

11 19 09 Healthy Isolation Allows Healing

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:

A few weeks ago our son died during birth. We both are shattered and find it all so difficult. The funeral has past and our friends have returned to their own lives and we still sit broken hearted with little energy or effort to go out in the world. I have also noticed it is hard to go shopping as all I see are baby things, pregnant moms, children playing etc. It is as if there is a magnifying glass that zones me into these people or things. I would rather stay home and not interact at this time. Is this normal? Thank you, John

Dear John,

You find yourself in a very excruciating time in your life and my heart goes out to you, your family and all of those who are in the healing process after the loss of a child. This type of loss appears to break all the universal rules and leaves the heart shattered. When my daughters died, I thought there wouldn't be another minute or day without such intense pain that I could barely breathe or move. I lived in a land a fog for quite a long time as the natural healing process moved me forward, yet I find myself today with a happy life that I am grateful for and hope you and your wife the same as you begin to heal on your path. Your loss is enormous and if you compare it to a major surgery such as heart surgery, you may find solace in the fact that conscious isolation is not only normal but healthy. You said that your heart was broken, if you correlate this to heart surgery, you would have the time to recover after your surgery. This would include a recovery room in which you had time with very little stimulation to get back to your senses and then you would return home and rest, once again with little stimuli. The first phase of the grief process is denial and it can be interpreted in different ways to each of us, yet one part of denial is the healthy reintegration back into your world after it has been shattered. This takes time and your wounds are fresh and sensitive. Denial is similar to insulation and allows us the protection and space for rebuilding and reintegrating into the world. As you heal you will find certain activities will become less sensitive and you will be able to step back into the world around you. This will take time and some areas will stay sensitive for a very long time. Giving you and your wife time and permission to gingerly rebuild who you are and slowly reintegrate into your new situation can help for a healthier and less traumatic experience on your path to healing. I wish you well as you grieve your loss and heal from this experience. 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