



M otherless D aughters  
of O range C ounty

# *Sisters at Heart* ©

A Publication of Motherless Daughters of Orange County, Inc.

Summer, 2009

Volume 6, Issue 2

## *MDOC CELEBRATES THE ANNIVERSARY OF OUR 13TH MOTHERLESS DAUGHTERS DAY LUNCHEON*



**A tribute to Mother**



**Karen Stoller, Juanita Driskell, Cindy Hallgren**



**Laura Gibson & Antonietta Treacy**



**Casey Enda, Cami Black & Joan Brooks**

**MDOC thanks the following for their generous contributions to our luncheon:**

**Jim Driskell (wooden heart vessel); Diana Lyons (Wine Country Gift Baskets); Casey Enda (Cookie Lee Jewelry); and Cindy Hallgren (flowers).**

**(To view more pictures and details, go to our website, [motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org](http://motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org).)**

## Don't Forget About Me!

© Jenny Gordon

Should I be feeling guilty, was there something I didn't do?  
Did I not do enough to show all the love I had inside for you?  
If you could say three words to me, would they be the one I'd want to hear?  
When I knock on heavens door for you will you push me away or hold me near?

There's a million questions that I have inside,  
And a million more that keep coming to mind,  
Like where are you now and are you free from all your pain?  
If someone asked you about me would you even remember my name?

I hope I've never left you disappointed or ever let you down,  
That all you've done is smile for me and upon me you've never frowned,  
I want you to be proud of me, in the many years how far I've come,  
From the smallest to the biggest things that I have ever done.

Even though you left me here without a mum so young,  
I'd never say your name in vain, disrespect you or do you wrong.  
So all the questions I have inside, I guess they'll grow to more,  
Just promise me you'll be there the day I knock on heavens door.

## A Prayer For My Parent

© Talking to God by Naomi Levy, Doubleday Press, 2002

I miss you. You gave me my life. You were my protector, my teacher, my moral compass, my comfort. I feel so alone without you. No one worries about me the way you did. No one loves me the way you did.

Please forgive me for the times I caused you pain, and for the times I took you for granted. I can't begin to fathom all the sacrifices you made for my sake.

I want to thank you for all the ways you blessed my life. Nothing can replace the gaping hole your death has left in my life. But mixed together with all my sadness, there is a great joy for having known you.

I will remember your smile, your touch. I will remember your laughter, your kindness, your generosity, your determination, your love.

Thank you for the time we shared, for the love you gave, for the wisdom you spread. I will always treasure the lessons you taught me. I will carry them with me all the days of my life. I am so proud to be your child.

May God watch over you and bless you, with gentleness and with love. As you blessed me. Rest in peace. Amen.

## *Message From Our President ~ Juanita Driskell*

**Dear Fellow Motherless Daughters,**

I hope that you all are having a wonderful summer, wherever you are, enjoying the beautiful weather, and living a good life. I feel especially blessed because my step-daughter was recently married to someone my husband and I both feel is a really good man and who our grandchildren really love. I hope similar blessings have come your way as well.

We held our annual Motherless Daughter Mother's Day Luncheon in May on the day before Mother's Day at the Alta Vista Country Club in Placentia. We had about thirty people attend, a few for the first time. It was a lovely setting and we had some really good sharing amongst us, first at our tables as we ate our delicious lunch, and then after as some of the ladies shared up in front of the microphone. That can be a very daunting experience so I was glad that we had so many who did share their thoughts and feelings that day.

I hope by this time you have been able to access our website and read our last newsletter and the other things on the website. If you are reading this letter, then you have found us. Good!!

And now is the time for me to ask you again to join us, either for the first time or to renew your membership. This website, along with the newsletter you are now reading, can be brought to you because of member dues. Our dues are now only \$20 for a year and while the dues don't bring you a hard copy of our newsletter anymore, they do help pay for the website service, as well as for administrative costs, some of which help put on the luncheon and holiday brunch each year. Administrative costs also include the cost of stamps, printing, printer paper, and other miscellaneous costs.

If you do contribute by paying dues to be a member, it really helps us stay afloat. And that helps us reach out to other motherless daughters, some of whom are still young, like the young kids at Gary's Place For Kids (GPFK). GPFK is a very worthwhile place that helps kids who have lost a parent or parents and is something we all wish had been around when we were suffering that loss all alone. GPFK is where some of our members volunteer and where MDOC donated \$350 last year in your name. And that donation would not have been possible without your dues contribution.

Please make out your check today for \$20 to MDOC and send it to me Juanita Driskell at 1302 W Colonial Ave., Anaheim, 92802. You can find the membership coupon at the back of this newsletter. Fill it out and send it along as well. I will thank you in advance!!

Juanita

*Juanita Driskell*  
MDOC President



### **Board of Directors**

**Juanita Driskell  
Casey Enda  
Mary Felix  
Antonietta Treacy  
Maria Yoss**

### **MDOC Officers**

**Juanita Driskell, President  
Kimberly Martin, Secretary  
Karen Stoller, Treasurer**

### **Sisters at Heart Newsletter**

**Linda Mantarakis, Editor  
mdocnews@yahoo.com**

***This newsletter can also be viewed on our website:  
[motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org](http://motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org)***

## CLINICAL CORNER

By PEGGY BOLCOA

Working with clients who have experienced mother loss at an early age has taught me that the human spirit can be unimaginably strong and the human heart, incredibly courageous. Helping motherless daughters learn to develop intimate relationships with their husbands, friends, and children has shown me that even the most primal of wounds can be healed to some degree so that the adult can be restored, her heart can be reopened and her ability to love can be recovered and renewed.

The issue here is centered around the attachment process and the breach that occurs when the attachment process is interrupted at an early age. For the purpose of this article, I will be talking about women, but much of what I say could be applied to a person of either sex. At any rate, when a young girl experiences the loss of her mother, she may close up and develop defense mechanisms meant to keep her safe from further pain. Unless she is surrounded by loving people who help her to process this huge loss, encourage her to grieve, give her honest but appropriate answers to her questions, and made to feel safe while she is going through all of this, she will probably develop protective emotional and psychological systems which are meant to safeguard her from further hurt and suffering.

Most of these defense mechanisms are appropriate and functional at the time they are developed. While the young girl doesn't develop them consciously, they are very real.

Nobody likes to think of her environment as out of control. Think about earthquakes, tornadoes, stock market crashes, and other huge unexpected environmental threats that make us feel helpless and powerless. The loss of a parent is at least as disruptive to her psyche and at least as disorienting for a young girl and in order to get a sense of control she has various ways of defending against further trauma. Instead of being open to love, she may close up, become depressed, become angry, hostile, or hyper vigilant to try to predict events.

### What is Attachment?

Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and bonding. It is characterized by strong emotions and continues through time. There have been numerous contributors to the theories of attachment I will be discussing, such as John Bowlby and Freud. Bowlby described attachment as a lasting psychological connection between human beings. Since then, most psychologists have found and would

agree that early experiences in childhood have an important influence on the patterns of relating we exhibit later in life. I don't think there are many people today that don't realize this truth.

### Characteristics of Attachment

Bowlby believed that there are four distinguishing characteristics of attachment:

1. **Proximity Maintenance** - The desire to be near the people we are attached to.
2. **Safe Haven** - Returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.
3. **Secure Base** - The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.
4. **Separation Distress** - Anxiety that occurs in the absence a loving caretaker, especially a parent.

### Relationship Style

Rather than continuing to use the rather clinical term "attachment", I will talk about relationship styles from here on.....but I wanted you to understand the origin of most of these thoughts. I also want to say that the relationship styles developed at first, right after mother loss are not necessarily identical to those demonstrated later in adult relationships and there are other variables that play a role in your relationship style. A great deal of time has elapsed between childhood and adulthood. There can be many influential and intervening experiences .

The four basic relationship styles are:

Secure

Ambivalent

Avoidant

Disorganized

For the purpose of this article, I won't go in to secure relationship styles, however, that is what we are all working toward. Obviously that style involves a lot of trust, mutual respect of boundaries, physical and emotional safety, consistency, warm, nurturing non sexual touch, etc.

### **Characteristics of Ambivalent Relationship style**

Children who are ambivalently attached tend to be extremely suspicious of strangers. These children display considerable distress when separated from a parent or caregiver. After a young girl loses her mother through death, she might seem inconsolable to the caretakers that come to raise her. In some cases, the child might passively reject the care taker by refusing comfort, or may openly display direct aggression toward the person put in charge of raising her. According to some researchers ambivalent attachment is relatively uncommon, however, I experience it quite often in my counseling practice.

As adults, those with an ambivalent relationship style often feel reluctant about becoming close to others and worry that their partner does not reciprocate their feelings. This leads to frequent breakups, often because the relationship feels cold and distant. These individuals feel especially distraught after the end of a relationship. These women have a strong desire to be close, but they unconsciously cause separation and then feel very angry and abandoned about their partner leaving, even if they initiated it.

### **Characteristics of Avoidant Relationship Style**

Young girls with avoidant relationship styles tend to avoid parents and caregivers. This avoidance often becomes especially pronounced after a period of absence such as occurs with mother loss. These young girls might not reject attention from a caregiver, but neither do they seek our comfort or contact. Children who are avoidant show no preference between a caregiver and a complete stranger. As adults, those with an avoidant relationship style tend to have difficulty with intimacy and close relationships. These individuals do not invest much emotion in relationships and experience little distress when a relationship ends. They often avoid intimacy by using excuses (such as long work hours), or may fantasize about other people during sex in order to maintain emotional distance. Other common characteristics include a failure to support partners during stressful times and an inability to share feelings, thoughts, and emotions with partners. Often these women appear to be self-sufficient but they have an unconscious yearning to be able to depend and count on someone.

### **Characteristics of Disorganized Relationship Style**

Young girls with a disorganized-insecure relationship style show a lack of clear attachment behavior after mother loss. Their actions and responses to caregivers are often a mix of behaviors, including avoidance or resistance. These girls are described as displaying dazed behavior, sometimes seeming either confused or apprehensive in the presence of a caregiver. Often, when placed with a relative after the loss of their mother, they feel disregarded or burdensome. She may be “playing second fiddle” to other children in the home. Frequently, relatives (or even a Dad) feel stressed by the newcomer and the young girl senses their anxiety and their feeling of being overwhelmed. The little girl is then confused, anxious, angry or fearful.

As grown women, they usually choose between trying to control relationships or going passive in order to keep their partner happy. They either “power up” or “power down”. In other words they are desperately trying not to get rejected or abandoned again.

In my practice with motherless daughters who come in as adults, I find that their deepest need is bondedness and an intense and intimate relationship. They express having struggled to trust both women friends and male partners. However, because we are designed to be in community and meaningful relationships, the consequences of their isolation has been anywhere from disastrous to very unhappy and lonely. It's pretty easy to imagine how important this strong trusted relationship is with a mother. From the moment we are born, we need her to feed us, change diapers, give us attention and take care of our emotional and physical needs. If this doesn't happen, it is called abuse or neglect and it has profound and lasting consequences. However, in the case of the death of a mother, the young infant or child often doesn't realize the mother is gone not of her own free will. To the child, it can even appear that she left on purpose. And many times, even explaining that the mother died, doesn't make it real to a child who is too young to understand the concept of death. There's even a state of depression for young children where they are too young to give themselves a voice or describe what is going on. The young girl develops an emotional picture of the world, based on the fact that her mother suddenly abandoned her. And many times, relatives share the care of the young girl between several

homes. All of this makes for an early child imprint such that she will expect abandonment, she will be distrustful, she may become clingy, or she may push people away. Eventually, she internalizes the outside world and it becomes her inside world. Of all of these, isolation and loneliness are the worst outcome. Look what we do with prisoners in our jail cells, when they act out. We put them in solitary confinement. That is considered the most extreme punishment. And further, it is so primal for us to bond and relate that if we are not in a healthy relationship, we will find another way to bond and it will be a relationship with food, alcohol, drugs, promiscuous sex, money, work, shopping, or some other substance or activity.

Since I don't want to leave you with just the difficulties that come from mother loss, I want to offer the paths to healing and the journey that I've experienced with many of my clients.

### **Paths to healing:**

1. The first thing I ask women to do is to join a motherless daughter's group. In other words, seek out other motherless daughters who will understand your experience and offer comfort to you. Open your heart a little bit and do it gradually. These are women who might have been at a different age when their mother died, in a different country, or their loss might have been expected or unexpected. There can be many variables. However, there will be some common feelings and some ways that you will feel at home with them
2. I explain to the woman in my office that we are going on a journey together and it will take time for her to build up enough trust to "take off her armor" with me. In other words, it will be a process of developing trust in order to feel safe and be vulnerable. If she can do that with me, in my office, then she can take that outside the office and do it in her world. This work doesn't have to be done with a therapist. It can be done with a friend, or a member of your motherless daughter group, but it needs to be someone where you know your feelings are safe and where there is love and nurturing. You should be able to give yourself reasons for trying to trust this person. And then, admit to me or that person that you need support, love and help.
3. Then, I ask that you begin to think about your thinking! What is your relationship style, based on the loss of your mother? Are you ambivalent, avoidant or chaotic? And once we identify your style, we work to change the distortions behind that style. Some fears are rational and some aren't. Some defense mechanisms that served you years ago, might be constricting you now. We need to free you of those so that you can live a rich, rewarding life relating to the people in your world with whom you choose to be intimate.

Change is difficult, however, surrounded by loving, safe people, it is possible for you to heal from mother loss and to change your relationship style to a secure one. You may never fill the void completely, but you can truly enjoy the very life that your mother gave you.

*Peggy Bolcoa, Ph.D., MFC*

*2900 Bristol, Suite J101*

*Costa Mesa, CA 92626*

*(714) 436-1800 ext. 2*

*www.peggybolcoa.com*

# Angel Wings

© Melanie Jordan

I want to know if you can hear me  
I talk to you all the time  
To tell you how I am, how I am feeling  
I want you to know that I am fine

Nothing will ever take the hurt  
But I am so proud of your fight  
For 6 years you battled, 6 different tumors  
Guided by a blinding light

You lived for us children  
We were your world, your dreams  
But It came and took it all away  
My heart feels torn at the seams

It breaks my heart to know  
That you wont be by my side  
How can I walk down the isle  
Wearing your brooch and gorgeous smile?

I prayed for a sign, a gift  
Something to show me that you were here  
And you gave me my husband to be  
He saved me, helped me with my fear

Jamie is a mum now, you would be so proud  
He is so beautiful, with curly hair  
And it's blonde, just like yours  
But he wont ever know you, its not fair

I keep a photo of you  
Its the one from your funeral day  
Did you hear me as I told the story?  
About how much I needed you to stay?

I said, "Mums has got her angel wings,  
She has graduated from this place  
To be honored forever in heaven  
With your caring nature, your loving face"

I will never stop missing you  
One more thing, its never too late  
That when I leave the earth, when my time has  
come  
You will meet me at the pearly gates...

***In love and remembrance:*****Members' Corner**

We acknowledge each Sister at Heart as she remembers the anniversary month she lost her mom and their age at the time.

**August**

Cindy Hallgren	Elizabeth
Maria Yoss	Teresa

**Birthday Wishes****July**

9 Cami Black

**August**

5 Laura Gibson

18 Maria Yoss

31 Juanita Driskell

**September**

9 Kira Mulrooney

# Motherless Daughters of Orange County Membership Form

Please print and complete all items

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- \$20.00 Annual Membership (See member benefits below)
- \$15.00 Student Rate: Eighteen (18) years of age and younger
- Other:\$\_\_\_\_ MDOC appreciates any other tax-deductible donation you care to make and will provide you with a letter for tax purposes.

- I have enclosed my company's matching gift form.
- Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities.

Membership donations pay for the printing of **Sisters at Heart** Newsletter for those professional therapists on our courtesy lists, mailings, local organizer support, and administrative costs. This information is strictly for the purpose of maintaining our database. Motherless Daughters of Orange County does not sell or exchange its member information with any person or organization.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's age at time of loss: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children?  Yes  No Month/Day you lost your mom: \_\_\_\_\_

If so, how many? Boys: \_\_\_\_\_ Girls: \_\_\_\_\_ Your age at time of loss: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Motherless Daughters of Orange County (MDOC)? \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check or money order payable to: Motherless Daughters of Orange County **or** MDOC

Mail to: Juanita Driskell, 1302 W. Colonial Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92802

## MEMBER BENEFITS

Your annual membership to Motherless Daughters of Orange County will provide you with the following benefits for one year:

- Invitations to special events and social events for motherless women.
- Notices about local workshops and seminars that relate to early mother loss and/or grieving.
- Remembrances on your birthday and the anniversary of your mother's death
- Discounts to members for all MDOC-sponsored events that include the public.

### Motherless Daughters of Orange County, Inc.

#### Mission Statement

**Motherless Daughters of Orange County** was formed to provide support, community and resources to women and girls who have experienced early mother loss (birth to 21 years of age). We are committed to bringing together motherless daughters, otherwise isolated, to encourage healing among them and to promote awareness about the long-lasting effects of such a loss.