

## TAPESTRY: A MOTHER'S RETREAT

### Healing Hearts

#### After the Death of a Child

The death of a child has been described as the most devastating event that can happen in a woman's life, affecting how she responds to the world as an individual, how she responds to her partner, and how she responds to her surviving children as a parent.

Many women state that they learned to love by loving their child. Caring for children, watching and helping them grow, worrying over their problems, and celebrating in their successes is a central part of a mother's daily experience. Mothers see the future, themselves, and eternity in their children.

*"My child has died. It must be my fault. Clearly, all the things that are wrong with me are the reason. I deserved this to happen. I can say 'no! I did not deserve to have this happen'. I can say it over and over. But still the same voice way deep inside of me says 'yes, I did, because...' Fighting that voice takes a lot of energy—something most of us don't have an oversupply of when we face the death of our child. Yet I believe that this fight is essential. None of us deserved to have this happen to us. No one deserves to lose a child."*

*\*The Bereaved Parents Survival Guide, J. Rothman*

If your child has died, you may feel an oppressive sense of failure, a loss of power and ability, and a deep sense of being violated; you may be overwhelmed with grief, anger, and guilt. Your body may feel like a stranger to you; it may look

different and act differently. You may forget simple things; you may be unable to think abstractly. Perhaps you feel overwhelmed; you've tried to understand what and why this has happened. Maybe the loss of control has left you feeling terrified. Perhaps you wonder if you are going crazy.

Impossible as it may seem, from this intense pain positive responses can emerge. As your grief is processed, a heightened sense of spirituality, increased sensitivity to others, closer relationships, and a commitment to living life can be experienced.

**A Mother's Retreat** provides an opportunity to gently explore feelings, strengthen coping skills, make lasting bonds, and allow healing.

Goals of **A Mother's Retreat** include:

- ♥ assist women in honoring their individual process of grief;
- ♥ assist women in identifying and developing ways of caring for self;
- ♥ increase the range of coping skills;
- ♥ help women identify, understand, and express the feelings associated with grief;
- ♥ help women establish a support network of other grieving mothers;
- ♥ provide activities that help women heal emotionally.

♥ **Tapestry: A Mother's Retreat** is open to mothers who have experienced the death of a child; the age of the child does not matter, nor the circumstances or length of time since the death.

♥ **Tapestry: A Mother's Retreat**, a program provided by **Project Joy and Hope**, will be held at the **Victorian Condo Hotel and Conference Center, Galveston, Texas, Friday evening - Sunday afternoon, February 27 – March 1, 2009. All meals, lodging, programming, and materials included.**

♥ Volunteers provide transportation from Hobby Airport to the Galveston retreat location on Friday, and return ground transportation to the airport on Sunday evening. Participants who plan to fly should schedule flights to arrive between noon - 3 p.m. Returning flights should be scheduled beginning no earlier than 6 p.m. on Sunday.

♥ For more information, or to register for **Tapestry: A Mother's Retreat**, contact **Project Joy and Hope**, 713-944-6569 or 1-866-JOYHOPE, or email [joyandhope@aol.com](mailto:joyandhope@aol.com). This program is limited to twenty-four mothers. Registration fee: **\$150 per person**. Scholarships are available for mothers with economic need.

♥ **Project Joy and Hope** is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with life-threatening conditions and their families. Parental bereavement support programs include: **H.O.P.E. "Helping Our Pain Ease"** seven-week support classes (free to the public, locations vary), **H.O.P.E. for the Holidays** classes (Dec/Jan), and **Tapestry Retreats**. The Parent to Parent Support Line is 713-851-9792.