

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

“Change”. Has there ever been a word that can hold so much hope and promise, or fear and anxiety? If you are a newlywed starting out your life together with your beloved this “change” can be exciting and filled with happiness. Where will you live? Will you have a family?

If you are a young adult starting out on your own, this “change” is also exciting and filled with hope. Where will you go to college? Where will you get a job? You will very likely get a new circle of friends who share your interests. These friends may become your friends for life, always there for you and whose lives will be forever intertwined with yours.

Bereaved families, however, have a far different “take” on change. We fear life without our child and the thought of living the rest of our lives without our child brings despair and hopelessness. We don’t want “change”! We want our old lives back-the life with our child. We want to lie down on the floor and kick our feet and wail that life is not fair! We don’t want this change! We want our child back!

We want to be able to look toward the future and the promise of future family memories. A sibling wonders if they are still a sister or a brother, a mother whether she is still a mother to that child and a father still a father. The entire dynamics of the family change. Maybe the child who died was always the social director of family activities and planned the family’s vacations or outings and made each family memory funny and special. Perhaps the child who died was a prankster and kept the other members of the family always on their toes-never knowing what to expect.

Maybe the child who died had many health issues, like our Aaron, and how he felt that day determined your family’s plans or activities. Aaron’s health routines and medications had been such a central part of our daily routine I didn’t know how I could function any more. I felt lost, like no one needed me any longer.

Gradually you come to realize that our old life is over, whether we wish it so or not. We begin to seek answers. How do we do this? How do we function without our child? What do I say when someone asks how many children I have and how old they are? How do I get through his birthday and the day he died without falling apart? What do I do with his belongings? Do I have to change his room?

A lovely woman once came to our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting, sat down, crossed her arms and asked “Just what do you people do here?” Her body language, her tone of voice; everything told us she did NOT want to be there, but like all of us she was looking for answers. We laughed a little “with her” because we all felt that way at one time. “I don’t want to go to those meetings! Please don’t make me go to those meetings!” and then after we found how helpful and healing it could be to visit and share with people who truly understood-“I wish we could meet more often”. By the way, this lady became a very faithful member of our Compassionate Friends group for many years, and helped many of us heal with her compassion, kindness and humor.

Change is inevitable in our lives. We grow older, change jobs, people come in and out of our lives, our surviving children grow up and still the sun comes up and goes down. We are constantly re-defining ourselves.

January is a good month to reflect on the past year; to look back on the events, both joyful and painful, that occurred this last year, and to look to the future. For some of us our grief is still very fresh and we are still in “survival” mode. We are just trying to get through the days and nights. Right now you need to focus just on breathing in and out and taking care of your physical and emotional needs.

For those of us further along the path to healing we still need to take care of our physical and emotional needs, but we need to find answers to our questions. Come to a chapter meeting, read the chapter newsletter, read one of our wonderful books on grief from the chapter library, or go to one of the Compassionate Friends chat rooms on the website.

You don’t have to do this alone. There are no prizes for “best griever” or “best stiff upper lip”. We are all seeking answers to end our pain, and there are Friends who care and understand. Reaching out for help is a good change. In helping those who hurt we heal ourselves.

I wish you comfort and healing in the answers you seek.

In friendship,

Nadine