

## 'Reaching for Rainbows'

When your loved one dies, how do you go on living? Dealing with your loss takes enormous amounts of energy and may leave you feeling exhausted and discouraged for days, weeks, and for some people, years. You may feel your energies are just swirling around and around inside you and going nowhere. You may feel you're not making any 'progress' in dealing with your loss. How can you make sense or find meaning in your loved one's life and death? How do you let others know he or she is still, and always will be, alive in your heart and mind?

For me, the phrase, '**reaching for rainbows**' encompasses how we can, in time, empower ourselves to move forward in life with our loved one's spirit and love as a driving force. When working through grief, you run memories of your loved one over and over in your mind trying to recapture one more time that smile, that laugh, that sparkle in the eye, that unending motivation, and even that stubbornness. What you would give to have it all back!

In reality, you know you can't have your loved one back, but there are various ways of cherishing and memorializing their love and spirit. The specialness of those memories need not be relegated to only your heart and mind, though. That's where 'reaching for rainbows' comes in.

During some quiet time and with your eyes closed, visualize a vibrantly colored rainbow in the blue sky. Just thinking of a beautiful rainbow often brings a smile to your face because it symbolizes hope, something we ALL need to keep going in life. When dealing with grief, you long for or hope that the intense pain will not last forever and that you will not only survive your loved one's death but **move BEYOND survival** ~ living with joy again. Keeping your loved one's 'rainbow' alive in you can help you not only cherish them, but can help you open yourself to living again.

While visualizing the rainbow, imagine in your mind all of the endearing (and maybe not so endearing!) qualities that made you love that person who died. Maybe you loved the way your husband told funny jokes, the way your sister always helped the less fortunate, or the way your daughter said "mama." Whatever it may be, take each one of those qualities and memories and place them in the bands of the rainbow you're envisioning. When you've finished, you'll probably have a smile on your face and maybe a few tears, because you are looking at a uniquely vibrant rainbow representing your special loved one.

With your eyes still closed, envision your loved one's rainbow in the sky and then one by one reach up (literally) and pull down the bands of the rainbow, wrapping them around your heart. **Your loved one may have died, but their love and spirit will remain with you for the rest of your life.**

As previously mentioned, these memories do not need to stay only internalized. When you are ready, **share your loved one's 'rainbow' with others.** One way is by talking about your loved one and another way is by doing. For example, make donations to a charity in your loved one's name or volunteer your time at a local hospital or shelter. Learn to live again by going outside of yourself with renewed energy.

Those once swirling energies now have a purpose ~ to keep your loved one's love and spirit alive in you as well as in others. **Your loved one may be physically out of touch, but his or her memories will forever be emblazoned on your heart and mind ~ you have reached your rainbow!**

Deb Lee Gould 1993

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