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Q&A Forum - Review

Grieving the Loss of a Grandson

2-Feb-2002

Q&Aers,

Greetings! This week we welcome Patty from Naugatuck and Kim from Stratford to our list. We have lost a few members whose email bounced back after the last Q&A and we are now at 111 members. Our Goal Setting and Time Management workshop is coming along fine. We now have brochures, and an email should be ready to go real soon. If you are interested, let me know and hold the date, Saturday, Feb 16th from 9am-4pm.

Exciting things are beginning to happen here at Personal Growth Concepts - look for updates in future Q&As.

Also, a request - I have one more question in the hopper and need more questions so..... if you have been holding back, now is the time to send them in. Now..... onto the show.....

Q: Dear John, I have a friend who lost a grandson several years ago to cancer. Her grandson was three at the time and passed away within only a month of his diagnosis. It is now approximately ten years later and she has trouble speaking about her grandson without breaking down into tears. She is working and maintaining an average life with the exception of this deep grief. Other people have told her that she should be "over it" by now, and others have told her she should be happy that her grandson is in heaven. I think these people are well meaning, but I also think that there is nothing wrong with grieving and missing a loved one. She isn't crying constantly, but when her grandson is brought up in conversation, she does begin to cry. I think this is normal, especially given the fact that he was taken from this world so young and so quickly. She said the other day that maybe she shouldn't mention her deceased grandson anymore and just "forget about it." I didn't think that would be helpful, as putting it "out of one's mind" doesn't make the death and grief any less real. Do you have any advice to offer her? Thank you.

A: Yes -- I believe grieving the loss of a child is an extremely emotional and painful experience. Some of the most intense and difficult grief work I have been privileged to share has been done by parents who have lost a son or daughter. The pain is no less when it is a grandchild and, for some, it may be more as one grieves not only for the loss of the grandchild but also sees their son/daughter and their spouse in pain and feels utterly helpless. For you, I would encourage you to honor her grief, her need to cry and to create a non-judgmental, safe, caring environment where she feels free to talk or not talk about him when she chooses.

Regarding her -- I agree, the periodic crying appears normal. While I understand her motives, I disagree with her about just 'forgetting about it.' Her language gives it away: she said "forget about it;" she didn't say "forget about him." Perhaps she doesn't know how to handle people's reactions to her crying or their extremely insensitive comments about being "over it" by now. It is obvious the loss is very painful and it seems that she may need some professional help to gently guide her through more completely some of the stages in her grief process. If she can handle it, you might offer to accompany her to a meeting of Compassionate Friends, a support group for grieving parents. I believe they also welcome grandparents. If you need to check them out or find out when or where they meet, you can call 211 in Connecticut (Infoline). If that doesn't work, contact me and I will help you access this excellent group in your locale.

One final note -- deep grief creates a large emotional scar that reminds us of the hurt, the pain, the wound, the entire experience and the healing. As most of us know, scars can and do hurt. If you will, please update me in a few months (sooner if necessary) as to how your friend is doing. Peace, John

Quote: "The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits." -- unknown

Bonus#1:

The Daffodil Principle

Several times my daughter had telephoned to say, "Mother, you must come see the daffodils before they are over."

I wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive from Laguna to Lake Arrowhead. "I will come next Tuesday," I promised, a little reluctantly, on her third call.

Next Tuesday dawned cold and rainy. Still, I had promised, and so I drove there.

When I finally walked into Carolyn's house and hugged and greeted my grandchildren I said, "Forget the daffodils, Carolyn! The road is invisible in the clouds and fog, and there is nothing in the world except you and these children that I want to see bad enough to drive another inch!"

My daughter smiled calmly, "We drive in this all the time, Mother."

"Well, you won't get me back on the road until it clears - and then I'm heading for home!" I assured her. "I was hoping you'd take me over to the garage to pick up my car." "How far will we have to drive?"

"Just a few blocks," Carolyn said, "I'll drive. I'm used to this."

After several minutes I had to ask, "Where are we going? This isn't the way to the garage!"

"We're going to my garage the long way," Carolyn smiled, "by way of the daffodils."

"Carolyn," I said sternly, "please turn around."

"It's all right, Mother. I promise you will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience."

After about twenty minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand-lettered sign "Daffodil Garden."

We got out of the car and each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn down the path. Then we turned a corner of the path, and I looked up and gasped. Before me lay the most glorious sight. It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon-yellow, salmon-pink, saffron, and butter-yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted as a group so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. Five acres of flowers.

"But who has done this?" I asked Carolyn.

"It's just one woman," Carolyn answered. "She lives on the property. That's her home." Carolyn pointed to a well-kept A-frame house that looked small and modest in the midst of all that glory.

We walked up to the house. On the patio we saw a poster: "Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking" was the headline.

The first answer was a simple one: "50,000 bulbs," it read.

The second answer was, "One at a time, by one woman. "Two hands, two feet, and very little brain."

The third answer was, "Began in 1958."

There it was: The Daffodil Principle. For me that moment was a life-changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than thirty-five years before, had begun one bulb at a time to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Still, just planting one bulb at a time, year after year, had changed the world. This unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. She had created something of ineffable magnificence, beauty, and inspiration.

The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration:

Learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time often just one baby-step at a time.

Learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things we can change the world.

"It makes me sad in a way," I admitted to Carolyn. "What might I have accomplished if I had thought of a wonderful goal thirty-five years ago and had worked away at it one bulb at a time through all those years. Just think what I might have been able to achieve!"

My daughter summed up the message of the day in her direct way. "Start now," she said.

Bonus #2

7 UPS

1. Wake Up

Decide to have a good day. "Today is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalms 118:24

2. Dress Up!!

The best way to dress up is to put on a smile. A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks. "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart." I Samuel 16:7

3. Shut Up!!

Say nice things and learn to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He must have meant for us to do twice as much listening as talking. "He who guards his lips guards his soul." Proverbs 13:3. Gossip betrays confidence. Avoid men who talk too much."

4. Stand Up!!...

For what you believe in. Stand for something or you will fall for anything. "Let us not be weary in doing good; for at the proper time, we

will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good..." Galatians 6:9-10

5. Look Up!!... To the Lord.

"I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me". Philippians 4:13

6. Reach Up!!...For something higher.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." Proverbs 3:5-6

7. Lift Up!!...Your Prayers.

"Do not worry about anything; instead PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING." Philippians 4:6

A POSITIVE THOUGHT

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, He'll listen. He could live anywhere in the universe, and He chose your heart. What about the Christmas gift He sent you in Bethlehem; not to mention that Friday at Calvary. Face it, He's crazy about you!!

Send this to the Special ones you care about. I thought this was mighty special, just like YOU. Pass this on and brighten someone's day, and remember: God answers Knee-Mail. :)

Have a great day today and every day!!
God loves you sooo much. God bless.
Enjoy His Sonshine!!!

Peace, John

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We wish you peace in who you are and in all that you do!

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