



PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd.....

I Never Let Go...

The question I am most often asked is "how do you do it?" or "I can't even begin to imagine; I know I never could do this..." That's usually followed by the "you're so brave" nonsense. For me, not helpful! So...how do I deal with the loss of my brilliant, blessed son, Mathew? How can a question so simple be so difficult to answer? Knee jerk response is "I don't know." And if you want me to think about it, the answer is "Hell, no! I don't want to think about this, it's too hard. Too painful."

There are a multitude of answers I could provide regarding breathing, one foot in front of the other, one minute at a time, being present with my pain, not avoiding... it really is endless and all are authentic, effective strategies that I learned in order to cope and survive. But I think the truth, deep down inside where I hide the true me, is this:

I NEVER LET GO.

I never let go. People told me I should. I should move on, get better, bury the past, live my life, be happy. But the truth is I didn't move on. I didn't do any of that stuff. I recognized that the physical part of my life with Mathew was over. But recognition and acceptance are two different things, both exponentially hard for the mind to sort. So, I hung on. Hung on to all that I had left of him. I carefully and lovingly built his memory space and I still add to it. I speak of him, share stories and anecdotes whenever I can even though it makes people uncomfortable. I dwell on him and his memory. In my mind, he is still with me. I think of him constantly, Mathew is always in my thoughts. I talk to him. All the time. I text him, call his phone. I hear his voice answer, hear what I believe he would say. Is it real? It feels real.

ITS REAL TO ME.

I curse the universe. For all that was stolen from me. A future I will never have. Watching Mathew marry, continue to be successful with his career, at home, with his friends, with his family. Grandchildren I will never meet. "My life has killed the dream I dreamed." (1) It's truly how I feel. I hide these feelings, nobody wishes to hear them. It scares people. This is my one consistent emotion: my anger with the universe.

But here is where it gets difficult and understanding may become elusive. In spite of all this darkness, there is a tiny light inside of me that will not burn out. I find myself nurturing it, protecting it. This tiny flame allows me to still lead a happy, productive life. "How could this be?" one might ask, living with such overwhelming darkness buried inside? The flame survives because of the darkness. The darkness is my grief and my grief is my love and my love will never end, will never be extinguished; therefore, the grief will never end, will never be extinguished. Instead, my love breeds goodness, kindness, hope, compassion and understanding, and yes, even joy. This fuels the light and the light fuels me. "Joy and grief can inhabit the same space." (2) That is a powerful message. A message I embraced, words I could believe in. Maybe even a goal to strive for?

And there it is. My messed up, really goofy, somewhat disconcerting perhaps, answer to "how I deal..." It may not make sense, or be logical, or practical. It may be solely my imagination. None of that matters. It sustains me. And for now, that will have to be enough.

The light in me honors the light in you, may you go forward and shine...

- (1) I Dreamed A Dream, Les Miserables
(2) Cacciatore, Joanne, PhD

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