

PARENTS TALK BACK

What makes loss easier to bear?

I was visiting the home of a close friend, near my own age, who had recently lost her mother after a prolonged illness.

A few of us stopped by to offer our sympathy.

The woman talked about her beloved mother with a measure of peace in her voice. She had been an amazing woman, one who lived a full life and had been dearly loved, my friend said.

I admired her strength despite the nearness of her loss. Then she revealed that a previous tragedy gave her perspective on her current grief. Her brother had died when he was 31. He had been diagnosed with a brain tumor while studying for his own medical boards.

His untimely death changed her and her family. But it taught her something that helped her cope with future losses: Control is largely an illusion.

"When it's your time, it's your time," she said.

Many of us reach a certain point, in midlife, when the prevalence of loss becomes more noticeable — hitting more often and closer in intimate circles. Parents, spouses, friends, relationships, jobs, pets and, most unimaginable of all, a child, may leave our lives too soon.

So, what makes these losses easier to bear for some than others? While there is no set timetable for processing grief, there are factors that influence how it impacts us: our age, life experience, relationship to the deceased, the circumstances surrounding the death, and our support networks and belief systems.

There aren't any shortcuts in grieving. There are, however, strategies for coping. Survivors can honor the memory of the deceased by doing something purposeful in their loved one's name, spreading kindness or raising awareness. They can focus on the good in their lives, no matter how small, and hold tightly to memories. They might turn to prayer or share stories. Sometimes, it's simply a matter of moving through a single moment, day after day, until the passage of time dulls the sharp edge off of the pain.

The hurt of a significant loss is never fully erased. But it ceases to be an open, throbbing wound after enough time passes.

The way we reframe a personal loss, the narrative we tell ourselves about it, can eventually alter our emotions. Some parents who have gone through the unspeakable trauma of burying a child tell themselves that the child's life was meant to serve a purpose — perhaps to provoke a societal change that could save other lives, or inspire others to be brave or grateful. Those who believe in a higher power and an afterlife take comfort in the hope of an eventual reunion. That ability to convince ourselves of what we gained, and what remains possible, is one of the few things within our control in times of despair.

The five stages of grief are familiar to most adults: denial, bargaining, depression, anger, acceptance. The length of time one lingers in each stage only becomes apparent in hindsight. In the midst of it, it can look like an empty, endless road of suffering.

Dan Duffy, a St. Louis-based video producer, published "The Half Book" last month, a story about his battle with cancer. He has also filmed a few stories of cancer survivors and victims.

"When we go through loss, we think, 'No one knows what I feel like,'" he said. "That compounds the loss."

He has devoted hours to recording other people's cancer stories, convinced that they are vital to healing.

"It reaffirms that we are not alone," he said.

We can be reminded of this when we visit with friends and family in the aftermath of a significant loss they have suffered. We may show up to comfort and offer support to survivors, but it's also a chance to remember our own losses — to share that moment of sorrow that makes us human.

Life is filled with loss. Grace enters us in how we contend with it.

Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age while trying to keep up with her tech-savvy children. Find her on Twitter: @AishaS.



AISHA SULTAN
Parents talk back

Colleges tell students to leave their hoverboards at home

BOSTON (AP) — One of the holiday's hottest presents is now considered contraband at many U.S. colleges.

More than 30 universities have banned or restricted hoverboards on their campuses in recent weeks, saying the two-wheeled, motorized scooters are unsafe. Beyond the risk of falls and collisions, colleges are citing warnings from federal authorities that some of the self-balancing gadgets have caught on fire.

"It's clear that these things are potentially dangerous," said Len Dolan, managing director of fire safety at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. The public school of 14,000 students issued a campus-wide ban effective on Monday, telling students in an email that any hoverboards found on campus would be confiscated.

"These things are just catching fire without warning, and we don't want that in any of our dorms," Dolan said.

Outright bans also have been issued at schools such as American University and George Washington University, both in Washington, D.C. Other schools said they will forbid the scooters in dorm rooms or campus buildings, a policy adopted at colleges including Louisiana State University, the University of Iowa and the University of Arkansas.

After banning hoverboards from dorms in December, officials at the University of Hartford in Connecticut are now considering a full ban because of concerns over how to store them safely, said David Isgu, a school spokesman. Some of the reported fires have occurred while the boards were being charged, authorities say.

At Ohio State University and at Xavier University in Cincinnati, students were told they can



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

Since December 2015, several universities have banned or limited hoverboards on their campuses, saying the two-wheeled, motorized scooters are unsafe.

bring a hoverboard only if it came with a seal showing that the board meets certain safety standards.

Schools have issued bans as recently as Thursday, when the University of Connecticut announced that the devices aren't welcome on campus. The University of Alabama and the University of Kentucky declared bans on Wednesday as students prepare to return from break.

"We are not willing to risk your safety and our community's safety," University of Kentucky Fire Marshal Greg Williamson told students in a statement.

Bryce Colegrove, a sophomore at Shawnee State University in Ohio, got an email from his school on Tuesday telling students to leave their hoverboards at home after the holidays.

It was bad timing for Colegrove, who had just received one as a gift from his girlfriend and had even plotted his new routes to class.

"Honestly I was really disappointed," said Colegrove, 20. "I don't think it's right to ban them. I mean, it's a college campus; it's not a high school."

Others took to social media to voice their frustration, with some saying they planned to bring their scooters to school anyway.

Hoverboards, which are made by several brands, already have been banned by the three largest U.S. airlines, citing potential fire danger from the lithium-ion batteries that power them.

The devices also are prohibited on New York City streets, and a new law in California requires

riders to be at least 16 and wear a helmet in public.

On Monday, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported that it's now investigating 28 fires in 19 states tied to the motorized scooters. Fire officials from New Jersey to California have blamed the boards for fires that damaged homes. The federal commission also said there have been serious injuries caused by falls.

Colleges reported that even though the gadget has been gaining popularity, it's still relatively rare on campuses.

Dolan, of Kean University, said he saw about six students riding the scooters last fall. News of swift sales over the holidays, plus the reports of fires, led him to propose the ban.

OUT OF THE VAULT

Pendleton man violently opposes church invitation

A Pendleton man was beaten with a club in November 1932 after asking another resident to attend church.

James Montgomery, an employee of a Pendleton barber shop and a member of the Nazarene Church, went to the home of John Sirvilas on Nov. 11, 1932, with R.S. Taylor, a fellow church member and evangelist. The men wanted to ask Mr. Sirvilas to attend church with them the following Sunday; Sirvilas was known to have attended services several times in the previous week. Sirvilas was in the yard burning when Montgomery and Taylor arrived,



RENEE STRUTHERS
Out of the vault

and the pair encouraged Sirvilas to come over to the car, Montgomery calling Sirvilas "my brother." Sirvilas responded with, "You're not my brother." Montgomery got out of the car to continue the conversation, and Sirvilas suddenly attacked him with a heavy club, bashing him in the temple and knocking Montgomery to the ground. When Montgomery got up,

Sirvilas hit him again in the back.

Taylor jumped out of the car, and Sirvilas ran to the rear of his house. Taylor put Montgomery in the car but had to go back to recover Montgomery's glasses. When he saw Sirvilas returning, and heading in his direction, Taylor jumped in the car and drove with Montgomery to the church. When Montgomery began to feel dazed Taylor took him to the hospital, where doctors treated severe bruises and a nasty gash.

City and state police descended on Sirvilas, who was attempting to get hold of a

double-bladed axe when they arrived. Sirvilas was arrested and then committed to the state mental hospital the next morning.

In talking to Sirvilas' landlord, Lemuel Dunlap, police learned Sirvilas had struck him the previous day when he told his tenant he could rent the property for \$10 less than the year before.

Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the East Oregonian. See the complete collection of Out of the Vault columns at eovault.blogspot.com

ODDS & ENDS

Small plane makes emergency landing on California freeway

MOORPARK, Calif. (AP) — Motorists got a shock when a small plane made an emergency landing on a Southern California freeway just as the evening commute was getting underway.

The California Highway Patrol says vehicles had to swerve to avoid hitting the two-seat aircraft when it touched down on State Route 23 in Ventura County Monday.

Student-pilot Danielle Lagree tells the *Ventura County Star* she was flying with her instructor when the engine began to sputter. Lagree says the instructor calmly took over and managed to put the single-engine plane down in lanes without hitting any vehicles. Nobody was hurt.

The aircraft had left Van Nuys and was en route to Camarillo Airport. Southbound lanes were briefly blocked while crews towed the plane to the center divider.

The incident is under investigation.

Thief stuffs snake in his pants at pet store

PORTLAND (AP) — A snake thief smuggled a 2-foot-long python from a Portland pet store by stuffing it down his pants.

Sgt. Greg Stewart said no arrests have been made in Friday's theft. But Christin Bjugan, an owner of A to Z pet store, said video surveillance has helped viewers and police detectives identify a suspect, and she expects to have the snake returned soon.



Ventura County Fire Department via AP

This Monday photo shows a two-seat airplane after it made an emergency landing on the State Route 23 Freeway in Moorpark, Calif. The California Highway Patrol says vehicles had to swerve to avoid hitting the two-seat aircraft when it touched down after the engine began to sputter. No one was injured.

"We know who did it," she said Monday. "We know where he lives, we know where he works, we know all about him and his girlfriend. We're just waiting to get our snake back."

The video shows the suspect with a blue-haired woman who appeared to be in on the theft. He handed her some keys before taking the snake from a tank and shuffling out of the store.

Bjugan says it was "pretty gutsy" for the man to put the python down his pants, and potentially a bad move because it was close to feeding day.

On the other hand, she added, the snake does like warm, dark places.

The snake is a black pastel ball python and sells for \$200.

"We have a cheap price, usually they go for about \$400," Bjugan said.

Stewart said the department has investigated thefts at pet stores, but this is the first time it has involved someone putting a snake in their pants. It also

seemed more purposeful than usual.

"If you look at the theft of stuff from pet stores, a lot of times it's someone wandering in drunk and doing something stupid," he said. "This one's a little bit different, although putting a snake down your pants is not super bright. There's a lot of different ways that could go wrong."

Couple get engaged at Wal-Mart, then get accused of theft

BAY CITY, Mich. (AP) — A Michigan couple's engagement is off to a rocky start.

Police say a 25-year-old man proposed marriage to a 20-year-old woman at a Bay City Wal-Mart store in front of employees and other shoppers who congratulated them on Dec. 30.

But that same night, William Cornelius Jr. later was accused of

shoplifting at a nearby store and arrested. Court records show the items included an edible thong and sex toy.

The *Bay City Times*, citing court records, reports his fiancée admitted stolen jewelry was in her possession.

Cornelius was arraigned Tuesday on a misdemeanor charge. He couldn't be reached for comment Thursday. His fiancée posted bond before she could be arraigned on any charges.

The newspaper says investigators confirmed Cornelius bought an engagement ring at Wal-Mart for \$29.

Elusive dog finally captured after 559-day team effort

WATERBURY, Vt. (AP) — A Vermont dog who was the subject of a 559-day search after being spooked by a car accident is finally back home with his owners.

Murphy the golden retriever had resisted the efforts of dozens of volunteers to find him. But he finally walked into a back yard trap in Waterbury set for the very purpose of capturing the cagey canine.

Murphy had been missing since his owner — 25-year-old Kirstin Campbell of Morrisville — went off the road and struck a tree in Stowe June 29, 2014. The stunned dog ran off when he got out of the car.

There have been sightings of Murphy in Waterbury Center and game cameras captured his image, but it wasn't until Saturday night that the pooch was caught and reunited with Campbell.