



PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

Dear Compassionate Friends:

A Friend and I were recently discussing how there is no way to get through grief without going through grief. You can't go around it, ignore it or stuff it down inside you for long without causing even more emotional trauma.

Among the most painful comments grieving parents often hear are “you shouldn't feel that way” or you're still going to the cemetery or that group?” implying that you have reached the “deadline” and you are long overdue to be “over your grief”. This is a major change in your life that you had no control over-no choice in the matter. I always wonder why people try to put a time limit on our grief for losing this huge part of our life. When you marry, become a parent or a grandparent it is with the joyful expectation it will last your lifetime. Your spouse, child, grandchild or sibling become part of your life forever and when we lose them we lose our future with them. We will learn to live with that grief and broken heart eventually, but it takes time.

How long will you grieve? No one can answer that question for you. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and no timetable for your grief. We all grieve differently, and you get to feel however you feel. Angry? Cheated? Lonely and left behind? Your heart has been ripped out of your chest? Your life has been forever changed and you had no choice in the matter? and .

You often hear about the “stages of grief” -shock, anger and acceptance. What they don't tell you is that you can go back and forth between shock and anger often and unexpectedly during your grief journey. You can be functioning pretty well and all of a sudden something can trigger your rage and shock and you are right back to Day 1. These “flashbacks” usually come less often as you continue your grief journey, and it's important to remember you're not “weird” or “crazy” and, most importantly, not alone.

Acceptance is another whole issue. I don't believe we ever “accept” losing our child, and I really don't like that word, but I guess “I will never really get over that he is gone and I have to learn to live with a broken heart” is too long for their catch phrases. Instead, we hope for the “peace that passes all understanding” and that we will be reunited with our child someday.

So give yourself permission to feel. Cry, scream, swear in the shower if you need to. Find a quiet place this holiday season to just “be” where you can remember the love and joy your child brought you. We need not walk alone-we are The Compassionate Friends.

In friendship,

Nadine

