

LIFE HAS CHANGED

Grief is a key part of each of our lives which is essential for us to journey through and experience.

My life was full. I was married and had two beautiful sons. Before I knew it my life changed. My husband died in an accident and here I am with two young sons. They became my life. Grieving? How do you do that when you are raising two young children and you are in your twenties? It got put on hold. I wrapped my life around my two boys. They didn't understand where dad was and I tried to explain to them but they did not get it. I am not sure I understood. Living each day was what I/we did. I took them to church, we prayed and would have our conversations with God but nothing made sense. My husband, their father was no longer with us. They participated in activities and I did what moms do. I love to cook so was always hosting family dinners. Weekends I made homemade sauce. As my sons grew up, we would travel and enjoy many sights together. I enjoyed spending quality time with them. There came a time that each of them got involved with the wrong crowd. I questioned and thought I was a good mom but then began to think I wasn't. How could they get involved with drugs and drinking? I raised them well. What did I do wrong? Then one of my sons overdosed and died. WHY I continued to ask. It's not fair. First their dad dies and then one of them.

It was then that I really realized that I did not deal with my husband death and now I have to deal with both of them. Everything was so mixed up. The tears would not stop, I was angry; angry at everything my son, the drugs, my husband for leaving me and how do I go on? My other son missed his brother so very much. I tried to do everything for him but found out that is not the answer.

I found a grief group with other moms who were walking in my shoes. All of our children were struggling. Do we; as moms, as dads as people in general realize illness can affect us in so many ways. We think we are

living a happy life and then stop and think and realize things can be mixed up. In my grief group, we share our feelings, our pain when anniversaries, birthdays, holidays and so much more. Where would I be without that group of women. We are not alike but we carry one thing that is the same. We understand.

Several years later my other son in his grief took his own life. WHY? WHY? How could this be happening to me again? My husband and both of my sons are gone. I am alone. Where do I go? What do I do? I cry, I scream, I get mad at God. The night he died our facilitator was with me and a group member came and spent the night. The next day another group member came and spent part of the day. What would I do without these wonderful women who truly understand? The bond we have as group and as friends will always be there. My faith has changed, my life has changed. I go places alone. I celebrate holidays with my sister and brother but it's different. I want my old life back. If you are asking the question, is this a true story? Yes it is. It is the story of someone I know and she has given me permission to share with you.

Each of us, no matter who we are need to deal with our grief whether it be in a grief group, one on one with a grief support person, professional counselor or by sharing with a friend. When our grief is not dealt with, it will come back and affect us in some way or another. Do not be afraid to explore your feelings and be open to peace and healing.

Grief takes on many forms and is different for every person. Our friends and family don't always understand as it's not them. The group facilitator, in our group has always told us that you will find your best friend who you can say anything to and tell your story over and over and they will listen and that has been so very true for many. Very often we lose friends because they have not walked in our shoes. The others in group have children and one a husband. For each of them it is different. We will never forget. There will always be a hole in our hearts. When least expected we will cry. Our children are forever in our hearts and give us signs if we are

open to them. Those signs can make you laugh, smile and even cry. Don't be afraid of them.

Where is God in all of this pain and turmoil? He/She is there walking beside you, taking your hand, listening to you. God wraps you in love when you least expect it. Not only does God give you a hug but so does your loved one.

As you step back and listen to your loved one and take some time to reach and see what is being offered to you as you begin a new day, there is love all around. Feel it and let it give you strength and peace. What is the gift you are being given?

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