

October 11, 2020

RE LATIONSHIPS

Grief quite often can find a way to strongarm us into re-evaluating some of our relationships with family and friends. I've been hearing a lot about this in groups lately, and it has certainly been an experience in my own life. Quite often, when we are in the throes of our grief, we expect certain people to respond in certain ways, but we can often come up feeling disappointed and even surprised that they did not respond in a certain way, or even more surprisingly, didn't respond at all. It has been pointed out in groups that some people just don't 'get it' or can't possibly understand how we feel because they have not suffered this loss. (This is part of the reason why our groups are helpful, -everyone 'gets it.')

This in no way points out any kind of flaw in the people who don't get it, because they simply can't, which is a good thing for them; they can't possibly know because it has not yet happened to them. This is combined with our culture that can often prefer to deny loss, or pass over it quickly, because it has the potential to trigger people's biggest fears. Some of the people we have known for a very long time may run for the hills- far away from what makes them uncomfortable. On the other hand, there almost always seems to be the surprise of those we thought would not respond becoming some of our most cherished allies. Grief has a way of overturning so many components of our lives. Almost everything can seem different or changed, which is not something anyone wants, but what must unfortunately be endured as part of the grieving process.

In grief, it seems, we find out who our friends truly are. We need to be very careful though, especially in raw grief, not to so isolate ourself and build such thick walls as to keep everyone out, because there are still people in our lives that love us very much. Sometimes, as a knee-jerk and understandable reaction, because we have been wounded by love, we may subconsciously push all love away for a while, but this needs to soften in order for us to move toward healing. We need love in order to survive and heal. Love is what got us into this, and love will be what eventually brings us to a place of healing. This kind of love requires that we love ourselves as well. As part of our self-care, we sometimes need to rethink some of our relationships. I always invite people to consider a relationship by the following: is it nurturing

or is it depleting? We all need relationships that are nurturing. The last thing we need is to be more depleted than where grief has already taken us. One of my favorite spiritual writers has this to say: “When we ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain... that is a friend who cares. ...”

Henri Nouwen

Peace and Serenity, Kevin