

# Balcony and Basement People

By: Traci Cooley  
Bereaved Mother, Tampa, Florida

Shortly after my daughter Malena died, I started a home based business to keep busy. During the course of this business venture, I was able to attend the company's annual convention. These conventions are geared toward encouraging and motivating the sales teams to sell, sell, and sell. There are workshops and motivational speakers all pushing you into "expanding your business". As I sat through many of these speakers, most of what they said I related to surviving the death of my precious daughter rather than expanding my business.

Three years later, one of the workshops I attended that weekend keeps popping into my head as my grief process extends past what the world finds "comfortable". The workshop was called "Balcony People and Basement People". I have spent days and weeks applying this to the people I have encountered during my bereavement. I continually seek Balcony people and I avoid those I consider Basement people.

Basement people are people who constantly pull you down or discourage you. Basement people in our grieving process can and do cause us much hurt and distraction. Basement people are the people who do not wish to hear about your child, they do not want to talk about your hurt or actively help you go through the grief process. Basement people are also people who say ugly or uneducated things about your loss such as "Aren't you over that by now?" Basement people criticize your bereavement or question every method you chose in dealing with your loss. Basement people make everything about them and their feelings; disregarding the fact that it is your child who died. Basement people can cause a lot of hurt (often, unintended) to you during your bereavement process.

Balcony people are the people who pull you forward and along the road of grief. Balcony people come beside you and cry with you, spend time listening to you talk of your child and tell you stories they remember, too. Balcony people encourage you to seek ways to heal and process your loss. They understand that the way you chose to deal with the death of your beloved child may not be their way but it is what is good for you. Balcony people understand when you do not want them around but stand by just in case you change your mind. Balcony people cook or clean for you because you just do not have the energy or they do not comment when the house is a little (or a lot) messier than it used to be. Balcony people understand that you will never be the "old" you and help you to find the "new" you who will emerge through the grief and loss you have sustained.

Take the time to identify the Balcony people and Basement people in your life. Spend most of your time with the Balcony people and try to limit the time with Basement people; if possible. Balcony people pull you up, cheer you on, encourage you and take care of you when you most need it. Basement people pull you down, criticize and find fault in what you do. Balcony people and Basement people; we all have them in our lives. It is our choice of who we allow to be part of our bereavement process and our lives. I choose my Balcony people.