

Dear Fellow Hilltoppers,

In 1983, I lost my best friend in the world, Matt Weisz, in a car crash. We were 19. I have thought about Matt--and you all--a lot in recent days.

I want to share this with you because through the loss of my friend I have learned some important, tough lessons from which you may benefit.

I have walked in your shoes. I know what it is like to grieve the loss of a great friend at a young age. It's heartbreaking and causes you to question a lot of things in your life. I asked those questions when I lost Matt, and I am asking them again, along with you, today. Here are some thoughts I carry with me from 1983.

Please don't grieve alone. Ask your questions WITH people you trust. There is power and safety in numbers. Stay together; take care of each other. Know when your friends are hurting and be there for them. Allow your family and friends to help you when you are hurting. There was an incredible outpouring of love in recent days. Know that, just like our friends we lost, people are there for you in this time. Find them. Talk to them. Don't travel this road alone.

My wife, Betsy, and my son, Cooper, never met my friend Matt personally. But you better believe they know all him so well....from the hundreds of stories I have told them about Matt over the years. The same will be true for Dom, and for Jackson, and for Zach. They will live on through you, and they will remain part of you and part of your lives, just like Matt lives on through me, 34 years after he passed away.

For many of us, the most challenging days begin now, when life returns to "normal." This is when we need each other most. I urge you to continue to demonstrate your love and friendship for one another as you have done in recent days, and like Dom and Jackson and Zach did each day.

And please remember to stay in touch with Dom's parents and sister, and Jackson's parents and sister, and Zach's parents and family in the days and months ahead. They need us.

Finally, always remember that if you need anything from me, stop in my office, call or text, or stop by the house.

God Bless you all.

*Coach Snyder*