



Fatherhood is a gift, a calling, a commitment. Kudos to the dads, step-dads, foster dads, big brothers, uncles and role models that respond joyfully to those who seek their guidance, approval, acceptance and unconditional love. Happy Father's Day to each of you who bring heart, humour and hope to a child. Blessings to the dads that we miss deeply and remember with pride!

A Happy Father's Day to all!

Connecting

Part 1 June, 2020

Out of Body, Out of Commission, Out of Sight, Out of Touch, Out of Control

(Where are you now?)

Grief has a *temporary* stranglehold on every person that has ever lost someone they cherish. We feel as though we were kidnapped by aliens and had our brain scrambled somehow—shock, isolation, madness, guilt, disorientation, sadness, pain and DENIAL rule the day. When somebody dies, we go on “auto propel” for a brief time-- preparing a memorial service, cleaning out a parent’s apartment, distributing death certificates, basically taking care of business. We often can barely remember who attended the funeral, if we fed the dog this week, or when we last had a shower. Everything is a blur, a foggy mess, and it is as though we are floating up above, an out-of-body experience, hoping that what we see is happening to somebody else.

Before long, the gears shift and we find ourselves in a different place... immobilized, frozen in time. Everything is now measured by a perpetual marker...either before or after the exact date and time our loved one died. We

seem disconnected.... out of step with the world around us. We isolate ourselves, hoping to emerge from our cocoon one day with new wings and a whole new identity. Nobody will recognize us or ask about the day we are desperately trying to forget. You may frighten yourself noticing the “out of control” gear has trapped you in an angry, frustrated, anxious state, pumping the gas aggressively wanting to move forward. Then, suddenly shifting wildly right back into reverse.

You are certainly not ready to accept your loss, so you pull “denial” from the bag of options.

Grief makes for an uncomfortable ride, an unsafe place to be, and most folks hesitate to ride with us, fearing that our madness might bring them down too. So we try to “deal with grief” on our own. Some folks recoil on the floor in the fetal position until they have exhausted

all of their tear reserves. Others lash out in anger, alienating everyone within screaming distance. Some engage in harmful behaviors self-medicating with drugs, alcohol, gambling, sexual indiscretions, or other obsessions. Others focus inwards, choosing prayer, meditation, yoga, massage, music, gardening, exercise, dog-walking, knitting, and others -- exploring all non-invasive “therapies” that might allow for healing in a tranquil space before exposure to the noisy, chaotic world outside.

When nothing seems to make any sense, we often recoil into a world of make-believe, resorting to familiar tactics from our past to get us through the most traumatic times. If we can convince ourselves that something is “fake news”, not real, never happened, then maybe it will disappear. A toddler will cover his eyes to make a scary monster disappear. People often distort the truth to escape being accountable for their actions. They may deny previous convictions, unsavory relationships, or embellish credentials to get a job they want. (Others like myself, simply exaggerate “for effect” to illustrate



a point!) Books, too, are a form of escapism, taking us away to another place of adventure, drama, romance, intrigue or fantasy, away from where we don't want to be. Make Believe is a long-time favourite pastime for all of us at one time or another. Our great-granddaughter can transform herself in a New York minute twirling around in her princess outfit...she *becomes* Elsa from Frozen.

So how does one cope after a loss? You hear about Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief and you try to pick one that seems appropriate. You are in shock, no energy for anger, and too overwhelmed to recognize depression. It is too late for bargaining with God to spare him/her.

You are certainly not ready to accept your loss, so you pull “denial” from the bag of options. It has a reassuring feel like “I can fake my way through this one” bringing back a fleeting moment of taking control. When somebody dies, we long to escape from reality to protect ourselves from more pain; to disappear into an imaginary world where one never has the eviscerating experience of losing somebody they loved. We say things like, “Harry is out fishing again today”. Wearing wedding rings lets one remain as part of a “we” as opposed to just “me”. (rings can also repel prospective suitors, not realizing that their untimely or premature advances may not be

embraced warmly by someone who is newly bereaved). Personally, I see no harm in wearing a ring that reminds you each day that you were blessed to have loved someone; and were loved back in return. Bereaved parents often rock a weighted teddy bear that reflects the exact weight of their newborn when they died. They close their eyes praying that the memories of the little one that they held for such a short while will never fade. We all “wish for” what could have been, or should have been. Letting our mind’s eye take us to where we want to be is one way that grievers adopt to get them through the moment, the hour or a very painful day.



When we feel overwhelmed, our life is devoid of purpose, we don’t know *how* to go on, if we *can* go on, or even why we *should* go on without our loved one. We are simply in a survival mode, especially in the beginning, and so we find denial fits our Modus Operandi.

Admittedly, denial may help to pace ourselves so we can gradually adjust to the grief process. It is nature’s way of giving us sadness in tiny portions so that we can accept as much as we can handle, gradually, without pressure. Pretense can overlook the bad and magnify the good.

However, pretending to be okay when we are not, is neither a healthy, nor productive way to honour our loved ones, or to bring a healing hand to our soul pain. "I'm fine" should be eliminated from the griever's vocabulary, because it is seldom true. They know, and we know that we are NOT fine. You can simply admit that today is a bad day; but don't stop there. Let folks know, briefly, what you are feeling and why. ie. "This morning I woke up to Brock's favourite song on the radio; and then I smelled his cologne in the bathroom—I miss him so much." God willing, they may ask about your loved one, giving you an opportunity to speak his name, tell who he was-- what he meant to you.

Embrace those conversations even if they are with complete strangers, because they reignite memorial flashbacks like fireflies, bringing light and love to your heart and a sparkle to your eye. Lying, make-believe, pretense and **denial** are temporary fixes, but generally only serve to delay the inevitable. Grief requires a realistic acknowledgement of our situation, a validation of our pain, and a plan to address our sorrow.



[Continued in Part 2](#)