

Taos News Article

Other Important Types of Grief: Important and Rarely Mentioned or Recognized

The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. People may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.

March 3, 2016

Dear Ted,

Valentine's Day has come and gone and I find myself perplexed by my emotional breakdown this holiday. My son died a couple years ago and this year on Valentine's Day all I could do was cry and feel my pain of my loss. I didn't know what to do and am now worried about future anniversaries, holidays, or other benchmarks that will come up. Do you have any ideas of what may be helpful to allow me to grieve my loss and continue to be in the world today?

Thank you,
Broken Heart

Dear Broken Heart,

Thank you for writing in and I appreciate you taking the time to ask your question. The amazing thing is that just writing and sending this question supports healthy healing. This is because you are acknowledging and honoring your son while healing your own heart broken heart.

Certain benchmarks such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other types of monumental moments that have built love, history, and bonding between you and your son will have a tendency to trigger emotions. These cellular and cognitive memories become activated and alive in the present moment. Permission to acknowledge your emotions and actually see, hear, and value your needs can help transform deep pain and sadness while nurturing a new type of relationship with your son.

Seeing, hearing, and valuing these feelings, and yourself can help satisfy certain levels of yearning and allow your psyche to settle. Setting up traditions, the same as when your son was alive, can help build new experiences and bonds presently. The love for your son does not die and the relationship can continue. I'm not saying you wouldn't do anything to change the situation, but you can take action, build ceremonies and rituals that serve you. Honoring your past while making choices and taking action in the present allows you to step into your truth with support and motivation.

In the midst of your grief it can seem overwhelming to even begin to find energy to create any kind of action. Action does not have to mean enormous transformations within yourself or taking energy to change the world around you. Baby steps that scaffold into healing and health allow a stronger foundation for you as you rebuild your life. I believe

there is a lot of resistance towards healing from loss. The fear is that if you heal you will forget your past. There also may be resistance as healing sounds like “healed.”

Honoring the past and gleaning the wisdom, love, joyful memories, lessons, and fondness can soothe the pain, trauma, trials and tribulations around a loss so that you are not confined and defined by the past. Taking action is being in the present. It is something you are doing now and your body and psyche can start to calm as there is choice and movement happening.

I recently did an unofficial survey to see how others cope with holidays and what action they take to be present while honoring loved ones. Fifty-two people responded. Six categories showed up. These included: 1. Spiritual – (praying, church, meditation, religion, ritual and ceremony, connecting with a Higher Power of one’s understanding, and communing with Spirit). 2. Self-care (Bubble bath, solitude, massage, doing something to not remember, healthy isolation, rest, day off from work, working with 12-steps, curling up and reading a book). 3. Reflection – (looking at photos, solo time to remember, writing a letter and burning it, sharing with others who remember, sharing, including the person, for example with a spirit plate or chair, or by fixing their favorite meal) 4. Connection – (visiting family, sharing a meal, hanging with friends, going to the gravesite, food and meals in so many ways, celebrating life with others, being close with a few friends and telling stories) 5. Movement – (exercise, lighting a candle, going on a trek in honor of loved one, going to Golden Willow Retreat, going to counseling, finding a recovery meeting, visiting special places, Tai-Chi, yoga, walking, journaling, hiking in nature) and 6. Service – (finding a way to have sense in life, helping others with loss, helping at church, giving a donation in the person’s honor, feeding others, checking in to see what I need, helping with children, cleaning up the graveside, showing gratitude for the people in my life).

What I found was that some sort of conscious action developed tools to honor the past, be in the present, while manifesting a future that allowed healing and love. Thank you to those who participated in the survey and Broken Heart, thank you for taking action and reaching out for help. I wish you well.

Until next time, take care.

Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing and recovery from any type of loss. Direct any questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, Founder of Golden Willow Retreat at (575) 776-2024 or GWR@newmex.com