

Love is never lost...

Not even in death

Gordon Livingston, MD, said...

"Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart"

I am a parent twice-bereaved.

In one thirteen-month period, I lost my oldest son to suicide and my youngest to leukemia.

Grief has taught me many things about the fragility of life and the finality of death.

To lose that which means the most to us is a lesson in helplessness, humility, and survival.

After being stripped of any illusions of control I might have harbored, I had to decide what questions were still worth asking.

I quickly realized that the most obvious ones

Why my sons?

Why me?

were as pointless as they were inevitable.

**Any appeal to
fairness was
absurd.**

I was led by my fellow sufferers, those I loved and those who had endured irredeemable losses, to find reasons to go on.

Like all who mourn, I learned an abiding hatred for the word “closure,” with its comforting implications that grief is a time-limited process from which we all recover.

The idea that I could reach a point when I would no longer miss my children was obscene and I dismissed it.

I had to accept the reality that I would never be the same person, that some part of my heart, perhaps the best part, had been cut out and buried with my sons.

What was left?

Now **there** was a question worth contemplating.

Gregory Peck, in an interview many years after his son's death, said, "I don't think of him every day; I think of him every hour of every day."

With time, the nature of these thoughts change, from the lacerating images of illness and dying to softer memories of all that their lives contained.

Grief is a subject I have come to know well. Indeed, it was the subject of my life for a long time.

What I have learned is that there is no way around it; you just have to go through it.

In that journey, I experienced hopelessness, contemplated suicide, and learned that I was not alone.

Certain that there could be no comfort in words, I came to realize that words, my own and those of others, were all I had to frame my experience ~ first my despair and finally a fragile belief that my life still had meaning.

Thirteen years later, my sons, though frozen in time, remain a living presence for me.

I have, largely, forgiven myself for not being able to save them.

I have reconciled myself to growing old without them.

They will not, as I once confidently assumed, bury me.

I have forsaken any belief in an orderly universe.

I have not relinquished my love for them nor my longing that I will see them again.

This is what passes for hope:

those we have lost evoked in us feelings of love
of which we did not know we were capable.

These permanent changes are their legacies, their gifts to us.

In this way, we remain faithful to their memories.

At his daughter's wedding, Dr. Livingston said,

The love between parents and children depends heavily on forgiveness. It is our imperfections that mark us as human and our willingness to tolerate them in our families and ourselves redeems the suffering to which all love makes us vulnerable. In happy moments such as this, we celebrate the miracle of two people who found each other and created new lives together. If love can indeed overcome death, it is only through the exercise of memory and devotion. Memory and devotion...with it your heart, though broken, will be full and you will stay in the fight to the very last.

A Head Start on Heaven

by Helen Bush

When those we love have passed away
Our hearts at first are sad,
But here is a thought to comfort us
And a reason, instead, to be glad ~

They just got a head start on heaven
and beat us there by a little while.
They are already hearing the angels sing
And looking down on us with a smile.

The ones of us left behind
Will miss them here below
But when it's time in God's own plan
It will be our turn to go.

Then we'll meet again in heaven,
And be together for evermore,
They'll be waiting there to welcome us
When we arrive at heaven's door.