

20 years later - *I have made friends with my grief* - Lyz Best

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I saw grief drinking a cup of sorrow and called out, 'It tastes sweet, does it not?' 'You've caught me,' grief answered, 'and you've ruined my business. How can I sell sorrow when you know it's a blessing?' --Rumi

Twenty years ago, grief barged its way through the red wooden front door of my family's old farmhouse looking for me. So rude and unexpected grief didn't even have the courtesy to knock.

September 11th, 2001, I remember every detail of that morning until 10:03 the moment Jeremy's plane crashed in a lonely field in Pennsylvania. The last thing I remember from that morning is my father hugging me. He was crying. I was shaking and in shock from spending over 30 minutes on phone with my husband.

During that fateful call we comforted each while he made a plan to attack the hijackers on his plane. For hours after the phone went dead, I hid in the bathroom away from everyone in the house. I didn't want to know the truth. I thought if I avoided everyone this nightmare would go away, Jeremy would come home, and I could go back to living the beautiful life in front of me. When I did finally get up and tiptoe my way into the kitchen I bumped into my dad.

With both disbelief and with certainty I grabbed my father by the shoulders and screamed over and over, "Wait. You think he's dead?" Wait you think he's dead?" He couldn't form the words to tell me. He was in shock. Of course, he was he loved Jeremy as a son. We both just cried harder and the last thing I remember is falling to the ground. I have no memory of the rest of the day.

I remember the next morning clear as day though. Shock and pain consumed me. It was like nothing I have ever felt before. I was pretty certain I would die from the pain I was feeling. Our beautiful daughter lay in the crib next to me. She was cooing, looking peacefully up at her mobile just three months old unaware of the horror of the previous day.

I didn't think it was possible, but for the next 7305 days the sun has come up and it has set, and I am still grieving, but my grief is different today than it was in the early days.

Over the years I have often wondered what today, twenty years later would feel like? Would the pain be as sharp? Would I still feel so alone? Would my daughter know her father? Would I experience joy again or would life always be so chaotic?

Grief took so much away from me. Grief took away my husband and robbed him of the opportunity of experiencing life as a father. It took away the man I loved and was supposed to dream with, raise children with and grow old with. Grief left me a single parent and left my daughter no tangible memories of her father. Grief left me with fear, debilitating anxiety and PTSD. It left me angry and exhausted. I didn't recognize the new me and I certainly didn't want to accept or embrace my new life as a 31-year-old widow.

But little by little I made a choice that there had to be something better than where I was at. So, I chose to embrace grief rather than fight it. I had no choice. I had a daughter to raise and life in this state was pretty unbearable. So, I did the work.

At first, I tried to find the old me, that carefree, fun adventurous person – but soon I learned that she had changed. She didn't exist anymore. I found that the best way for me to work through grief was to let it out. I cried, screamed, yelled and occasionally would curse and throw something as hard as I could. I also wrote letters to Jeremy, talked to him often and used writing as an outlet.

I kept an open mind and worked hard in my weekly therapy sessions and went to a support group for widows. I read a lot and practiced self-care. I ran a lot of miles and even completed a marathon. I spoke of Jeremy often and found ways to honor him and his memory that made me feel good.

Slowly over many years grief became my friend. I began to accept it rather than bury it deep inside where only I could see and feel it. It took me many years to realize that if grief remained my enemy and if I didn't look it in the eye, I would be blind to the many gifts that grief would bring me. So, one day, I invited grief to take a seat next to me on the couch and he's been a more welcomed companion ever since.

Grief has taught me the importance of gratitude and as a result senses for beauty and joy are stronger and more beautiful than I could have ever imagined. Grief has taught me that love will never die, but grow stronger and be honored in ways that are sacred. Grief has taught me that pain and the tragedy of 9/11 will never go away, but it will change, and it will be different. Grief has shown me the true relationship between mind, body and spirit and the importance of self-care.

Most importantly I have learned that grief is both personal and universal at the same time. It has reinforced that the most important thing that we can experience as humans is compassion and how we care for others. If we let it, grief and sorrow can prepare us for joy. It can awaken us to a peace and freedom we would not have been able to see and feel otherwise. This is my blessing.

Source - [AirCraft Casualty Emotional Support Services \(ACCESS\)](#)



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