

Making sense of grief and gratitude. What meaning and understanding can we derive from profound grief? And how might this be a basis for gratitude?

What meaning and understanding can we derive from young children taken by force by the US government from their parents and community and relocated to far-away institutions, often run by institutions of faith, that were created to kill the children's spirit, their culture, and their sense of connection to their people and their community? And what meaning and understanding can we derive when we become aware of the many children who died in these places, and were buried in unmarked graves, so far from those who loved them? How do we integrate this meaning and understanding into our daily consciousness, our work, our lives, our faith, and into our sense of gratitude? And how do we weave this work, this challenge, this opportunity, into our November event?

"The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. How much sorrow can I hold? That's how much gratitude I can give. If I carry only grief, I'll bend toward cynicism and despair. If I have only gratitude, I'll become saccharine and won't develop much compassion for other people's suffering. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible." Francis Ward Weller



Grief is subversive,
undermining the quiet agreement to behave and be in control of our emotions.

It is an act of protest that declares our refusal to live numb and small.

There is something feral about grief, something essentially outside the ordained and sanctioned behaviors of our culture. Because of that, grief is necessary to the vitality of the soul. Contrary to our fears, **grief is suffused with life-force...**

It is not a state of deadness or emotional flatness. Grief is alive, wild, untamed and cannot be domesticated. It resists the demands to remain passive and still. We move in jangled, unsettled, and riotous ways when grief takes hold of us.

It is truly an emotion that rises from the soul.

~ Francis Weller

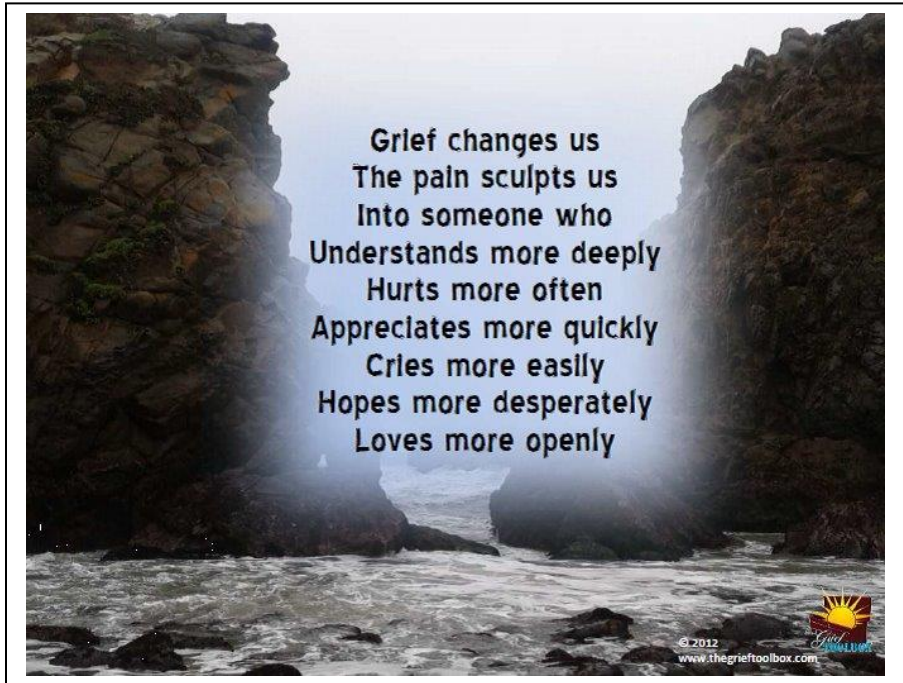
Grief

I had my own notions of grief.
I thought it was a sad time
that followed the death
of someone you love
and you had to push through it
to get to the other side.

But I'm learning
there is no other side,
there is no pushing through,
but rather, there is
absorption,
acceptance.

Grief is not something you
complete,
but rather you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish
and move on,
but an element of yourself,
an alteration of your being,
a new way of seeing,
a new definition of self.

Gwen Flowers



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