

Reader's Digest

1986 July — September

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"THERE IT WAS— A LUMP ON MY BREAST!"

BY CAMELLIA JACKSON
Jasper, Ala.



READER'S DIGEST not only saved my life but also helped me recover emotionally from a very trying time. One day last summer, I got up early and sent my eight-year-old daughter to a swim meet. My August Reader's Digest had arrived, and I started to read "A Race for Life," a special feature by Lawrence Elliott about a woman's fight against cancer.

Later, as I showered and thought of that story, I decided to examine my breasts. And there it was—a lump on my right breast! Or was it? What are they supposed to feel like?

That night I told my husband, who felt the lump and was also unsure. So, after the weekend, I called our doctor. He examined my breast and suggested a mammogram; after he saw the mammogram, he urged a biopsy. On August 22, a surgeon removed the lump. It was malignant.

I went home and the next day enrolled 30 children in my third-grade class. The school hired a substitute, and I returned to the hospital. On August 27 I had my right breast and lymph nodes removed. I felt fine, both mentally and physically. After all, I had a daughter I wanted to raise, and a very supportive husband and family. Who wouldn't give up a breast to live?

On August 29 a cancer specialist suggested low-grade chemotherapy, since one lymph node had contained a malignant cell. He explained that the major side effect was some loss of hair. Why did that possibility upset me so? I was still teary and decided to look at the new Reader's Digest that had been brought to me at the hospital. I happened to turn to "Three Words That Work Magic" by Anya Bateman. The three words: "It doesn't matter." After reading the article, I thought, *What will be important twenty years from now—the fact that I'm alive or that I was bald for a short time?*

Bring on the chemotherapy, I thought. Let my hair fall out . . . IT DOESN'T MATTER!



The Digest

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MOVING?

SEE PAGE 206
FOR CHANGE OF
ADDRESS FORM



Robert Neill is a farmer from Mississippi who likes to write—and gets up an hour early to do just that. When he decided to try his hand at anecdotes, he thought first of *The Digest*. "You people keep things on a down-to-earth basis that everyone can relate to," he says. His contribution to "All in a Day's Work" was actually a family project, admitted Neill. His oldest daughter took the dictation from him, and his wife typed and sent in the story. "I guess," says Neill, "I'll have to share the wealth with them."

HAVE YOU READ—or heard—something interesting or amusing you would like to share? Although Reader's Digest does not read or return unsolicited article-length manuscripts, it welcomes the following contributions, and payment is made, on publication, at these rates:

\$300 for *Life in These United States*. Contributions must be true, unpublished stories from your own experience, revelatory of adult human nature, and providing appealing or humorous sidelights on the American scene. Maximum length: 300 words. Address: Life in U.S. Editor.

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For short anecdotes, quips and quotations, the most likely sources are books, magazines of limited circulation and local newspapers. So many duplicates of items from major magazines and syndicated columns are received that the chance of being the first contributor is slim. Original poetry is *not* solicited (except for short, light verse suitable for *Picturesque Speech*).

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**I earned money, fame & glory
Reader's Digest bought my story!**

Unresolved pain keeps us from being complete, content people.

Here's keen, compassionate advice from what Ann Landers calls "the best all-purpose self-help book I have seen in years"

How to Live Through Loss

Condensed from
"LIVING THROUGH PERSONAL CRISIS"

ANN KAISER STEARNS

LIFE INVOLVES almost all of us in losses of significant magnitude. When a 55-year-old man suffers a heart attack and has to change his way of living, something is taken away, choices that previously belonged to him. When parents lose a child, they are deprived of the thing most precious to them in the world. When people of any age suffer the loss of a loved one by divorce or death, they are often left with a sense of having been robbed. Unfortunately, few of us know what to do to help ourselves through these times of personal upheaval.

Grief is profoundly misunderstood. A typical example occurred

ANN KAISER STEARNS, author, professor and lecturer, holds a doctorate in clinical psychology. She wrote this book following her divorce and other family-related losses.

in one of my college classes, when a student expressed his concern about an uncle who was "not taking marital separation well at all."

The young man was troubled because his uncle talked almost constantly about his estranged wife and was "still tearful." When I asked how long his relative had been in this emotional state, the student replied, "More than four months!"

The well-meaning nephew had not yet learned that grieving takes time. Exactly how long depends on the circum-



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PHOTO: DAVID ATTIE/THE STOCK SHOP, INC.

HOW TO LIVE THROUGH LOSS

stances of the loss. Many who grieve the slow death of a loved one or gradual deterioration of a marriage engage in anticipatory mourning. They begin the grieving process long before the relationship actually ends, and only a few weeks or months of emotional turmoil may follow.

In situations where death comes suddenly or people are forced to cope with radical surgery, a debilitating accident or other unforeseen tragedy, the mourning can last a year or more. In any case, unrealistic expectations that the bereaved should be able to "snap out of it" and "get on with their lives" often lead them to feel anxious, guilty or self-doubting, and make the process of grieving more difficult.

Grief is not a mental illness. It just feels that way sometimes. Sleeplessness, anxiety, fear, anger, a preoccupation with self and with sad thoughts can all add up to a feeling of "going crazy." Actually, each of these is a normal part of the grieving process, and it is important to understand that.

A widower may come home from work at night and open the door to the aroma of his wife's cooking—though nothing is on the stove. He is hallucinating—an experience common to bereaved persons; especially in the early weeks. If you ask the widower, he will tell you that his wife is dead. But he may also tell you that he hears her in the kitchen at night, getting a snack as she often did in life. The

widower is struggling with separation. His wife is gone, but her memory is vividly present, and he misses her terribly.

In the early stages of grief, one is apt to move back and forth between calmness and tearfulness. There is a disbelief about what has happened, and we feel bewildered. Gradually, a depression sets in that will color a person's life for months. Everything is a reminder of the tragedy. Those who have lost a spouse will notice every couple holding hands. Happy people will seem to be everywhere, intensifying the sense of isolation. If you have had a miscarriage or an abortion, every child on the street may speak to you.

Grieving people will think about themselves and their own feelings more than they think of anything else. They will avoid certain friends and places until, as time goes on, they become less sensitive to painful reminders of their losses. This process is an essential aspect of separating from someone precious.

People need to work through the course of bereavement in their own ways, though I'm convinced that grief is less prolonged when a person is able to mourn openly. What is crucial to the healing process is that some kind of action release the pain.

Six days after his first child was born, with Down's syndrome, an insurance salesman began to work at home every evening, tearing apart his old wooden porch. He had meant to rebuild the rickety thing

anyway. Now he was pulling it down, one piece at a time.

Although he was never able to put his feelings into words, this young father was facing his grief in his own way. Evening after evening, he went out to the porch he was violently disassembling, until he finally began to construct the new one. At that time, he began to love his Down's syndrome child.

For most of us, talking with trusted friends is an effective means of releasing emotions and undergoing healing. Even while you may be uncomfortable sharing your pain and would prefer to remain alone, you will find solace in the company of others. Realization dawns that you're making matters much worse by self-imposed isolation. Companionship is healing, and your religious beliefs will almost certainly be a strength. Faith is a powerful energy when it represents the trust that, with struggle, your sorrows can be overcome.

Activity is another crucial ingredient of the healing process. Mobilizing yourself will probably be difficult. Work and other activities once pursued with interest may now be a drudgery. But work has an extremely therapeutic value. Having to be responsible to other people will help you discover inner strength. Just remember to have the compassion toward yourself to accept your limits. Your work performance will only gradually return to a normal level.

If you must remain at home, try

to follow a schedule, even if at first you can bring yourself only to do the laundry, shop for groceries or take a long walk. Physical activity is difficult to undertake while you are feeling depressed, but it can be very restoring to heart and soul. There may be solace even in card playing, concerts, movies or a good book. You'll have to keep prodding yourself until regular routines are established.

Do something for someone else, something that helps you to feel useful. Committing yourself to a regular activity of benefit to another person, even while you're hurting, will help you to respect yourself. Small acts of self-caring are also helpful in times of duress. Taking a warm bath at bedtime, setting the table attractively even when eating alone, sitting outside when the weather is nice, buying a bouquet of flowers—such small things can help you feel better.

After the earlier period of grief has passed, finding a group to join can also be helpful. A community center, local college, church or synagogue may offer events that would be of comfort to you.

Sometimes, the one thing that keeps us going is the knowledge that human beings can transform something hurtful or ugly into positive learning. Viktor Frankl has taught as many people as anyone, perhaps, how to survive personal tragedy. Frankl's experience as a concentration-camp prisoner in Germany during World War II is

chilling and inspiring. Virtually his entire family was murdered in the Holocaust. Still, Frankl found a way to sustain a sense of meaning in his life.

When the brutality of the concentration camp pressed in on him, Frankl held to a fantasy that gave him strength. He imagined himself after the war standing before a class of students. In his fantasy he was teaching them about the meaning that can be found in suffering. Frankl determined that he would take along with him these horrors and that they would be transformed into something of value. Quoting philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Frankl boldly declared, "That which does not kill me makes me stronger."

As Rabbi Harold Kushner observed in his best-seller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, "We need to get over the questions that focus on the past and on the pain—'Why did this happen to me?'—and ask instead the question which opens doors to the future: 'Now that this has happened, what shall I do about it?'"

At 23, as part of my work toward

my counseling degree, I found myself caring for hospital patients for the first time. Working with gravely ill people provoked a storm of unsettling memories and I sought the counsel of a beloved professor. For several weeks I periodically sat in his office weeping.

He was a man with young children and I knew that his wife was dying of cancer; but he listened to my problems attentively. Finally, I told him that I felt guilty crying for myself. Surely, I said, your sorrow is more profound than mine. In the 17 years since then, I have quoted many times my professor's reply: "Don't let my suffering rob you of your own."

You may have to give up the idea that you aren't entitled to mourn because others have greater sorrows. All of us have both the right and the responsibility to take our losses seriously. Grief, when ignored or denied, can harm us in countless ways. Facing our losses is part of how we find our freedom again.

For information on reprints of this article, see page 205

Hands Off!

A FRIEND OF MINE was giving an important dinner party for her husband's business associates. She put guest towels and soap in the bathroom, and, not wanting her teen-agers to use them first, attached warning notes that read: "Use these and I'll kill you."

When the guests left after a successful evening, she went into the bathroom and found the towels and soap untouched—with her warning notes still on them.

—Contributed by G. W.

News from the World of **SCIENCE**

KILLER LAKE OF CAMEROON

IN THE PREDAWN HOURS of August 16, 1984, along Lake Monoun in the African nation of Cameroon, 37 people lost their lives, victims of a mysterious cloud that had enveloped a 200-yard stretch of road. Authorities could not enter the area until 10:30 a.m., when the cloud had dissipated. A physician who examined the bodies concluded that death had been caused by asphyxia. Mucus and blood had oozed from the victims' noses and mouths. There were first-degree burns on their skin, though their clothes were unaffected.

Nearby villagers had heard a loud explosion from the lake the night before. Since 300-foot-deep Lake Monoun is one of many volcanic-crater lakes in the region, scientists first suspected that the cloud resulted from an eruption. The government invited volcanologists Haraldur Sigurdsson and Joseph Devine, both then of the University of Rhode Island, to assist in a study of the incident.

Their analysis of Lake Monoun, completed last December in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey, worked against the volcanic-explosion theory. The researchers found that delicate chemical balances had strongly stratified the lake by maintaining high levels of carbon dioxide and bicarbonate in the deepest waters. When a landslide from the crater rim disturbed this stratification, the sudden change in pressure released carbon-

dioxide gas—"as when you open a soda bottle," says Sigurdsson. The resultant dense cloud was carried by winds to the shore road, where it stayed near the ground. Sigurdsson suspects there may also have been acid in the cloud, which could have helped make it visible in daylight and might account for the victims' skin burns.

"As far as we know, this event was unique—certainly in its lethal effects," says Sigurdsson. —S. Weisburd in *Science News*

TALKING ELEPHANTS?

WHILE OBSERVING a group of elephants last year at the Washington Park Zoo in Portland, Ore., Katharine Payne, a Cornell University biologist, felt unusual throbbing sensations in the air around her—"like the vibrations from the lowest note on a big pipe organ," she recalls. After further investigation, Payne and fellow Cornell researchers found that the giant animals make a variety of calls in the frequency range of 14 to 24 hertz, below the threshold of human hearing.

The discovery indicates a more sophisticated complex of elephant communication than was previously recognized. Since very-low-frequency sounds travel great distances before losing their strength, the use of infrasonic calls may explain at least two mysteries that have long puzzled elephant field researchers: the ability of male elephants to find females several miles away during the two days each

month that the females are fertile, and the sudden coordinated movements of large groups of elephants when no signal is apparent to human observers.

—Bayard Webster in *New York Times*

VOYAGER MEETS URANUS

"THE MOST SUCCESSFUL space mission of all time," exclaimed one delighted NASA scientist as Voyager 2 completed its flawless rendezvous with the giant planet Uranus last January.

Having brilliantly explored Jupiter in 1979 and Saturn in 1981, the spacecraft had now photographed the nine known rings of Uranus and found at least two more. Voyager further discovered ten tiny Uranian moons and sent back incredibly detailed images of the five larger, known satellites. By far the most exotic was Miranda, about 300 miles across, its rugged features combining at least ten different types of terrain.

The versatile spacecraft also managed to pry a bewildering volume of

information from Uranus itself, despite its 5000-mile-thick, opaque atmosphere. Voyager helped resolve old questions about the composition of Uranus (a core of rock and liquid, covered by a deep ocean of water laced with ammonia), while raising new ones by showing that the planet's magnetic field is topsy-turvy by Earth standards. Its magnetic axis is displaced by 60 degrees from the rotational axis. (The data did help establish the length of a Uranian day: 17.24 hours.)

While scientists continue to examine the wealth of new material, the indomitable Voyager heads on for one last encounter—with Neptune in August 1989—before leaving our solar system.

—Leon Jaroff in *Time*

USING THEIR HEADS

AFRICAN WOMEN who carry enormous loads on their heads expend much less energy per pound of load than do soldiers carrying backpacks—even less than pack animals. In fact, according to a team of Kenyan, Italian and U.S. researchers, these women can carry up to 20 percent of their body weight without expending any extra energy. Carrying a 70-percent load, the women raised their energy consumption only about 50 percent versus nearly 100 percent for soldiers.

The scientists said they could not explain the findings for certain. One speculation is that head-supported loads are moved less up-and-down or side-to-side with each step than are back- or shoulder-supported loads, thus saving energy. But experience also seems to be a factor, since people unaccustomed to head-carrying use as much energy that way as they do back-carrying.

—Washington Post



Montage shows Voyager images of Miranda and Uranus with artist's overlay of rings

Surrounded by Sisters

To a little brother subject to their domination, there was never a moment of the day free of their dreaded vigilance

Condensed from NEW YORK TIMES
JEREMIAH J. MAHONEY

WHEN I was very young I believed sisters were a dark penance for little brothers who had strayed from God's will. Sisters—and I had three older ones—were strange and cruel beings dedicated to ensuring that a brother's time on the planet would be as heartwarming as a stay on Devil's Island.

My good mother was preoccupied with cleaning, cooking, and stretching Depression dollars, and often gave my care and feeding over to my sisters, who took the job very seriously. They loved harsh soap and hot water. Three or four times a day one of those iron-willed little guardians was scrubbing my body.



In the case of my youngest sister, a certified perfectionist at the age of five, the motive for tearing at my face was her repugnance for freckles. My large raisin-shaped facial stigmata were a disgrace to the family, she contended. Often she

pleaded with my mother not to let me out of the house until I was 28.

My sisters hated baseball bats, hammers, sticks, rocks—all the things I loved to brandish with mad determination. I was never allowed to play with any object they considered lethal. Early on, I was convinced my sisters believed that hands were made only for food handling, itchy woolen gloves and prayer.

In those years I had a clear, unbiased view of what constituted the genus sister. Sisters were ugly, bony giants whose only purpose was to make life miserable. Sisters ate their vegetables, enjoyed milk. Sisters carried tiny handkerchiefs with embroidered hems. Sisters liked bathing, school and teachers, did homework neatly and never spilled ink.

I remember days filled with sun and sky, days when I should have been off in some green field, but instead my sisters would box me in on our front steps. It was agony to sit there dreaming of freedom, while they pursued the idiocy of "jacks" or worked on their red, nail-studded spools that after half a lifetime produced a foolish knitted strip that had no discernible use whatsoever.

There were times I escaped and ran off seeking excitement. My sisters, cheered on by my mother, would scream threats of death and other dire consequences while they chased me around the neighborhood as if I were a mad dog.

On occasion, my warders would drag me to the movie house. Even though they fed me caramels, I rolled around the gum-checked floor, shouting encouragement to the villains on the screen, until the usher, and then the manager, told me to tone down.

Often one of my sisters would upend my seat and jam my frail body between it and the backrest. I would plead to be released. As soon as my bruised body was pulled out, I would break free and run about shooting people in the audience with my thumb-and-forefinger handgun. Then my sisters, the usher and the manager would chase me up and down the aisles, in and out of the empty rows, until they cornered me.

For my crimes at the movies, sooner or later my sisters would embark on a quiet vendetta. When my mother was off shopping, they tied me to the back-yard fence like a mongrel, or made me eat spinach or day-old boiled cabbage.

When I was 11 or 12, an orange-haired idiot stripling, and my sisters began to date boys, I remember Saturday nights were a nightmare of activity. My sisters ran about the house looking for shoes and belts and dresses and ribbons; they sulked, they screamed, they argued as to who would use the bathroom first. But I loved those crazy nights. Their nervous hysteria was a joy to behold—especially since my sisters invariably remembered something that was needed from the store—

stockings, bobby pins, a barrette, white shoe polish. And each Saturday night, I straddled a kitchen chair waiting to do business—full of brotherly love, of course.

I would run to the store for one sister at a time, and only one item could be purchased on each trip. Each trip cost them ten cents. They hated me, but I was the only game in town. Most Saturdays I exploited their needs to the tune of 70 or 80 cents.

Though their Saturday-night anxiety supplied me with a tidy sum each week, I was not above the mean surprise that made life with sisters worthwhile. After we had a telephone installed and it became my sisters' link to the wonderful world of boys, I was instructed to take messages. Upon her return home, my most popular sister would ask, "Any calls?" I would reply, "A guy named Frank called." She would take the bait eagerly. "Frank who?" I would stifle a laugh and say, "Frankenstein."

Another telephone ruse was affected from the candy store. I would call home and ask for my youngest sister, who at the time thought she was Joan Crawford. She walked and talked like the

movie star and wore her hair in the Crawford style.

When my sister came to the phone I would explain that I was an agent for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and that I had seen her in Rappaport's Candy Store and was struck by her walk, her long hair; would she come to Hollywood for work as a stand-in? She promptly inquired in her most articulate silver-screen voice, "A stand-in for whom?" I would muffle my joy at her gullibility and reply, "King Kong."

In time our gentle war came to an end, and I discovered that my sisters were beautiful, kind, human. Suddenly I became protective of them; I resented the slick-haired young men who came to our house in Simonized Chevrolets.

And I discovered my sisters' generous hearts; many thoughtful gifts came my way at Christmas and on birthdays. They wept when I left for the Marines in 1941, and during my time in the Pacific they wrote many warm, sweet letters that helped still the fear.

As I look back to the trials they had to endure with their little brother, I salute their patience and devotion and I thank that special muse who brought them into my life.



The Pall of the Wild. On our camping trip in northern California, my husband was kept busy constantly: chopping wood, lighting fires and, most of all, heating up water to wash clothes, dishes and ourselves. I thought he was enjoying every minute of the trip until I heard him complaining to a fellow camper. "I've heated up so much water," he said, "I feel like a midwife."

—Contributed by F. A. M.

Quotable Quotes

It's not the voting that's democracy; it's the counting.

—Tom Stoppard, *Jumpers* (Grove Press)

If you are all wrapped up in yourself, you are overdressed.

—Quoted by Kaye Halverson and Karen M. Hess in *The Wedded Unmother* (Augsburg)

Idleness is not doing nothing. Idleness is being free to do anything.

—Floyd Dell, *Were You Ever a Child?* (Knopf)

A happy marriage is the world's best bargain.

—O. A. Battista

Learning sleeps and snores in libraries, but wisdom is everywhere, wide awake, on tiptoe.

—Josh Billings

Parents often talk about the younger generation as if they didn't have anything to do with it.

—Funny Funny World

I am sure it is a great mistake always to know enough to go in when it rains. One may keep snug and dry by such knowledge, but one misses a world of loveliness.

—Adeline Knapp

Laughter can be heard farther than weeping.

—Yiddish proverb

There is no fence or hedge round time that has gone. You can go back and have what you like if you remember it well enough.

—Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley* (Macmillan)

Borrow trouble for yourself if that's your nature, but don't lend it to your neighbors.

—Rudyard Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies* (Doubleday)

No sound concentrates so much spitefulness and malice into a very small volume as the pinging of mosquitoes.

—Elsbeth Huxley, *The Flame Trees of Thika* (Chatto & Windus, London)

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding.

—Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (Knopf)

Life is a child playing round your feet, a tool you hold firmly in your grip, a bench you sit down upon in the evening, in your garden.

—Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

Five current scientific findings that can help
your fight against fat

ALWAYS HUNGRY? HERE'S WHAT EXPERTS ADVISE



Condensed from
WOMAN'S DAY

PAULA SPAN

LUNCH IS OVER, yet you reach for something to nibble on—a salty bread stick, a bite of leftover dessert. You know that you shouldn't, you've really had enough, but something prompts your appetite.

It's nowhere near dinnertime, but when the conversation turns to cooking, you are immediately hungry. Others seem able just to talk about food, but you sneak away for a snack.

You're on a low-carbohydrate diet but can't resist gobbling a couple of cookies now and then. You're ashamed to have so little willpower.

Proper eating is partly a matter of willpower, but it isn't the whole story. Studies have shown that appetite is controlled by many factors—both emotional and biochemical—which are in the process of being explored. Of numerous inquiries into the mysteries of eating, here are five of the most surprising. What they tell us may change the way we think about eating, over-eating, dieting and exercise.

1. Chewing and stress. When Dr. John Morley and Allen Levine of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Minneapolis asked several hundred people how they