



Issues -12-20

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- **Check out our updated website!**

www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com

The Bereavement Link has all the past Touchstone Issues...you can download and send to a friend.

Along with additional Bereavement Resources.

Quotes of the Month

"I do not claim to know the mystery of Grace: only that it meets us where we are and does not leave us where it found us." (Anne Lamont)

"Days pass and the years vanish, and we walk sightless among miracles. Lord, fill our eyes with seeing and our minds with knowing. Let there be moments when your Presence, like lightning, illumines the darkness in which we walk. Help us to see, wherever we gaze, that the bush burns, unconsumed. And we, clay touched by God, will reach out for holiness and exclaim in wonder...how filled with awe is this place and we did not know it." (Rachel Naomi Remen)

"Whenever we are between here and there, whenever one thing has ended and we're waiting for the next thing to begin, whenever we're tempted to distract ourselves or look for an escape route, we can instead let ourselves be open, curious, tentative, vulnerable." (Pema Chodron)

Touchstone

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

Seneca (Roman philosopher, 1 AD)

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

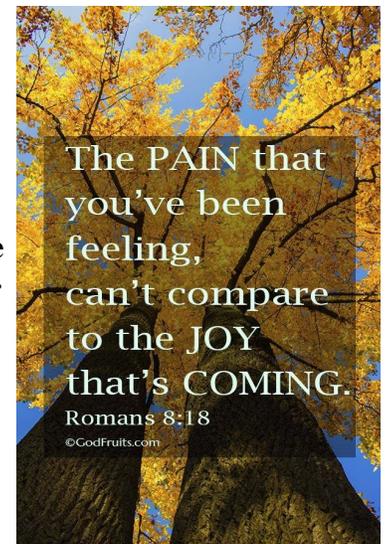
Losing a significant loved one changes you and your life forever. You will go through a metamorphosis as you grieve. You will eventually come full circle, and back to some semblance of a satisfying life. But it will be a different life. You can never return to the innocent, happy, unblemished existence you had before your disaster struck. After your grieving is done, you will have reinvented yourself just as you redefined your life. It's all about change.

New relationships, new interests, and a new outlook on life. It is not healthy for you to rush to find a quick replacement for your deceased mate or child. You may be tempted to take this route in an effort to reduce the pain. It may make you feel better for a while, but it sabotages the grief process. It robs you of the intensity and depth of your loss. This intense grief, although painful and unpleasant, must occur.

Pursuit of a "replacement" is also not fair to the new person, who will likely not be cherished and valued in his own right, apart from the tragedy. They will not appreciate being a "surrogate". No one would. So the decision to remarry, adopt or get pregnant should be postponed for as long as possible after the death.

That being said, after you have grieved through months and months of loneliness and solitude, there will come a time when you will NEED new people to enter your life. This does not dishonor or demean your lost loved one. Although your beloved can never be replaced, it's okay to fill the void in your life with a new relationship when the time is right. It is simply a reaffirmation that you are still alive. **You cannot stay married or in an exclusive relationship with a dead person forever, or you will die too.**

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Touchstone

Postcards-by-Deacon Dan McGrath

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

The first summer following Carol's death I was visiting with a social worker. I mentioned to him how things I used to enjoy, and had a passion for doing, didn't seem important or worth doing...since Carol died.

For example, I use to love to play golf (I never took my clubs out of the trunk of my car...always ready to catch a game). But since Carol's death I have no more desire to play. We talked about other things as well when he asked me if there might be something that I had not done in a long time that I might enjoy doing now?

I thought about his question for a while and then told him how when we lived at Georgetown Lake we owned a catamaran sailboat. Some of my fondest memories are of Carol and I sailing together...her sitting on the front pontoon with her feet dangling in the water...watching the wind catch the sails and water spraying over the bow of the boat. It's funny but since Carol died, I often thought about sailing again... however, it's been over thirty years since I sold the catamaran.

So...three weeks ago I started googling my computer for used catamaran sailboats. I found two prospects in the Coeur d'Alene area...however, one did not have a trailer and I just missed the sale of the other by a half hour.

Continuing my google search... "Craigslist" popped up. Now, I have never been on Craigslist before...but my daughter has mentioned it from time to time. So, I clicked it for the Butte area. A single post appeared for Anaconda. When I clicked on the post, I almost fell out of my chair... low and behold there was a picture of our old catamaran that I had sold thirty years ago! Needless to say, I am now the proud owner, again, of this grand old catamaran sailboat.

The sailor cannot see the North...but the needle can. - Emily Dickinson

Looking back on those days of sailing with Carol I was reminded of just how spiritual sailing was in our life. Sailing is a wonderful metaphor for healing.

When one is sailing you must stay attuned to the present moment...there is no future and no past...just you, the wind, and the sails...each contribute to the direction you will move towards.

Over the years, since Carol's death, I have come to find healing by focusing on the present moment throughout my day as often as I can...although the past has wonderful

memories and I would not want to forget any the life Carol and I had together...as hard as it is to realize...those memories cannot be re-lived.

Sailing quiets the mind...watching the two pontoons accept each wave as they move through the water with little resistance and ease calms the soul.

Over the years, since Carol's death, I have found that the formula:

Pain X Resistance = Suffering...rings so true.

Grief is painful...grief is hard...grief just sucks. But like birth, one must accept death as a part of the cycle of life. Acceptance of the pain of loss is the first step in moving through the grief... "the only way out is through."

Sailing on a catamaran is all about balance. The goal in sailing is to maintain the perfect place the weight of the boat and stress of the wind and sails are shared equally. When that happens, you hear a low pitch humming sound coming from the bottom of the boat. It's as if the boat is singing.

Over the years, since Carol's death, I have accepted how hard it is to stay balanced in coping with the loss of my soul mate. At times the weight, stress and pull on one's soul, mind and spirit can be overwhelming. It's been hard to find balance and get one's bearings on what they call the "new normal." That said, for me, healing has come in telling my story of grief to others who have experienced the death of a loved one. Telling our story...sharing the weight and stress with another helps maintain balance as we both realize you have no control which way the wind will blow...as it moves us to places we don't want to go.

Finally, and this is the hardest, sometimes when sailing, the wind just **STOPS!**

I have found, since Carol's death, it's good to stop from time to time and just be grateful...reflecting on life's goodness and grace both past and present, trusting the future to wherever the wind blows.

"I dissolved as a grain of salt in your Sea of Serenity. Nothing remained, no faith, no certainty, no doubt. In my heart a star was born and inside all worlds dissolved." Rumi

I can't wait to hear my old friend sing again!

Deacon Dan and a "Postcard" from Carol



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NEW INTERESTS

It may seem a little shallow or inappropriate for you to embark on a new project or hobby at a time like this. Yet such a diversion can provide just the comfort or distraction you need to ease you through your long days of mourning. Was there ever a hobby or new skill that you regretted not pursuing? Now is the time for it. What can you do that's new and interesting? The world is wide open...

- *Take up knitting or crochet. Knit a soft comforter in your favorite colors. Wrap yourself up in it.
- *Check out some library books and learn the basics of woodworking. Make a memory box or a bookshelf.
- *Buy some intricate jigsaw puzzles and a book of New York Times crossword puzzles.
- *Start a "square-foot" vegetable garden or plant some exquisite rose varieties. Savor the earthy smell of tilled soil or heavenly rose scents.
- *Buy a 20 gallon fish tank and stock it with Oscars or other exotic species. Tend to it daily and enjoy watching the fish.
- *Take guitar or piano lessons. Fill your living room with sweet sound.
- *Start bike riding or jogging daily. Get a skip-proof CD player and exercise to your favorite music.
- *Paint your bedroom, rearrange the furniture and clean out the closet. Take the clutter to the nearest donation center.
- *Take up watercolor or pastel classes at the local adult-ed center. Paint your grief. What color is it?
- *Join the church choir. Promise you won't sing too loudly. Glory in the sound of the voices as they harmonize.
- *Join an environmental group. Find a cause to donate your time to. Get involved.
- Find a charity related to the manner in which your loved one died. Find a way you can help promote the cause.
- * Try your hand at fishing or learn how to sail a small boat. Enjoy being out on the water.
- * Learn about hydroponics and construct a small

unit to grow herbs or heirloom tomatoes in (www.hydroponics-simplified.com). Fascinating.

- *Join a poetry workshop. Attend some readings. Nurture your soul.
 - *Join a bird watchers group. Buy a nice camera with a telephoto lens and capture the beauty of nature.
 - *Investigate the local Y. Take up yoga, aerobics or aquacize.
- Determine to treat your body right.

Finally. You have changed because of your loss. Let your soul evolve and welcome new dimensions into your life. It will create a focus for your energies and provide healing activity. Reach out to others in your days of need. Find some new interests and meet some new people. In so doing, you will find your way back to life. For life truly is rich, and precious... and worth celebrating. Even without your loved one at your side.

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"The emotional pain caused by loss suffered does not move toward forgetfulness. It moves, rather, in the direction of enriched remembrance; the memory becomes an integral part of the mourner's personality. The work of mourning has been completed when the (lost) person no longer appears as an absence in a barren world, but has come to reside securely within one's heart. Each of us must grieve in his own manner and at his own pace. For many people, one year seems to bring completion. Others require much more or much less time. Periodic waves of grief are often felt for the remainder of ones life. The mourning process must be given the freedom to find its own depth and rhythm; it cannot be artificially accelerated. A loss, like a physical wound, cannot heal overnight. There is no way to hurry the stages of tissue growth, and there is no way to speed up the healing process of mourning. But, when mourning has been completed, the mourner comes to feel the inner presence of the loved one, no longer an idealized hero or a maligned villain, but a presence with human dimensions. Lost irreversibly in objective time, the person is present in a new form within ones mind and heart, tenderly present in inner time without the pain and bitterness of death. Once the loved one has been accepted in this way, he can never again be forcefully removed." ~Robert Chernin Cantor, *And a Time to Live*, Harper & Row, 1978.



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Book Suggestions

- ⇒ Resilient Grieving-Lucy Hone, Phd
- ⇒ It's OK That You're Not OK-Meagan Devine
- ⇒ The Emotional Life of Your Brain-Richard Davidson

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Website Suggestions

- ⇒ www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com
- ⇒ www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com
- ⇒ www.recover-from-grief.com/

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