

Good Grief –Love expressed through Sorrow

It happens to all of us at some point, the death of someone we love, whether a grandparent, parent, child, close friend or family pet. It's part of the human experience, part of life. When you open your heart to love, it comes with the close partner of sorrow. Sorrow is in a way the greatest expression of love. As Kahil Gibran's Prophet says, "Your joy is your sorrow unmasked... Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep on your bed."

If sorrow is an expression of love, shouldn't there at some level be a beauty in it.? I believe there is. To the living, we express our love through joy, delight, smiles, hugs, tender touch, caring gestures. In death, our grief is often more passionate, even when it is hidden. When international news stories show wailing, grieving relatives in the Middle East after some terrible tragedy, caused by war or natural disaster, do you think "What an expression of love!" or "What an outpouring of sorrow!"? They are in effect the same, and I for one envy other cultures for their ability to demonstrate so freely, straight from the heart.

So, when we allow ourselves to love, we are taking a risk, whether we are aware of this at the time or not. I had a friend at University who had seen so many friends grieving at the ending of a relationship, that she was determined not to fall into that trap herself, and therefore avoided the whole messy business of falling in love. But life is full of risk, and without it we are missing an opportunity to grow and learn, and also the chance to experience true joy. In his poem, Dr Leo Buscaglia describes the danger of avoiding taking risks:

*The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has
nothing, is nothing and becomes nothing.
He [or she] may avoid suffering and sorrow,
but he simply cannot learn and feel and change and grow and love and live.
Chained by his certitudes, he is a slave, he has forfeited his freedom.
Only the person who risks is truly free.*

Gloria Hunniford, when sharing her deep grief and sorrow over the death of her daughter, Caron Keating in her book, *Always with You*, reflected on the fact that no matter how painful, if we were given the choice to love someone knowing there is a risk of experiencing the pain of losing them, most people would still choose to love. We are compelled to, it's in our make-up as human beings. It's what we do.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer also mentions love and sorrow in her poem *The Invitation*, where she expresses the desire to know people deeply, not superficially: *I want to know if you have touched the centre of your sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals, or if you have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain.*

I believe very strongly that grief is a cleansing process. Unexpressed grief is like stored poison, which will eventually leak out and wreak havoc on your physical body. I know this, because it happened to me. Let it come, let it out in whatever way suits you personally. Eventually, hopefully, you will reach acceptance of your loss, and although the sharp pain will hit you sometimes, like a tender wound, you can find peace. In her wonderful book, *Mourning Has Broken*, I was inspired by [Carmella B'Hahn](#) who, even in the depths of her pain over the tragic death of her 5 year old son, sensed a light shining somewhere and she felt the strong instinct and desire to see her son's death as being as natural as his birth. Courage indeed.

Grieving the loss of someone you love, going through the sometimes excruciating painful mourning process, can take years. People get through it in different ways, but if you're struggling on your own, always look for help. Talking to a friend or family member doesn't work for everyone, especially if they are grieving themselves. [Cruse](#) is a free counselling service, and these days there is a wealth of information available online. Help the children, they don't know how to grieve, and left to their own devices, may not find a way to express their feelings of loss. Assistance can be found at [Daisy's Dream](#), [Winston's Wish](#) and [The Child Bereavement Trust](#).

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Solace: Comfort and the alleviation of sorrow
Alchemy: The art of transmutation (from base metal to gold)

Solace, created by Carmella B'Hahn, offers support to use adversity and grief as fuel for transformation.

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