

May 10, 2020

Dear Friends,

Mother's Day has come and gone. Without a doubt, this one was strange and difficult for everybody, particularly for those who are grieving. Days like this, and anniversaries, birthdays, and so many other dates quite often hit chords even when they may not be expected. These days are not just difficult for those of us who have lost our mothers, they are difficult for mothers who have lost children, for wives who have lost husbands, for husbands who have lost wives, and anyone else whose grief is somehow triggered by any such days marked on our calendars. The 'whys' really don't matter; sometimes there is no why, - no date, no association whatsoever for triggers to go off, and yet they do. This is called grief.

In grief there is no hierarchy of pain. Why try to gauge if one person's pain is more important or more significant or better or worse or deeper or harder than somebody else. Pain is pain and suffering is suffering. There is a lot of loss happening right now all around us due to COVID19, real losses that are having a deep impact on many people's lives. We are all suffering the loss of so much all at the same time and we have never seen anything like this. Certainly, there is the loss of life and the toll that is taking on so many families, but there are other significant losses which are activating all kinds of grief. Someone from a zoom group this past week said that he felt like the opportunity to 'normalize' was stolen from us by the lockdown. He was hoping that by now he would have been feeling better about the loss of his wife, but he said, "It feels like we are stuck at day one." I can't tell you how many times I've heard people refer to this time as 'Groundhog Day.' It certainly feels like we are all stuck in the same day repeating over and over. We all want to feel better, but sometimes we just can't; we're just not able to yet. My heart goes out to all the High School and College seniors who are being robbed of their graduations and proms. These are significant moments and events in young people's lives, and they have looked forward to these moments that simply are not going to happen. So many people have lost their employment, their paycheck, their means of survival. Our neighborhoods and towns will lose businesses that have always been there but are no more. The loss of celebration and ritual has been quite difficult for many people who are unable to attend community worship, and it has been particularly difficult for those who have lost loved

ones during this pandemic; the void of such rituals is having tremendous ramifications on people's emotions, stress levels, grief, and ability to cope.

I just read about something called 'skin hunger' which psychologists say is 'the deep longing and aching desire for contact with another person.' So many of us just need a good hug. That is something to grieve right now. Hopefully it will change sooner than later and we can embrace one another again. None of this is easy. Some people are calling it the new normal, but I don't think we really know what that is going to look like yet. We are in a liminal period, -we are all stuck in the threshold between two kinds of 'normal' ways of existing, and the one we used to call normal is of course the one we want back. But that is gone now. What lies on the other side of this threshold remains a mystery for us all. It is going to take time and hopefully taking care of ourselves during this time, but, like humanity always has done, we will adapt, we will adjust, we will prevail. As they say on Star Trek, "resistance is futile," trying to resist what is inevitable is pointless and depleting. As the chips are falling, we can try to adapt by allowing ourselves to be and feel whatever we are feeling, and perhaps come to a new perspective because of this time of contemplation. With so much of our former lives stripped away from us, I think that this time is allowing people to really ask themselves: What is really important to me? Who matters to me? How can I nurture those relationships?

In the meantime, please continue nurturing and caring for yourselves.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Peace and Serenity,

Kevin