Grief Journal

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When addressing the grievances of loss from when I was a child it was difficult to express what I was suffering. At 12 years old I was sexually assaulted by my stepfather, a month after he moved into our apartment. The relationship was not good from the start, I felt alone, and not safe, he made me feel terrible about myself. He was my groomer. I portrayed somebody else, and I learned how to hide my feelings. I became defiant in school because I never told mom of the abuse and was angry with my mother for bringing this monster to live with us. I developed hatred towards him and particularly at night had plans of how can I hurt him? It was easier for me to shut myself off. I was paralyzed from the inside out with shame. I told no one except my best friend, and her mother. "Her mother whom I loved so much asked me" do you want me to call your mom or the police? and I begged her not to because my mother was pregnant. I was afraid that my mother would not believe me. My mother often mentioned to her sister that she was so in love with this monster. One day at school a classmate shared with me that she was being sexually, and physically abused by her stepfather, and her mother did not believe her. Some human beings do atrocious things to other human beings. The most atrocious is the abuse of a little child, he intruded in my development and spiritual growth process. Sexual abuse shattered me mentally, physically, emotionally and future. If I looked back to the period between 18 and 27 and examined myself and my origins, I would classify that era as merely magnificent. It was the spring of my life cycle: I got married two months before my high school graduation. At the age of 20, I gave birth to my first-born daughter. After which I attended the American Business Institute in NYC. After getting an associate degree from American Business Institute, I transferred to Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with Accounting. "I'm so proud of myself. I'm proud of the little girl who kept peace, love, and joy in my heart."

I find it is extremely important to keep my equilibrium, and to honor myself during the challenges and demands of life, and to not forget the most valuable person - me!

I was a single parent, the sole provider of four children. I focused on working diligently and providing the very best for my children. During the hustle and bustle of life's struggles and challenges, I was diagnosed with cancer three times - Cervical cancer, Ovarian cancer, and four malignant tumors. I recovered, but the cancer kept coming back because of the overwhelming stress. Finally at 35 I suffered a minor stroke from working 17 - 18 hours a day.

Today all of that has changed. My primary health care now is connecting with my higher powers - God Almighty, and the Lord Jesus Christ. The turning point came in 1985 when I took a Bible class called Power for Abundant Living. The class changed my life dramatically. For example, I lost a long-standing fear of taking the elevator in my mother's apartment building where I grew up. I was robbed in that elevator when I was 7 months pregnant. The traumatizing event was only assuaged by the introduction into my heart of the acquaintance of Jesus Christ. That class taught me all about positive and negative believing, and how the Devil can manipulate a person through fear. Overcoming the fear from that elevator episode and learning to trust the Lord's hedge of protection around me, was the beginning of my transformation. It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that to this day has been the wellspring of my 'self-care'.

It was the beginning of God preparing me to be the warrior for the trials and tribulations I was going to face in life and equipping me with His tools and armor for the spiritual battle. The Lord's helping me to overcome my fears turned out to be the key for getting ahead in life.

As a qualified mental health counselor, and a chaplain I work with children/adults suffering from trauma and/or emotional distress. Over time, I have developed a system that meets the challenges of serving my clients without neglecting my own emotional needs. In fact, it is this very system - a system of beliefs really - that both spawned my interest in helping others and equipped me to do so.

Let me stress my agreement that self-care is essential. We cannot neglect ourselves if we are to be helpful to others in any meaningful way. We cannot fill someone's tank from an empty one; nor offer compassion and empathy with our own wounds left untreated. It is also true that serving others without a

system of reflection and rest, can lead to emotional demise, or physical breakdown. This is not a subject to be taken lightly or ignored. The reality of emergency workers and medical personnel who are victims of their own overreach is well documented. So how to stay ahead of such a curve?

Let us face it. We all must deal with disappointment. We can no longer prevent disappointment that we can be of concerns. It is when we let disappointment become discouragement, that is as when concern becomes a vicious cycle and can become and can become a self-perpetuating reality. The thing is we must train our kids how to handle disappointment. And sometimes ourselves as well. Do you ever have to revisit the most basic Bible lesson? I do. In my house, we have had our share of disappointments. Even Paul admitted, he rejoices in tribulation because it brings about experience, then patience etc. I wager Paul's first disappointment was not enough. Experience comes with the repeat performance. That is a lot of sighing. Some of us do not learn that "patience thing" until many disappointments have turned into Godly appointments… and that can take time.

A common practice calls for turning the mirror of psychotherapy upon we; call it self-reflection; self-compassion, self-criticism, or what have you. Yet it has been my observation and experience, that there comes the point in which a focus on self, is in fact counterproductive.

Let me explain: After attending to the foibles of my clients, their pains, suffering, and emotional hurts - to my own emotional needs, reminds me of washing my hands in the same small tub of water that everyone else has just washed in. Finally, fresh water is needed. To best tend to the needs of others as well as my own - I look for that fresh water. What that means is that rather than looking to myself for my clients, and then again - for myself - I turn to a reference outside myself. An outside source of inspiration and guidance. One whose wisdom has stood the test of time. That source is what some call a higher power. I call it by His name - "Jehovah, Yeshuia God."