

The Intensity of Grief..Is Real Grief is “Doable” with Supportive Options

Dear Grieving Parent,

You asked a very important question during the group last week. You expressed how deep and intense your grief is and a fear of it going even deeper or never getting through it. This is a fear that has often been expressed, and I have asked myself that question during my own times of great pain.

Here are some of my thoughts on this topic..

At points in our walk, we feel as though we are in the very dark, deep, and slippery pit. All efforts to climb up the sides of this pit can seem to fail..we keep slipping. This is especially true during the first 6 months. In normal grief, as we slip we can feel it..that is why it frightens us so. Recognizing this for what it is - is a good thing, in my opinion. When we are aware..we are more likely to listen to our fear and try to understand what to DO to calm ourselves. (It is when we don't recognize it..and therefore make no effort to cope with it, that I really worry.)

So, we know that we want to stop from hitting the bottom over and over again for fear of going even deeper. This is when the coping ideas that we are learning have to come to our rescue. We grab a hold of one of the coping lines that seems to work and make it a ladder to climb out..or up a little onto the first or second rung.

That is why learning about grief and coping ideas is so important. If we don't understand about this pit or have a palette of options to pull on - we can't hope to climb out. The deal is, too, we have to WANT to heal. For awhile, we might actually WANT (sometimes unconsciously) to stay in the pit for fear of forgetting our baby or leaving our baby behind. Or because we hurt so much we just want to stay in the pit and wallow in our pain (as one of our SA moms used to put it). This is a normal reaction to the death of our precious baby.

Our babies would not want our grief over them to keep us in the pit. They would want us to grieve them, do things in their memory to show our love, and work to keep ourselves from being on the bottom of that pit. They would want their parents to be happy again some day. Most of us want our baby's legacy to be a meaningful one. To make this happen, we have to survive, and we have to heal.

Is it difficult to keep climbing out..yes. But, what happens is that the more we find that we can go up the rungs of the ladder..out of the pit..the more we are able to stay on a given rung without falling back down. Over time, it becomes easier to seek the option that will work best for us. (And, as we said the other night, the options - that work - change over time.)

For me, writing my thoughts down and finding books that would let me get outside of myself..helped. Also, traveling to places that gave me new experiences to hold in my heart...along with my wee baby. Several of our friends welcomed us and their love and support made the difference.

I never would have wanted to have my baby die. But, since this did happen, I have learned that what we do with this fact is key to survival. Your friends who support you and mourn with you do so because they love you both. They love and miss your sweet baby, too. Consider ideas that will bring them into your circle of healing. Many of our parents have made blankets, walked with our Walk to Remember, or created their own positive place. It doesn't have to be a big energy zapper...just something that lets everyone feel as though they are doing something in loving memory of your baby.

I have written and shared much on grief through the years. A lot has come from my own experience..but so much more has been given to me through those who have come through our group either here in Atlanta or online. One group member wanted me to address this so I did..below is a link to what I wrote in 2004. I have used this piece over and over again. It is similar to what I have shared here..but said in a different way! It does give instances that I strongly feel that outside support is needed.

<http://www.shareatlanta.org/legacy/griefintensity.htm> The Intensity of Grief...Marcia McGinnis 2004

My thoughts are with you...Marcia McGinnis 3/12

