

Not unlike many widows, my world completely shattered when my husband died. When practically every goal and plan involves your spouse it feels almost impossible to move forward – heck, move in any direction.

At 32 years old, I wondered what my life would now look like.

I distinctly recall thinking that when I died at 110 years old (a girl can dream, right?), I wanted those at my funeral to talk about how much I loved my husband. I wanted them to say that the light went out in her eyes and her world and she was never quite the same. She retreated from the world and waited to be reunited with him. She never invited love of any form into her life the moment she lost him and lived a life of reclusive, forever missing her husband.

I honestly believed that would be the most fitting, appropriate way to conclude our love story. He died and soon after, I died too – though my heart continued to beat.

I don't know when something snapped in my head but that was no way to honor a man who lived life boldly and passionately. I couldn't for a second imagine that he'd want his death to also bring about my demise – physically, mentally or emotionally.

I soon realized that my living took nothing away from our love. It took nothing away from how much I missed him. His family never doubted my love. Neither did my family or friends.

I had somehow convinced myself that suffering was the only way to show my undying love. But it wasn't. Whether I am in a crumpled heap on the bathroom floor or trying a new hobby, I still miss him. Whether I pull away from friends or take them up on an offer to enjoy drinks after work, I still love him. Whether I opt to be bitter and angry on his birthday or join my widowed tribe for a birthday celebration, I'm still his widow.

Nothing – absolutely nothing – takes away from my love for him. Not traveling, not dating, not getting remarried, not moving forward.

I can live while missing him.

I can laugh while missing him.

I can be happy again while missing him.

I can love while missing him.

Don't let anyone – including you - tell you anything different