

Professionally Speaking.....

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Love Never Dies

I have recently become friends with a woman named Elizabeth Horwin, who I met by chance one day in a restaurant. I was drawn to her immediately when she told me that she wrote a book called, "Love Never Dies" several years after her 16 yr. old son was killed in a car accident. We planned a second meeting, at which time she gave me a copy of her book and asked me to read it and underline the thoughts that intrigued me, so that we could discuss it at our next meeting. What struck me the most about her was how she seemed so reconciled with her only child's death. I underlined many thought provoking lines in the book, but the one that really struck me was in the chapter called "Healing." Horwin believes that our loved ones love us unconditionally and want us to enjoy our life, and she would encourage you, as grieving parents, to not stay stuck in your grief, but to enjoy the rest of your experiences here on Earth.

So, the question becomes, "How do we go on with our lives and still honor our babies who died?" Her answer is to respond to what has happened, rather than react to it. The difference is that by responding you are taking action and by reacting you are acting out. Horwin believes that a person who reacts is often giving up and not able to continue with their purpose in life. Responding requires action and action leads to healing. I'm not suggesting that you not feel the usual feelings of sadness, pain, and anger following the death of your baby. Your feelings are normal and essential to your healing process. It is what you choose to do with those emotions that make the difference.

There are many positive ways of responding to the death of your baby. Attending a UNITE Support Group is one way of responding, as you gather with other grieving parents to share similar feelings. By becoming an active member of UNITE, you have the opportunity to write and publish a poem or message in memory of your baby in the UNITE Newsletter. Respectfully educating your family, friends, and co-workers on what it is like to lose a baby is another positive way of responding to your loss. So often parents tell me about the inappropriate remarks they hear from well-meaning family and friends following the death of their baby. Instead of feeling a negative reaction on the inside, try responding in a firm, heartfelt way by offering them an understanding of how their insensitive comments hurt you. Another way to respond

to the loss of your baby, while honoring your baby at the same time, is to make something for another family who may have a loss, and donate that item to a hospital. One woman in my UNITE group knits tiny baby hats and blankets for other babies, while another sew beautiful baby gowns and quilts for babies who die too soon. Respond by planting a tree or a garden in memory of your baby. Respond by doing volunteer work in honor of your baby, or organize a *Walk to Remember* and invite other parents to participate. Respond by taking care of yourself through meditation or yoga, which helps to strengthen your spirit so that you can better endure the emotional pain of your loss. Some of our responses may be life changing, while others are small, but significant. There are many ways to respond to the loss of your baby. My hope is that you will feel satisfaction in knowing that your response to your baby's death made a difference in your life and the lives of those who know you, and that your response honored your precious baby.