

## 11 12 09 Healing Honors Your Loss

***The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. You may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.***

Dear Ted:

The other day you wrote an article on healing from loss and moving through the fog. I have experienced this feeling of guilt as I feel I am forgetting my loved one. It is hard to let go and on days that I am not overwhelmed with my feelings of loss. What is this all about? Sincerely, Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your question. It sounds like you are working and healing from a loss and allowing for your broken life to rebuild and grow. Remembering that emotional healing is a slow process, with no set schedule or benchmark to "be over it". You will not "get over" the losses that have impacted your life. You will change and grow as healing happens, this does not mean you will lose the loved one and have them cleared from your life and memories. Loss is something that moves through different phases as you heal. It starts with anguish, moving to pain, then to sadness, to missing, to remembering with forgiveness, and possibly gratitude as you glean the wisdom from your experiences with that loss and transform them into aspects of yourself. Please remember that this is not a linear process and the phases will come and go, yet the overwhelming pain will decrease in intensity and duration. As you learn to trust the healing process, you will be able to make it through the intense waves. You may find it similar to pregnancy, having labor contractions with a high intensity and then subsiding for a time; these waves of healing are the birth of the new you! In this process, the best qualities and teachings from a loved one are integrated into your psyche and hopefully your way of living. This can be difficult as the only relationship you have with your loved one after their death is the grief and there is usually a fear that if you let go of the grief...there will be nothing. Having faith that you do not have to forget and as you let go and heal from the loss of the physicality of your loved one, you have the opportunity to allow a new type of relationship to arise. It is as if they become a guide or teacher for you with only their true essence radiating through you. Guilt and fear can undermine this process due to a feeling of what right do you have to rebuild and enjoy your life once again. And in actuality, it is all that your loved one would ever want for you. In allowing and working on healing your shattered heart, you honor your loss. Permitting joy and sorrow to walk hand in hand may give you a level of serenity that brings balance, growth and wisdom. Until next week, take care.

*Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing. Please direct questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, founder of Golden Willow Retreat and clinical supervisor for Teambuilders Counseling at (575) 776-2024 or GWR@newmex.com*