

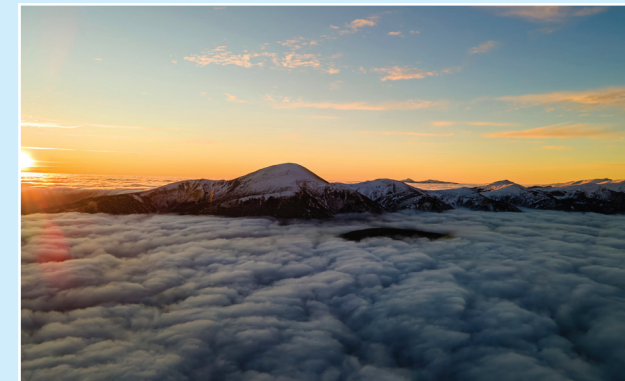
A *Grief* Story

I'll never forget Meg's sweet, gentle strength as her life came to a close. I had asked her, "Are you afraid?" She said "no," and then she added, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die—my time is now."

Today, as I opened my Bible to read the rest of the passage, I wondered again how she could have been so strong. It also made me wonder about myself.

My struggle wasn't so much about the issues of life and death; they were about what else I read. "A time to weep, And a time to laugh. A time to mourn, And a time to dance." I realized that I hadn't laughed since she passed and I certainly hadn't danced. Yet like death, these too were called "seasons"—times that come and go throughout life. Thus, my hope was that this season of grief would pass as well. I might not laugh as freely as before, and I might be slow to dance, but I was trusting that the night of weeping and mourning would give way to a new season.

After a long period of doubt, I think I was finally beginning to believe it might happen.



"You don't think you'll live past it and you don't, really. The person you were is gone, but the half of you that's still alive wakes up one day and takes over again."

Barbara Kingsolver

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TABITHA

CONTINUING BONDS

"Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship."

Robert Woodruff Anderson
I Never Sang for My Father

Part of what we do during grief is develop a new relationship—a continuing bond—in which we don't disconnect from our loved one, but instead reconnect with him or her in a new and different way.

Although we'd much rather have our loved one physically with us, it's reassuring to know that we don't have to completely let go. God has blessed us with thoughts, memories and a love more powerful than death itself. Through these gifts our loved one can forever remain a cherished part of our life.

Kenneth C. Haugk
Journeying Through Grief, Book Four

Your Grief

Journey

GRIEF HAS NO CLOSURE

As you are entering your second year of grieving, you may have the feeling that your mourning period should be over. Perhaps you have gotten the feeling from others that you should be “over that by now.” This is a mistaken impression of grief.

Yes, for many people, at this time in their grief, their pain has lessened and things are looking more positive. But that doesn't mean grief is over. You may still be experiencing a variety of emotions and some that feel like they come out of the blue. Feelings of loneliness and despair may still be deep. Your grief journey is not over just because you have passed the 365th day.

One way you can look at this next year, is the continued rebuilding of your life. Learning what is “normal” in your life now. Finding ways to keep your loved one “alive,” but at the same time moving on.

This can be a hard concept to accept. It is difficult to think of someone so significant to us, as the “past” or a “memory.” But it is necessary to figure out how your loved one will be part of your new life.

This next year will bring challenges and hopefully positive experiences. It can be a time of self-discovery, as well as an opportunity to find ways to honor those you have lost so that you can always feel their love and presence in your life.

No matter how many years go by you will be changed forever. You may think of your loved one almost daily and you will have days out of the blue that knock the wind right out of you. Certainly, the pain softens and eases over time. However, normal grief will always have moments of reoccurring sharpness, pain as raw as the very first day.

But, consider this: If I suggested I could wave a magic wand and make all your enduring pain disappear instantly, with only one catch—that you would never have known your loved one, that they were never born—would you take that bargain?

No, you wouldn't. And you wouldn't because those relationships touched and enriched your life in ways that cannot be measured. Your life without their physical presence is painful but your life having never known them at all is unthinkable. Their love was, and continues to be, a great gift... Living with loss has no closure on pain but, thankfully, it also has no closure on love.

~ Adapted from Ashley Davis Bush, LCSW
Hope and Healing for Transcending Loss

“Grieving is more than learning to live without our dear one. In many cases, we are also required to forgive them and ourselves as we bring the story of the time we spent together to a meaningful completion.”

Joan Borysenko
Pocketful of Miracles

THE VOICE OF GRIEF

“For those who are in the grips of grief, please hear me. It does get better. I have lived it and I know where my life is now. It's incredibly difficult to see a path out of the hole you've fallen into. It's difficult to even see the hole. You will just want to curl up and die. But please believe me. Your life will change.

It may take you a few months or a few years. There is no formula and no right way. Remember that there is no right way to grieve and everyone will do it differently. Contrary to pop culture, the “stages of grief” are not universal. You may skip stages or live in one for quite a while. You may revisit stages. You may never “move on” in the conventional sense and, truthfully, that shouldn't be the goal. This is personal and you will not forget. Nor should you. This event, your loss, the person who died whose name I wish I could say but that I do not know, is an important part of you and part of your life.

Celebrate the memories when you can. Embrace the feelings you have, good and bad. In time the good feelings and memories will win out. When that happens you may still feel sadness. You might still cry.

But you will also feel peace.”

Tim
Tabitha Bereaved

Spiritual Corner

By Chaplain Juanita Steenbakkers

Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:5

You have been through difficult times recently. I don't know everything you are facing, but I do know you have faced the death of a loved one. As you look back on their life and your relationship with them, you may be filled with gratitude for the life they lived and the important role they played for you. You may remember only the good memories.

Maybe your memories aren't as pleasant. The relationship was messy and you can only think of the difficulties, the arguments, or the long road of caregiving. Most of us are somewhere in between.

As you look back on your relationship, be honest with yourself on what they meant to you and how they impacted your life. Remember the laughter, anger, joy and tears. May you come to peace with the memories of who they were, and may you show forgiveness and love to them—and to yourself.

“

I am present with life because I am present with death. I know joy and peace because I am present with grief and suffering.

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Joanne Cacciatore
Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief