



Haven Herald



Hope

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune—without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Emily Dickinson

Letter from the Executive Director

The summer months are traditionally a time to take a break and slow down. Here at Haven we also move at a slightly slower pace and take time to reevaluate our goals and programs. We will be organizing a fund-raising campaign in June and offering a workshop, "Journey through Grief," in July, but overall, this is a time when things are at a lull.

Those who are working their way through the grief process may find summer to be a time to take that much needed break and to regroup. Taking time to rest and get away from the normal routine may also be helpful if someone is struggling with the regret and guilt that grief can bring. Working through grief is critical to moving to a more hopeful place after a loss. Guilt is often self-defeating and lacks the truth, yet for most people, it is a challenging aspect of their grief work and is tied to regret. Talking about these feelings and coming to some level of resolution with them can eventually lead to acceptance of a loss. Acceptance is necessary for healing because it makes other choices possible. Hope for the future becomes a greater part of life again even with the knowledge that life will be different.

Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope" uses the bird as a metaphor for hope. The poem relays the message that hope is possible and difficult times do not have to destroy our belief in the future. When we are ready to move forward, hope is always there.

Jill Bellacicco



Messages of Hope

by Mary Smith

When my younger sister's fiancé survived a terrible accident but was left completely paralyzed and on a respirator, there was no hope. His situation was heartbreaking and terrifying, a complete nightmare. He and my sister went from the happiest point of their lives -- with only two months to go before their wedding -- to the darkest and bleakest of all times. Their despair exhausted them and both of their families. And yet, my sister became a soldier in the fight against despair. She was amazingly brave in her new role. She stood behind Jeff, nursing him, feeding him, encouraging him. She read to him and played his favorite music; she found a lip reader to communicate for him. She visited him every evening and every weekend. She was his advocate with the doctors and nurses. In this role, she was tested, and she passed with high honors. She was dedicated, loyal and loving. She found reasons to hope, if not for a change in Jeff's situation, then for what they could enjoy -- books, music, sunshine, friends, family...and memories.

Jeff died eighteen months after his injury. He never left the hospital, unable to move even his head and never able to breathe on his own again. I can't say that he wanted to live forever; he didn't. He suffered horribly, but he knew my sister's care and love. And I like to think he found hope in the sweet, hopeful messages she would whisper in his ear.

What Worked for Me

by Peggy Cauley

For the parents of children born with an illness that has no cure, the grieving process can begin at diagnosis, but for some it can come later. For me, it began when our son Kevin was about 18 months old. He had been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis (CF) at 2 months and put on medicine to help him digest his food. But the reality of CF didn't hit home with me until the day the doctor outlined a proactive routine of physical therapy to help keep his lungs clear. At that moment, I understood I was facing something that was out of my control.

Today, I think of myself as an optimist, but that day in the doctor's office, I felt anything but optimistic. I credit my friend Rosemary with my change of attitude. When I returned home and recounted my day to her, she told me that when she was diagnosed with diabetes while in college, she had struggled to accept it. She said I was not going to help Kevin by feeling sorry for him.

So perhaps the circumstances of my life have forced me into an attitude of optimism. I discovered that when you have children born with a disease that has no known cure, you quickly take sides. You either believe that things will change and a cure will be found or you drown in the depths of the unthinkable. For me, the deciding factor was how my attitude would affect Kevin.

Childhood is all about the future. Both parents and children dream of what the child's future life will be. Quashing those dreams of a future lawyer or nurse or fireman creates a life of hopelessness.

Optimism helps me keep my balance. It worked with Kevin, who has since died, and continues to work with Tim, our other son who has CF.





If Only

by Eileen Thompson

Sharon wonders how she will ever forgive herself. Her husband was running late as usual. She was scolding him fiercely as he raced out the door to pick up their college freshman at the airport. Their son's flight was delayed. The father never arrived. If he hadn't been rushed, this holiday reunion might have been the first of many. Instead, there was only a funeral. And enormous regret.

Ed ruefully admits his lifelong aversion to doctors and hospitals. Is that what prevented him from being the advocate and companion his wife of thirty years deserved in her last days? Or was he just afraid of death? "Why shouldn't I blame myself?" he asks.

Lydia cries as she remembers the wonderful parents who raised her and her brothers. Why were they all too busy with their own families and careers to recognize how old and tired their parents had become, how depressed their father was while caring for his ailing wife? Surely they could have prevented the tragedy of their mother's death and father's suicide.

Grieving survivors tell many stories of guilt and regret. In loss, we remember and reevaluate our relationship with the person who is gone and often find ourselves wanting. Joan didn't insist on a second opinion, Paul didn't call 911; Jim didn't take the car keys from his drunken brother. If only, if only....

Death is a teacher. It can show us the failings of family, friends, clergy, doctors. The one who failed to live. The ones we failed.

Sometimes the greatest guilt comes when we are beginning to heal. Honest grief has been the ladder to climb out of our deepest pain. But in beginning to feel alive again, do we betray the loved one who is gone?

Death humbles us. Perhaps we have been living life as if it would go on forever. How can we continue to deny that death awaits all people, including those we have loved and, ultimately, ourselves?

But then, death continues to teach us. Death -- which in a moment seems to steal our future -- begins to direct us toward a new future. Our guilt and regret have been showing us how to live in that future. Death makes our every choice and action matter. If we didn't love well enough, we are still alive to love better now.

And when guilt and regret have served their purpose, they fade. If we try to carry them into the future as our just burden, they become mere excuses.

When we recognize our power and our powerlessness, we gain our freedom. When we admit our shared fallibility, we become fully human. We look to the fragile future with hope.



HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net

Summer Schedule

“Journey through Grief” Workshop
Saturday, July 28, 2012
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Call for reservation for the workshop

NEW! Suicide Loss Support Group
Starting Saturday, June 16, 2012
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Will meet the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month
No reservation necessary

*Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person;
please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support
without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in
basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.*

Contact Information

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Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our voicemail
after hours

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

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