

Finding Healing, Renewal in 2013

Written by Ginny Grimsley
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By: Caroline Flohr

As a new year dawns, many Americans still grieve losses experienced in 2012. For some, it's very personal – the death of a parent, spouse or child. Others mourn the lives lost in one of the many tragedies we experienced together as a nation.

As a mother of a 16-year-old twin daughter killed in a car accident involving eight teenagers, I assure those of you who are still coming to terms with your loss and grief – it is possible to journey from the unimaginable to acceptance and a spiritual peace. I urge you to embrace the healing power of family and community, love and faith. You will be surprised at how it can transform you.

You can find renewal in this new year.

I have learned that death defines not the end, but a beginning. I have learned that, by weaving tragedy into the fabric of our lives, we can be stronger, spiritually richer and, yes, even happier for it.

Here are some of the milestones I experienced on my journey to inner peace:

• **Deeper meaning:** Through the death of someone so important, you will be changed. The

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question is how you will be changed. Will you grow, or become diminished? I 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.

• **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.

• **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 is the author of "Heaven's Child," www.heavenschild.com. It details her spiritual journey beginning with the sudden death of 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah. Flohr was forced to dig into the deeper meaning of existence and came away with profound edification and appreciation for the gifts left behind by those who leave us. Flohr lives with her husband and children on Bainbridge Island, a suburb of Seattle.