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Chapters

turning the pages through grief



By Paulette LeBlanc

The Road Traveled **ALONE**

It is difficult for anyone to truly understand another person's grief. Generally, people have a desire to help, but what if you find yourself in a situation where the people closest to you don't seem to be as sympathetic to your loss as you feel you need them to be?

I recently spoke to a woman who had begun to resent her husband terribly for not understanding her grief when she lost her mother. In her case, her husband and mother never got along. His disdain for his mother-in-law did not change as a result of her death. He had even gone so far as to roll his eyes in response to his wife's despair over this significant loss in her life.

Unfortunately death does not always automatically erase everything that was wrong with our relationships, though sometimes, this is seemingly the case. For this man, not even his

grieving wife's pain was enough to put away his own anger. The result of his unsympathetic behavior left his wife feeling even more alone and isolated.

It is important to understand that no one else will be able to feel your particular brand of grief to the extent that you do. While there are bound to be varying degrees of empathy from others, loss is a journey each of us travels alone. Of course there are bereavement support groups you can join that might make you feel less alone during the process. I would recommend these to anyone who feels they have no emotional encouragement from those closest to them.



While grief can be a lonesome journey, there are certainly things we can do to counter the daily pain of our loss. As I mentioned previously, many people find that a support group is a good outlet for connecting with others during this time. You may even find that you share

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“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.”

—Albert Camus

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commonalities with some of the people you meet there. For others, grief is more therapeutic when going it alone. For instance, I know a man who took up drawing while caring for his dying father. Once his father passed away he had already learned to submerge himself within his hobby, and as it turned out he'd had a real knack for it. You may find that the hours drag by with little to occupy your mind other than your emotional state of grieving. Sculpting, painting, or playing a musical instrument, have been found by many to ease the mind in giving them something else on which to concentrate. Whatever works for you is going to be the key.

If others seem not to understand your pain, now is not the time to worry about it. Right now, your concern is not whether or not the people around you are

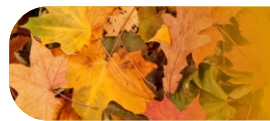
Grief is like a river that we cannot go around and must go through, no matter how hard we may try to avoid it.

experiencing the same loss to the same degree that you are. Now is the time for you to process your own grief. The journey of working through loss is a tough one. Even if others are experiencing the same pain in the wake of death that you are, it still doesn't make it hurt any less.

Grief is like a river that we cannot go around and must go through, no matter how hard we may try to avoid it.

Don't be afraid to try new things, or to say no thank you if you don't feel up to trying something new. Remember that it simply takes time to heal. In the end, you are your own best friend, so please be kind to yourself in this time of healing.

Paulette LeBlanc is a published author, editor and writer, who resides on the Gulf Coast of Florida.



OCTOBER

Birthstone: Opal

Flower: Marigold

Color: Pink



Footnotes

Where to Turn When Losing a Military Spouse

When you lose a spouse in the line of duty, your world is turned upside down. From the first anniversary spent alone and the first birthday with no one to celebrate, to the first time you check the box marked “widow or widower.”



Monica Frost is all too familiar with these moments. She lost her husband, Frank, an Army veteran who survived two tours in Iraq.

Like many survivors, not only was Monica faced with incomprehensible heartbreak and grief over the loss of her partner, she was also met with financial hardship.

“No one prepares you for your husband's funeral, but they really do not prepare you for what comes next,” said Monica. There were funeral costs, a mortgage, and bills to pay with one less source of income for support. As the widow of a veteran, Monica thought she was entitled to survivor benefits. But she had no idea which benefits she was

with basic needs, like a roof over their head and food on the table. Legislation put in place, like the 10-Year Rule and the Remarriage Age, have left many veterans' survivors by the wayside with no support or guidance on how to face their new reality and avoid poverty.

Luckily for Monica, she found DAV (Disabled American Veterans), a nonprofit charity that helps more than one million veterans and their families in positive, life-changing ways each year, all at no cost. Working with a DAV Benefits Advocate, Monica was able to secure the veterans' survivor benefits she and her husband earned as part of his service.

eligible to receive or how to get them from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The unfortunate truth is that survivors are often faced with seemingly impossible hurdles when trying to access benefits to help

The most crucial benefit Monica secured was Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). DIC is paid monthly to the surviving spouse to protect against spousal impoverishment after the loss of their loved one. Along with obtaining her DIC, Monica was granted ancillary benefits to cover the costs of her husband's funeral.

DIC and ancillary benefits are not the only benefits survivors, like Monica, have access to. Other benefits include:

*** Death Pension:** a monthly benefit paid to a surviving spouse with honorable wartime service whose death was unrelated to their time served.

*** Survivor Benefit Plan:** an insurance plan the deceased veteran elected upon retirement from military service.

*** Fry Scholarship:** provides post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to eligible survivors to attend school for up to 36 months at full scholarship.

Monica was able to access benefits that have helped to relieve some of the financial burden following her loss.

(Brandpoint content)

If you or someone you know is struggling to access survivor benefits, please go to www.dav.org to get the help you deserve.

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