

Local

Happy Tears

By Lauren Sachs

Lauren holds a bachelor's degree in English and Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Social Work, from the University of Michigan. After completing advanced clinical training at Yale University, Lauren worked as a therapist and consultant in a variety of settings. During her time in Jewish Toledo, Lauren has received the Harry Levison Young Leadership Award and the Shining Light Award, and is currently a board member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo. Lauren is also the author of a forthcoming book about her late husband, his joyful approach to life and work as an oncologist, and how examining his life helped her better cope with her grief. To learn more about Lauren's journey and her work on living well after loss, visit www.literally-lauren.com.



Even as a little girl, I was aware that I saw life just a bit differently than most of my peers. Despite being the younger child in my family of origin, my big brother nicknamed me “Little Mother” at a young age because of my tendency to nurture. Looking back, I believe I was attempting to adopt some of the parental responsibility in our single-parent home. During those early years and throughout my life, I was told that I had the makeup of an “old soul.” I did not assume a parentified role on a conscious level, but am sure it served an important purpose. Surely, one of the most significant purposes was to allay the anxiety I felt about many things, which were beyond my control. I carried these habits into adulthood, along with a related perfectionism, setting me on

a path of achievement, but also one still full of fear of the unknown. My late husband was an anchor in my life. He provided love and stability, and also allowed me to relinquish some of my desire for control. Still, it was not until he died that I realized how much more I had to learn.

Losing my husband so suddenly in the midst of the pandemic truly forced me to re-evaluate my approach to life. As time has passed following his untimely death, I started to think about what words of wisdom I would want to share with my younger self, if only I had the chance. In an odd bit of serendipity, as I was writing and pondering this question at a local cafe, the song “Hey Jude” started to play. Though the ballad is purported to be a song of comfort for John Lennon’s son, Julian, in the wake of his parents’ divorce, it dawned on me that the lyrics echo some of the themes of my own evolution.

As Paul McCartney famously sang: “Hey Jude, don’t make it bad. / Take a sad song and make it better.” Through living with grief, I can relate to the idea that the pain we experience in life can help us to grow and learn to make hard times better. In fact, while I strongly believe that we should not deny the pain of our lived experiences, I also know that coping with heartache can help us more fully appreciate the beauty of life, allowing us to find greater gratitude

for the happy times. I certainly wish I could have learned this vital lesson without my heartbreaking loss and would want to share these thoughts with a younger version of myself.

Along these same lines, McCartney also sings: “Hey Jude, don’t be afraid.” For me, fear of the unknown was such a large part of my modus operandi in my young adult life that I did not realize it was constantly at work in my psyche. Coping with grief has taught me that change is a constant and inevitable part of life. It has also allowed me to keep my heart open to this natural metamorphosis, listening to the universe for guidance when I felt unsure of my next steps. After about two years of coping with grief, I was able to take stock of how this life-altering loss had shaped me. To my surprise, I found that I had not fallen apart in its wake, and realized how strong and capable I truly was.

Another powerful piece of advice I could apply to my younger self comes midway through the song’s lyrics. “And anytime you feel the pain, hey Jude, refrain, / Don’t carry the world upon your shoulders.” While I initially considered that perhaps McCartney was advising young Julian to avoid feeling his painful emotions, upon further reflection, I imagine it has a more nuanced meaning. Instead of the idea that pain should be avoided, I believe that

the line that immediately follows (to avoid carrying “the world upon your shoulders”) suggests the concept of attenuating the hurt. In my life, I can say that my early attempts to avoid the torment of my loss only made it harder to cope. Over time, I found I could feel and acknowledge the heartache, but also find ways to soften it. By striking this balance, I could coexist with the pain, but not allow it to destroy me. Moreover, as I used to believe I was fully in charge of my future, the idea of lifting the weight off my shoulders is akin to learning to let go. Having that realization is freeing since it means that one can release the desire to fix things in life, and simply live more peacefully and openly.

As I edge closer to the four-year anniversary of my husband’s passing, I know for certain that the way I see life now has been shaped by my path through grief. While it feels almost inhumane to say I am grateful for my grief, I do have gratitude for the lessons it has taught me and the perspective I have gained. Through happy and sad times, I now understand how much we benefit from accepting change, as well as nurturing and being kind to ourselves as we adjust to our new realities. I also know that, like “Jude,” I really can deal with all the hard things that come my way...and somehow make them better, better and better.

First year of Toledo Jewish Men’s Club a success

At breakfast in February of 2023, Dick and Mark Greenblatt and Joel Beren met to discuss what could be done to develop a program that regularly promoted Toledo Jewish men to meet. Later, Matt Rubin, a Toledo transplant from Detroit, graduate of University of Toledo, and local real-estate developer, joined the planning committee.

From that initial conversation, the Toledo Jewish Men’s Club was formed. A little over a year later, the “Club” regularly welcomes 50 or more friends at monthly luncheons, usually on the first Tuesday of the month at The Beirut. “At the last meeting we had over 50 men ages 33 to 96 in attendance, this is truly a multi-generational fraternity of Jewish men,” said Matt Rubin.

Joel Beren commented, “growing

up in Toledo’s Jewish community brought with it many male mentors and regular opportunities to “rub elbows” with generations of male Jewish friends. Some of those are the last members of the generation that built our Jewish community. Many are lifelong contemporaries, and yes, there are young Jewish men in Toledo to meet as well!”

Dick Greenblatt commented, “most of the social activities that brought Jewish men together in Toledo have gone by the wayside or are close to inactive - the Toledo Bath House (the original “Shorty’s”), Glengarry and Twin Oaks Country Clubs, the Town Club, synagogue-based “kishke dinners” and men’s clubs, the Raggedy Ass Cadets annual reunion, JCC sports banquets, and B’nai Brith bowling and softball.

All either no longer exist or organize a fraction of their former activities.”

There are no dues, no officers, no Federation giving or congregational affiliations necessary, no community funds allocated or solicited for the operation of the “Club,” no charter no constitution, and no meetings (other than lunch). It functions completely on the energy of a handful of dedicated volunteers, its success and growth fueled 100% by the word of mouth of its participants. According to Beren there are nearly 250 men who have asked that their names be added to the contact list.

The format is simple - kibbitz, have lunch, listen to an occasional guest speaker, kibbitz some more, and then leave. “We’re usually in and out in just over an hour,” said Mark Greenblatt.

Guest speakers throughout the first year included a special appearance of long-time Toledo JCC Sports Director Murray Guttman and former Federation Executive Director Steve Edelstein. Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz, Ohio Jewish Communities President and CEO Howie Beigelman, UT head football coach Jason Candle, and Adam Levine, President and CEO of the Toledo Museum of Art.

June’s meeting is scheduled for Tuesday the 11th at noon (at The Beirut). The speaker is Brandon Sehlhorst, Director of Economic Development at the City of Toledo. Couvert is \$25, which includes a generous buffet lunch, tax, and tip.

To add your name to the email and/or cell phone invitation list, please email Joel Beren (joel@bereneq.com).