

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

School opens for another year. There is a flurry of activity to end the summer, clothes to buy; notebooks, pencils and pens to gather; decisions to make on rulers and odd-shaped erasers.

The family plans and almost plunges into the final weekend, the Labor Day splurge that ends summer and starts the fall.

For many, there will be no flurry. Clothing, notebooks, erasers, and all those other things become simply notes of hollowness in a fragmented life. For these, the last summer weekend may pass unnoticed. It is a time to consume silence in the land of bereavement.

When the school doors open, when the buses roll once more, communities across this nation visibly proclaim the hope we all invest in our children. Bereaved parents, having no immunity to these desires and aspirations for our kids, find themselves even more highly sensitized to that never-again kiss of parting, that vigorous waving as the school bus pulls away. Perhaps for some, an empty desk, an unoccupied chair, will form the elements of a new vision that proclaims again emptiness forever a part of life.

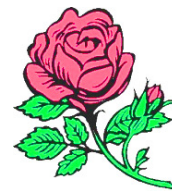
I teach. I know that schools reopening will remind me, even six years into bereavement, of the bittersweet capability of this time. And, I admit with some sorrow, I am never totally free of it, for often do I consciously hope that death will not again shadow a door that is mine, even the door to a classroom! School is opening. For some among us this is a period of deep, unuttered hurt. Only the pain of the holidays may be deeper.

As these doors open once again, and as the opening weeks pass, let us remember and reach out to those for whom the school bell is an endless tolling. Let us all offer the assuring hope that today's dreadful tolling will instead, someday, become an evoker of memories □ remembered images that will dance upon the heart, forming an anchor of love one which dealing may poise itself to soar, to bring darkness of pain to light.

- By Don Hackett, TCF Newsletter, KC Region,
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Do It Your Way



I think it's only fair to tell you there is no bereaved parent of the month award nor an award for the one with stiffest upper lip, in fact, what you will find if you try to be the most stoic, brave and strong, the one doing too well, is instead of reward, you suffer the consequences. It is not possible to lose someone as vital as one's child and not have the pain of deep grief. You will find a great many non-bereaved people will encourage you to play the old, "if-you'll-pretend-you're-okay-and-it's-not-really-so-bad-we'll-let-you-come-play-with-us-but-if-you're-going-to-cry-and-talk-about-your-dead-child-then-you-can't-play" game.

This is one time in your life you don't have to meet anybody else's standards. There is nothing more unique about you than the way you express your grief and you have that right, however it is manifested. A great deal of how you go about it is determined by how you have handled previous problems.

So if someone tries to influence you to play the old game by rewarding you with attention because you're doing so well, tell them you're not doing well, that your child has died and you're hurting.

Let them know it doesn't help you for them to pretend everything is okay. Do whatever it is you need to do to survive this trauma and don't worry about whether it pleases or displeases other people.....DO IT YOUR WAY!!

By Mary Clerckley, TCF Atlanta, GA
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Keepsakes

Over the years, many of us have found keepsakes that give us special meaning. I try to put some of them in from time to time. We do not endorse any of these products. We simply find them helpful.

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