

Helping Hands

Does work seem trivial?

How to handle post-crisis anxiety

By **Azriela Jaffe**

Web exclusive

Many of us are overwhelmed with sadness and loss of purpose these days as we try to resume our work and tear ourselves away from 24-hour television.

As I stared at the computer screen recently, writing the final sentence to my novel after watching coverage of America's new war all week, a voice tormented me:

"Writing a novel? How trivial! Why does the world need another novel in the midst of these tumultuous times? Shouldn't you be doing something serious and life-changing instead?"

I know I'm not alone in asking these questions. Whether your personal or financial loss from the September 11 tragedy was direct or two persons removed, you were not untouched. None of us were.

Those of us who are still alive and employed are asking: "Why did I live and others died? How can I make the most of the time I have left? How can I bring more light into a world that seems to be plunging into darkness?"

The answer, I believe, is to do what you were born to do-- and to do it well.

Those who were born to be firemen, nurses, policemen and women, and forklift drivers may be able to contribute directly to rescue and revitalization efforts.

What about entrepreneurs, selling a product that has no apparent useful purpose on the planet

other than to make people laugh or to give people more comfort? Is this a waste of human potential? I don't believe so.

The world is in disarray, and it needs you to get back to your purpose, whether it was to help us laugh, or to dress better, or to enjoy a gourmet meal or to employ a bunch of people who need jobs.

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Service of Remembrance

Redwoods shelter guests

More than 45 HAND parents, siblings and family gathered for a Service of Remembrance, held Oct. 13 at Huddart Park in Woodside.

The setting was the secluded Miwok Shelter in the county park, surrounded by redwood forests and with a view to the San Francisco Bay and beyond.

"The weather was absolutely perfect, the program beautiful and the speaker very moving." reports Celia Hartnett, one of the organizers.

Ron Shapera, M.D., president of HAND of the Peninsula, gave the opening welcome. He was followed by keynote speaker Dr. Ellen Six, chairman of the Religion Department at Notre Dame High School and lecturer in Ethics and Women's Studies at Dominican University.

Several HAND parents contributed favorite poems or readings for the service. Music was provided by Jayme Kelly Curtis, who sang and played the guitar.

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A familiar feeling

The shock and searing heartbreak our nation is enduring following the September 11 tragedy are familiar feelings for HAND parents. In fact, it almost seems like the entire nation has become a grief support meeting as victims' families, friends and witnesses of the event relate their stories and shed tears again and again. Even if we didn't personally lose a loved one that day, we can imagine the pain and we share it.

TV, newspapers and magazines run story after story quoting mental health experts explaining the emotional fallout of loss, ways to cope and support others. Despite the sad circumstances, this attention to a subject long ignored is validation for grieving parents who often feel like a fringe element in our society.

Now coping with grief and loss is in everyone's thoughts and deeds. A CEO's memo to his staff urges them to allow themselves time to heal. The fall curriculum of the University of California at Los Angeles includes a course on poetry and loss. Dr. Joyce Brothers writes in Parade Magazine about tragedy bringing families closer together. Thousands rediscover their faith and find comfort at their place of worship.

Our death-denying nation has learned a painful lesson, just as HAND parents do soon after their loss: there are no guarantees in life. Despite doing everything right, sometimes things go wrong. Our unborn baby's heart is beating strongly one day, and silent the next. We get on an airplane or go to work like we do everyday but this time we never come home. Innocence is lost. We have very little control.

That realization may prompt more people to take a hard look at their life goals and values. Hopefully it will also spur all of us to take action to protect ourselves and our families in the event the unthinkable happens. Perhaps the day has come in this country where facing death squarely by writing a will, appointing guardians for our children, buying life and disability insurance and, importantly, discussing our final wishes with loved ones will become commonplace.

Helping After Neonatal Death Chapters:

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Helping Hands

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If you feel you're not doing enough to help others, give some of your profits to charity. Devote more time to your loved ones. I can view my novel as a trivial pursuit, or as a gift to helping fellow human beings understand their humanity and better cope with loss and pain.

The question we ask ourselves should not be: "Is what I'm doing serious enough to merit my effort, given recent tragic events in the world?" The question should be: "Am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing and doing it well?"

Many business owners are understandably worried about navigating their companies through a downturn, while many of their corporate counterparts fear downsizing. Rather than panic, take a moment to consider whether the shifting economy is urging you in new directions. Is the market for your product or service drying up, and if so, how can you transfer your talents into something new that the world needs? By meeting emerging needs, you may be able to earn a more stable income.

Remember, there will only be one you in the history of the world. As my Rabbi said this week, and I paraphrase: Let this nation's tragedy be a lesson about the power of one life. Only months ago we were obsessed as a nation with the power of one vote to swing a presidential election. Now, we have witnessed how one man's evil wishes can torment a world. In a million years, there will never be another you. What are you supposed to be doing with your precious blink of an eye--maybe 80 years if you are lucky. Are you doing it? If you aren't engaged in your right livelihood, a terrorist attack is one heck of a wake-up call. Our life is not guaranteed to us. It never was. But that's easy to forget.

Azriela Jaffe is a syndicated columnist and the author of 10 books, including "Create Your Own Luck, Eight Strategies to Attract Good Fortune Into Your Life, Love, and Work (Adams Media). Email azriela@mindspring.com

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and guests scattered wildflower seeds at the conclusion of the service.

Christy Conklin made beautiful fabric hearts for each person to take home as a memento. Joan Stone designed the program. Micha's Cafe catered the barbecue lunch after the service. The Woodside Hills Garden Club donated exquisite tiny pink roses for the tables and for families to take home afterwards. The organizing committee was comprised of Christy Conklin, Joan Stone and Celia Hartnett.

Sweet Baby Rose

so, so tiny

quiet

perfect

baby girl.

beautiful

long fingers.

beautiful

long toes.

mouth opens

to say a

silent hello.

arm trembles

as her body

quietly dies.

quietly dies.

quietly dies.

eyes never

open, her

warm body

turns cold.

so, so tiny

quiet

perfect

baby girl.

Kellie Cunningham Bliss
In memory of Rose Tamikka Bliss,
1, 2001

July

Support Meetings

Support meetings are informal gatherings where parents can receive and give support by sharing common experiences as we work through and resolve our loss. We cordially invite you to attend.

Meetings may start out with a topic of discussion, but everyone is free to bring up any questions or aspects of their loss which may concern them.

Attending your first meeting does take courage, but parents who attend find a comforting network of support, encouragement, friendship and understanding.

Nothing is required of you. There are no dues or fees. You need not speak one word. Even if you no longer need the meetings for yourself, come and share your experiences with someone who has recently suffered a loss.

HAND of the Peninsula

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Celia Hartnett (650) 367-6993

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Dec. 5 - Craft Night
Dec. 19
Jan. 2 and 16, 2002
Feb. 6 and 20
March 6 and 20

Location: Sequoia Health and Wellness Services, 702 Marshall St., Redwood City.

HAND of Santa Cruz Co.

Support meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513.

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Dec. 19, 2001

Jan. 16, 2002
Feb. 20
March 20

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel 4951 Soquel Drive, Soquel

Pregnancy Support Meetings

Parents who are pregnant again after a loss have special emotional and psychological needs. Pregnancy Support Group meetings address the concerns of bereaved parents who have started or are thinking about starting another pregnancy. Fathers are especially encouraged to attend.

HAND of the Peninsula holds subsequent pregnancy support meetings on the second Wednesdays of the month. Call (650) 367-6993 for more information.

Time: 7:30-9:30 P.M.

Dates: Dec. 12, 2001
Jan. 9, 2002
Feb. 13
March 13

Location: Sequoia Health and Wellness Services, 702 Marshall St., Redwood City.

HAND of Santa Cruz Co.'s subsequent pregnancy meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Call ((831) 438-4513 for more information.

Dates: Dec. 5, 2001
Jan. 2, 2002
Feb. 6
March 6

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel 4951 Soquel Drive, Soquel.

Donations

Our warmest thanks to those who have sent donations to HAND of the Peninsula. It is through your support that HAND is able to grow and help others.

Joan and Douglass Stone, in memory of Baby Mac; Kristine Albrecht and Brian Sprinsock; Lyn and John Scott Kirsten and James Chan, in memory of our two angels, Arby and Karolina; Emily Corpos, in memory of Jamie Coolin and in honor of Celia Hartnett; Gina and Michael Hofman; Michele and Mark Hollar, in memory of William Adam Hollar; Ada and Robert Lai, in honor of Nathan Ruchames on his Bar Mitzvah; Caryn Goldman, in memory of Sasha; Laura and Gary Lauder Philanthropic Fund, in support of Jill Nelson; Daniel and Jennifer Goldstein who donated five books to HAND of Santa Cruz' library, in memory of their son, Ryan Wade Goldstein

Human Race Supporters

Shirley and Bryce Nelson
Joe Twicken and Jill Nelson
Deborah and David Walker,
Laura Lauder, Richard Miller and Janice Fried, Liz and Sean Robertson, Jean Nunes, Linda and Vic Bartolotta, Sara and Paul Schrauben, Laura and Don McMillan, Barbara Miller, Arni McKinley, Susan and Howard Lamb, Josephine Lucey, David Puziol, Stephanie Andersen and George Zurich, Skylawn Memorial Park, Irene and Maia Lustgarten Snezana Maslakovic, John Baron, Judy Moltzer, Lori McBride, Frank Muennemann, Anne Garrett, Frieda Haidt, Judy Sadoff, Albert Dorsky, Paul Resnick, Harvey Schloss, Leland Levy, Joe Podolsky, Joan Eisenberg, Sylvia Alderman, Ron Swan, Terri Goldberg.

eScrip Supporters:

Tish Alfonsi, Christy Conklin
Cathleen Findley, Suzanne Gallie, Lori Goldman Reddy, Celia Hartnett, Laurie McLucas, Ron Shapera, Kristina Shulman, Alison Tam, Joe Twicken, Edith Muennemann, Judi Weidenfeld,

Births

Althea Chan, Nov. 30, 2000, to Kirsten and James Chan

Abigail Nicole Reddy, July 27, 2001, to Lori and Dave Reddy and big sister Hannah

Audrey Elizabeth Crook, Aug. 14, 2001, to Laurie McLucas and Bill Crook and big brother Danny

eScrip supporters

Leslie Muennemann, Shirley Nelson, Susan Pon, Mary Angela Pechacek, Stacey Ahrens, Sara Braden, Shoneen Erskine, Tracy Hieber, Debbie Mekeeb, Emily Corpos, Jackie Willson

Special Thanks

Sacred Heart Preparatory High School students and parents participating as walkers in the Human Race, one of HAND of the Peninsula's annual fundraisers: Jessica Skelton, Mimi Bartels, Melissa Miranda, Sarah Laird, Orshi Fejer, Jenny Miller, Margaret Miller, Lauren Habig, Samantha Kraus, Paul and Leslie Kraus, Emily and John Corpos and sons Michael, Matthew and Martin Corpos.

Also walking to raise funds for HAND of the Peninsula were Jill Nelson, Joe Twicken, Celia Hartnett, Caryn and Noah Goldman, Leslie and Steve Muennemann, Christy Conklin and Richard McCluney

Woodside Hills Garden Club for the donation of two dozen lovely pink baby roses for our Service of Remembrance.

Christy Conklin, Celia Hartnett and Joan Stone for organizing the Service of Remembrance.

Inservices

College of Notre Dame -- Dr. Mcquinn's human sexuality class. Laura Hawkins, presenter, Su-mien Chong, sharing parent. Rachel Kindt, volunteer.

Nursing Mothers Counsel Santa Clara County -- Aug. 8, Christine Reeve, presenter; Shoneen Luck Erskine, sharing parent.

College of Notre Dame -- Sept. 15, Rachel Kindt, presenter; Jill Nelson and Joe Twicken, sharing parents.

Pregnancy Care Center -- Sept. 17, Jill Nelson, presenter, and Tish Alfonsi, sharing parent.

Pacifica Mothers' Group -- Oct. 14, Christy Conklin, speaker.

Perinatal Council San Mateo County -- Nov. 1, Christine Reeve, presenter, Twila Forbes, sharing parent.

"More Than"

*More than just a name,
was yours Jonathan,
from heaven above,
its meaning, "gift of God"
our son, full of love.*

*More than just a fetus,
or merely scanned as "baby B"
you mean and meant so much more to us,
than any doctor or specialist or diagnosis
could ever imagine or see.*

*More than a gift,
were two heartbeats in my womb,
feeling so incredibly blessed,
carrying two beloved twin sons,
not knowing what different plans God had,
one for Gabriel and one for you.*

*More than many prayers,
were said for us all,
when the doctors and specialists
had to tell us,
your life on earth may not be possible.*

*More than many tears shed,
as the weeks drifted by,
praying for a miracle,
asking God for answers,
yet, not understanding why.*

*More than any fathomable sadness,
on that sad morning last November,
when your heartbeat was no more,
and it was confirmed,
our dear son was now indeed in heaven,
with the Lord.*

*More than joy,
the birth of your twin brother,
though early and sooner than we thought,
still we thought of you and all
knew you held on to the very end,
and were in spirit just as present.*

*More than many lessons,
did your short life bring us son,
though much sorrow in your passing,
new friends to comfort along the same path
and the smile of your twin brother,
and in his eyes, we know your spirit and
heartbeat continues on.*

Sara Braden wrote this poem in memory of her son Jonathan, who died in-utero Nov. 28, 2000.