

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

Do you ever wonder if there is something wrong with you because you are still grieving after six months, a year, two years or ten years after your child or sibling's death? Do you get asked if you are "still" attending "those" meetings or "still" going to the cemetery every week? Healing from grief is a very individual experience. Some of us are very open and emotional about our grief-some of us withdraw and keep our pain inside. Some of us are able to deny their grief and carry on as though nothing has changed. They "shut the lid" on their grief and only briefly let some of it out when it becomes overwhelming.

Sometimes, however, grieving people get "stuck" in our grief. We may fear change and moving forward. Our lives were changed forever in the blink of an eye, and we realized that there are so many things out of our control. Accidents, illness, even freak accidents of nature can snatch our loved ones away. After this happens we can become fearful that it could happen again and tend to hold our surviving loved ones even closer. We are not quite so confident that our lives will go on smoothly if "we do everything right".

Life does, however, go on-with or without us. Seasons change. Friends come and go, and surviving children grow up and move away. We may get stuck in our grief, feeling that wanting to heal means we want to forget our child and the pain of losing them to death. I think we agree that our child would not want us to continue to feel such pain. Healing from our grief does not mean forgetting our child. Healing does not mean saying goodbye to our child forever. Healing means loving our child forever, but learning to live again without them in this lifetime. It is a different life because we are now different people. It takes a lot of time and is definitely a "two step forward, one step back" process. Sometimes it is a "one step forward, two steps back" process.

That's why grieving people who are a little further along the path to healing give us such hope and encouragement. I remember early in my grief when I felt I would never smile or feel anything but overwhelming sadness. I would come to Compassionate Friends meetings and see Friends smiling, and felt their warmth and genuine caring. It gave me such hope that maybe I could get through this pain. In time I learned that sharing my journey of grief and healing helped not only me, but others as well. I remember so well sharing some thoughts at the meetings that I would not have dared share with anyone else, and it brought me such comfort when other Friends smiled and nodded, agreeing they understood and felt the same way! I knew then I was not crazy, just grieving. It was very freeing to be able to talk about Aaron, and how much we loved him and missed him.

It is the nature of our group that Friends will come and go as they need the support and encouragement, and then are able to begin to live their new life. We are always a little sad when our Friends don't come as often, but we rejoice in their healing and are glad that maybe they don't need us as often. Seeing Friends smile again and be able to move on gives us all hope we can get through this pain. Our hearts have been broken, but we know we can survive with mended hearts. Maybe they are patched and mended, but they are stronger. They are kinder. Our mended hearts feel each other's pain and care more. They are gentler. Our mended hearts know what really matters and heal ourselves by reaching out to others.

When the day comes (and it will) and you feel joy again-don't feel guilty. Don't be upset if you have a good day! You are healing and getting stronger. You can get through this. Your child is so proud of you! It is a testimony of your love for each other that you honor his memory and carry it on for him in this world.

I wish you comfort and continued healing of your mended heart.

In friendship,

*Nadine*