

September 5, 2021

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that it has been twenty years since the world was changed forever on September 11, 2001. With such a great amount of time having passed, we are able to look back now and see things in ways we were unable to back then.

It was twenty years ago that I met all the incredible women whose lives were fused by common devastation and shared pain. They would form the support group that would solidify them as sisters and serve to help them navigate through the next two decades together. Out of these incredible women would emerge the founding board of Stephy's Place.

When we are brought to our knees by devastation, there can be a gradual and unfolding awakening that takes place within. This is a process with no timeline; it can happen rather quickly for some or take the rest of a lifetime for others. It is ongoing and it has no endpoint. The calamities and catastrophes of life can (but not always) catapult us into an entirely new phase of existence; they can serve as horrific catalysts to move us toward a new or renewed understanding of everything.

Although these experiences are extremely painful and horrible, tragedy, grief, mourning, and loss can in time, and with healing, allow us to be awakened to what is truly significant and important; they can help us to regain and reassess our priorities and our purpose.

In my own life, I have come to realize that it has been the excruciating experiences of loss and heartbreak, of separation and loneliness, of anguish and questioning, of despair and longing, of hopelessness and wandering, which have brought me to new understandings, new relationships, renewed spirituality, awakened awareness, infused hope, and new life. I don't think I would be the person I am today, nor would I have the understanding and faith that I do, if it had not been for my own personal losses and in my companioning those who lost loved ones twenty years ago on that fateful day.

To see Stephy's Place now, it may be easy to forget all the pain and suffering, the sorrow and fatigue that preceded it as even being an idea, not to mention becoming a reality. It may have taken over a decade, but it now exists. And it could not have existed before, because the healing had to take place first. This is a huge reminder for all of us that we need to be very patient with grief; healing does happen, but it doesn't happen overnight. If you ever doubt this, just look at Stephy's Place to see that it is possible and it is real.

Twenty years ago, I met some of the most broken, shattered, grief-stricken people you could ever imagine meeting. None of them thought they would ever survive the pain. None of them believed there was any kind of a future. None of them believed healing was possible. But they all did on their own timeline and in their own way. And so will you.

My love and my prayers go out to all my dear friends who mark this historic anniversary, and to all of you as you continue on the path of mourning and healing.

WE REMEMBER THEM

At the rising of the sun and its going down;

We remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter;

We remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring;

We remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer;

We remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn;

We remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends;

We remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength;

We remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart;

We remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make;

We remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share;

We remember them;

When we have achievements that are based on theirs,

We remember them.

For as long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as

We remember them.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual Mourning Walk on Sunday September 12th.

It will be a morning of healing and remembrance, of love and support.

Peace and Serenity always,

Kevin