

The Silver Lining

In late 2017, the parents of the Helping Parents Heal Tampa Affiliate enthusiastically took part in sharing some of the surprising and unexpected blessings they have experienced since their children transitioned. With gratitude, we chose to look beyond the commonly held notion that losing a child destroys a parent's life forever and erases the possibility of joy and a fulfilling life. On the contrary, we discovered a multitude of ways that life has blessed us with profound gifts and life-changing insight in our lives. As a result, we move forward still bearing the scars of child loss but also shining a brighter light than we ever have – a reflection of our children who live on sharing their happiness and encouragement with us.

To recognize and embrace these gifts is to honor our children and the love they surround us with every day. They want us to feel joy and to realize the full potential of our lives until it is our turn to join them. In sharing our **Silver Lining List**, we hope you will feel inspired to make your own personal list. We may not have asked for this immense challenge in life but we can be proud, as our children are, that we are willing to face it head on and use it for good.

If you are reading this and are in the early, very acute stages of grief, we realize it is difficult to fathom this could be your experience too. Know that we feel great empathy and understanding. It takes time and there are no shortcuts. We only hope it inspires you to know that it is possible and that one day you too will be able to share this perspective with us.

Silver Lining List

*Lovingly Shared by the Parents of Helping Parents Heal, Tampa Affiliate
Curated by Amy Diehl and Marla Grant, Affiliate Co-Leaders*

Faith

- My family and I have a greater spiritual connection and deeper faith
- I feel inspired to live life well knowing my child is watching
- I can see that God has led me to the tribe that helps light and share the path on this journey. I feel guided in the way to move forward and am surrounded by good people.
- Faith has replaced fear. I have no fear of death – my own or others. With fear gone, I can live my life more fully.
- My spiritual life has taken on greater importance and I can see that the one constant in life is the love that binds us all together.

Connection With Others

- Because of my experience, I have become a resource for others who seek advice and feel they can open up to me. My new mission is to help others and that is a meaningful gift to me.
- I gained the ability to ask for help and feel powerful in the process instead of feeling weak.
- I have a much deeper closeness with my family and friendships come easier for me. I am not so guarded.
- I now have the strength to remove negative people from my life
- Relationships are stronger and some have reappeared that I thought were gone
- I have gained sensitivity and compassion for others as a result of the way my son treated others. I am kinder with my words. This has helped in relationships with family and friends.

- I have slowed down and discovered what is really important in life...people, not things. I treasure family and friends so much more.
- I have met a lot of amazing people I would not have if this had not happened.
- I have a long-term continuation and deepening of friendships with my son's friends which is very healing.
- I am wiser and more in tune with things around me. I am living in greater awareness and see things on a whole new level.
- I have a deeper connection with students and others in my life in a very loving, family way. I prioritize this over other things in my life that have less importance.

Self Awareness, Sense of Purpose, Personal Growth

- I live from a deeper place. Life is all about the essentials – other people and solid relationships
- I take life slower and feel gratitude more fully than ever before.
- I now take time to enjoy the simple things in life. Colors and nature appear more vivid.
- I have more emotional freedom. Every day prior to my child's death was full of anxiety but since then nothing concerns me.
- I approach life with more patience and ease and don't sweat the small stuff.
- I am more accepting of those aspects of life I can't understand. Accepting the loss of my child has allowed me to accept anything.
- I now understand we each have our own journey and feel blessed I was able to share mine with my child.
- I have become more resilient than I have ever been.
- I no longer take anything in life for granted. I try to appreciate everything that enters my life whether it's a challenge or a gift.
- I have a new way of looking at the world. I am more sensitive to signs from the other side and recognize them when they appear.
- I have a new realization of life's brevity, so I look for something good in each day instead of focusing on negative.
- I am not as affected by other people's opinions – "my ego is going away." I am less inhibited.
- I want to experience more of life and I appreciate when I do; I am so in-the-moment.
- I have greater awareness of how precious and short life is and don't want to waste it. I am very careful how I spend my time, and I'm not afraid to say "no."
- I am more empathetic and careful with other people's feelings- everyone has a story.
- I have more compassion and less judgement for how others live their lives.
- I have a "timeless" view of the world. Everything has so much less importance. Life has been simplified and I have lost any interest in material items.
- I have grown as a soul and gained a deeper wisdom around my purpose in this life.
- I learned that a good way to create something positive out of losing children is to help others. That has resulted in improvements in the lives of others and helped me discover purpose and fulfillment