

## A Message from Kevin at Stephy's Place... March 17, 2020

It's a Tuesday and Saint Patrick's Day and a very odd day indeed. Normally I would be at Stephy's Place with several groups today, but alas times they are a changing. I hope to share a few emails each week during this time of isolation, as we are forced to be socially distancing ourselves and hunker down due to the Coronavirus. I hope to reach everyone who comes to Stephy's Place with a message regarding this roller coaster of grief we are all riding. I'm sure that anxiety levels, sadness levels, and feelings of isolation and loneliness are very much increased right now for many of us during these strange and mysterious times. I have never experienced anything like this in my lifetime, as I'm sure is the case for most of us.

I often say that fear is a huge part of grief, and right now we need to be aware of those fears we might be experiencing and try to keep them at bay. Let's not let fear be our captive during this time of separation. In fact, perhaps we can try to turn it around by finding within it an opportunity to work on healing ourselves in some way. The Japanese write with symbols, and in order to form the word "crisis" they use two symbols, one is 'danger' and the other is 'opportunity.' They understand that hidden within the danger of all crises is some kind of opportunity, and they seem to handle crises better than most other cultures on the planet. I believe this to be true, mostly from my own experience in life and loss, but I truly believe that every crisis has sown within it some kind of opportunity for us to grow or learn in some way.

Even though we are being forced to be alone and isolated right now, it is a reminder to us all that in order to do some of the hardest work in grief we need to be alone. A lot of this grieving and mourning must be done alone. Our support groups are incredibly helpful and even essential for many, but when we are not in our groups or with friends or out there keeping busy, there is always time for us to be alone, and while we are alone it is then that we need to confront the loneliness and issues that only arise when we are alone. This is nothing to fear, it is essential, yet it can be quite painful. Try not to be afraid of that pain, we all need

to feel it. This is when we can allow ourselves to really feel our feelings, to sit, without fear as much as possible, and allow ourselves to feel whatever is coming our way. Perhaps this can be a time to really be with yourself, to start to get to know yourself again, to befriend yourself and become your own support. You don't have Stephy's Place right now, but you have you, yourself. We have this wisdom deep within us, to look within to find the intuition and wisdom we all possess to survive and even perhaps in time to thrive. This is a time we can start to tap into that power within ourselves. This is a time to get to know yourself a bit better, to perhaps look in the mirror and be kind to yourself, say nice things to that person in the mirror, to affirm who you are, to be gentle and non-judgmental, and be compassionate and caring with yourself. While you're at it perhaps you can try something new from what I call the "toolbox" of mourning- if you haven't tried it yet, perhaps start a gratitude journal in which you simply write 2-3 things you are grateful for each day. This can be helpful particularly during a time in which it is difficult to find gratitude for anything. We must find something. In your alone time try to listen to your own innermost thoughts, to your own broken heart, and allow yourself to love yourself.

And so let me conclude on this Saint Patrick's Day with a rare but appropriate Irish Blessing:

***May the blessings of each day be the blessings you need most.***

***Life is like a cup of tea, it's all in how you make it!***

***We cannot share this sorrow if we haven't grieved a while.***

***Nor can we feel another's joy until we've learned to smile.***