

LIVING with Constructive Living

Thinking Out Loud about grief and mourning



These past several week I have been thinking a great deal about the customs of mourning. It appears to me here in North America that we are nudged to be "OK" as soon as possible following a death and never to

impose our unhappy state on others (except for the briefest of moments). In fact, we reward those who act "normal", carrying on as though nothing has happened. We use words like strong, courageous, resilient, "bounced back" and so on. We are suspicious of grief prolonged. (*prolonged being anything more than a few weeks*)

I know that I have also been caught in this web. I have experienced death a few times and in recent reflections realized that there had been no chance to grieve or mourn those losses. I was reminded of an old friend who took a sabbatical from work when his wife was dying and then stayed off work for six or seven months following her death. The latter struck me intuitively, at that time, as a wise thing to do, if not an unusual one.

I am now thinking that 'activity and staying busy and involved' isn't necessarily the antidote to grief. It may be for some but not for all. "Time out" from all of our obligations including social ones may be good "Dr.'s "orders", and not just for a month. (Each person, of course, will need to figure out Dr.'s orders for themselves).

Even though arm bands, black veils and drawn blinds are gone, it may be that we could benefit from a reprieve from our usual duties, albeit in a sunny room, not a darkened one. A room where we don't need to talk or greet or comfort another but where food magically appears with a hot cup of tea from time to time, where a fire is laid and burning. A room where we can fall asleep in the chair and

where fresh flowers adorn the single table and where the cold is banished.

A room where you are automatically excused for not taking calls, answering emails or from trying to cheer up. A room where you are free to expect, at any moment, for your loved one to re-appear; where maybe it has all been a big mistake, all the while knowing - this won't happen. This room would look out onto trees, birds and water, with a door leading to a path. Where there is no fear of encountering anyone (*no matter how dear*) who wants to offer comfort or be comforted by you. A cloistered place where one is permitted to be alone with ones thoughts and fears, and prayers and pain. No excuses are needed here, to decline lunch or any social gatherings. No explanations are required.

One day in good time (*whenever that is*), the desire awakens to move beyond the walls. It is different for everyone. No explanation for staying or leaving is required. Life does indeed move on but not easily or quickly for some, and not at all by the timeline we typically use in our country. We speak a great deal about grief, the internal process of grieving, yet we have few rituals for mourning - how we express that grief externally.

Thus today, I am holding in my heart those who mourn. I want to say that there is more than one right way to go through this pain - that we need to remember to tread gently with our dear ones and ourselves. For some, companionship is the answer, for others, solitude is what helps the most.

An old friend said the way he has dealt with loss is "to place even more value on the friends who are still there, and magnify their importance in his life ..." Of course this is true. It is why we go on living after loss ... to be with our loved ones as we journey together and to appreciate them while we have the chance. Certainly we need each other in this life of ours. We need to embrace our humanness, to be held, to speak, to be silent, to weep and grieve and mourn, as well as to celebrate. **Together.**

Trudy Boyle lives as 'constructively' as she can and assists others to do the same...1-877-247-2032.



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For all of my dreams I am what I do.

-Dr. David K. Reynolds

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