



*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 2** June, 2020

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

(Where are you now?)

**W**e all carry a bag of tricks with us when we grieve; some are avoidance tools to isolate ourselves, like claiming to “have other commitments” or a “last minute migraine”. We dig out a different mask many times throughout the day, to reflect what we are feeling at any given moment...never quite sure who we are underneath it all.

The bereaved can remember with sadness, and joy at the same time. Our feelings can intermingle, get twisted, or fluctuate momentarily; and usually do. Most grief bursts are situationally triggered...we see somebody with dad's undeniable limp, or watch a sad movie about losing a loved one from HIV. Moving forward with our lives also means anticipating that grief “triggers” will *always be there*, no matter how long it is since our loss. *Denying* that they interrupt and disrupt our lives does little to decrease

their frequency or lessen the intensity of those events. Once again, we have to face the truths that we have been sidestepping because they were too painful. Childhood costumes return to the trunk in the attic. You begin to connect the dots that Santa looks a lot like Uncle Eddie and even had the same shoes. A loving spouse made us believe that the lady in the mirror looks just like Beyonce—now our own image is clearly visible. That person who made us feel good is no longer here, to comfort us, make decisions, commiserate about the

***Denying reality is not to be confused with 'honoring the memory'***

kids, celebrate their brilliance, or take care of us if we get sick. We instinctively know that *one day*, we'll redefine who we are, rethink our purpose, cut our losses and revise our budget to absorb the financial burden of a funeral...but *not today!*

Life is full of uncertainty, change, reinvention and redirection. Our minds may reside safely in a virtual Camelot, but be careful not to draw others into your “imaginary” mindset by asking them to participate in activities like a birthday party for the deceased, talking or acting out as though he/she will return soon. Denying reality is not to be confused with “honouring the memory” of a loved one ie...lighting a candle or setting an extra plate at the Christmas table with a picture on it as a tribute and place of honour for a loved one. Healthy recall helps us weave the memories of our past into the tapestry of our future.



*Denial does not change situations for the better in any way.*

**S**o pretense is not a solution, nor an antidote to sorrow or grief. The hardest parts of facing reality are brought to bear very early after a loss by necessary changes that we are forced to do, despite our resistance and chagrin. If we have our vehicle in both names, you will have to re-register,

removing the other person’s name from your registration certificate. Joint bank accounts are changed to reflect your single status. Census forms reveal a disturbing truth...that Jerry doesn’t live here anymore.

Mail and subscription renewals for Chatelaine continue for years, ripping your heart out each time you have to shred yet another one of those envelopes with her name on it. Denial is not, and has never been, a catalyst for change. If we deny that we have a melanoma, left untreated this will never get better. Denial has never magically paid off over-the-limit credit cards, or healed a broken relationship. It cannot bring our loved one back. Denial does not change situations for the better in any way... it only allows things to continue as is... or get progressively worse. I have yet to hear of one bereaved person who wishes to stay locked into their state of sorrow, dis-ease, imbalance and lack of movement forward.

We all face challenges, battle demons, or fail miserably at one time or another. Unless we concede that we may need help in adapting to where we are, and some direction to get us where we want to be, we will continue to see each setback as a failure, rather than a building block in our Life Tower. Those who choose truth telling, humility and a sober recognition of their current state of affairs are those who adjust and alter their life course to reflect their new reality. Rocking back and forth rarely moves us forward. Unless and until we acknowledge that something “is what it is”, it is difficult to progress any further.



**S**peaking honestly about the finality and reality of our loss is a good place to begin. Slowly, we begin to ask questions, seek answers, and speak truthfully about our feelings. As one becomes stronger, our need to pretend, deny and defer our grief begins to fade. There will always come a time when you can't pretend anymore. The reality of your loss may be harsher than if you had conceded earlier on. Pretending basically will hold you back from entering the grief process, and completing the inevitable requirements of that journey. So, practice saying (out loud) “My wife, Elsie, died in May.” Ask for a “table for one” rather than pretending you are expecting a friend to join you.

It is hard to embrace a new status after a loss; becoming an orphan, widow, widower, or a mom or dad who will forever grieve, but whose child lives “somewhere else”. Make-believe loses its magic when we become adults and have to face our sorrows, our pain, and our challenges head on. Grief requires hard work, honesty, self evaluation, kindness, patience and empathy FOR OURSELVES. Once we learn that make-believe, and playing The Great Pretender game is not working, we reluctantly abandon some of those practices and recalibrate our GPS navigation systems to steer us in a different direction where we can address our fears and become stronger, more confident, and self-reliant than we ever thought possible.

Children should never be shielded from, or deprived of the grief process—they, too, are entitled to true and accurate information about how a person died, (according to their level of acceptance and understanding at their various ages) and allowed the right to mourn their loss. We all grieve, mourn, and cherish the memory of our loved ones. It is only by accepting their death, and our loss, for what it is, that we can push through the ashes like a new sprout looking for the sun to help us grow and emerge anew.

Our roots will sustain us. When we unclench our fists to open up a hand to hold that of another, we discover that there is much solace and joy that can be shared between those with common experiences, and reciprocal trust that one's secrets will be securely stored by those they choose to be the gatekeepers of those stories. We, at Links, are good shepherds of your diary and its contents.

There is a reason that vehicles have a very large windshield, but a tiny rear-view mirror. Looking forward with faith and hope is difficult, but not impossible; as long as we know there is an "off-ramp" always available when we need a moment to pause & stay warm with our memories. "Remember When" Games are still sad, but fun. Rather than deny a death, they can bring families together and collectively celebrate a loved one. Playing a recall game at special gatherings lets you enjoy stories about grandpa's arrest for littering, or how Aunt Hilda's bloomers peeked out from

under her summer shorts when she bent over to pick flowers, or when Thomas got a train with his name on it for his graduation. Sorrow can often be silenced by silly stories that make us laugh. It is important to take a "time out" from grief periodically allowing ourselves to rest, regroup and recover. One day we will get sick and tired of futile denials and decide to invite Madam Acceptance inside (for brief visits at first) until we feel more comfortable with her. At SABF, we understand that everyone grieves in their own way, in their own time. Nobody will push you out of the nest until you can fly on your own again. I promise.

Until we meet again, know that I am flooding the heavens with pleas to keep every one of you safe and well during this time.



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*I came alone;  
I left connected.*

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