

'Finding the Light in the Darkness'

Throughout my entire life I have tried to see the 'light' around me no matter what 'darkness' has been presented to me. That was never so evident, and most challenging, than when we experienced **the sudden death of our daughter, Kristen, from an undiagnosed metabolic disorder.**

Anyone who has had a child die can relate to that darkness ~ that ripping apart of oneself, one's family, and one's life ~ emotionally, cognitively, spiritually, physically, socially ~ all in a split second...the second you realize that your child has REALLY died. As excruciatingly painful as that is, however, we DO have a choice about how we will work through the chaos of that darkness.

We can either stay in it and 'die' ourselves or allow ourselves to embrace the darkness and work through the grieving process in order to get through to the other side ~ to not only see the light but to enhance that light the rest of our lives! For me, it's been a **union of Kristen's light and love with my own unique light** ~ which has 'birthed' the FOD Group and changed my career from teaching to Grief Consulting.



Finding that union has been extremely painful and confusing, yet at the same time releasing and exhilarating. It has been a learning over and over and over again that pain and joy CAN coexist and it is the experiencing and expressing of both those human emotions and everything in-between that promotes an active grief process.

That **process is not just a one-time event or 'inside head job'** ~ it is **a lifelong journey that requires A LOT of Faith, Hope and Love...and a lot of endurance and patience!** In order to make MY process ACTIVE instead of passive, I found that it was, and continues to be, necessary to **work internally as well as externally ~ individually, with family and friends, and within my own community and beyond.**

My work with bereaved parents and the FOD Group is a reflection of what Kristen meant to all of us ~ Love, Light and a great deal of JOY! Yet, getting to that point of finding meaning in her death AND life and a renewed purpose for my own life did not happen overnight. Working through her death occurred over many years

and it intertwined with 'recycling' earlier losses and personal issues. As quickly as many would like us to 'get over it' ~ IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY!

Understanding this multidimensional process was one thing ~ ANIMATING it was another story! I believe there are '**six eyes of grief**' that impact how one sees their own process, as well as how one can be transformed over time by being aware of and open to those factors that can be stirred within you and then animated to move you toward a different kind of 'healing.'

These '**eyes**' [**Individuality , Intrapsychic , Interpersonal, Intergenerational , Interactional, and Integration**] are discussed in my 'Holistic Healing of a Fractured Heart'©DLG article. These dimensions of grief played a huge part in how I perceived grief for myself. As much as I respect all the grief experts and their own writings, I have come to learn and own what my own process 'looks' like through my own 'eyes.'

Those of you who are in the middle of this process right now KNOW what I am talking about. For me, some days it felt like I was spiraling up and down and on a nonstop treadmill at the same time! When was the pain going to STOP?

In our lives, we all have choices and decisions to make and I hope others won't try to make them for you out of their own fears or issues. We've all heard the phrase 'I know what's best for you...this is what you need to do.' Many are uncomfortable around bereaved parents because they just don't know what to say or do ~ and that is exactly why individual and group support from other bereaved parents is so vital.

I truly believe we all have the power within us to 'heal' ~ sometimes, however, we just need to walk beside someone that is farther along on that road to help us see that and feel that hope of embracing life once again.

It is only when you go through the pain that you can feel the joy again ~ as strange as it sounds, the pain is like a healing balm for our hearts and lives, so that over time and with much grief work we can reach some sense of 'wholeness' once again.

As difficult as it is, **embrace your loss and follow it through to a new meaning and purpose in life...EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR CHILDREN'S LIGHTS IS LEADING THE WAY!** ©DLG



Deb Lee Gould, MEd
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References

1. Dr. Therese A. Rando, Clinical Psychologist and Director of the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Loss. Author of a variety of books on grief including ***Treatment of Complicated Mourning*** (Research Press, 1993), ***Parental Loss of a Child*** (Research Press, 1986), and ***How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies*** (Lexington Books, 1988). 'The Six 'R' Processes of Mourning' is explained in detail in ***Treatment of Complicated Mourning***. Research Press, 1993.
2. Dr. J. William Worden, Clinical Psychologist and Co-Director of the Harvard Child Bereavement Study. Author of a variety of books on grief such as ***Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*** (Springer Publishing, 2nd Edition, 1991) and ***Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies*** (The Guilford Press, 1996). '***The Four Tasks of Mourning***' is "used by permission": ***Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy***, Dr. J. William Worden. Springer Publishing Company, Inc., New York 10012, 2nd Edition, Copyright ©1991, pp 10-18.