



When Someone You Loves Dies **By: Sheila Munaf-Kanoza**

I knew from the day my husband Vince died, that God had a plan for my children and I. I am proud of Vince. He bore his cross so young. And, to me, he is the lucky one; he is in heaven with God. At the time of his death, I asked God to help us to get through the funeral and the rest of our lives. Here I am fourteen years later, I have gone on with my life, but there is not a day that goes by that I don't miss him. I love Vince, in fact I love him more now than ever. The grief will always be there only now it's seems to be cushioned.

When Vince died it felt as though someone had reached into my chest and pulled out my heart. It was a pain that was like no other. Nothing can prepare anyone for the truly physical and mental pain of grief. What you think it might feel like and how it feels is unimaginable. It has been proven that a broken heart causes physical and emotions problems. Grief can lead us through many emotions of sadness, anger, guilt, fear and great loneliness. These emotions can have a great effect on our bodies, causing damage to our immune system. I was so tired, after my husband ten-year battle to cancer was over. Yet I kept on going, not giving my body the rest that it needed. Keeping busy was a way I coped with my grief. In doing so I depleted most of my adrenal gland. The end result my body got weak and ill very quickly. All because in the beginning I didn't give my body the rest it needed.

Physically I felt I needed to keep busy, mentally I was dazed and confused. I felt as though I was watching a movie of someone else's life or that I was having a bad dream. I even tried pinching myself to bring my life back to what it once was. About a week or two after my husband death I thought I was functioning until one of my children said mom, "I need clean underwear. My reply was; "well let's go buy some." It was at that very moment that I caught myself and saw that I needed to get back into reality. As I looked back, I knew I had done things, I had fed my children, washed their clothes but I couldn't remember doing anything. Perhaps this dazed and confused state was God's medication. I had to try to find a way through the maze of the reality that life was no longer what I had planned.

Our lives change when someone we love dies and we are no longer the person whom we once were. We are forced to take on a new identity. We are no longer a wife, a husband or a parent. Yet in our hearts and minds we are. When meeting people, questions are often asked about our lives. As our parents die we become orphans, as our spouse dies we become widowed and if our children die we wonder how many children do we say we have. It is an identity that we had no choice in.

Many times in grief walls are built between families and friends. Perhaps it is a wall not meant to keep you out, but to keep out grief itself. Families need to take time to remember. Sharing memories of a loved one may at first bring pain, but in the end those memories will bring healing. Memories are our most important gifts from our loved ones. Don't be afraid to share them. We must build families, not walls.

There are no timetables for grief. Grief is an emotional roller coaster; it will bring you many ups and downs. It seems that people expect grief to last a few weeks and then life is back to normal. Our lives will never be the "normal" that once was.

In the past few years our world has dealt with the emotional shock of death. Death for many just comes and goes until it happens to them. For many they see grief as being here for a day or two not realizing that it takes time to heal the wounds of grief. In our world today we have many one-minute mourners. When the center of someone's life has been blown out like the core of a building, is it any wonder why it takes so long to rebuild? Remember this; Hearts heal faster from surgery than from loss. Take the time you need to heal.