

WHEN CHILD LOSS VISITS OUR HOME

News headlines constantly remind all of us that we are NOT alone in losing our most precious children. We can only pray that fewer children die each year. We wish fervently that no parent has to place their child's remains to rest, whether that "child" is an infant, an adult, or even a senior citizen. Our children hold our hearts, no matter how long it has been since their birth. In fact, it may have been years or decades since we watched as they left home and made their own lives.

The pain of losing a child, YOUR child, is unique for every parent. It is boundless, infinite, brutal, bitter, obscene, all encompassing, and yes, even violent. I am using the term violent with a great deal of thought. It is not an exaggerated term, (for me), when it comes to describing the loss of a child.

As parents, we all treasured every finger and every toe, every new tooth, the growth of hair, the feel of new skin, and the overall physical presence of our child being fully present in the world WITH us. In the broadest definition, having our children torn from us is a very cruel act of violence on our own physical and emotional lives. It tears our bodies limb from limb and sets our emotions on a perilous ride that threatens our spiritual BEING. It is a violent act which pummels us to the ground.

For some of us in this "club", that we never wanted to join, our child's death bears all the traditional definitions of violence. Car wrecks, suicides, and murders are clear examples. MOST of us who have lost a teen or young adult have been exposed to these types of violent deaths.

But in the broadest way, we are all victims of a violence in our lives as our children lost their health, their safety, their well being, and the breath of life. **We are all in deep TRAUMA following these deaths.**

Please recognize the trauma, and DO seek the help and support that you need. Don't minimize the ferocity of your grief. And most especially, don't allow OTHERS to define this loss for you. They cannot imagine, much less comprehend, the seismic level of this earth shattering trauma to YOUR life. **Only you can define your loss, and you WILL need support on this journey.**

Find support where the help "feels good" to you. It might be a professional counselor. Please check to see that they have some specialized experience or training in bereavement. It might be a support group like Compassionate Friends or a faith-based community group. **Just know that to feel true support, your experience must be honored, respected, and not judged. You are the navigator of this journey, and ONLY you.** Even family members, who may mean well, are limited in their own capacity to help you with your healing.

Please try to eliminate the phrases "move on" or "closure" from the bereavement community. These overused words carry no true meaning, and they can cause a great

deal of pain. Healing is a journey that is never over. It will continue to drive us in the direction of LIFE. It can become the very purpose of our lives. I prefer to say we are “moving forward” or as Kay Bevington reminds us, we are “reinvesting” ourselves.

If you are reading this article, no doubt some form of violence has visited your home in the form of the loss of a precious child. Even those moms and dads whose “babies” were collecting social security have lost the foundation upon which their lives were built. And their own future looks precarious without children who may have been very supportive in their “golden years”.

Look inside your own heart for your own definition of your greatest loss. And reach outside for support which “feels good”. That support should be life enhancing, not filled with judgement, unwanted advice, and criticism. If it feels that way, run in the opposite direction. That is why it is so critical for those of us who embrace the organization of **Alive Alone** to stay committed to reaching out to wounded and hurting parents. The trauma of child loss, and its attendant “violence”, has visited ALL of our homes, and only love and respect can nurture us on this very challenging journey of healing.

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