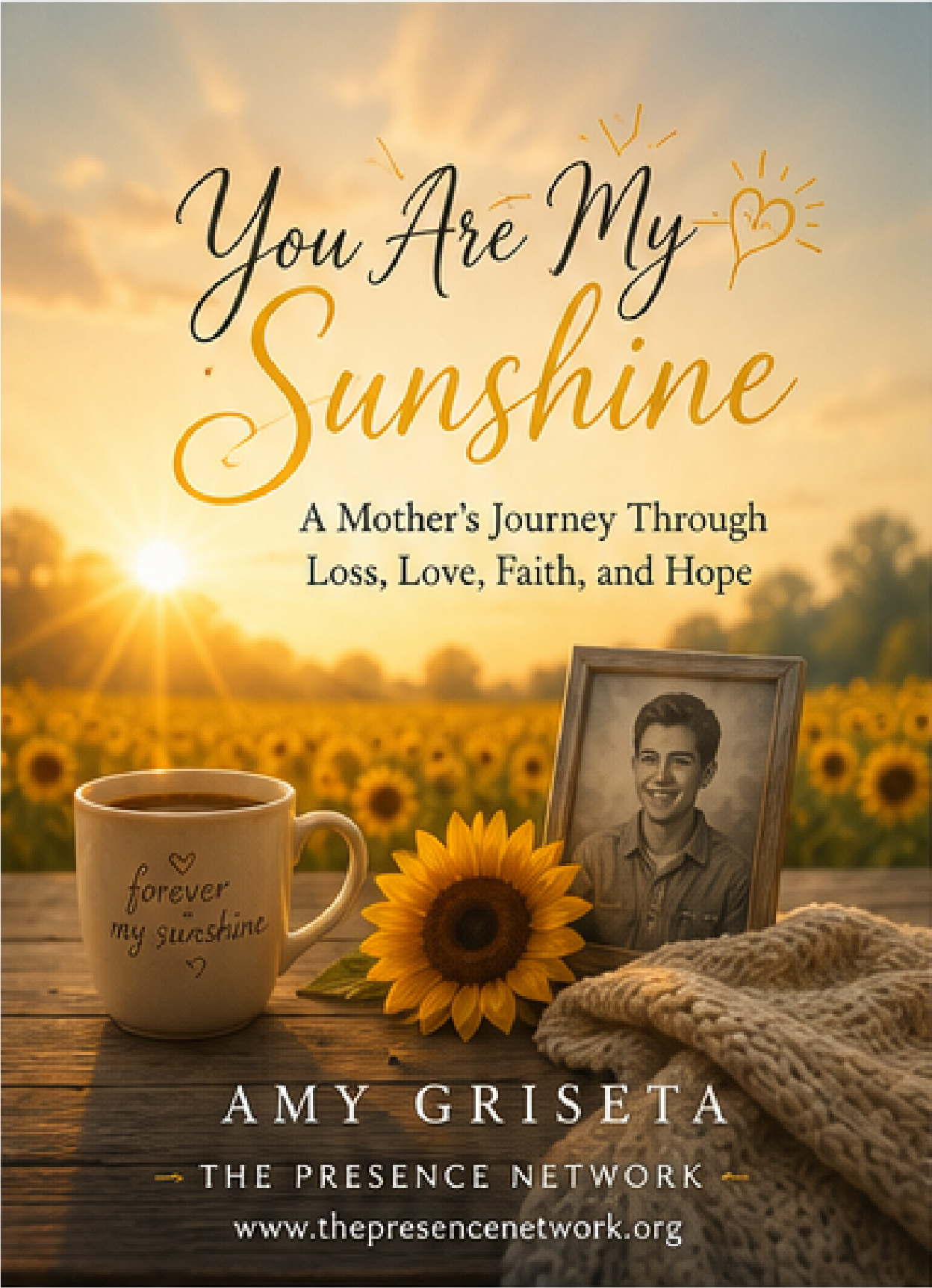




You Are My Sunshine

A Mother's Journey Through
Loss, Love, Faith, and Hope

AMY GRISETA

→ THE PRESENCE NETWORK ←

www.thepresencenetwork.org

Welcome

If you're holding this book, there's a good chance your heart has been broken.

Maybe you've lost a son or daughter. Maybe you've lost someone whose absence has changed everything. Or maybe you're walking beside someone you love and don't know how to help. Whatever brought you here, I want you to know this before you read another page: you are not alone.

This isn't a book written by someone who has all the answers. It's written by a mother whose life changed forever the day her son, Anthony, unexpectedly left this earth. In a single moment, my world became divided into "before" and "after."

Grief has a way of changing everything. It changes the way you wake up, the way you laugh, the way you celebrate holidays, and even the way you look toward tomorrow. But I've also learned that even in the deepest sorrow, God can gently carry us one breath, one step, and one day at a time.

These pages are pieces of my heart. They contain tears, questions, memories, hope, and the lessons I've learned while walking a road I never wanted to travel. My prayer is that somewhere within these chapters, you'll find comfort, understanding, and permission to grieve without shame.

If this book helps even one grieving heart feel a little less alone, then Anthony's life continues to touch this world in a beautiful way.

This journey begins with love... because love is why grief hurts so deeply.

May you discover hope and comfort,

Sincerely,

Amy Griseta

Dedication

For Anthony, my beloved son

I wrote this book because sometimes putting our grief into words is the first step toward healing.

They say that giving birth to a child is one of the greatest pains a mother can endure. But I have learned that there is another pain that words struggle to describe:

Burying your child.

No parent should ever have to know that kind of heartbreak.

Anthony was only 31 years old when his life was suddenly taken from us by a brain abscess. His passing was unexpected and heartbreaking, leaving behind a family who loved him deeply and a future that we thought we would still get to share with him.

But Anthony's story is not defined by the way he left this world.

It is defined by the way he lived.

He was funny, handsome, kind — oh, so kind — and generous in ways that touched the lives of everyone around him.

He was my son.

He was loved beyond words.

This book is dedicated not only to Anthony, but to every grieving family who has had to say goodbye too soon.

To the mothers who carry an ache in their hearts that never completely goes away.

To the fathers who grieve quietly and carry a pain that is sometimes unseen.

To the grandparents who mourn the loss of a grandchild and the dreams they held for their future.

To the brothers, sisters, spouses, children, and loved ones left behind.

I know the depth of this pain because I have lived it.

I know what it feels like to wake up and realize the person you love is no longer here. I know the

questions, the tears, the emptiness, and the moments when grief feels too heavy to carry.

But I have also learned that love continues.

This book is my way of reaching out a hand to other grieving families and reminding them:

You are not alone.

Your grief matters.

Your love matters.

And the person you lost will always be a part of your story.

My hope is that these words bring comfort to someone who feels lost in their pain, and that they remind every grieving heart that even in the darkest moments, love remains.

For Anthony.

For every family who grieves.

For every heart learning how to carry love after loss.

Chapter 01

The Day Everything Changed

No mother ever expects to receive the news that will change her life forever.

I never imagined that a terrible migraine would be the beginning of a journey that would take my son away from me.

Anthony had started experiencing severe migraines. They were frightening and unlike anything we had seen before. We searched for answers. We trusted that someone would find out what was happening.

But no one knew.

Then an MRI revealed what was happening — Anthony had a brain abscess.

The news came like a storm.

I was living in another state when I received the call. Suddenly, I had to leave everything behind and fly to be with my son.

But by the time I arrived, Anthony was already in a coma.

There are moments in life when your heart cannot accept what your eyes are seeing. A mother wants to run to her child, hold him, fix it, make it better.

But I could not wake him.

I could only sit beside him.

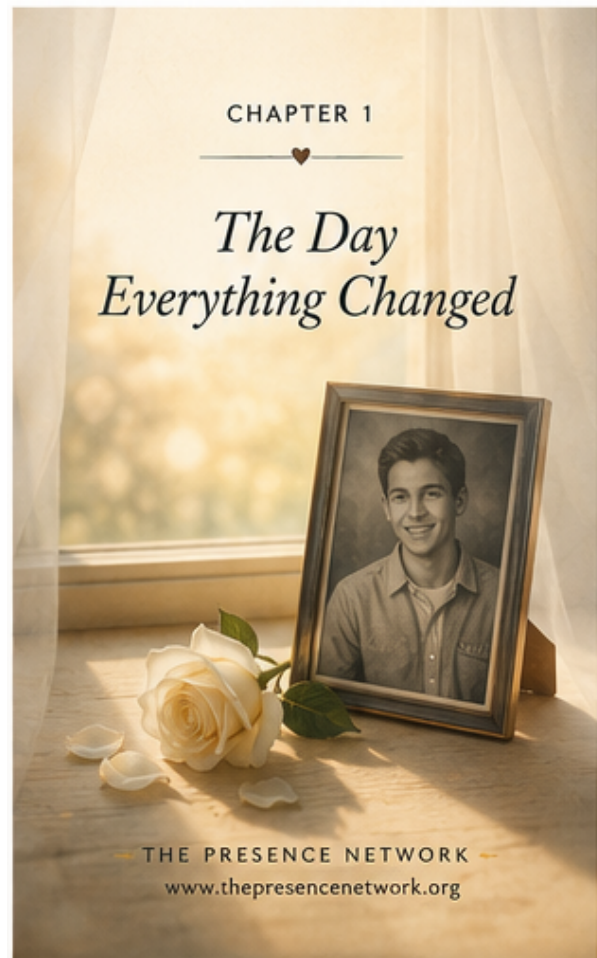
So I did what any mother would do.

I sang to him.

I sang, “You Are My Sunshine,” believing somehow that my voice might reach him. I wanted him to hear me. I wanted some part of him to know his mom was there.

I wanted him to know he was loved.

Just one week before all of this happened, Carlo and I had gone to see Anthony during our vacation.



At the time, it was simply a visit.

A beautiful time together.

A chance to spend time with my son.

We had no idea it would be the last time we would see him awake.

No idea that one week later, we would be fighting for his life.

Looking back, I thank the Lord for that gift.

I thank Him that I got to see Anthony, hug him, talk with him, and spend those precious moments together.

Because I know my heart.

I know that if I had not had that time with him, I would have carried a different kind of pain. I think I would have struggled with wondering if I should have been there, if I should have gone, if I had missed my chance.

But God gave me that time.

A gift I will forever treasure.

After the MRI, everything moved quickly. Anthony underwent surgery, and we were told it had gone well. We held onto hope. We believed we were moving toward healing.

But the next morning, Anthony woke up still suffering from pain in his head.

Then the unimaginable happened.

He suffered three brain strokes.

Those strokes put Anthony into a coma.

We prayed.

We waited.

We hoped.

For days, we held onto every possibility that our son would come back to us.

But eventually, the doctors told us the devastating news — Anthony would not come out of the coma.

No parent should ever have to face that decision.

The decision to remove life support is not a decision made because love ends.

It is made because love is so deep that you cannot bear to see your child suffer.

Anthony was only 31 years old.

He was funny, handsome, kind — oh, so kind — and generous.

His life was so much more than the way it ended.

And this book is not only about the day I lost my son.

It is about the love that remains.

Chapter 02

When Others Still Need You

People often talk about the moment you lose someone you love as if time stops. And in many ways, it does. The world keeps moving around you, but inside, everything feels frozen.

When Anthony died, there was a part of me that wanted to stop too. I wanted permission to just fall apart and not have to be anything for anyone. I wanted to disappear into my grief and not answer questions, not make decisions, not pretend that I was okay.

But life does not stop because your heart has been shattered.

I was still a mother.

Even though Anthony was gone, my other children were still here. They were grown, but they still needed their mom. They needed my love, my voice, my presence, and sometimes even my strength when I felt like I had none left to give.

That was one of the hardest parts of grief — realizing that while I was mourning one child, I still had to keep showing up for the others.

There were days when I smiled because they needed to see their mom smile. There were days when I answered the phone and said, “I’m okay,” even when those words felt impossible to say. There were days when I was pouring from an empty cup, trying to be present for the people I loved while quietly carrying a pain no one could see.

A mother’s heart does not divide when she loses a child. It stretches. It hurts in one place while still trying to love in another.

I learned that strength does not always look like being fearless. Sometimes strength looks like getting out of bed when you don’t want to. Sometimes it looks like making dinner, answering a message, hugging your children, and choosing to keep going one more day.

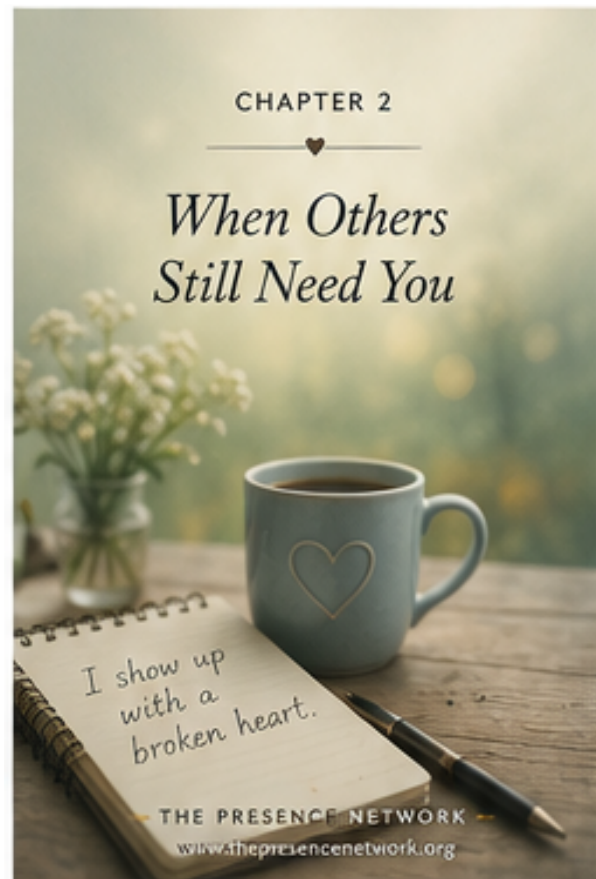
I didn’t keep going because I was no longer hurting.

I kept going because love was still asking something of me.

Anthony’s life mattered. His love mattered. And the love I still had for my children mattered too.

Grief taught me that you can carry a broken heart and still carry love. You can miss the person who is gone while embracing the people who are still here.

And somehow, through God’s grace, you learn to take the next step.



Chapter 03

The Weight of “What If?”

There is a question that visits many people after a sudden loss.

“What if?”

It is such a small phrase, but it can carry such a heavy weight.

What if I had noticed something sooner?

What if I had asked one more question?

What if there was something I could have done?

What if I had known that I was saying goodbye?

After Anthony died, my mind searched for answers because my heart could not accept that someone I loved so deeply could be here one moment and gone the next.

When someone leaves suddenly, you don’t just grieve their absence. You grieve all the moments you thought you still had coming.

You grieve the conversations you’ll never have.

The hugs you’ll never feel.

The memories that will never be made.

And somewhere in that grief, guilt can quietly creep in.

A mother’s heart naturally wants to protect her child. It doesn’t matter how old they are. You never stop being their mom. When something happens that you cannot fix, cannot change, and cannot undo, your heart starts searching for a reason.

But love is not measured by the moment you lost someone.

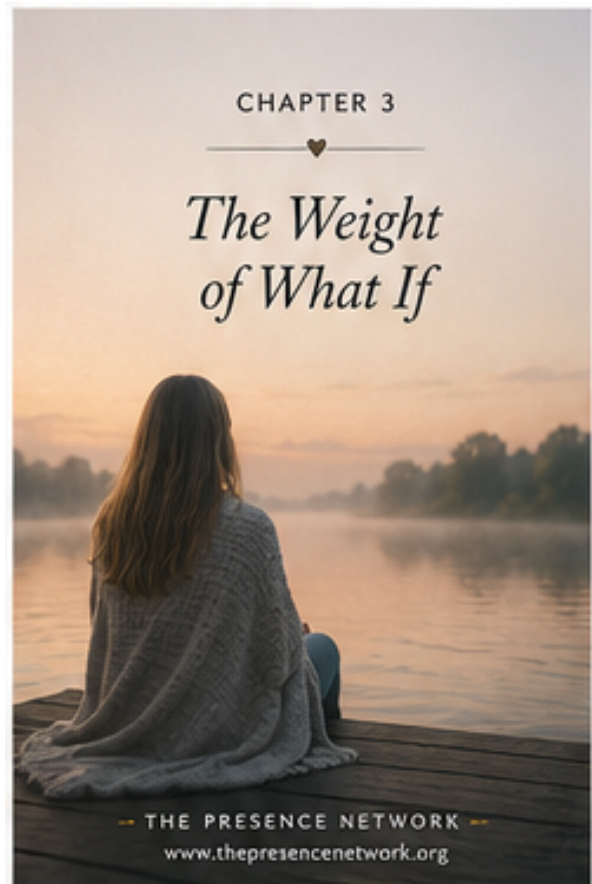
Love is measured by a lifetime.

Anthony knew he was loved because love was woven into the years before that moment. It was in the hugs, the conversations, the sacrifices, the prayers, the countless ordinary days that made up a life together.

I have had to remind myself that a person does not leave this world wondering if their mother loved them when they were surrounded by a lifetime of that love.

The guilt comes because the love is so big.

We wish we had one more chance to say: “I love you.” “I’m proud of you.” “I wish I could have protected you.”



But sometimes the hardest truth to accept is that love cannot always prevent loss.

Love can hold someone.

Love can comfort someone.

Love can stay connected forever.

But love cannot always change what happens.

And that is one of the hardest lessons a grieving heart has to learn.

Anthony's story did not end because his life ended. The love between a mother and son does not disappear. It changes shape. It lives in memories, in stories, in the ways he continues to influence the people who loved him.

I still carry the ache of losing him.

But I also carry the gift of having been his mother.

And no loss can ever take that away.

Chapter 04

The Person Who Helped Me Carry It

Grief is a road that no one can walk for you.

There are moments when the pain is so personal, so deep, that even the people who love you most cannot fully understand what is happening inside your heart.

But sometimes God sends someone who does not try to fix what cannot be fixed.

Sometimes He sends someone who simply stays.

For me, that person was Carlo.

Carlo never tried to erase my grief. He never told me to “move on” or made me feel like I should be done hurting. He understood that losing Anthony was not something I would simply get over. It was something I would learn to carry.

He loved me in the middle of my brokenness.

He saw the tears I cried when memories came rushing back. He saw the moments when grief caught me off guard. He understood that some days were harder than others, and he gave me space to feel everything I needed to feel.

There is a special kind of love in someone who can sit beside your pain without trying to run from it.

Carlo became my safe place.

He reminded me that even though my heart had been shattered by loss, I was still worthy of love, laughter, and a future. He helped me see that continuing to live did not mean I was leaving Anthony behind.

That was something I had to learn.

For a long time, happiness could feel like guilt. A smile could feel wrong. A good day could feel like I was somehow forgetting the son I loved so deeply.

But Carlo helped me understand something important:

Honoring Anthony does not mean I have to stop living.

Anthony’s life was a gift. The love we shared is a gift. And allowing myself to love again, laugh again, and experience joy again does not take anything away from him.

It simply means that love is bigger than loss.

Carlo walked with me through some of the hardest parts of my life. He held my hand when I felt weak. He reminded me that I was still here, still needed, still loved.



I believe God knew I would need someone who understood compassion, because Carlo's own heart has always been drawn toward caring for others.

He came into my life not to take away my scars, but to love me with them.

And sometimes that is the greatest gift someone can give another person:

Not fixing the pain.

Just refusing to leave you alone in it.

Chapter 05

Learning to Live Without Leaving Him Behind

One of the hardest things about losing someone you love is learning that life keeps asking you to continue.

The sun still rises.

People still laugh.

Birthdays still come.

Families still gather.

And sometimes that feels almost impossible.

There can be a part of your heart that believes moving forward means moving away from the person you lost. As if enjoying a beautiful moment means you have forgotten them. As if laughing means you miss them less. As if finding happiness again somehow betrays the love you still carry.

But I have learned that love does not work that way.

Love does not ask us to stop living.

Love asks us to remember.

Anthony is not honored by my sadness alone. He is honored by the way I continue to love. He is honored by the stories I tell, the memories I hold close, and the way his life continues to matter.

I used to think that if I let myself be happy again, I was leaving a part of him behind.

But I have learned something different.

I can miss him and still smile.

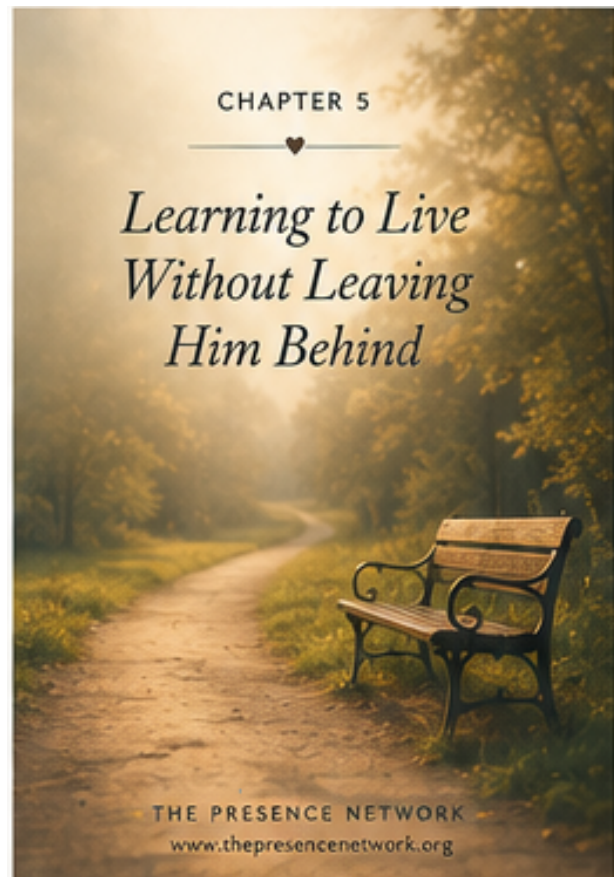
I can cry for him and still laugh.

I can wish he were here and still be grateful for the people God has placed in my life.

My children still need me. My family still needs my love. My grandchildren still need my hugs and my voice and my presence. There are still people who need the mother, grandmother, and wife that I am.

Anthony's absence changed me, but it did not take away the love I still have to give.

Grief has taught me that the heart has room for both sorrow and joy. It can hold the deepest pain and the greatest love at the same time.



There are moments when I see something beautiful and my first thought is, "I wish Anthony could see this."

There are moments when I wish I could call him, hear his voice, or tell him something that happened in my day.

Those moments still hurt.

But they also remind me of something precious:

The pain exists because the love was real.

I would never wish away the years I had with Anthony just because losing him hurts. The love was worth the heartbreak. The memories were worth the tears.

I carry him with me.

Not as a weight that keeps me from living, but as a love that walks with me.

I believe that the people we love leave pieces of themselves behind. They live in our hearts, in our stories, in the ways they changed us.

Anthony changed me.

He taught me a love deeper than I knew existed. He taught me that a mother's heart never stops loving. Not when a child grows older. Not when miles separate you. Not even when death does.

I will keep living.

I will keep loving.

I will keep remembering.

And every step forward I take is not a step away from Anthony.

It is a step carrying the love he gave me.

Chapter 06

The Fear That Came After Loss

Before Anthony died, I knew that life was precious.

After Anthony died, I understood it in a completely different way.

Losing a child changes the way you see the world. It changes the way you look at a phone call, a late text message, a moment when someone doesn't answer. Things that once felt ordinary can suddenly feel frightening.

Because once you experience the unthinkable, a part of your heart wonders:

“Could it happen again?”

After losing Anthony, I found myself worrying about my other children in a way I never had before. Jonathon, Gina, and Sabrina were still my children, no matter how old they were. A mother never stops being a mother.

I wanted to protect them from every hurt. I wanted to make sure they were safe. I wanted to somehow prevent ever having to feel that kind of pain again.

But I had to learn something very difficult:

Fear can become another kind of loss.

When we live every moment expecting something terrible to happen, we miss the beautiful moments happening right in front of us.

Fear can make us hold back instead of e close.

Fear can make us worry instead of l.

Fear can make us spend today grieving a tomorrow that may never come.

I had to remind myself that my children were not given to me to control every moment of their lives. They were given to me to love.

And love is not meant to be lived in fear.

Of course I still worry. I am a mother. That will always be part of me. But I have learned that I cannot let the loss of one child steal the joy of loving the children who are still here.

Anthony's life taught me to cherish my family more deeply, not to spend my life afraid of losing them.

I want my children to feel my love, not my fear.



I want them to remember their mom as someone who laughed with them, celebrated them, listened to them, and treasured the time they had together.

Because the truth is, none of us are promised tomorrow.

But we are given today.

And today is where love lives.

om I choose to hug a little longer.

I choose to say "I love you" more often.

I choose to be grateful for the voices I can still hear and the hands I can still hold.

Anthony's death taught me that life is fragile.

But it also taught me that life is beautiful.

And I do not want fear to keep me from seeing the beauty that remains.

Chapter 07

A New Kind of Joy

After Anthony died, I wondered if my heart would ever feel light again.

Not because I stopped loving.

Not because I stopped caring.

But because grief can make you wonder if the person you were before will ever return.

There are parts of yourself that change forever when you lose someone you love. A piece of your heart is always connected to that person, and you learn to carry that love in a different way.

Then came Celeste.

She did not erase my grief.

She did not fill the space that Anthony left behind.

No one could ever do that.

Anthony was my son. He will always have a place in my heart that belongs only to him.

But Celeste brought something I didn't know my heart still had the ability to feel:

A new kind of joy.

There was something healing about holding her tiny hand, watching her discover the world, seeing her smile, hearing her laugh, and watching her grow. She reminded me that even after the deepest heartbreak, God can still place moments of beauty in our lives.

Sometimes joy after loss feels complicated.

Sometimes you feel guilty for enjoying something beautiful because someone you love is not here to share it.

But I have learned that joy is not a betrayal of grief.

Joy is a reminder that love is still alive.

When I look at Celeste, I see a precious gift. I see a little girl who brought laughter and warmth into our family. I see the miracle of life continuing, even after we experienced a loss that changed us forever.

She has given me moments where my heart feels full again.

Moments where I am not only remembering what I lost, but appreciating what I still have.

Grief and joy now live together inside of me.



I can miss Anthony and love Celeste.

I can cry over the son I lost and smile at the granddaughter I get to hold.

I can carry yesterday's pain while embracing today's blessings.

That is one of the greatest lessons grief has taught me:

The heart does not have a limited amount of love.

It grows.

It stretches.

It makes room.

Anthony taught me the depth of a mother's love.

Celeste reminds me that love continues.

And every time I hold her, every time I watch her learn something new, every time I hear her laugh, I am reminded that even in the darkest seasons, there can still be beautiful moments waiting to find us.

A different kind of joy.

A precious kind of joy.

A gift I will never take for granted.

Chapter 08

Finding Purpose in the Pain

There are some experiences in life that change you so deeply that you cannot simply go back to who you were before.

Losing Anthony was one of those moments.

I would never choose that pain. I would never choose a world without my son in it. There are still moments when my heart aches because I wish he were here — sharing another conversation, another laugh, another ordinary day that I once thought I had plenty of.

But through the heartbreak, something began to grow.

A deeper compassion.

A deeper understanding.

A desire to reach out to others who are hurting and remind them they are not alone.

Before loss, you can have sympathy for someone's pain. You can feel sadness for what they are going through. But when you have walked through your own valley of grief, something changes.

You understand the silence.

You understand the questions.

You understand what it feels like to smile on the outside while carrying a broken heart on the inside.

Anthony's life and death changed the way I see people. Everyone carries something. Everyone has a story. Everyone needs compassion.

And I believe God can take even the most painful parts of our lives and use them for something meaningful.

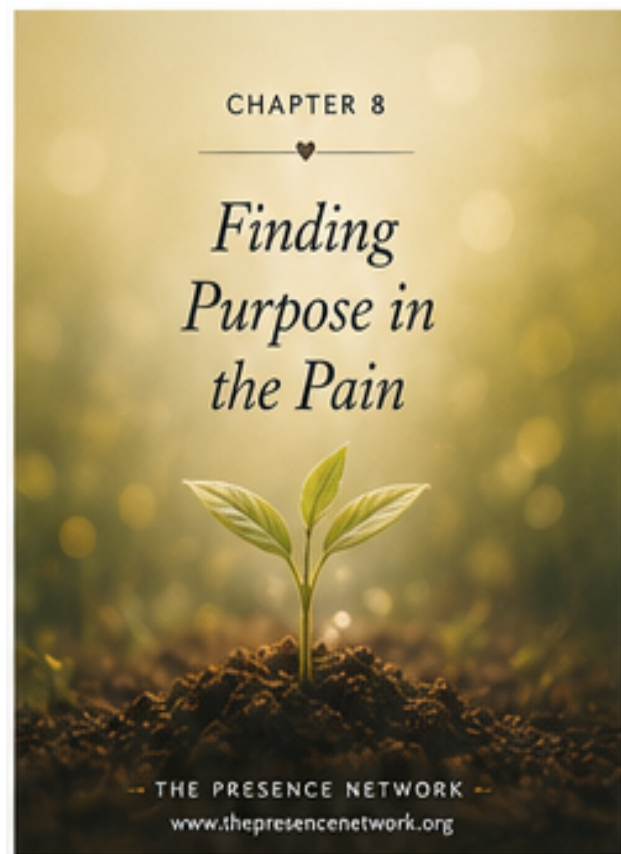
Not because the pain was good.

Not because losing Anthony was something that was meant to happen.

But because love can grow even in places where we thought nothing beautiful could survive.

Through this journey, God brought Carlo into my life. Someone who understood the importance of compassion, presence, and caring for people in their most vulnerable moments.

Together, we began to see how much people need someone to sit with them in their hardest seasons. Someone who does not rush their grief. Someone who does not try to erase their pain. Someone who simply says, "I am here with you."



That is where the heart behind the Presence Network was born.

Out of love.

Out of loss.

Out of the understanding that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and cared for.

Anthony's life mattered far beyond the years he was here.

His story continues through the love he left behind.

It continues through the way I care for others. It continues through the compassion I now have for people walking through grief. It continues through every person who feels a little less alone because someone chose to be present with them.

I wish I could have protected Anthony from what happened.

I wish I could have changed the outcome.

That is a wish many grieving parents carry.

But I also know this:

A life does not have to be long to be meaningful.

Anthony's life touched mine forever.

And now, because of the love I have for him, I want to help others feel the kind of love and presence that every hurting heart deserves.

His story did not end.

It continues through mine.

Chapter 09

The Things I Wish I Could Say to Anthony

My precious Anthony,

There are so many things I wish I could say to you.

So many words that I carry in my heart because I never imagined there would be a day when I couldn't simply pick up the phone, hear your voice, or sit with you and tell you what I needed you to know.

I wish I could tell you one more time how much I love you.

I wish I could look into your eyes and tell you that being your mother was one of the greatest gifts God ever gave me.

I hope you knew.

I hope you knew that every sacrifice, every worry, every prayer, every moment I spent loving you came from a heart that was completely yours.

A mother's love doesn't have an expiration date.

It doesn't end when a child grows up.

It doesn't end when life changes.

And it doesn't end when someone leaves this earth.

I still love you every single day.

There are moments when something happens and I instinctively want to tell you. Moments when I think, "Anthony would love this," or "I wish he could see this."

I wish you could see your family. I wish you could see the love that surrounds you still. I wish you could see the ways your life continues to touch people.

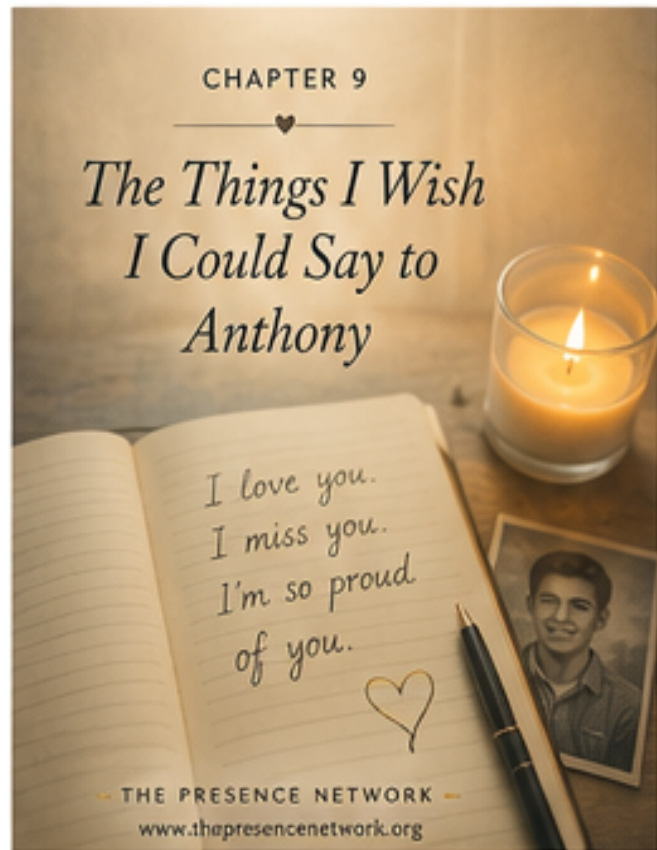
I wish I could tell you that your life mattered.

That you mattered.

Not just because you were my son, but because you were Anthony. A unique and irreplaceable soul who left a mark on the people who loved you.

There are still moments when I wonder if I did enough. If I said enough. If you truly knew how deeply you were loved.

But I have to remind myself that love is not found in one final conversation.



Love is found in a lifetime.

It was in every hug.

Every "I love you."

Every memory.

Every ordinary day that became precious because it was a day I had with you.

I wish I could have protected you from everything.

That is what mothers do. We want to take away the pain, carry the burdens, and fight every battle for our children.

If I could have taken your place, I would have.

But even though I could not change what happened, I will never stop being your mom.

That is something death cannot take away.

I carry you with me.

In my heart.

In my memories.

In the love I give to others.

And in the purpose I found after losing you.

Anthony, I hope you know this:

You were loved before I ever held you.

You were loved every day I had you.

And you are loved every day I live without you.

Until the day I see you again, I will keep telling your story.

I will keep loving.

I will keep living.

And I will carry you with me, always.

Love,

Mom

Chapter 10

The Anniversary of a Day I Never Wanted to Remember

There is a day on the calendar that I never wanted to know.

A day that changed my life forever.

Before that day, it was just another date. A normal day. A day I never imagined would become a day I would carry with me for the rest of my life.

But after Anthony died, that date became something different.

It became a marker of the moment my world changed.

The first anniversary was one of the hardest things I ever faced. There was something about knowing I had made it an entire year without him that felt impossible.

A year without hearing his voice.

A year without seeing his smile.

A year of waking up every morning knowing I could not change what happened.

People sometimes think that as time passes, grief becomes smaller. And in some ways, it changes. You learn how to carry it. You learn how to breathe through the moments that once felt unbearable.

But love does not become smaller.

And that is why certain days still matter.

Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and special moments can bring a wave of emotion that feels just as real as it did in the beginning.

Sometimes I think, “How can it have been this long?”

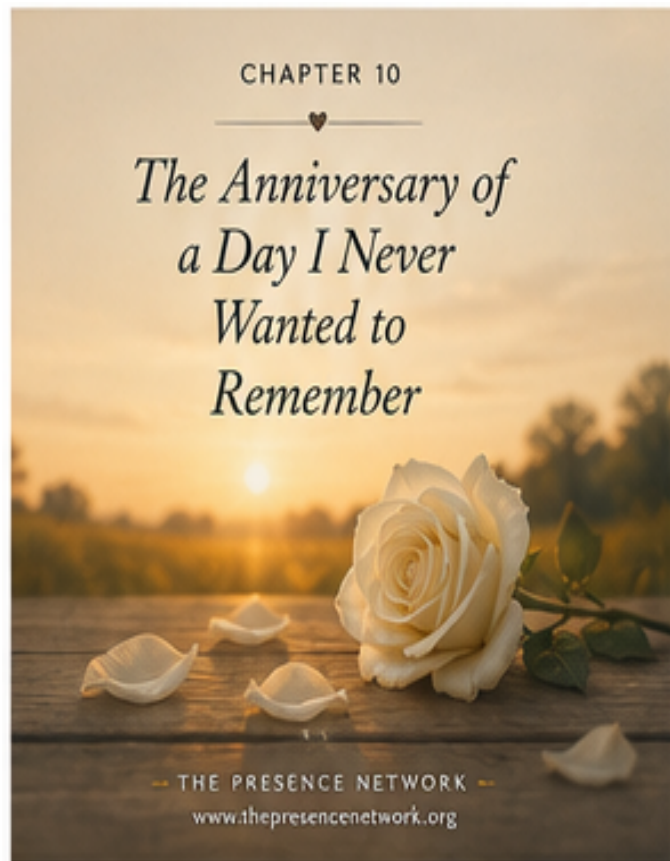
And other times I think, “How has it only been this long?”

Time is a strange thing in grief. The world keeps moving forward, but a part of your heart stays connected to the moment you lost someone you love.

Over the years, I have learned that I do not have to fear these days.

I can honor them.

I can remember Anthony.



I can allow myself to feel the sadness without letting it take away all the beauty that still exists in my life.

Because that day was not the only day that defined Anthony's story.

The day I lost him matters.

But so do all the days I had him.

The memories.

The laughter.

The conversations.

The moments that made him my son and made me his mother.

I don't want Anthony's story to only be about the day he left.

I want it to be about the life he lived.

The love he gave.

The impact he made.

The person he was.

So when that anniversary comes, I allow myself to grieve. I allow myself to miss him. I allow myself to wish things had been different.

But I also choose to remember that love is still here.

It is in my heart.

It is in my family.

It is in the compassion I have for others.

Chapter 11

The Mother I Became After Loss

Before Anthony died, I was a mother who loved deeply.

After Anthony died, I became a mother who understood love in a way I never knew was possible.

Losing a child changes the way you see everything.

The things that once seemed important become smaller. The moments you once rushed through become the moments you wish you could hold onto forever.

A simple phone call.

A family gathering.

A hug at the end of a visit.

An ordinary day together.

You begin to understand that ordinary moments are not ordinary at all. They are gifts.

Anthony's life changed me.

His death broke my heart, but it also opened my eyes to the preciousness of the people still beside me.

I became more aware of the words I say.

The love I give.

The time I spend.

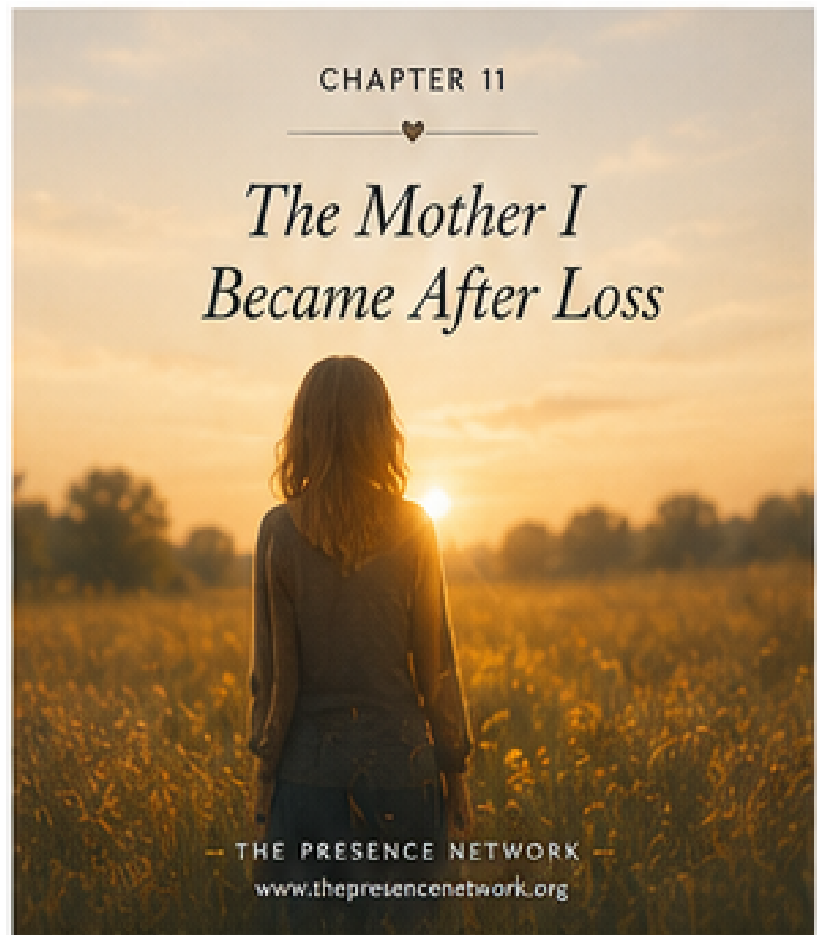
I don't want to leave important things unsaid. I don't want the people I love to ever wonder if they mattered.

I want my children to know.

I want my family to know.

I want the people God places in my path to know.

You are loved.



After Anthony, I became more compassionate toward the pain of others. I became slower to judge and quicker to understand. I learned that everyone is carrying something — even the people who look like they have it all together.

Sometimes the strongest person in the room is the one silently carrying a heartbreak no one else can see.

My faith changed too.

I had questions. I had moments of deep sadness. I had moments when I didn't understand why something so painful was allowed to happen.

But through those questions, I learned that faith is not about never hurting.

Faith is holding on even while you hurt.

It is trusting God when you do not have all the answers.

It is believing that love is still present, even in the darkest moments.

Anthony also changed the way I love my children who are still here.

I learned not to let fear steal the gift of today.

I learned to celebrate them.

To listen.

To hug longer.

To be present.

Because I know now how precious presence truly is.

The mother I was before Anthony's death loved her children with all her heart.

The mother I became after his death loves with a deeper understanding of how fragile and beautiful life can be.

I would give anything to have Anthony back.

That will always be true.

But I also know this:

The love I have for Anthony did not end when his life ended.

It transformed me.

It made me more compassionate.

It made me more intentional.

It made me more aware of the sacred gift of simply being together.

Anthony will always be part of who I am.

He is part of my story.

He is part of my heart.

And because I was his mother, I will carry that love for the rest of my life.

It is in every person whose life was touched by Anthony.

The anniversary of the day I lost him will always be painful.

But it is also a reminder of something beautiful:

I was blessed to be his mother.

And no day on a calendar can ever take that away.

Chapter Twelve

Love Never Ends

If there is one thing I have learned through losing Anthony, it is this:

Love is stronger than loss.

I used to think that losing someone meant losing everything connected to them. I thought the empty space they left behind would only ever be a reminder of what was missing.

But over time, I learned something different.

The people we love never truly leave the places they have touched.

Anthony is still part of me.

He is in my memories.

He is in my heart.

He is in the compassion I carry for others.

He is in the way I love my family.

He is in the purpose I found after walking through the deepest pain I have ever known.

I would give anything for one more conversation with him. One more hug. One more ordinary day.

That longing will always be there because a mother's love does not have an ending.

But neither does the love we shared.

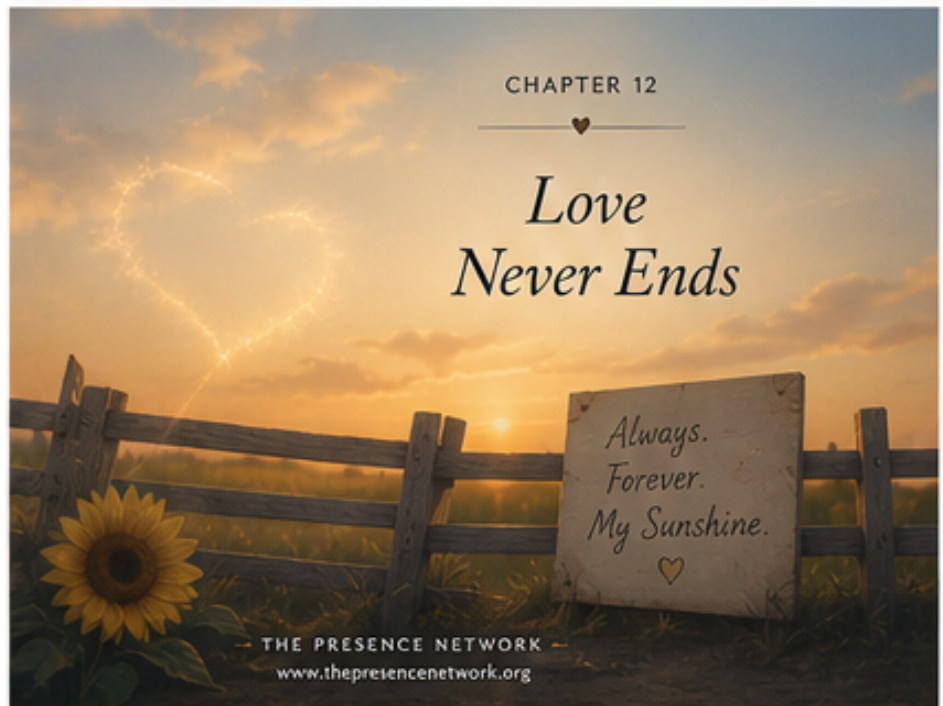
To the mother who is reading this and knows this pain — the mother who has looked at an empty chair, held a photograph, or whispered her child's name when no one else was around — I want you to know something:

You are not alone.

Your grief is not a sign that you are weak.

Your tears are not a sign that you have failed to heal.

Your love for your child is a reflection of the incredible gift you were given: the chance to love someone so deeply.



There will be hard days.

There will be unexpected moments when a memory takes your breath away.

There will be times when you wish the world understood that a part of your heart is somewhere else.

But there will also be moments of beauty again.

There will be laughter.

There will be love.

There will be reasons to keep going.

And when those moments come, you do not have to feel guilty.

Joy does not mean you have forgotten.

Living does not mean you have left them behind.

It means the love they gave you is still doing what love does — changing you.

Anthony's life was a gift.

My children are a gift.

Carlo is a gift.

My granddaughter Celeste is a gift.

Every person God places in my life is a reminder that even after heartbreak, there can still be purpose.

There can still be hope.

There can still be love.

My story is not only the story of losing my son.

It is the story of being his mother.

It is the story of a love that continues.

It is the story of a heart that broke but chose to keep loving anyway.

Anthony, you will always be my son.

I will carry you with me until the day I see you again.

And until then, I will keep loving.

I will keep serving.

I will keep showing up.

Because your life mattered.

Your love mattered, and I know now, with all my heart:

Love never ends.

Closing

If you've made it to the end of this book, thank you for allowing me to walk beside you.

Although our stories are different, our hearts understand a language only grief can teach. I wish neither of us had learned it. Yet here we are—still breathing, still loving, and somehow still finding the strength to keep going.

Anthony will always be my son. Death changed his address, but it could never change our love. I carry him with me every single day, and I always will.

If you're grieving someone you love, I pray you never feel pressured to "move on." Instead, may you find a way to move forward while carrying their love with you. There is a difference.

There will still be hard days. There will still be tears. There will still be moments when a song, a smell, or a memory catches you off guard. That's not weakness. That's love with nowhere to go.

My prayer is that, in time, your grief will no longer be the loudest voice in your life. May love become louder. May hope become stronger. And may God remind you, over and over again, that He has never left your side.

Until the day we are reunited with those we love, may we honor them by loving deeply, living faithfully, and bringing comfort to others who walk this difficult road.

With love, understanding, and hope,

Amy