

I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me.

Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me.
Say nothing.
Do not offer a cure.
Or a pill, or a word, or a potion.
Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me.
Please be gentle with me.
And I will try to be gentle with me too.



I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path. Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am even able to smile again, the pain is just beneath the surface. There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more- hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child- or an elderly person struggling with the door. There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that " God has a plan " for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers- and fathers- and grandparents- and siblings won't wake up one day with everything 'okay' and life back to normal. I have a new normal now.

As time passes, I may gain gifts, and treasures, and insights but anything gained was too high a cost when compared to what was lost. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder, don't forget that I have another one, another child, whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything as C.S. Lewis said.

My child may have died; but my love - and my motherhood - never will.

~Candi Schmidt Price (08/18/18)

