

I have been working on a book which will feature most of the reflections I've been writing for Stephy's Place, I'm happy to say that it is very near completion to go off to a hopeful publisher. For the next few months, I will be sending you some of those past reflections that I think bear repeating. Here's one which I hope may be helpful to you wherever you may be on this roller coaster ride of grief...

### ***Where the Heavens are Full of Promise***

In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo shared these thoughts:

“There are days when the burdens we carry chafe our shoulders and wear us down, when the road seems dreary and endless, the skies gray and threatening, when our lives have no music in them, and our hearts are lonely, and our souls have lost their courage.”

He went on to pray:

“Flood the path with light, we beseech thee Lord. Turn our eyes to where the heavens are full of promise.”

Even all those centuries ago, it seems, things, or at least feelings, weren't all that different. Wherever we may be in the grieving process, I think we can all relate to some of the raw feelings and emotions that Augustine shares.

At times, it may not be very apparent to us that we can make choices regarding how we navigate and cope with our loss. I do believe that in early, raw grief there is very little choice, we are in what I call the ICU of grief, there is very little we can do period. Early, raw grief is different for everyone, and it lasts different amounts of time for everyone. Some, unfortunately remain there for what may be the remainder of their lives. It seems, though, that on most 'journeys' of grief, we come to a crossroad: we can get bitter, or we can get better. We can be, and even remain, resentful that things are the way they are, and that resentment can very much keep us locked in place in our grief; sometimes we can become stuck in the muck of being victimized by loss and sorrow. There is, however, also the choice we can make to begin to, or continue to take steps toward Light, toward Hope and Promise, to where our lives have music in them again. These are the essential steps, even if they are baby steps, that we need to take in order to develop new skills, to find new support, or find new people to take on new or different roles in our lives.

We need to accept our feelings of sorrow and rage and helplessness and betrayal as part of what it means to be human. One of the biggest helps for doing this is to learn to acknowledge our feelings to ourselves and to express them to others. Hard though it is, we must experience and fully, 'lean into' our pain, if you will. Oh how it hurts! And, oh, how we need to do it! (J. William Wordon, *Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy*)

It can become increasingly difficult to try to ‘turn our eyes to where the heavens are full of promise,’ and sometimes, in fact most of the time, we need assistance; we can’t do it alone. Ironically, one of the most difficult things for many of us may be asking for help. In joining a support group or seeing a therapist, or preferably both, one begins to take those steps and turn their eyes. They have opened themselves up to be assisted, to be supported, to being helped. This means so very much because we are not meant to do this thing called life alone. We need others.

It unfortunately doesn’t end there, in simply joining a group or seeing a therapist, there is still work to be done, steps to be taken, people to meet, friends to help us, and choices to be made each and every day. So together, let’s try to support one another to take the ‘better’ road and to keep choosing to turn our eyes to where the heavens are full of promise.

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