

Giving Hope

Favourite quotes or expressions:

• "There is only one happiness in life, to love and to be loved."
~George Sand

• "I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship."
~Louisa May Alcott

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Matters of the Heart

As quickly as Santa returns to the North Pole, in flies Cupid, hearts, chocolate, and anything else you can imagine that celebrates romance, being in love, and sharing your life with the perfect partner.

I think next to Christmas, this annual event is one of the most painful times of the year for partners and spouses who are grieving the death of their loved one.

Let's face it, all the hype is

about marketing and sales. Nonetheless, romantic, loving pictures can bring forth a flood of memories. Even in real life, the sight of a couple holding hands and strolling down the beach or street can retrieve fond memories.

The emotions attached to these recollections can often leave one feeling gloomy, abandoned and even irritated.

There is no quick fix or cure to settle these feelings. Instead, it's

important that the bereaved spouse or partner take time to consider and express their mood. Anger, sadness and loneliness are normal responses to losing your best friend, confidant, and lover.

If you or someone you know is grieving their loved one on Valentine's Day -- be gentle, and allow yourself or them to feel and express the emotions that arise. Remember ... a heart can heal, but it takes time.

Memory Albums, Journals, and Other Treasures

When a parent or grandparent dies, how can you help a child remember this person? This can be of great concern to families when the grandchildren or children are young. Here are some ideas to try:

♥ Create a memory album or scrapbook that details your loved one's life. Use pictures, memorabilia (old report cards, letters, articles or acknowledgements), and any other item that is unique to the

person who died. Tell a 'visual story' from the beginning of the person's life, right up to the time of death. It's okay to include the memorial card or obituary, to mark the end of the person's life.

♥ Use the magic of "remember when..." to share stories about the person who died. Do this when you are having dinner, camping or driving in the car.

♥ Make a video of the

person's life and have family & friends record their thoughts.

♥ Write about the person in a journal. Include stories from others, favourite expressions, and your special memories of the person. Add photos for effect!

♥ Ask the children what they remember about the person and record it for them in a book. Have them add hand-drawn pictures.

♥ Be courageous and creative!

The Ugly Old Board and The Violin by Peg Reuther



“Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.”

~Mark Twain

For several hours a day, the old man held the ugly old board in his hands. Carefully, and ever so gently, making precise cuts and gouges, he chipped away at it, bit by bit, piece by piece.

Several times while the board was being whittled, the board would ask, “Why do I have to endure this pain?” and “Why me?” The whittler answered, “Because if I don’t do this, you will remain an ugly old board.” His plan was to continue to shape and form the board so that it would someday be a violin, a beautiful piece of wood, bringing music into

the world.

Are we like that ugly board? Are we being whittled? When times of pain and suffering come into our lives, we may also feel like that board, wanting to ask God, “Why do I have to endure this pain?” and “Why me?”

Without enduring pain and suffering, we also would remain “an ugly old board.” Experiences, such as the death of a loved one, shape us and define for us what is important in life. The emotions, the feelings, the heartache of our painful experiences can fine-tune us into being more compassionate and

caring toward others. To our surprise, we discover that the simple things in life – the hugs, the frequent expressions of “I love you,” the colorful sunrises, the gorgeous but quickly fading sunsets, good health, loyal friends and caring family – are far more important than accumulating money and things in life. It is then that we become more like the violin, a beautiful piece of wood bringing music into the world.

Are you the ugly board or a violin in the hands of the Artisan?

Peg Reuther is author of Thoughts from the Heart.

Grief Bursts – What are they? How do you cope?

Dr. Alan Wolfelt uses the terms “grief burst”, “grief attack” or “memory embrace” to describe those times when a feeling of deep sadness washes over the bereaved and renders them to tears.

This happens a lot immediately following a loved one’s death, but it is not uncommon to happen, weeks, months, and even years down the road. Often, it can happen when the person is going along in their day doing things like shopping, working, or socializing.

These unexpected bursts of tears and sadness are beyond our control, yet we are often embarrassed by

our behaviour and may feel the need to apologize. Don’t.

Grief bursts are normal and they happen to all of us. I remember a particular time, about nine months after my husband died. I was hurrying from an appointment to meet my children at the school bus, but decided to make a quick stop at the store for bread and milk. As I rushed from the car, pulling my cheque book out of my purse, a slip of paper fell to the ground. It was my husband’s cheque cashing card. When I picked it up and saw his signature, I

stopped in my tracks and burst into tears.

I was so overcome with grief from seeing his handwriting that I could barely stand up. So I got back in the car and headed for home – without the bread or milk!

Fourteen years later, I still have ‘grief bursts’ now and then. However, they are less intense and although my eyes may tear, I no longer experience a sense of “uncontrollable emotion”. This may have to do with the amount of time that has passed. Or it may be that I tend to embrace these moments as a time to pause and remember.