the holidays.

Since starting The NASH Foundation, we've accomplished so much! We donated towards The STAR Legacy Foundation, The Cooper Project, and also donated close to 100 Molly Bears (weighted teddy bears). We partnered with The Hazel Project to donate handmade blankets made by our family and friends to Jefferson Hospital. I also volunteered for The Cooper Project to make pink and blue awareness bracelets, which I plan to do each summer. Most importantly, we were able to purchase and deliver a Cuddle Cot to Jefferson Hospital, which will give families the beautiful

gift of extra time with their stillborn babies. While we hope it never gets used, the reality is that sadly, it will.

Aside from our nonprofit, we've also found other ways to honor our babies - ones that don't cost very much and don't require going through all of the paperwork to start a nonprofit, or the planning to hold a fundraiser. On Nash's birthday, I created "acts of kindness" cards and we encouraged those who loved Nash to complete an act of kindness in his honor. Unfortunately, I had an early miscarriage in May of 2020, so we decided to do the same during the holiday season in honor of our second angel baby's due date, as well. Some acts of kindness we've heard about from friends included paying it forward at Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts, paying for a meal or a frozen treat, or sneaking gift cards onto a random item at the local grocery store. On Nash's first birthday, we heard so many stories about the impact these simple gestures made on those giving, as well as, those receiving, and it truly warmed our hearts.

Carrying on the legacy of a baby you've lost can be as simple as just talking about him or her. Light a candle on the date they were born sleeping, write them letters on their milestone dates, or pay for a birthday cake for another family on their due date or heavenly birthday (we plan to do that this year!). A fellow loss mama I've met through this journey puts together a little gift basket for the first baby boy born on her son's heavenly birthday at the hospital where she delivered - another simple yet meaningful idea. The babies we lose will always be a part of us, and I've always felt it was my job to carry on their legacy since they weren't here to do it themselves. It's been so healing, and really does give me a way to connect to my angel babies. If you can find a way to honor your baby or babies, whether it be big or small, I encourage you to do so. As they say, there is no footprint (or in this case, no act of carrying on your child's legacy) too small that it cannot leave an imprint on this world.

Thank you for the opportunity to share!
Heather



A Difficult Day

"Today was a Difficult Day," said Pooh.
There was a pause.
"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.
"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."
"That's okay," said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing, really," said Piglet. "Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either.

"But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be here for you, Pooh."

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs...he thought that his best friend had never been more right."

~ A.A. Milne



Grief

I had my own notion of grief.

I thought it was the sad time

That followed the death of

Someone you love.

And you had to push through it

To get to the other side.

But I'm learning there is no other side.

There is no pushing through.

But rather

There is absorption.

Adjustment.

Acceptance.

And grief is not something you complete,

But rather, you endure.

Grief is not a task to finish

And move on,

But an element of yourself –

An alteration of your being,

A new way of seeing,

A new definition of self.

Author Unknown

*Lovingly Lifted from
the Mindful Christianity Website*

You never said I'm leaving,
You never said goodbye.
You were gone before I knew
it,
And only God knew why.

A million times I needed you,
A million times I cried.
If love alone could have saved
you,
You never would have died.

In Life I loved you dearly,
In death I love you still.
In my heart you hold a place,
that no one could ever fill.

It broke my heart,
To lose you,
But you didn't go alone.
For part of me went with you,
The day God took you home.

Author Unknown



A Letter to a Newly Bereaved Mom

(In memory of David Anthony Nuccitelli on his 21st Birthday)

Dear Newly Bereaved Mom,

You are going to be ok.

You will be overwhelmed by a broken heart, but don't be afraid of the pain because the pain was made from love, and when you sit with the pain, you sit with the love. And with time the pain will fade, but the love will remain.

You are going to be ok.

Holidays may be difficult. People will expect you to celebrate, but how can you celebrate without your baby? You may focus less on the gifts and all the fuss that surrounds the holiday, and focus more on the time and love that you can share with others, and this will be uplifting.

You will be ok.

You may be envious of family and friends who are pregnant. They seem to carelessly and joyfully flaunt their pregnancies. Your baby did not survive, so it is normal for you to feel sad. Your friends at UNITE understand the way you feel. You are not alone.

You will be ok.

You will find a way to honor your baby by supporting other bereaved parents, volunteering, or just offering compassion to someone in need. You will make your baby proud.

You will be ok.

You will have a new appreciation for the little things in life and take nothing in this life for granted. The moon and stars will shine brighter in a clear night's sky, the sunset will have more colors, the sound of the ocean waves will be more profound, and the mountains in the distance will seem more majestic.

You will be ok.

As time passes, the tears that once came daily will be few and far between. You may stop attending UNITE meetings or visiting the cemetery, but this does not mean that you love your baby any less. Your baby has not been forgotten. He has just become a part of you. He is with you always.

You will be ok.

You are a bereaved mom. You are strong. You are courageous. Your baby has made you beautiful.

With love,
Linda Nuccitelli



“Losing a child means
carrying an almost
unbearable grief,
experienced by many but
talked about by few.”

Meghan Markle Speaking About Her Miscarriage

There is no tragedy in life
like the death of a child.
Things never get back to
the way they were.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower
On the Death of His Child*



Dealing With Grief

Communication

- Talk about the baby and your feelings with your partner, family, and friends. It may sound trite, but this is an excellent outlet for releasing bottled-up emotions.
- Try to resume old and start new relationships as a couple and as individuals.

Nutrition

- Eat a balanced diet that includes milk, meat, vegetables, fruit, and whole grains.
- Avoid junk food and fast foods.

Fluid Intake

- Drink eight glasses of liquids per day. It can be useful to keep a measured jug of water in the refrigerator to assure you drink enough.
- Don't drink caffeine or alcohol because they may cause dehydration, headaches, and/or lower back pain.

Exercise

- Do something active every day such as, biking, walking, jogging, aerobics, or stretching. Even a walk around the block can be useful.

Tobacco and Alcohol

- Avoid tobacco because it depletes the body of vitamins, increases acidity of the stomach, decreases circulation, and can cause heart palpitations.
- Don't drink alcoholic beverages because they depress body function and natural emotional expression.

Rest

- Avoid increased work activity
- Maintain rest patterns even if unable to sleep.



Amazon Smiles

Everyone,

UNITE could really use your help this year.

When ordering online from Amazon, please choose UNITE, Inc. as the organization you would like to support.

UNITE will get a percentage back from what each person spends on Amazon Smiles. You have to use the link below.

Go to smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2362403 and AmazonSmile donates to Unite Inc.

Copy this URL into your browser ---www.smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2362403
Then Shop....it's that easy!

Please also share with family and friends!

Thank you,
Barbara Bond-Moury
UNITE Board Chair

Winter/Spring 2021 Donations

We Are So Grateful for Donations Given Throughout the Year

Donations

Cheryl West
John & Kathleen Connors
James & Thanh Dickey
Eric Woolf
Kevin Duermit
Charles Bennett
Jeffrey Bakely

Walk to Remember Donations 2020

Allison Healy

Butterfly Memorial Wall

Cheryl West

Grants

Thrivent – Thomas R. Jenners
Merck Foundation
Amazon Smiles
United Way



UNITE's Services Include:

- Support Group meetings in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.
- Hospital In-service Programs and community education.
- Conferences for bereaved parents, professionals and the community.
- Literature and newsletter.
- UNITE group development assistance and training programs for group facilitators and support counselors.

Without Your Most Generous Donations, UNITE Would Not Be Able To Continue These Services

News

Mailing Address and Phone Number

Please note our new mailing address:
P.O. Box 298, Oxford, PA 19363

Phone Number

Please note our new phone number:
484-758-0002

Safe Arrivals

We would love to hear about your safe arrival so we all can celebrate in your joy. So we can put it in the newsletter, please send information on your new bundle of joy to administrator@unitegriefsupport.org.

Home Page Info

www.unitegriefsupport.org

Virtual Butterflies: The donation cost for placing one of these virtual items on the page is \$25 and will be in memory of your baby. You may donate through PayPal by clicking on the Buy Now icon. Note: On the PayPal page, where it states, "Instructions to the Merchant," type in your baby's name, etc.

Newsletter Submissions

Please send your original poetry, short stories, articles, and letters to *UNITE Notes*. The beautiful writings that we receive from UNITE's bereaved parents are what make our newsletter so special. If you have written poems, articles, etc. that you would like to share with other parents, please send them soon. Note that the newsletter is now being uploaded to the UNITE website which allows all who are

searching for comfort and support due to the loss of their child(ren) to see your written story.

Acknowledgments

If anyone has not received an acknowledgment for their donation, please contact the administrator@unitegriefsupport.org, or call the UNITE line at 484-758-0002. Please leave your name, phone number, and the best time to return your call.

AmazonSmile Foundation

The Foundation runs a program in which Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to charitable organizations. To shop go to smile.amazon.com from your web browser on your computer or mobile device and choose UNITE, Inc. Products will be marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. You may also go to our web page: www.unitegriefsupport.org and click on the icon/banner, which will bring you to smile.amazon.com. You should bookmark this page so that you go directly to your Amazon Account and start shopping. Purchase of digital content, such as Kindle e-books or MP3's, is not included.

Fundraisers Wanted

We are looking for some fresh ideas in fund raising! Do you have an idea to share? We'd love to hear about it. Please contact UNITE at administrator@unitegriefsupport.org.

Support Groups

UNITE in-person support group meetings are suspended until further notice
Please Call 484-758-0002 if you would like to attend a UNITE Virtual Support Group

For information about the group nearest you, please contact UNITE, Inc. at 484-758-0002 (leave a message), write to UNITE Inc. at P.O. Box 298, Oxford, PA 19363, or email administrator@unitegriefsupport.org. New members must contact the group coordinator before attending their first meeting. UNITE, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, marital status, religious belief, race, sexual orientation or economic status.

Pennsylvania

UNITE, Delaware County Memorial Hospital

Drexel Hill, PA

Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:00 PM-8:30 PM

Facilitators:

Debbie Rafferty

Michelle DePrince

UNITE, Holy Redeemer Hospital

Huntingdon Valley, PA

Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitators:

Denise Paul

Liz Steward

UNITE, Jennersville Regional Hospital

West Grove, PA

Meets 1st Tuesday, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitator:

Karen Powers

UNITE, Lankenau Hospital

Wynnewood, PA

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitator:

Paris Margaritis

UNITE, Paoli

Paoli Pointe Medical Center, next to hospital

Meets 2nd Monday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitators:

Sue McAndrew

Gerri Donaher

UNITE, Pennsylvania Hospital

Philadelphia, PA

Meets 1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Facilitators:

Michelle Ferrant

Kelly Colby

UNITE, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitators:

Kelly Zapata

Vicki Kroesche

UNITE, Riddle Memorial Hospital

Media, PA

Meets 1st Thursday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitators:

Regina Fazio

Sheila McCabe

New Jersey

UNITE, Penn Medicine Princeton Health

Meets 1st Wednesday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Contact: Debbie Miller, RN

Facilitator:

Bernadette Flynn-Kelton BSN, RN

UNITE, Virtua at Voorhees

Barry D. Brown Health Education Center

Meets 1st and 3rd Monday 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitator:

Ann Coyle, RN

Subsequent Pregnancy Groups

UNITE, Virtua at Voorhees

Barry D. Brown Health Education Center

Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Facilitator:

Ann Coyle, RN

UNITE, Virtual Support Group

Virtually on Zoom by invitation

Meets 1st Monday, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Facilitator:

Denise Paul

Father's Group "Grieving Dads"

Virtually on Zoom by invitation

Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitators:

Simon Hindle

Matthew Sklar

UNITE Notes Staff

Editor: Theresa Fisher

Administrator: Barbara Bond-Moury

Submissions: We welcome your original poetry and articles. Your contributions are important to UNITE's work of reaching out to bereaved parents. We reserve the right to edit and select from submissions. Please send all submissions to:

UNITE Inc.

P.O. Box 298

Oxford, PA 19363

484-758-0002

or email administrator@unitegriefsupport.org

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