

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
Transitioning Through Grief With Poetry
Hope, Healing and Help – October 25, 2014



Genesse Bourdeau Gentry is the author of two books of poetry, *Stars in the Deepest Night - after the Death of a Child* and *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child*. She lives in northern California with her husband Bill. They are the parents of Megan, who lives in Davis, CA with her husband Steve, and Lori, who died in a car accident in 1991 at the age of 21.

Before Lori's death, Genesse had used writing for correspondence and in her work first as a Montessori School administrator and later in the environmental field as Recycling Program Coordinator for one of the first Recycling companies in the nation. She loved the idea of being a writer, but never pursued that dream.

Following Lori's death, Genesse and Bill joined the Marin County, California Chapter of The Compassionate Friends (TCF), a world-wide support group for families who have experienced the death of a child. She credits her involvement in TCF for getting her through the terrible years after Lori's death and her role as group meeting facilitator as beginning her healing and opening her heart to writing.

Nine months after she began facilitating the meetings, phrases began to pop into her head, describing feelings she was going through, or had gone through in the past, and from those phrases, poems began to form. She found writing this way wholly cathartic, helping her understand her own thoughts and emotions better, helping her to heal even more. When she shared the poems with other bereaved parents, she found that the thoughts and feelings she was describing were fairly universal and the poems began to show up in TCF newsletters all over the country. Eventually the poems were gathered into her first book, *Stars in the Deepest Night – after the Death of a Child*.

As soon as *Stars in the Deepest Night* was published, Genesse began receiving e-mail and letters from readers telling her how important the book was to them, how they read it daily, took it with them wherever they went, how it reflected exactly how they were feeling. The reception of her book, and hearing how it helps people, not only in this country, but in Canada, Europe, Africa, India and the Middle East, has been a continuous miracle in her life. Genesse has continued to write, both poetry and articles for The Compassionate Friends' magazine, *You Need Not Walk Alone*. She has now gathered these poems and articles, along with new poems, in another book, *Catching the Light – after the Death of a Child*.

Since the death of her daughter, Genesse has found the quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson to be so true. "It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." She has continued being involved in The Compassionate Friends. Besides acting as meeting group facilitator for the Marin County chapter, she also facilitated the meetings in San Francisco. She served as chapter leader for the Marin chapter, which included the San Francisco meetings under its umbrella. She retired as chapter leader but is still on the chapter steering committee and serves as Regional Coordinator for Northern California for TCF. She presents writing workshops at national conferences of The Compassionate Friends as well as for northern California chapters.

Genesse appeared on the radio show "Healing the Grieving Heart" with Dr. Gloria & Dr. Heidi Horsley to discuss "Compassionate Friends: Finding Hope Through Service."