

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

Happy New Year! Don't you just cringe when you hear those words? For many years after my son's death I wanted to respond to totally innocent, well-meaning people who greeted me that way with "Oh, just shut up!" First, I certainly didn't feel happy and could not imagine when I ever could be again, and second, the thought of facing another hour of another day, let alone another year without my child seemed overwhelming and filled me with despair. Another birthday, another anniversary date, another holiday...the list went on and on.



So in order to survive I had to try to break it down into manageable steps. If I can just get up in the morning, get dressed and remember to breathe...if I can make it through the work day without falling to pieces...if I can cry only once (or twice) today...if I can shop for groceries or pay bills or sleep through the night (that was a big one) I can get through this day and maybe, just maybe tomorrow will be a little better.

As we are struggling to survive through this pain and heartache, do make little resolutions to help you heal. Hug more often-there is great healing in the power of touch. Many times there are no words to convey feelings, but a touch can say "I care for you and I care that you hurt".

Get some exercise. The physical exertion will release that pent-up frustration and anger, and help your body to deal with the stress of grief. It may also help you sleep better, which also helps your body heal.

Eat nutritiously. Grief is very strenuous on your body and affects your metabolism, digestive system, immune system and overall good health. Salt and chocolate are NOT major food groups. Eating nutritiously will help your body heal.

Reach out to those who care for you and your family. Don't be afraid to ask for help and take the help when you need it. You are not weak or selfish to need help to get through this journey of grief. You love your child and miss your child-that will not change, but you do not have to do this alone.

Are you feeling guilty thinking it is a betrayal to your child's memory to want to heal from your grief? It truly is not-your child would not want you to be in this much pain. Remembering your child and honoring their life by reaching out to others celebrates your love for each other. Your child made this world (at least your world) a better place and you a better person.

A recent letter to "Dear Abby" from a bereaved mother who signed her letter as "Different Now" explained it perfectly. She explains when her daughter came into her life it changed her profoundly. Losing her did the same. She and her husband are working hard to honor her memory, but will never "get over it" in the sense of being who they were before. She feels in many ways she is "better" now-kinder, more patient, more appreciative of small things, but she is not as outgoing or as quick to laugh. She understands that people mean well when they encourage her to get on with her life, but her priorities and expectations for the future have changed and her hope is when people offer "anything I can do?" they will accept her as she is now.

Honor the gift of your child's life by passing it on. Pass on the kindness, generosity, and joyful spirit that was your child. It hurts so much to miss them and remember them, but it hurts far worse to try to NOT remember.

I wish you comfort and healing and strength to continue on that journey of healing.

In friendship,

*Nadine*