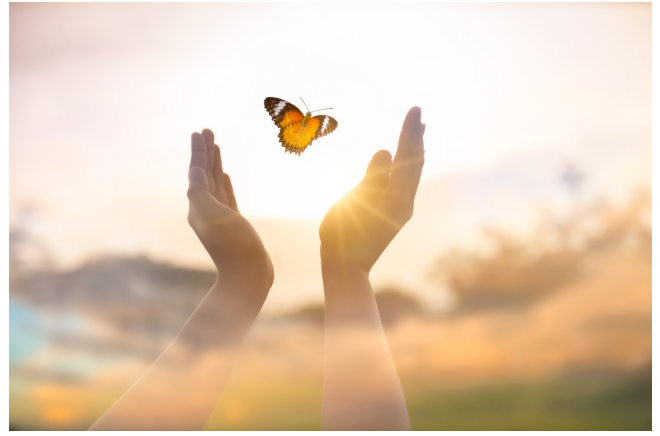


THE IMPACT OF FOREVER MOMENTS IN REDEFINING OURSELVES AFTER LOSS

By: Dave Roberts



The End of An Era

On February 9th of this year, an era of sorts ended for me. One of my favorite undergraduate professors at Utica College and one of my favorite people, Thom Brown, died at the age of 65. Thom first came to Utica College in 1975, fresh out of graduate school. I was a sophomore psychology major at Utica College when Thom arrived and he quickly made a lasting impression on all of us with his wit, honesty, intelligence, integrity and his love for teaching and his students. He was a major and influential part of the Utica College community for 45 years; I suspect that he always will be...

A Celebration of Life

Thom's daughter Amy crafted an eloquent and beautiful tribute and read it during his celebration of life. This excerpt really resonated with me:

There is a quote I really like, from a book called *The Fault in Our Stars*, which you should all, of course, go home and read. It reads, in part:

"There are infinite numbers between 0 and 1. There's 0.1 and 0.12 and 0.112 and an infinite collection of others. Of course, there is a bigger infinite set of numbers between 0 and 2, or between 0 and a million. Some infinities are bigger than other infinities. There are days, many of them, when I resent the size of my unbounded set.

I want more numbers than I'm likely to get, and God, I want more numbers for him than he got. But, my love, I cannot tell you how thankful I am for our little infinity. I wouldn't trade it for the world. You gave me a forever within the numbered days, and I'm grateful."

I certainly wanted my father to have more numbers than he got, but the best thing he taught me was how to make a forever out of our numbered days.

Retrieved from: <http://bluedollarbill.blogspot.com/2014/02/celebration-of-life-amys-reflection-on.html#.UOsSG17FnnY>

It is my hope that those of you who are experiencing the challenges of loss due to death or other transitions find your unique paths to transformation and inspire others in the process.

Unconditional and Never-Ending Love

Today marks the eleventh anniversary date of my daughter Jeannine's death. In this moment, I look at her death as a rebirth into a new life in a world that is governed by unconditional, never-ending love, bliss and the absence of malice and rancor. Jeannine and I share a pure spiritual relationship that embodies all of those positive qualities that are in her world. I do at times yearn for her physical presence, and I believe she at times yearns for mine. Whenever I receive a sign from her, I like to believe it is because she yearns for my physical presence, as well as the physical presence of my wife and two sons. When a spirit makes themselves known to you, they are making themselves known to all that is a part of you.

The Gift of Peace

This morning I spent some quiet time inviting Jeannine into my sacred space and sharing my gratitude for the relationship that we continue to share and the teachings that she continues to reveal to me about life, death and the value of a life. I also encouraged her to continue to evolve spiritually and if she so chose, to make herself part of the universal intelligence that guides all who walk in awareness to do so with honor and integrity and to help them inspire others to do the same. To empower Jeannine to continue to evolve in her new life is the greatest gift that I can continue to give her as her father. It is the greatest gift that I can give to myself, for it is the gift of peace.

Changing our Inner Landscape

I had an appointment to get my hair cut and as I looked at the landscape around me, commented to Jeannine that not much changed since her day of rebirth, but that it was OK, nonetheless. That is the cool thing about nature, that there is a consistency in landscape, a landscape characterized by unconditional beauty that we can find anywhere we look. Of course, after our loved ones cross over, the pain, anger, and disconnectedness that we experience clouds our perspective and contributes to us overlooking the magnificence of nature. However, once our inner landscape is transformed because of our desire and intent to see death differently, we again begin to appreciate nature's splendor and beauty. So our transformed selves, allows us to see the same things differently.

Starting Year 12

My Little Infinity

Thom's life compelled me to look at infinity and forever moments in the context of my daughter Jeannine's short life. Jeannine died and was reborn into a new phase of existence on March 1, 2003, at the age of 18 due to cancer.

There were many " forever moments " that defined our relationship during her time on earth. There was The Gin Blossoms and Goo Goo Dolls concerts, her impromptu sweet sixteen party, her solo flute recital when she was in fifth grade, just to name a few. In early grief, recalling those forever moments were extremely painful, because I wanted more of them. Recalling those moments compelled me to think about "what could have been" had she had lived. I lived in the valley of regret, pain and self -pity for quite a while after her death. However it was necessary for me to honor all of those emotions in order for me to transcend my grief and find meaning. We must embrace what we so often run away from... ourselves. When we embrace who we are, we redefine who we become.

Like Amy wanted for her father, I wanted for Jeannine, more numbers than she got. Like Thom, Jeannine lived her life to the fullest and packed many forever moments into her numbered days, with friends and family. It is those forever moments that were part of the little infinity that we shared. It is those forever moments that will define her legacy, and those moments that I will honor for the rest of my numbered days.

Redefining Forever

What has become increasingly clear to me is that relationships with our deceased loved ones extend beyond the physical realm. Whenever Jeannine signals her presence to me, albeit in a different form of energy, another forever moment is created for us to share. One of the most magnificent manifestations of this truth occurred during April of 2013 when this sign appeared on the inside of our backyard shed. There are two number 8's; the number 8 is the symbol for infinity or eternal life. I believe that this was a sign not only from Jeannine, but from my deceased mother Sadie Roberts; both of them were born in the month of April. It was cool that my mom also wanted to share forever with me too.

The little infinities that are created in life continue when our loved ones are reborn into a new existence. The relationships that we held so near and dear to us and that touched our hearts and souls in the physical world, continue to live on from a different dimension. If we can embrace the idea of continuing relationships and continuing bonds after death, not only do we redefine forever, but also we learn to find our peace despite the challenges that our life path after death presents to us.

“The more you learn, the less you fear. “Learn” not in the sense of academic study, but in the practical understanding of life.”

From *The Sense of an Ending*, by Julian Barnes