

PUBLIC UNAWARENESS

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I am always amazed that we can put a man on the moon, send documents across the world in minutes, leave messages on people's machine, and the list goes on. Yet the general public (especially the new media) sticks to the idea that grief is a fleeting emotion that passes in a few weeks or months.

I am referring to the many commentaries that have inaptly characterized the families whose loved ones died in the Oklahoma City bombing. Several television reports declared that it will take weeks, or maybe months before the families *will get over this*. Please!! We know better. It seems that the old cliché *until you have walked a mile in my shoes* holds much wisdom.

There is no *getting over* the death of one's child. Those of us who are old in our grief have learned a new kind of tolerance for such statements. For you who are new in your grief, we understand how such statements hurt and undermine your own emotional healing. You are made to feel even more weak and somehow not as capable as others.

It's a slow and painful process that brings us finally to an acceptance, perhaps, but it cannot be said that any parent is ever *over it*. Grief recovery, if I may use that term, is the result of eventually coming to a deeper understanding of life, its meaning, and death's rightful place in it. Out of all the pain of sorrow, bereaved families do find peace and a new compassion we may not have known before.

For all newly bereaved families, cry your tears, unleash your rage, lean into the pain, feel all your emotions. Most of all hold on to your children in your hearts, hold on to your memories. With lots of time you will see through more knowledgeable eyes, more loving hearts.

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