

March 19, 2020

Hello Friends,

With the weekend approaching, I think many of us are wondering what are we going to do with our time as everything is closed and we are being strongly encouraged to stay isolated as much as possible. I readily share that one of the things that has always been most helpful to me in my grief has been walking. I think we all need to get outside, to get some fresh air, vitamin D and move around our limbs and muscles. We also need the endorphins that are produced during exercise to feel better. I have been walking every day during this Corona crisis, and it has been the highlight of each day for me. It's easy to avoid people while walking, and you may find they are avoiding us as well. Just go outside and take a walk when you get the chance. My sister, who has been struggling with cancer for over a year, has become quite adept at social distancing due to her compromised immune system. She sent a text yesterday to our family with some suggestions of what we can do to entertain ourselves during isolation. Some of the things on the list we need to do with others- for those of you who are not alone, and some we can do ourselves. Here are her suggestions: Play cards, play board games, watch videos, read books, draw, journal, go online, write letters, garden, take walks/hikes, sleep, file papers, pray, listen to music, ride a bike, do laundry, spring cleaning, fix things, photo albums, shop online, clean closets and cabinets, facetime with friends or relatives, walk the beach, walk the dog, meditate, stretch, cook, bake, check in on a neighbor, watch comedies and funny movies... I thought it was a pretty good list so I wanted to share it with you. Also there is a very good series about grief on YouTube from The Centre for the Grief Journey. It's always good to learn more about grief as we journey with it, it can be helpful to know more about this experience that we have never experienced before. Here is the link if you would like to check it out:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChuZU8jw2mPRKCvvC_d44rA

As I always say, and have said in my previous letters, we also need to take some time to "lean in," to lean into our grief and allow ourselves to feel our feelings. Although this is important and even necessary, we can't do this 24-7. We need to take breaks and give our brain and bodies a break as well. The list above will hopefully offer some healthy suggestions for necessary distraction. When we are leaning in, however, please remember that these waves, which can often be strong and harsh, will not destroy us. We will get up again. The waves will continue to come; we must learn how to ride them. Don't let yourself avoid

the waves, try to learn how to welcome them. A book I often recommend to those a bit further along in grief is: "A Grace Disguised," by Jerry Sittser. Jerry lost his wife, his daughter and his mother in one car accident when his family was wiped out by a drunk driver. He learned, over time and through tremendous pain, how to ride these waves when they come. He says: *"Since I knew darkness was inevitable and unavoidable, I decided to walk into the darkness rather than try to outrun it, to let my experience of loss take me on a journey wherever it would lead, and to allow myself to be transformed by my suffering rather than to think I could somehow avoid it. I chose to turn toward the pain, and to yield to the loss, though I had no idea what that would mean."*

I will be writing to you all again next week. In the meantime, let's keep one another in our thoughts and prayers and do our best to ride the waves.

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.

Stay Healthy and at peace,
Kevin