

## TIME DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Early in my grief I really couldn't understand what people meant when they said, "time makes a difference", "time heals", or "you'll feel better in time". In fact those trite comments often ticked me off! I thought, "how do you know"? But when another parent who had experienced the death of a child made similar comments I responded differently. I thought, "well you must know, you've been at this grief thing longer than I. Tell me how time is going to heal me or how I'm going to be able to live without my child. I don't think I have ever received a clear answer to that question, nor do I have the answer to pass on to others, but I will have to admit that time has made a difference. On June 4<sup>th</sup> my son Cameron will have been gone from this world for seven years. Sometimes seven years seems like an incredibly long time, yet other times it seems as if it has went by quickly. So many things have changed in seven years. I think of Cameron and wonder how he would have felt about some of those changes. In my mind I imagine conversations with Cameron where I tell him about the changes that have occurred since his death.

Cameron's death caused me to question many of my beliefs and to explore new ideas and beliefs. But Cameron's death and my anger about not having him in this world with me actually gave me permission to question and look into my beliefs like never before. By nature I am a people pleaser, a don't rock the boat, go with the flow, don't make waves, type of person. I've always had a strong sense of right and wrong, and a feeling that good will always prevail. Cameron's death shook those beliefs to the very core. Whatever limited sense of security I had prior to Cameron's death was replaced with the thought that if something this bad could happen, than what else could happen? I'd already experienced a lot of tough stuff; the suicide of my father when I was eight, the birth of my first child with spina bifida, my mother's brain tumor, my divorce and then my child's death. Somehow I felt I'd already paid my dues. I heard people say, "God never puts more on you than what you can handle. I thought God had too much confidence in me, or perhaps he didn't know me very well or maybe there really wasn't a God. Nothing seemed very certain in my life at this point. I felt tormented with all the uncertainties. Nothing seemed normal now and I wondered how I could live without one of my children. I seemed to exist in a funny sort of place. I didn't understand how the sun could shine when my world seemed to have plunged into darkness. I did not feel a part of this world. People assured me it would get better, but I wondered if it would? Insecurity and guilt seemed to accompany me day and night. At night when I couldn't sleep I would replay the last days of Cameron's life. I thought that if just one thing had happened differently my Cameron wouldn't have died in the accident. As a parent I felt it was my responsibility to keep my children safe. Somehow I had dropped the ball and failed to keep Cameron safe. "Why" was always the question that remained unanswered?

When did things change? I can't remember an exact date/time when things changed, but the important thing is, things did change.

When I listen to a newly bereaved person talk, I really see that time has made a difference. I usually hear some of the same fears and concerns I had early in my grief. Some of the things I have learned so far are:

- That it is my responsibility to learn to live with the pain from the death of my son.
- That attending BP support groups, attending National Gatherings, counseling, talking to trusted family and friends, reading BP newsletters and many grief books have all played a part in my recovery.

- That grief is hard work!
- That life is not fair?
- That bad things do happen to good people.
- That it's up to me to make a decision to become better, not bitter.
- That everything I have experienced in this life has had an impact on me.
- That as I grow and change, so will some of my beliefs.
- That my life is a work in progress.
- That there is much to learn in this life and that when I'm ready to learn new lessons a teacher (sometimes an unlikely one) appears in my life.
- That I need to talk about my son who died.
- That it's o.k. to be mad at God, - God can handle it. God is a bereaved parent too, so he truly understands.
- That God knows how long you will live even before you are born. (this means that there is a master plan)
- That there is life after death, which means I'll get to see my son again.
- That sometimes we are fortunate enough to be given signs that there is life after death.
- That allowing myself to be happy doesn't mean I've forgotten my son's death.
- That while most of the time I move forward in my journey through grief, there will be times when I take some steps backward, but never back to the beginning.
- That I can love my child as much in death as I loved him in life.
- That I should share my experience, strength, and hope with other bereaved parents.
- That life can change in a heartbeat.
- That I have very little control over events in this world.