

Shining On

by Suzanne Gieseemann

“We need another name for those of us with children in the afterlife other than ‘bereaved parents.’” This suggestion came in an email from two dear friends, Irene Vouvalides and Elizabeth Boisson.

I found it no coincidence that Irene and Elizabeth had raised an issue I had been grappling with while finalizing the manuscript for my latest book, *Still Right Here*, written for families with a child who has passed. Elizabeth is the co-founder of Helping Parents Heal, an organization whose stated purpose is to assist bereaved parents, and Irene serves on the board of directors. The group openly encourages discussions of spiritual experiences and evidence of the afterlife.

I marveled that our traditional vocabulary doesn’t allow us to express our new status in anything less than depressing terms. I realized that we needed an entirely new term. As so often happens, the moment we stopped trying to find such a term, the space created in the silence allowed room for higher insights. “Shining Light Parents,” dropped into my mind like the gift from above that it was.

Elizabeth, Irene, and I understood that those who are healing from a recent passing cannot imagine ever smiling again. During the initial stages of grief, it is not the bereaved, but the child in spirit who is the Shining Light. In that regard, identifying oneself as a Shining Light Parent acknowledges that the child’s bright light will always shine in our heart. It is their light that keeps us going. In the beginning, we are the parents of a shining light, and yes, of course we are bereaved.

Moment by moment however, thanks to the unmistakable signs from our children across the veil, the undeniable synchronicities, and the support from others who have been on the journey longer than we have, we begin to feel the light within once again. We no longer feel resentful of the formerly bereaved parents who smile and laugh. In fact, from time to time we find ourselves doing the same, and our child on the other side of the veil rejoices.

And then one day, a newly bereaved parent approaches and says, “I see how far you’ve come, and seeing you gives me hope.” It is in that moment that you realize that yes, we are the parent of a Shining Light, and we are also a parent whose light shines for those who need to find their way. It no longer feels right to call oneself a “bereaved parent.” We have graduated to full status as a Shining Light Parent.

The death of a child transforms us. At first it feels like the end of the world, until we learn that our loved one lives on in a world that interpenetrates our own. In my unexpected work as a medium, the irrefutable evidence shared with me by thousands of souls who have passed has proven to me that death is merely a transition to another reality. We naturally mourn the lack of instant communication and the physical presence of our children, but as we grope for answers and understanding we find unexpected gifts. One of the greatest of these is the fact that our human nature is only a small part of who we really are as eternal souls.

Life is about the ongoing growth of the soul, whether here or in the hereafter. The light of the soul may grow dim temporarily as we face life’s inevitable challenges, but that spark never goes out. Our shining lights on the other side know each other now by their radiance, and they see ours. May we celebrate the eternal life of all of those who have passed by making every effort to turn up our lights in their honor.