

Daffodil Time

Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, and rush, never stopping to “smell the roses.” We are afraid that if we stop or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we’ll drop down that black hole of grief again--so we don’t stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade we had to memorize some poetry. I hated it. I still remember some lines from the poem “Daffodils”:

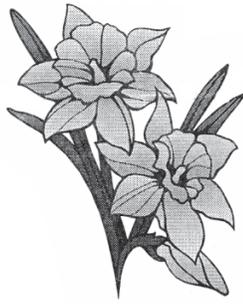
“When oft upon my couch I lie, In vacant or pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye, Which is the bliss of solitude.”

For a couple of years after my daughter’s death I could not, I would not allow myself to get in vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn’t daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye, it was always my daughter who was there ... and then there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw, open wound. Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant or pensive moods, and I can see daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more bitter than sweet, usually more sweet than bitter, but it is bliss as those memories flash on my inward eye.

I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do NOT like it, but I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in vacant or pensive mood, I am careful that those memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones, not the sad or unhappy ones. They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns hidden within the beauty. But I can do it now. I can take time to “smell the roses,” and so can you. Try it, in small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself - and your family - and your child. Take time to “smell the roses.” Slow down and let your memory take over. That helps you to heal.

~ Tom Crouthamel, TCF, Gibstonon, FL



The Path

My world lay shattered around me. Gone were the flowers and the sun. The path ahead looked dark and threatening. I heard a voice saying, “You have to travel this path alone.”

“I don’t want to go down that path. I can’t,” I protested. “I liked the old path.”

“The choice is yours,” said the voice, “but you may never go back to the old path. You may stay here at the crossroads where anger and pain will keep you company and wither your spirit. Or you may run off into the surrounding woods and pretend you are going somewhere, but you will become disoriented and lost. The only peace is to be found at the end of the path ahead.”

“If you have the courage to set forth upon the new path and to keep struggling through the storms, you will discover depths in yourself that you never knew existed. If you reach out, you will find those who have already traveled this difficult way and are there to support and guide you. Though it seems impossible now, your path will become beautiful again, as will your spirit. You will emerge from the desolation a stronger, wiser and more compassionate person. Then you too can turn and extend your hand to those who are still on the way.”

I made my choice. I picked up the remains of my life - my aching heart and wounded spirit; my broken dreams and disbelief - and wrapped them carefully in my blanket of grief. Holding them closely to me, I walked steadfastly ahead into the storm with faith, in the promise of peace on the other side.

~ Sharron Cordaro, Riverside, CA TCF

April . . .

*(Time for jesting,
time for laughter?)*

*And if you are not ready,
not yet,
to remember something
that makes you laugh:
Tell April to be patient.
Take your time....*

~ Sascha Wagner



SPRING CLEANING

I am a "spring cleaner." As one who works full time, my usual housecleaning is what is often called, "a lick and a promise." But once a year I really enjoy taking everything out of a closet, bureau, cabinet or cupboard - examining it remembering (if I can) where it came from - thinking about its potential uses - and often wondering why I am keeping it!

Recently, as I was rummaging around on a shelf, finding a few things I'd forgotten about, I thought about how much of what I was doing could apply to my "personal closet" as well as to our living room closet. My "personal" closet is that part of me where I store all sorts of things - anger, guilt, hope, joy, love, caring. If I could dig way down into that closet and find something I'd forgotten I had and could put to good use, I'd like to find a big box labeled "FORGIVENESS:"

One of the things we must do before we can move ahead in any situation is to completely forgive whatever wrongs, real and imagined, (and we do have both) have been done to us. This isn't easy.

I have to forgive the doctors and nurses, whose training had not prepared them to deal with a child whose illness they couldn't understand - or how to be supportive of her grieving parents and sister.

I have to forgive the people who stayed away from us because they had never been taught about the needs of a bereaved parents.

I have to forgive the people who tried to "cheer us up" or "take our minds off it." They, too, were baffled by the horror

of it all, and were, in their own way, trying to be helpful.

I have to forgive the people who told us that Linda's death was God's will. They were trying to comfort us.

I have to forgive myself - for so many things. This is a really tough one - the times I was cross or demanding - the situations I handled badly as Linda was growing up - the times I screamed or spanked out of my own frustration. I think she has forgiven me, yet the guilt remains, and I must forgive myself.

Then there is the question that so many of us ask, "Why didn't I realize sooner how sick she was?" "Why didn't we transfer her to Children's Hospital sooner?" There are no answers to these questions. If I made mistakes then I must accept them and forgive myself for them. I know that carrying the burden of blaming myself, and passing judgment on myself will only weigh me down and hold back whatever potential I have for future growth. But still, it's difficult.

I have to forgive people who don't understand where I'm coming from now, and make derogatory remarks about their children. I do wish I could help them realize how very valuable and precious those little lives are.

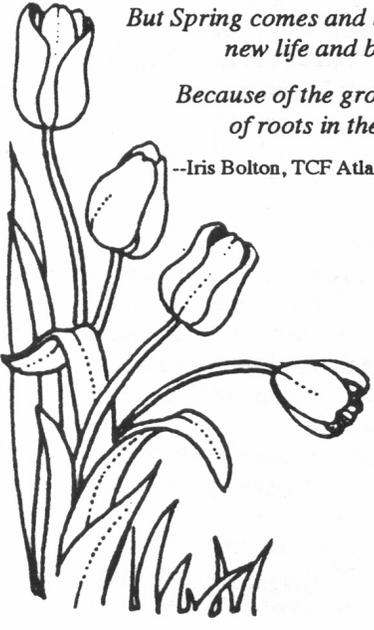
And, finally, I have to forgive Linda. Her dying really messed up my life, by creating a situation I didn't know how to deal with. It took a relatively normal, uncomplicated life, smashed it to smithereens, and forced me to attempt to reconstruct it - to put it back together - a hard job when some of the pieces don't quite fit anymore!

Yes, I'd like to find deep down inside me a great big box labeled "FORGIVENESS:"

~ Evelyn Billings, Springfield, MA TCF

*These days are the
Winter of the soul
But Spring comes and brings
new life and beauty,
Because of the growth ...
of roots in the dark.*

--Iris Bolton, TCF Atlanta, GA



This is the spring
I vowed to not own as mine;
I'd keep a closed and winter door,
Not let April's guile
Encompass me in its
Sentimental way,
Not even when lilacs bloom
And cast their scent upon
A warming breeze.

I vowed to stand in kitchen door,
Jaded senses tuned to mundane things.
I vowed ... I vowed
But oh! The heart remembers
A little boy with
Buttercups
Melting in his hand
One love-filled spring .

~ Dee McCollum, TCF, Atlanta, GA