

Fathers Weep At Graves



I see them weep
The fathers at the stones
Taking off the brave armour
Forced to wear in the work place
Clearing away the debris
With gentle fingers
Inhaling the sorrow
Diminished by anguish
Their hearts desiring
What they cannot have—
To walk hand in hand
With children no longer held—
To all the fathers who leave a part
Of their hearts at the stones
May breezes underneath the trees of time
Ease their pain
As they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

Alice J. Wisler

For David, in memory of our son Daniel
(August 25, 1992—February 2, 1997)

TCF Tuscaloosa 2010

THOUGHTS FOR SPRINGTIME?

Would it be easier,
if spring were not so lovely?

Would it be easier,
if robins did not sing?

Would I be stronger,
if the trees were barren
or if a cloak of grey
hid everything?

Could I be braver,
if the days were faded
and if the sun remained
remote and cold?

I hear the whispers
of a new beginning.
The earth is new.

Why is my grief so old?

Sascha Wagner



Where Does Grief Go?

A Personal Reflection on Loss and Healing.

Tony Gee
May 2010

I didn't invite grief into my life. Grief simply arrived. It didn't knock, didn't ask permission, It simply burst through my door and was there. An ominous and overwhelming uninvited guest who took over my Life and began to affect every aspect according to it's whim.

Like most of us dealing with the loss of a child (or sib), since the death of my youngest daughter, Nellie in 2005, Grief has been my constant companion. Whether it be a 'good day' or a 'bad day', whether I was involved in work or other tasks, or directly focussing on Nell, grief was, and is, always there.

But as time has gone by, I have begun to notice that grief has changed. Perhaps it has grown older, matured one could say, perhaps it has become less intense as time passes, perhaps weary, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps....



In any event, I think I have finally made friends with grief. But I suspect that somewhere along the line, before I really knew it, Grief began to shift itself into something else.. it began some sort of metamorphoses.. and I have now begun to recognise that that 'something else' was Healing. Unlike Grief however, Healing held no Loud Arrival. It didn't Crash Down The Door. It seemed to have crept up on me slowly and steadily, like a Gentle Breeze that had begun to whisper for quite some time before I really noticed.

But how did this happen? Unlike much of what I had read about loss and bereavement, I do not believe Grief simply became less intense, less energised and then sort of 'fizzled' out; and then the Healing began as if they were two very different and distinct processes, one being somehow 'completed' before the other began. That certainly has not been my experience nor the experience of many people I have talked to... for I really don't think Grief goes away at all. Nor has there been any discernable timeframe. In fact I think now that Grief always remains, that it is and will always be there, but it changes, it shifts, and it eventually transforms....

And in some strange way I found that idea very Comforting. I realised I have become so used to my Constant Companion, who always keeps me linked to my daughter, but just as I change, and just as Life changes, my Companion is now also changing.

And if Healing was taking place, then I began to wonder what it actually was; what did Healing really mean? The Dictionary defines it as; "to become sound or healthy again: to cause a wound or disease or person to heal or be healed: to put right or to alleviate". And when there is a physical wound this seems quite clear. But what about emotional, psychological and spiritual wounds, what about non physical trauma that can so often accompany loss of a Loved One ?

In that sense, I used to think that Healing meant finding Peace. Peace within oneself and with others, including with our Loved One Lost. But now I think it is more than that. I think real Healing means

somehow re-finding ones place in the world, but in a different world. For me, it is a world without the physical presence of my daughter, but a world that now encompasses a much wider dimension (some may call it a spiritual dimension) of which she is a part... and of which I am a part and in some manner of which we all are a part. The Lakota have a saying - *Mitakuye Oyasin* - which is like a prayer and means "to all my relations". And in that Indigenous Wisdom Tradition these relations are both living on this material plane as well as 'living' on other planes or dimensions as well. And we all remain connected....

I think that we all have enormous capacity to Heal, that all Healing is essentially Self Healing and is an inherent part of our Human makeup. I now also think that for the most part Healing needs some sort of connection to the spiritual (or whatever one would like to name it), or at least to an expanded vision of the world... otherwise it stays static and has nowhere to go....

But the inner 'drive' to Heal needs the right time, circumstances and understanding, as well as a conducive environment. In many ways this is not an easy Journey and often requires help and many of us can get 'stuck' at times. And this is where our "compassionate community" can guide and assist, as the trauma and the Grief that follows loss can at some point be transforming, if we can find the right 'space' for it, the right understanding of how Healing can occur.

I know that for me, a deep reflection of the spiritual has kept me (so far) relatively sane. I think we have so little understanding of the Mystery inherent in Life and in Death and the Ongoing Nature of Spirit. I miss the physical presence of my daughter every day, but feel she continues to walk with me and her sibs. She remains very much a part of our everyday lives and that thought/feeling/knowingness is in itself of great comfort and a Healing Presence.

So in a strange way my Grief and then my Healing and a recognition of a wider dimension has expanded my world. In a strange way my Grief now has a larger 'container' ... it is still there, it is still connected to my daughter...but in this expanded place it has become Healing.

So where does Grief go?

I now don't really think it goes anywhere.... but in time and with understanding and guidance, I think that it can transform into Healing. We may not notice it at first, we may not recognise its initial breath, but nonetheless I think it Happens. So for me, Grief remains an Ongoing Companion but one who has changed and will continue to change. Grief still connects me to my daughter but now in more positive and hopeful ways. While Grief was once a Dark Companion, It is now Lighter and can hold Hope and Joy. For just as Life keeps shifting and changing, just as Change is the very nature of our Existence, it seems to me that Grief must continue to change as well.

