

A *Grief* Story

My sister Meg had always been the artist—watercolor, acrylic, oils... she had done it all. Her pastels were my favorite: so bright, hopeful and calming. I smiled as I inspected her work again. It was the last piece she gave to me and I was thankful for her thoughtfulness.

It hadn't always been that way; we were sisters, after all. Who would have thought that you could fight with someone you loved so much? Yet those years had passed, apologies had been made, and we were closer than we had ever been.

The sadness of her passing still came in waves, and the tears still flowed.

However, today it seemed that the serenity of her artwork was settling on me as well. The stillness of the water and the peaceful field were more than just lovely to the eye. It spoke peace to my heart as well.

She was gone, but she was still giving back to me.



“If only someone whom I respected had sat me down and said, ‘Now, Lynn, bereavement is a wound. It’s like being very, very badly hurt... You will grieve, and that is painful. And your grief will have many stages, but all of them will be healing. Little by little you will be whole again. And you will be a stronger person. Just as a broken bone knits and becomes stronger than before, so will you.’”

Lynn Caine

What Helps the Most...When You Lose Someone Close

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TABITHA

REMEMBERING

Go ahead and mention my child,
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me further.
The depth of my pain doesn't show.
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing
The tears that I try to hide.
I'm hurt when you just keep silent.
Pretending he didn't exist.
I'd rather you mention my child,
Knowing that he has been missed.
You asked me how I was doing.
I say “pretty good” or “fine.”
But healing is something ongoing.
I feel it will take a lifetime.

Elizabeth Dent

Your Grief

Journey

Grief can turn one's life upside down. A part of you can feel lost, gone forever. This significant person you have lost may have represented parts of your past or maybe your future. Even more overwhelming is the void this loss has left in your present.

At times you may feel as if you are unable to pick up the pieces. You don't know how to move on. Finding the new "you" without this person can seem overwhelming.

At times, you can take this task of grieving moment by moment, as you may have been advised to do. But other times, you get caught up in the emotion and worry about how life will carry on. How different it will be.

There may be other times as well, where you would rather avoid all the emotions. Occupy your mind and heart with staying busy or

avoid the grief when it comes up. This can work for a short time, and sometimes it is necessary to help lessen the pain, as sharp as it may be.

The grief process begins to work when we are present in our grief. As we acknowledge our own discomfort with loss and suffering, we begin to recognize that running away from loss can make us more uncomfortable. Being present in our loss doesn't mean trying to fix it or do something with it.

Experiencing grief doesn't mean one has to be "doing"; it may simply mean opening your heart to feel sadness, emptiness, grief or other emotions. This is not to fix grief, but to find how it can be a companion of sorts, allowing grief—physically, emotionally and spiritually—to do the work it needs to do.

BROKEN HEARTS

I know you've lost someone and it hurts. You may have lost them suddenly or unexpectedly. Or perhaps you began losing pieces of them until one day, there was nothing left. You may have known them all your life or you may have barely known them at all. Either way, it is irrelevant—you cannot control the depth of a wound another soul inflicts upon you.

Which is why I am not here to tell you tomorrow is another day. That the sun will go on shining. Or there are plenty of fish in the sea. What I will tell you is this: it's okay to be hurting as much as you are. What you are feeling is not only completely valid, but necessary—because it makes you so much more human. And though I can't promise it will get better any time soon, I can tell you that it will—eventually. For now, all you can do is take your time. Take all the time you need.

*Lang Leav
Lullabies*

THE THREE Ns OF GRIEF

As you are a few months into your grief journey, you may have heard that there is **no way to go around your grief, only through it.** This is very true.

Feeling one's grief is not optional or a sign of weakness; the very real and human response to such a loss is to grieve. Grief is a normal, natural and necessary process.

- **IT IS NORMAL** because it is the basic response in humans when there is a significant loss. It is normal to be affected by the hole the loss may leave in your life.
- **IT IS NATURAL** because grief is built into us. We are created to love; therefore, we are created to grieve when we lose those we love. Most of us would not choose to give up love to avoid the loss.
- **IT IS NECESSARY** because it allows for healthy coping. Avoiding grief will not work and may cause additional pain.

It is important to remember to give yourself permission to grieve. Don't apologize for the tears that well up when someone asks how you are doing. Don't avoid the people or situations that may cause your feelings of grief to stir. Embrace them. Let yourself feel the loss so that you can begin to heal.

*Kenneth C. Haugk
Journeying Through Grief, Book 1*

“First one foot, then another. Two steps forward, three steps back—this is the real pace of grief.”

*Stephanie Ericsson
Companion Through the Darkness*

Spiritual Corner

By Chaplain Juanita Steenbakkers

*I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.*

Psalm 40:1-2 NIV

Grief is a unique process that consumes all of you. You may experience a roller coaster of emotions, followed by questions with no easy answers. During the illness or grief process, you may have had spiritual questions. You may have been wondering if there was a purpose or a plan. It certainly didn't seem like the easiest or most direct path. Even now you wonder where the Holy One is leading you. You wish you didn't have to walk this path. You have experienced so much change. You may not have realized how much your loved one touched even seemingly unrelated areas of your life. You miss their presence.

We are made for connection to people and the Divine. As we grieve, we may be tempted to break these connections when we need them the most. Reach out to those who will listen and to those who will renew you. We can share our emotions with God.

“I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process.”

*C.S. Lewis
A Grief Observed*