

Does Time Heal?

By: David Roberts

I discovered this quote from singer/songwriter Jack Johnson: *And if they tell you love fades over time, tell them there is no such thing as time.*

His quote also got me thinking about the passage of time as it relates to our grief journeys. Many in our society believe that there is a set time period for resolving our grief. In six months to a year, it is generally expected that one should be “over” his/her grief and return to life, as he/she knew it.

What is also implied is that there are practical solutions to the losses that we experience. The reality is that any loss we experience permanently changes our world and that there is no set time period to resolve it or practical solutions. However, one of my friends recently suggested that LOVE is the solution to even those things that we may not believe has one.

On this point, I agree.

For those of us who have experienced losses that have defied the natural order of the universe (such as the death of a child, death of a young wife or husband), our world is forever changed and we never get over our loss. We get through it by learning to live with both joy and sadness, while simultaneously making a decision to find meaning again by celebrating our children’s lives.

In the process, we also find meaning through service to others. There is no set time frame. As individuals, we all take different paths to finding meaning as a result of our struggles with loss. We need to be able to unconditionally support every individual’s journey and bear witness to it. The power of both support and presence cannot be underestimated.

Also, we can experience the intense pain of loss at any time during our journeys, depending on what is going on with us in the present moment. One, five, ten or twenty years, it doesn’t matter. Our grief journeys are circular rather than linear.

The death of my daughter Jeannine has taught me to re-evaluate not only my values but the traditional expectation that time heals all wounds. Time hasn’t and won’t heal the wounds for me associated with the physical absence of Jeannine. What the passage of time has helped me do is adjust to her physical absence and develop a different kind of relationship with her.

My earthly journey and spiritual relationship will continue to evolve until the day that I cross over. And then it will continue, for eternity.

DAVID ROBERTS

David J. Roberts, LMSW, became a parent who experienced the death of a child, when his daughter Jeannine died of cancer on 3/1/03 at the age of 18. He is a retired addiction professional and an adjunct professor in the psychology and psychology child-life departments at Utica University in Utica, New York.