

## Overcoming a Parent's Worst Nightmare: Loss of a Child

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to a parent is experiencing the loss of a child. However, as one mother shares, it's possible to turn one's devastation into spiritual enlightenment and to weave the tragedy into the fabric of your life and your family.

"I don't think any parent ever gets over the loss of a child," says Caroline Flohr, whose memoir "Heaven's Child," ([www.heavenschild.com](http://www.heavenschild.com)), recounts the transformative death of her 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah.

"Through the web of pain, I have been amazed by the power of family, love and faith in healing. I have learned that death defines not the end of the journey, but a beginning."

Flohr reviews some of the milestones in her journey to inner peace:

- Deeper meaning: Through the death of someone so important, you will be changed. The question is how you will be changed. Will you grow, or become diminished? Flohr grew with the realization that death – so often viewed as an end – is just the beginning of another phase of existence. "One of my favorite quotes is from poet Rabindranath Tagore: "Death is not extinguishing the light. It is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

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- **Celebrate life:** When the bereaved are able to look at the life of a person who has passed and see more beauty than pain, they should rejoice. The reality of a person's absence will always have an element of sadness, but the joy of wonderful memories is even more powerful. When loved ones leave this Earth, graces are given to those relationships left behind. These are gifts. When we can acknowledge them, our lives can expand in the present.
  
- **Ready for anything:** Once you've experienced the worst and pulled through, you know you will be able to weather just about any adversity. Maya Angelou wrote, "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it." Have faith in that inner strength we all harbor, Flohr says.
  
- **Appreciate what you have:** Life as we know it will come to an end. This includes everyone we know, love and care about; it's a fact that we often forget, and it's as startling to remember as it is true. Come good or bad, we do not know what the future will bring, which means we should take every opportunity to fully embrace the present, and our loved ones.

### About Caroline Flohr

Caroline Flohr was a busy wife and mother to five children when her 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed in an accident. She was forced to dig into the deeper meaning of existence and came away with profound edification. Flohr lives with her husband and children on Bainbridge Island, a suburb of Seattle.