



Your Gift To Me

What can you give me this holiday season?

Your greatest gift to me is your listening.

I don't need answers, lectures, sermons, or judgments.

All I need is your acceptance of me and my feelings.

You give me so much every time you listen to me

And allow me to talk about my child whom I am missing so badly.

Your loving reassurances that what I am feeling is normal frees me

From the crippling fear that I am losing my mind

Thank you for not playing God or trying to make it better

Thank you for just being there...and listening.

Janis Keyser
UNITE Notes, winter 1982/83





Professionally Speaking...

by Denise M. Paul MA, CT, CPLC



The Holiday Dilemma

'Tis the season to be jolly....but for parents grieving the loss of their precious baby, they certainly feel anything but jolly! Department stores are adorned with festive holiday décor, and cheerful music rings in the season with songs that sometimes bring tears to the eyes of those who are mourning. Babies are seen sitting on Santa's lap in the mall, while your dreams of visits with Santa are shattered. The dilemma is that the rest of the world wants to experience joy and celebrations while you are grieving. Family and friends want everything back to normal, yet holidays "as usual" deny the loss and trivialize the life of your baby.

I'd like to offer some coping strategies as you approach the holidays:

- Be patient with yourself. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.
- Decide on a new way or a new place to spend the holidays.
- Be realistic and realize that hurting moments will come. Be ready for them and honor them, then let them go.
- Plan ahead. Prioritize what needs to be done, and decide what is really important.
- Be prepared for holiday well-wishers. Brace yourself and know that others do wish you well and that their greetings are not intended to be hurtful reminders.
- Redefine your expectations. Make a holiday checklist of things you would usually do regarding cards, decorations, shopping, and traditions. Be honest with what you expect to be

- able to do and don't feel guilty if you are not able to accomplish all that you had in previous years.
- Be flexible. Know that you are working through a challenging time and might have to make some changes.
- Take care of yourself physically. Eat right. Exercise. Rest.
- Screen all holiday activities and gatherings. Only attend the ones that you really want to. Have an escape plan ready. Give yourself permission to leave if you feel uncomfortable.
- Give yourself the gift of emotion. It's OK to cry, but it's also OK to laugh.
- Make shopping easier. Do what you feel you can handle. Shop on-line to avoid busy malls.
- Live through the hurt. Feel the pain – that's how you will heal. Don't allow the pain or sadness to ruin the entire season. Joy can return to your heart.

Grieving is full-time work and holidays interrupt the grieving process. If you can incorporate some of these suggestions into your holiday planning, you may feel better prepared to cope with this difficult time of year.



Walk To Remember 2022

We had a great turnout for UNITE's 11th Annual Walk to Remember. Over 100 people came out to reconnect and make new friends. It was a beautiful day to remember and honor our children. We are happy to announce that between sponsorships, donations, yard and luminary sales, and raffle tickets, we raised over \$9000.00. Thank you to all who attended and supported this year's walk. A special thank you goes out to all who worked so hard to make this happen, especially Andrea Boyle, Matt Sklar, and Simon Hindle.



To Calm Your Nerves, Little Love

Elizabeth Neal

A letter to my spirit baby—my third pregnancy after multiple losses—following a connection made through a medium. I learned my daughter was feeling nervous about her journey and needed reassurance from me.

My darling daughter. I'm so proud of you. You were so brave and courageous in telling me you're feeling nervous. It's not always easy to name your feelings—and you did it with such grace little one.

I want you to know it's OK to honor, feel, and lean into every single feeling that comes up little love. They're all information. They're all here to help us. We just have to be *still enough* to listen to the wisdom.

I want to reassure you, feeling nervous is completely normal. It's a part of being human, a journey you and I are starting together little love.

Nervousness comes any time we're about to do something great or magical. Stepping into the unknown can be scary. And that's perfectly OK.

But that's why you have me beside you darling daughter. To hold your hand. To care for your heart. To let you know you're never alone. I will walk through the scary part with you.

You are *safe*. You are *loved*. You are *held*. Momma's got you.

We will take on this journey, side by side, holding hands. And when you're nervous, you can squeeze my hand tight, and I'll hold you even *tighter*. And *together*, we'll *breathe*.

My love will wrap around you like a warm blanket little love. And with that love, I'll shield you with a golden aura of protection to keep you safe. To deflect any harm or negativity.

You can do this. You can do anything little love.

Together, we can conquer your nervousness. And as you get older, momma will show you how to embrace the shadows.

If you're nervous, little love, it's because you're embarking on the greatest adventure a soul can take.

And it's going to be filled with so many mysteries and treasures. You'll experience a love bigger than you could *ever* imagine.

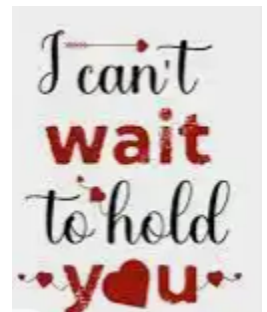
Because at the end of your adventure, little love, will be your dad and I waiting...

...waiting to *hold* you.

...waiting to *love* you.

...*waiting for you*, little love...

Our Treasure.



Honoring Our Babies

Here are some things that you can do to honor your baby during the holiday season

Visit the cemetery (if your baby is buried) and place a small artificial tree or wreath on the grave.

Purchase a baby gift and give it to a baby/child in need, in the name of your baby.

Light a candle in your home during the holiday season in remembrance of your baby.

Make or purchase a special tree ornament that represents your baby.



Eric and Joshua have stockings and Angels on our mantel along with our living children's stockings

Purchase a necklace or a pin for yourself with your baby's name and/or birthstone on it.

Plant a tree in your yard in memory of your baby.

Say a prayer at your family holiday table before the meal and mention your baby's name, along with other family members who have died.

Purchase a journal and write your feelings to and about your baby.

Write something about your baby to be published in the UNITE, Inc. Newsletter.



We decorate Eric and Joshua's grave on every holiday



Coping With Christmas

When You Have Experienced Baby Loss

Lovingly Lifted from the UK Charity called "Tommy's, Together, for every baby"

Christmas can be a difficult time of year for lots of people. If you are going through a complicated pregnancy, or have lost a baby, the expectation to be merry and grateful can be overwhelming at a time when you are feeling neither of these feelings. Families cannot, and do not, need to pretend that everything is OK – because for them, it isn't.

Below is some advice from Sophie, a midwife, on how to navigate the festive season after losing a baby.

REFLECT and REMEMBER

Christmas can be used as time for reflection, love, and remembrance for the baby you are grieving for.

Gathering together with family and close friends who have shared the loss of your baby, can be a great source of comfort to you and your partner.

TAKE SOME TIME AWAY

Some couples prefer to go away for Christmas, whether it is to a relative's home or to somewhere completely new over Christmas. This can act as a much-needed escape from home, a change of scenery, and as space to take a meaningful pause.

INVOLVE YOUR BABY

Some couples I have cared for have been able to include their little one in the festive celebrations by decorating a separate little Christmas tree with white lights and topped with a little star or angel to

represent their baby. Having a visible symbol like this, or a special tree bauble, allows some women to feel that their baby is included and a part of their families' Christmas traditions, which can be hugely comforting.

DON'T FEEL PRESSURED TO CELEBRATE

Some couples who suffered a loss may choose to not even acknowledge Christmas the first year. They may choose to do something special on the day to honor their baby instead, which can help to solidify some special memories as a family unit.

I hope you find Sophie's advice helpful and comforting this festive season. Be kind to yourself and, most importantly, do what you need and want to do this Christmas.



I have been collecting ornaments for Eric and Joshua every year since they were born. I display them on this tree by my fireplace.

Rebirth in the Face of Loss

Elizabeth Neal

A reflection of my healing journey after my second miscarriage

I did something I've never done before.

I removed all distractions. I claimed space and time. I unraveled to allow myself to feel it all. Every emotion.

On March 30, 2022, I glared at the ultrasound technician as she searched for my baby. I looked for any micro-expression that could indicate an answer. Her face was blank. Silence.

I miscarried—again.

Just two days earlier, I had seen my baby's beating heart for the first time. I couldn't breathe. It was a miracle. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

And in a moment, it was gone. My baby was gone. And I was here. I was here to grieve, to empty, to bleed.

I wept. I wept. And I wept. I now had two babies in heaven.

My first loss hurt and filled me with rage. This one left me tender. It cracked me open.

Little did I know, this moment of utter despair would send me on the most healing spiritual journey of my life. I just needed to trust myself.

This was hard. This was hard because part of me hated myself. I hated my body for failing me. I hated myself for opening my heart up to feeling hope again.

And yet, I couldn't give up on myself. Not yet.

As my body bled and ached, my heart ached...but not a pain ache. A yearning ache.

My heart and my soul aligned to transmit this idea to my brain: Go.

But where? How? Why?

My brain couldn't understand. And yet, I trusted it. It felt safe.

Go.

I will go.

After pushing down the yearning two days, I woke up as the sun rose on a Saturday morning and told my husband, "I need this. I need to go."

And then, my soul's voice flowed. The words left my lips, but they weren't from my brain.

"I need to go on a road trip," I said. "I need to feel freedom. I need to feel myself again. She's lost. I can't find her here if I stay with all of the distractions. I need stillness. I need to feel."

And I left.

Me and the open road. Me and God. Me and my babies.

Me and my feelings.

A trip of emptying. But I didn't know it would be that quite yet. I just trusted and flowed. Unsure of the answers.

What I did know was I needed to feel held. Supported. Not alone. I needed to share. And I needed to unleash my authentic self and every single painful, heartbreaking feeling that accompanied.

Breathe. I could finally breathe.

There's something magnetizing about the open road and crisp air. I was the traveler. And my possibilities were endless. Here, I was safe. I was in control.

I had lost all control when I lost the baby.

This felt good. I was lost, but I felt so safe.

On I went.

I traveled up the most incredible bridges. I felt the sinking feeling in my stomach, the kind you get before reaching the climax of a roller coaster. Thump. Thump. Thump. And GO.

I felt small. My problems felt small. I was in God's grace.

I felt THRILL.

I watched the sun rise and fill the sky. The colors were bright. Cold. Inspiring.

I felt WONDER.

I watched the sun set and warm the sky. The colors were pink and blue. My babies were the pink and blue.

I felt PEACE.

I watched the night hijack the blue sky. It was dark. It was empty. I was alone.

I felt COMFORT.

I watched mother nature's wildlife stare as my lights beamed in the stillness of the night.

I felt FEAR.

I held my sister and wept.

I felt SAFE.

The week would be filled with thousands of micro-moments of medicine that would slowly start to help me empty and spill.

I didn't know why I was there. I just knew I wanted to feel safe and not alone. I did.

I chose to do something different from my first encounter with pregnancy loss. I wouldn't isolate, hide, bury, put up a front, smile.

I would honor every single feeling that arose, as it did in real time.

I would cry. I would break. I would be triggered. I would share stories. I would remember.

And in doing so, I was writing a new story. This was new for me.

I was transmuting a story of victim to a story of conqueror. Warrior. That's it. Warrior.

I was a goddamn warrior.

I didn't hide. I spilled everything.

Fear. Hope. Sadness. Grief. Anger. Rage. Sorrow. Joy. Peace. Hope.

I shone a light on them all. I honored each one, claiming it and giving it the space it needed to be seen and to feel heard. And then they lay to rest.

But they were so grateful. Each one smile and felt safe. Tucked in with their blanket, ready to rest.

I shared my story of miscarriages with my younger brother and sister. They grieved too. And they held me. We held each other.

But there's one feeling I want to spotlight.

Her name is RAGE. I mean pure rage. Seething at the mouth kind of rage. Full of hate. Anger. Shame.

I let her run. I let her breathe.

She's beautiful. She's my warrior. And her rage needed to be let out.

And once she could breathe, I could breathe. I could breathe lighter than I've ever breathed before.

Then I felt HOPE. But rage had to come first. Then release. Then hope.

Now, I have hope.

I didn't have hope before.



15 Things I Wish I'd Known About Grief

Lovingly Lifted from The Compassionate Friends of Delaware County, April 2018 Newsletter

1. You will feel like the world has ended. I promise, it hasn't. Life will go on, slowly. A new normal will come slowly.
2. No matter how bad a day feels. It is only a day. When you go to sleep crying, you will wake up tom a new day.
3. Grief comes in waves. You might be okay one hour, not okay the next. Okay one day, not okay the next day. Okay one month, not okay the next. Learn to go with the flow of what your heart and mind are feeling.
4. It's okay to cry. Do it often. But it's okay to laugh, too. Don't feel guilty for feeling positive emotions even when dealing with loss.
5. Take care of yourself, even if you don't feel like it. Eat healthily. Work out. Do the things you love. Remember that you are still living.
6. Don't shut people out. Don't cut yourself off from relationships. You will hurt yourself and others.
7. No one will respond perfectly to your grief. Even people you love will let you down. Friends you thought would be there won't be there, and people you hardly know will reach out. Be prepared to give others grace. Be prepared to work through hurt and forgiveness at others' reactions.
8. God will be there for you perfectly. He will never, ever let you down. He will let you scream, cry, and question. Throw all your emotions at Him. He is near to the brokenhearted.
9. Take time to truly remember the person you lost. Write about him or her, go back to all your memoires with them, truly soak in all the good times you had with that person. It will help.
10. Facing the grief is better than running. Don't hide from the pain. If you do, it will fester and grow and consume you.
11. You will ask, "why?" more times than you thought possible, but you may never get an answer. What helps is asking, "How can I embrace others, how can I change and grow because of this?"
12. You will try to escape grief by getting busy, busy, busy. You will think if you don't think about it, it'll just go away. This isn't really true. Take time to process and heal.
13. Liquor, sex, drugs, hobbies, work, relationships, etc., will not take the pain away. If you are using anything to try to numb the pain, it will make things worse in the long run. Seek help if you're dealing with the sorrow in unhealthy ways.
14. It's okay to ask for help. It's okay to need people. It's okay, it's okay, it's okay.
15. Grief can be beautiful and deep and profound. Don't be afraid of it. Walk alongside it. You may be surprised at what grief can teach you.

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



Fall 2022 Donations

We Are So Grateful for Donations Given Throughout the Year

Donations

Andrea & William Devenney – in memory of Anthony Devenney

Dennis & Leslie Boyle - in memory of Anthony Devenney

LindaNuccitelli

Karen Binns

Samantha Wilson

Michael& Hannah Campbell - in memory of Marc John Campbell, stillborn 5/4/1987

Cathy Plaisted



Grants

Fidelity Charitable – in Memory of: Thomas Reid Doherty and his dad.

The Merck Foundation

Walk to Remember

Ashley Plasha - in memory of Emry John Plasha

Jessica Powell

Mark West

Caitlin DePrinzio - in memory of Danielle Theresa

Linda Nuccitelli

Andrea & William Devenney – in memory of Anthony Devenney

F Gimbel Enterprises – Plymouth Opticians – Walk to Remember Sponsorship

UNITE offers a number of services to grieving parents and their caregivers including the following:

Peer to Peer Grief Support Groups

- * Literature
- * Educational Programs
- * Training Workshops
- * Group Development Assistance

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

New Group

A new group entitled Parenting After Loss started in September. The meetings will be online. More info to follow.

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. **All UNITE Virtual Support Groups are by Invitation only.** 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, Holy Redeemer Hospital
Huntingdon Valley, PA
Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitators:

Denise Paul
Liz Steward

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
Philadelphia, PA
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 Parenting After Loss Group

Virtually on Zoom by invitation
Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Facilitators:

Hali Sklar and Cathy Plaisted
484-758-0002

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

UNITE Notes is published quarterly by UNITE, Inc., a non-profit corporation. All Rights Reserved.

Please correspond with UNITE, Inc. before reprinting any material from *UNITE Notes*. In most cases reprinting permission is extended, but only with proper credit noted, including author, "Used with permission from *UNITE*



UNITE, Inc.

P.O. Box 298

Oxford, PA 19363

www.unitegriefsupport.org