

MY HEART HAS NO STEPS

David Hurley

I married into a family that was going through the process of grief. I often feel like an interloper at meetings of bereaved parents because I “technically” don’t belong. When I married Beverley she had experienced the death of her oldest daughter. Her marriage was one of many that could not handle the added pressure of the death of a child. This is written for the “Step” parents in the group, but there are also a few things that apply to natural parents.

The title exists because several people have heard me say that my heart has no steps. I’ll explain.

Beverley – the bereaved mother I came to love: Beverley was in the process of grieving the death of Debbie when we first started seeing each other. She still is in that process. I am moving through the process with her, even though Debbie died before I was on the scene. I have had to learn a lot about what is going on. Living with a grieving wife you love is a good way to gain knowledge of what grief is about. We share this, along with everything else in our lives. It has given me the opportunity, on way too many occasions, to put grieving parents and grandparents in touch with Bereaved Parents.

Debbie – is Beverley’s oldest daughter: I never met her. I watched all of the video that was available, including the old 8mm silent home movies and looked at all of the pictures that were available. I have talked with her friends. I have talked with her Aunts and Uncles in an effort to try to understand more about her and her relationship with her mother. That is my choice, and I think it is a responsibility as Beverley’s husband to prepare myself as much as possible for my role of trying to comfort her on the worst days of her grief.

Kim – the daughter I did meet: If I ever introduce Kim to you, I will introduce her as my daughter. My heart has no steps. I believe we have a pretty good relationship. That is a miracle, considering the circumstances surrounding her when I entered her life. I worry about her. I want only the best in life for her. I will do all I can to protect her. In the purest sense, I love her. We are family. The longer we go the tighter we bond. I now have four children. (I know. They are all adults now. Just humor me. Okay?)

Kim and her husband (my son-in-law) have given me three beautiful grandchildren. Watch us together and you will be convinced that there is a real familial bond. This relationship does not replace my natural children. I have as much love for them as ever.

One of the things I had to overcome (I am still working on this) is my propensity as the male of the species to fix everything so there is no more problem. Guys, we **CAN’T** fix it. We must do all we can in support of our wife. Actually, whichever spouse is being stronger at any given moment wants to make everything better for the other. We feel like a failure when we cannot make the hurt go away. I know I have to be sensitive to things that others know nothing about. A song, a date or other stimulus may trigger the grief in my wife and the mood can change quickly. I finally learned to ask her if her mood was because of something I did or didn’t do, or something I said or didn’t say. I also ask if there is something I can do to help her at that time. Sometimes she just needs to experience her grief with a minimum of distraction. Searching is my responsibility and honest answers are her responsibility.

I can do things to soften some of the bumps I know are coming. Little things do mean a lot. It is easy to send a card or flower to her on dates that I know are important to her. I once bought a flower and placed it on Debbie's grave on her birthday. I knew Beverley would have a difficult time getting there because of her workload. She tearfully related that she would fail to get to the cemetery. When I told her I had attended to the grave she received some relief. Don't give up looking for big things to do to help, but be particularly sensitive to the little things. They show up quite often and are just as effective.

Remember to flatten out any steps in your heart. The love you experience will be worth the effort.