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Is There Someone You're Missing?

Ingrid Weiss Slikkers

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Is There Someone You're Missing?



▲ INGRID WEISS SLIKKERS

"I MISS HER."
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TILL THE DAY I DIE.
RAW HUMAN
EMOTION.
IS THERE
SOMEONE YOU
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It seemed we had been preparing (if there's such a thing) for her death for some years. The initial cancer diagnosis had a life expectancy of 5-8 years, and we were entering year 12. We were grateful for the extra time with her.

There had been difficult moments but when she breathed her last, she did so peacefully and surrounded by loved ones. My mom was an example of a life well lived. She had given beyond measure and her impact transcended continents.

It is now a few months later and due to my busy schedule, many in my support system have checked in with me and asked, "Have you allowed yourself to grieve?" It's hard for me to answer that question because, frankly, what does that mean? Does that mean a few good cries? Does that mean doing some intentional things such as making a memory bear with an article of her clothing or making that old black and white picture of her holding me as a child the lock screen on my computer? Do I have a checklist of the stages of grief on my fridge that I am marking off? Professionally I know the stages, I have counseled others through the stages, and I know that everyone grieves differently. But how do I know if I am allowing myself to grieve?

Our responses to death are very complicated especially when considering the age or how it happened. Although we have more and more studies that analyze and give us ways to acknowledge the impact and ways to work through grief, we continue to be quick to have pat, albeit true, answers that we tell ourselves, such as "We have this hope," "She lived a full life," or "He is no longer suffering." Grief is a human response to loss and is painful. Many books and articles have been written about the topic. Grief might come due to the death of a loved one, the end of an important relationship, part of the impact of traumatic events, or a significant life change.

I know that when asked by my support circles how I am doing, since many are professional counselors, they are encouraging me to process my emotions, understanding that identifying and working through the feelings is vitally important for my mental well-being. If that's the case, as kids today say, "I *am* having all the feels." I tear up when I automatically pick up the phone to call her and realize I can't. I roll my eyes when I hear her voice in my head about something I should or shouldn't do. I giggle out loud when I change the toilet paper roll and recall which way she insisted was correct! What about when I remind myself to intentionally tell the kids a story at dinner and ask them about moments when they miss her? Might writing this piece be grieving? I think my answer moving forward when asked will be, "I miss her." Period. Till the day I die. Raw human emotion. Is there someone you are missing? ■

Ingrid Weiss Slikkers, LMSW-C&M, CCTP, CFTP, is associate professor in the School of Social Work and executive director of the International Center for Trauma Education & Care at Andrews University.

