

August 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that it's August already, and before you know it September will be here in a flash. I am thoroughly looking forward to our Mourning Walk on Sunday September 13th! It is hard to describe the feelings and experience I personally had on the Mourning Walk the last two years. I would like to share some of that today because I believe it is the feelings and the whole experience of the Walk that is significant, and it is something that can't be conveyed through a pamphlet or a website.

When I first heard that the Walk would be at 6am, my brain started to jump to excuses to get out of it (I'm not a morning person). But I must confess that the experience of actually getting up early for this particular purpose felt really good. I enjoyed the ride to Long Branch, Seven President's Park on the empty early Sunday morning roads. As I pulled into the parking lot, my heart felt warm to see how many people had also gotten up early and had already gathered under the outside canopy to enjoy coffee, water and bagels. There's nothing like the smell of coffee and bagels in the early morning... I felt an enormous wave of love as I walked into the crowd of so many faces that I recognized from our groups, and even more unfamiliar faces of their friends and relatives I had yet to meet. Every person there was grieving and supporting others in grief, and for me, it was a beautiful and moving experience of camaraderie and solidarity like no other. Some of the people in my party, my team, were unable to walk because of health issues, but they were quite happy to hang out by the food until the rest of us returned.

During the Walk itself, I can't tell you how inspiring and moving it is to see teams honoring their loved ones with signs, pictures, posters, tee shirts and in the sharing of their names. I had a huge inner instinct that they, all our loved ones who have crossed over, were walking with us, side by side, arm in arm. I felt it in my bones, and it felt awesome. I just somehow knew that we were being accompanied by a legion of loved ones on the other side. It was a spiritual experience, and it was beautiful. We always start with a short meditation and a moment of togetherness, and it just flows from there.

The one thing that I will miss this year will be all the awesome hugs. It will be our first time actually seeing one another in person in months, and it will be extremely hard not to run and hug one another, but we must resist. With the pandemic, we will need to be together and apart, and we will get clear guidelines on all that for sure. But that will not impede the overall experience of solidarity and love as we start our Sunday morning together as a Stephy's Place family. I look forward to seeing other family members and friends, - all the teams who support the wonderful people in our groups and are remembering and memorializing our loved ones.

Because this is our major and most important fund-raiser of the year, and because the pandemic has depleted our resources, I sincerely hope that every member of our Stephy's Place family will register for the Mourning Walk. Even if you cannot be there, or you are unable to walk, perhaps you can consider sponsoring someone who is walking. Your generosity is what will keep Stephy's Place alive and well in our hurting world that so desperately needs it.

Appropriately, Dr. Alan Wolfelt quotes Osho in today's reflection *in Grief One Day at a Time*: "One thing: you must walk, and create the way by your walking... You will have to create the path by walking yourself..."

Again, I am really looking forward to seeing you all at the walk, it will be a much-desired reunion for sure. Please take good care of yourselves this week.

Peace and Serenity, Kevin