

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a word not commonly found in bereavement literature.

The word forgiveness doesn't quickly jump into our minds when our child is killed in an accident...except for twisted people like me.

The day after my son was run over and killed by an elderly woman I sent her a note telling her I knew she didn't mean to do it and that I didn't blame her. But, for years I didn't speak to my sister from another city that had a son the same age as Arthur and whose birthday was the same day Arthur was killed. Some forgiveness! Huh!

As an aside, six years later this same sister's 16 year old daughter, was killed by a drunk driver. Thank God I had worked through my irrational anger towards her before her daughter was killed so that I was able to be with her in her grief.

Many of us have someone we hold responsible for our love's death. The drunk driver. The person who was careless and let the accident happen. The medics who didn't get there in time. The physician whom we feel didn't do everything s/he could. A relative. Ourselves. God. Whomever!

Somebody must be blamed. It's almost impossible to believe that what happen to our loved one was honestly and truly an accident. And you know sometimes, someone or something IS responsible.

The driver who ran your loved one off the road was drunk. The man running the crane that crushed your love wasn't paying attention. The 911 dispatcher gave the wrong address and the medics got there too late. The doctor was incompetent. Our spouse braked too fast on the icy road. I gave her medicine out of the wrong bottle. Our loved one did NOT have to die.

And I write about forgiveness?

Yes, I write about forgiveness because blame leads to anger and hate and anger and hate lead to destruction, and we are the ones who are destroyed.

I'm not so Pollyanna-ish as to suggest that you rush out in early grief and forgive everyone and everything for your loved one's death. That's ridiculous!

But I am suggesting that somewhere along your road to recovery that you give serious consideration to the blame, either by recognizing that it's irrational and simply letting go of it, or by doing the hard thing—forgiving.

Forgiving can be very complicated. Usually there are practical and psychological elements to it. Hopefully you can do this yourself by examining what has taken place, thinking about it, praying about it, and then letting go of the blame. But, sometimes the blame necessitates professional help to sort through the various aspects of it.

I hope that if you're having trouble getting through your grief and finding happiness and joy in your life again, that you will look at the possibility that forgiveness might be what you need.

Margaret H. Gerner, MSW