

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

There comes a time on your journey of grief that you must make a decision to heal.

It may sound odd. Why would anyone not want to heal from their pain? But losing a child is like no other kind of bereavement. We grieve for the loss of the future, as well as the past. Each new chapter of our lives, those of our surviving children and each milestone our child would have gone through brings fresh pain.

You may feel guilty if you let go of your grief and feel joy, if only for a little while. “My child died! How can I possibly feel happy ever again!”

There is an unkind expression I have heard used: “wallowing in self-pity” to describe someone who can’t or won’t get out of their depression or grief. In my worst moments I did feel as though I was trapped in a dark canyon. The walls were soft and crumbled when I tried to climb out, and many times it just seemed easier to stay in that dark place.

I felt guilty at first when I would actually have some good days that I was not being faithful to my memories of Aaron. I felt I had failed as a mom when Aaron died because I couldn’t protect him from illness and death.

What would come next? Would I forget what he looked like? Laughed like? Smelled like?

I have written in previous columns about the different stages of grief—shock, anger, denial and acceptance, and how very much I hate the term “acceptance”. To me my child’s death is unacceptable. If I “accept” it, does that mean it’s ok?

The turning point for me came when a friend and bereaved parent asked if I would have done anything differently. I realized my husband and I had loved Aaron with all our strength, and done everything we could to fight his illness. My friend also told me that we had survived the worst possible thing a parent could go through, and it gives you a kind of peace and serenity to know nothing else you may go through even comes close.

The healing began when I had to forgive myself for not saving him. I had to forgive myself for letting go of some of the pain—never the love, but the pain of the “woulda, shoulda, couldas”. You know what those are: “if only I could have....I should have....if I knew when what I know now, I would have....”

Only you can decide when it is time to forgive yourself and let go of the pain. Letting go of your pain and healing from your grief doesn’t mean you are letting go of your child’s life and memories. It means you are able to focus more on the joy and meaning of his life, and less on the pain and hurt of his death.

Your child will always be your child in this life and the next. Your love for each other goes on and on, and transcends death.

May you find forgiveness, healing and the “peace that passes all understanding” in this new year.

In friendship,

*Nadine*

