

June 13, 2021

The Waiting Room

Dear Friends,

“The voice of grief is rather convincing, isn’t it? It tells you you’re ‘too old,’ ‘not good enough,’ or ‘not worthy enough,’ for another chance at life, that starting over is impossible. This voice in your head is the first thing you hear in the morning and the last thing you hear at night. It drives with you to work. It stays with you at lunch. Its message is so consistent that, because of its repetitive power, you may be inclined to believe it. But, as persuasive as the voice of grief is, everything it says is a lie.”

In her book, ***Second Firsts***, Christina Rasmussen describes her experience of grief after losing her husband to cancer and becoming a single mom in her thirties with two young daughters to raise. “The way out of this pain was a big mystery to me. I would wake up in the morning and forget what had happened for a split-second only to remember with such cruelty and torture.”

A few friends have recommended this book, and I decided to start it this weekend, and although I haven’t finished it yet, I am deeply impressed with her ability to describe both her pain and her journey toward recovery.

Like many people I’ve walked with in the grieving process, Christine experienced a sudden ‘shift’ in her grief and began to embark on a powerful healing journey once she gained new insight for herself. Long before this happened, however, Christine had to remain in what she calls “the waiting room,” and what I call the threshold. This is the place where we realize what was our normal is now our past and that there may be a future, but we certainly aren’t there yet. It is that liminal place in between our old life and our new life; a place of pain and mystery, a place we feel lost and often hopeless, a place of necessary and unavoidable grief. It’s a place where we aren’t even familiar to our self, where we’re just not sure who we are right now or if there can even be a future. And it sucks. Christine came to a decision to tackle her personal and greatest fears and negative voices inside her head, and in doing so, she gradually began to re-wire her life path. First, however, she, like all of us, needed to be in the waiting room; she had to

stand in the threshold for as long as was necessary. “So I entered the waiting period, a period of waking up morning after morning, hoping I would feel better than the day before.”

Most of us, well actually all of us, want a fast-forward on that damn waiting room, but there is no set timeline whatsoever. Yes, it is not fair that some people move through it faster than others, but we need to remember that one of the golden rules in grieving is to NOT compare our grief to others as much as possible. Your grief is your grief alone. Nobody can truly understand your grief or its own particular path to healing because nobody had your relationship with your loved one.

Because everyone’s grief is different, everyone’s waiting room is also different. One person may try to keep as busy as possible during this threshold period, others may stay in the comfort of their own cocoon, the familiar four walls, the comfy couch. There are no rules, there is only survival. This is not a time of planning or moving, it’s more about coping, and navigating during this threshold period. Some may remain in the threshold for the rest of their lives, others can get through in a short amount of time, most move through the door into what’s next eventually. Christine wanted to “survive grief by acquiring new skills, a new attitude, and a new life.” And she did. “Gradually, over the next couple of years, I was able to transform my sorrow into the fuel that would launch me into a new life of passion and creation. But this life didn’t happen overnight. In fact, the first glimpse I had of a life without sadness or not solely defined by my loss came many months after my husband died.”

When I think about what I do now, I can see that I also have transformed my sorrow into a fuel that keeps me moving forward. I see this in so many people, particularly our Founding Director, Sheila. Her sorrow has been the fuel that has created Stephy’s Place. All this, and so much more, can help to give us hope during a time of hopelessness, or help to eventually ignite the flame that may become the fuel to propel us through the threshold and into the next part of our life, the new life that awaits us. I know that it may be quite frightening right now to even conceive of such a thing, and that fear is very real. Fear can be our greatest enemy right now. As we meet in groups or talk to friends, or journal, or read, or whatever we may be doing for self-care, we are gradually building back up our strength, we may even be acquiring new skills, we

may be in the process of making decisions to move toward new life, - be it moving, or dating, or renovating, or changing careers, or going back to school, or volunteering, or going for a promotion, or beginning to travel again, or starting a scholarship or foundation in their memory, or simply getting out of the house after the damn pandemic, know that it is never easy, and it takes courage because most of what keeps us in the threshold is fear. Quite often we gradually begin to realize that most, if not all of these fears are unfounded, just created from the pain of our grief and loss.

Wherever you are, in early raw grief, or in the threshold, or coming toward the other side, please be patient with yourself and others. This is a slow and tedious thing. “I can tell you it was not easy. It’s actually harder to live and grieve than just to grieve. But I believe the difficulty was worth it.”

Peace and Serenity, Kevin

To learn more about how Christine moved to life after loss we will all have to read her book. I look forward to it.

All quotes from: **Second Firsts, A Step-by-Step Guide to Life after Loss**, Christina Rasmussen
2019, Hay House Publishing