



Issues –3-19

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TELL YOUR STORY

“One often calms one's grief by recounting it.” ~Pierre Corneille,

In the beginning of grief comes storytelling. It is traditional, expected, and natural. With the gathering of friends and family following the tragedy, the story is told... over and over again. It serves a useful purpose.

In the beginning, storytelling releases raw energy, confirms the reality of the loss, and elicits needed sympathy and support. You may need to go over and over all the details in your mind, review many times the events surrounding the loss, before you can become fully aware that it has indeed happened. The tiniest details are important, so hold on to them and share them.

Later on in your grief, you will find yourself retelling your story of loss again to anyone who will listen. Storytelling helps you to make sense of things, helps you cope with the gaping void left by the loss, helps you find a new normal for yourself, and ultimately, helps you to move on.

Storytelling is a helpful thing. It is important that you tell your story. Find someone who will listen. If not a trusted friend, then a support group.

It may also help you to write your story down and start a journal. Tell your story... in all its detail. Express your grief and pain. Expose your anger, guilt and unfairness. Experience your grief fully through the written word. Writing is a wonderful outlet and it will help you feel better. Use your journal often.

You may wish to keep your words and thoughts private, for your eyes only. But some people find comfort in letting others know about their great loss. Letting it all out and telling the whole world what has happened to you can provide a unique satisfaction and comfort.

"When we tell our stories to one another, we, at one and the same time, find the meaning of our lives and we are healed from our isolation and loneliness... We do not know who we are until we hear ourselves speaking the drama of our lives to someone we trust to listen with an open mind and heart." ~Sam Keen

Quotes of the Month

Impermanence means transformation at every moment.

*Therefore, we can say,
“Thanks to impermanence,
everything is possible.”
(Thich Nhat Hanh)*

*“Just keep opening. Just keep softening, just keep allowing.”
One time I said back to the voice. “How much more?”
The reply came, “Until your surrender is total!”*

*“Silence is the language of God...all else is poor translation.”
(Rumi)*

BACK TO LIFE !

YOUR PERSONAL GUIDEBOOK TO GRIEF RECOVERY

www.recover-from-grief.com

Touchstone

Postcards-by

Deacon Dan McGrath

(Note: My wife died Oct. 23, 2015 these postcard reflection were written following her death)

Following Carol's death, I had many long hours to reflect on my life and where I should turn next: To the left where nothing was right or right where nothing was left?

For the first few weeks I thought I was going crazy and losing my mind. I will never forget the first thing our hospice nurse said to me after Carol died "Remember, we are still here for you and your family for the next 13 months." I cannot tell you how helpful that statement was. I still didn't know where I was or how to speak this new language of "grief" but hospice had the map. All I had to do was say, "Show me the way."

One place that map has led me to is a twice-a-month bereavement group. There, we are able to share the pain of loss and support each other on this new journey of what some call the "new normal." Some members, like myself, are new. Others have been coming for years. Each has their own story and way of understanding. Each shares their grief journey, challenges and changes in life since the loss of their spouse or loved one. In our own way we help each other understand the new place, language and terrain that we have landed in.

One member shared a story she came across that, for her, described just how she felt after her husband died. Although the story was written by a mother who had a child with special needs, for me and others in our group, It perfectly described how we felt after the death of our loved one. In its own way it has become a good "map" through our grieving journey. The story is titled "**Welcome to Holland,**" by Emily Perl Kingsley:

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip-to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Colosseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian.

It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland, you say? What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. Its slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain that will never, ever, ever, ever go away because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

So, it's off to Holland.

Deacon Dan and a postcard from Carol

More Postcard reflections visit: www.postcardreflections.blogspot.com

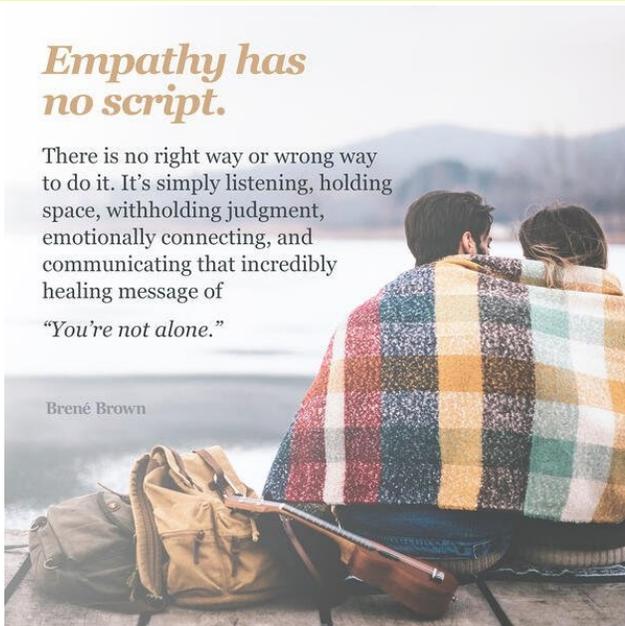


Empathy has no script.

There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of

"You're not alone."

Brené Brown



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Book of the Month Suggestion

It's OK That You're Not OK-Meagan Devine

There is a twin paradox in being human. First, no one can live your life for you—no one can face what is yours to face or feel what is yours to feel—and no one can make it alone. Secondly, in living our one life, we are here to love and lose. No one knows why. It is just so. If we commit to loving, we will inevitably know loss and grief. If we try to avoid loss and grief, we will never truly love. Yet powerfully and mysteriously, knowing both love and loss is what brings us fully and deeply alive.

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Indulge Your Grief

"To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness" ~Erich Fromm

In the beginning stages of grief, it is important not to suppress it. Unfortunately, you must experience the excruciating pain and depths of despair in order to process grief properly, and make it through in one piece. There is no getting around this. Efforts to bury, deny or avoid grief only postpone the inevitable. If you don't meet your grief head-on, it will come back to haunt you later in life.

Unresolved grief can manifest itself through physical symptoms or psychological problems. So, with bereavement, sooner is better than later.

During your Internet travels, you may have come across some offers, e-books or phone counseling, offering a quick fix or easy way out of your misery. Well, I am sorry to tell you that there is no easy way out of grief, and anyone who tells you there is, is doing you a grave disservice. I would have to say they are probably taking advantage of your pain and vulnerable state of mind! No one experiences the same amount or intensity or duration of pain in their grief. But severe raw pain is universal to all major bereavements. And even in today's "enlightened" society, giving way to grief can be seen as weak, unhealthy or morbid. This can prompt friends to try to distract you from your mourning. Well-wishers can actually make you feel wrong or embarrassed for your expressions of grief and sorrow, and you may in turn try to stop it in yourself. You can short-circuit this task, the working through of pain, by cutting off your feelings or denying the pain.

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Guided Imagery

One effective method to express your full range of emotions is through guided imagery. This exercise helps you get in touch with your feelings about the loss in a powerful way.

Here's how to do it:

- ◆ Sit in a chair, close your eyes, and imagine that your lost loved one is there with you.
- ◆ Use present time, and address him or her directly.
- ◆ Talk directly to him or her, and say what you need to.

Some things that you might want to tell them:

- ◇ ***The thing I miss most about you is...***
- ◇ ***I don't miss your...***
- ◇ ***I'm sorry I didn't...***
- ◇ ***I am sad that we didn't get to...***
- ◇ ***Please forgive me for...***

This technique encourages a full expression of thoughts and feelings, including regrets, disappointments, and guilty feelings.



2825 Lexington Ave. Suite B
Butte, Montana 59701

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Book Suggestions

- ⇒ Being Mortal-Atul Gawande
- ⇒ It's OK That You're Not OK-Meagan Devine
- ⇒ The Mindful Path to Self Compassion-
Christopher Germer

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Website Suggestions

- ⇒ www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com
- ⇒ www.recover-from-grief.com
- ⇒ www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org.
- ⇒ www.modernloss.com.

**Senior Solutions-2825 Lexington Ave. Suite B
Butte, Montana 59701**

Phone: 406-299-3777 Fax: 406-299-2730
www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com