

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

"Be still and know that I am God". What does it mean to truly "be still"? I have decided in this chaotic, fast-paced world it becomes daily more difficult to truly "be still". The more time saving devices we obtain, and as quicker, faster technology comes available it seems we try to cram even more tasks into our allotted time. No one just daydreams any longer. No one just sits and breathes, listening to their heartbeat and just "being". No one takes long lunches, writes long letters or enjoys leisurely conversations with family or friends. Whole relationships now exist by "text", "email" or Facebook. When you speak to someone they may be checking their phone messages, "surfing" the Internet or something else.

Listening-truly listening with your heart and mind and no other distractions-has become a lost art. I have decided that truly listening to someone with eye contact, not interrupting and just being still is truly a gift and blessing to that person. One of the most important functions of our Compassionate Friends support group is listening, because we know the healing power of sharing your story with people who genuinely care. Grieving can be incredibly lonely, because it can last for a lifetime. People who have not lost a child have difficulty understanding that our grief differs from any other kind. They care for us and want us to "hurry up and get better", usually because they are uncomfortable with our grief. They don't understand that we are grieving past memories with our child, but also grieving for our future with our child.



When someone is newly bereaved, everyone asks "how can I help?" Often just "being still" and giving the gift of your presence, a gentle touch or hug or listening if they wish to speak is a tremendous help. Newly bereaved people are suffering from every kind of possible negative emotion; anger, denial, guilt, anxiety and bewilderment. They don't know how to go on with their life and have so many questions. Our Compassionate Friends who are further along the path to healing can be so helpful and help to answer those questions.

There were many times when I was newly bereaved I felt I just wanted to run away from the pain. I felt like I was just jumping out of my skin with anxiety, and needed to keep moving. It helped to take an exercise class and try to stay active. Work was difficult because my memory was so bad. I needed "sticky" notes everywhere to stay on task and focused. Reading or watching a movie was out of the question because I couldn't remember more than a phrase at a time. At home it was more of the same-I would ask my husband what he wanted for dinner and 10 steps later to the kitchen I couldn't remember what he had said.

I read that when you are freezing your body pulls the blood from your hands and feet and head to keep your core (your heart) warm. I think that grief must be same-I think your body pulls your strength and energy from other parts of your body to heal your broken heart and mind. I also think numbness and poor memory is the body's way of insulating us at first from that initial shock of our child's death.

As time went on I began to want to feel the emotions, want to experience my memories of Aaron over and over in my mind. Sometimes they came in dreams, sometimes as I wrote them down, but more often unexpectedly in a quiet moment. The pressures and expectations of our society don't give you much free time, but I found just writing to you, my Compassionate Friends about my journey has helped me heal. I can write to you about anger, how unfair life can be, encourage you to reach out to others, validate your feelings or sometimes just ramble on. I hope that my writing gives you hope, comfort and healing and maybe, once in a while, makes you smile or even laugh aloud. I hope that my writing gives you strength to look toward the future without your child-your "new future", live that new future in ways that honor your child's memory and how important he continues to be in your life. I hope I help you understand you will never be quite the same again; grief shapes us differently, but your "new self" is probably kinder, gentler and doesn't sweat the small stuff any longer. I hope I can help you forgive yourself because I know you blame yourself for your child's death regardless of the circumstances-that you somehow failed to protect him as his parent.

I hope you can find time to shut your phone off, sit in a quiet place without the computer or TV on, and just "be still". Focus on your breathing, listen to your heart beat and just "be". It can be very calming and help the anxiety and stress. If exercise helps calm you take a long walk and just think. You can talk to God, your child or even the dog on your walk, but don't talk on the phone-it's too distracting. This is not the time to "multi-task".

I wish for you a quiet, healing place to find the calm, find the comfort and strength to go on, find the "peace that passes all understanding" and take comfort in God's promise of the resurrection and eternal life for us.

In friendship,

Nadine