

H.O.P.E.

Sent to you by

BROWN-PENNINGTON-ATKINS

306 W. Home Ave.

Hartsville, SC 29550

843-332-6531

www.bpafuneralhome.com

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Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear friends,

Author Brian Tracy tells of being 21 when he and a companion decided to go off and see the world. While most of their friends were hitchhiking through Europe, Tracy and his friend decided they wanted a different experience, so they chose to cross Africa – never wondering why others were not going to that continent. Before long, they found out why: to get to their destination meant crossing the enormous Sahara desert.

They set off from London, riding bicycles across France and Spain. In Gibraltar they sold their bikes and invested their meager funds in an old Land Rover and used it to cross from Gibraltar to Tangier into Algeria. Between them and their destination was the mighty expanse of the Sahara desert.

The two young people had no idea how difficult and dangerous that journey could be. “As we

moved south across the desert, we encountered endless problems, any one of which could have ended our trip and, probably our lives,” Tracy recalls.

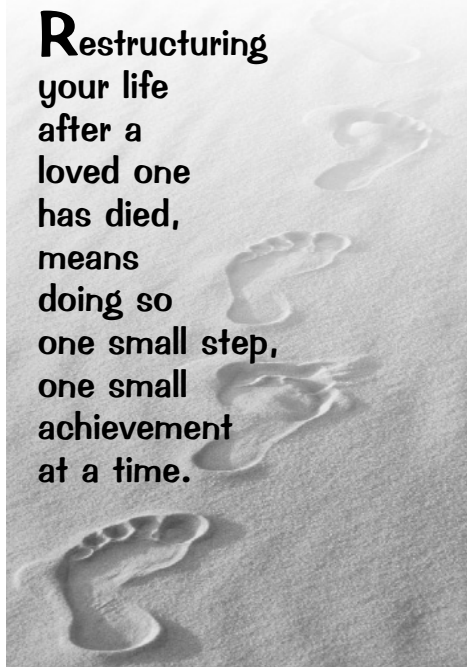
Yet, it was during that desert crossing that he learned a vital life lesson. The French, who had governed Algeria for many years, had marked a path across the desert with black 55 gallon oil drums. The drums were spaced exactly five kilometers apart. As they drove and came to an oil drum, the next drum, which was five kilometers ahead, would pop up on the horizon, and the last oil drum, which was five kilometers behind,

would fall off the horizon. No matter where they were in the desert, they could always see two oil drums at a time: the one left behind and the one they were headed toward.

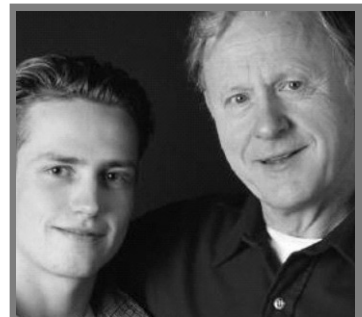
Here was the invaluable lesson Tracy learned: “To cross one of the greatest deserts in the world, all we had to do was take it one barrel at a time. We did not have to cross the entire desert at once.”

That insight is a metaphor for life, especially those who are dealing with the loss of a loved one. Today, all you have to do is take one step, one oil barrel, at a time.

Restructuring your life after a loved one has died, means doing so one small step, one small achievement at a time.



Restructuring your life after a loved one has died, means doing so one small step, one small achievement at a time. British author Charles Kingsley wisely observed, “Do today’s duty... and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things that you cannot see and could not understand if you saw them.”



“MY DAD DIED LAST MONTH. . .”

A young man raised this bereavement question recently: “My father died last month. I believe I’m dealing well with his death, but many days I seem to be lacking in energy, focus and motivation. Is there something wrong with me?”

Three comments are appropriate for that young man. First, there’s nothing wrong. In fact, it is common following the death of a loved one to feel tired and unfocused. Bereavement is emotionally taxing. Secondly, it is unrealistic to expect grief recovery after only one month. Give ample time for the spirit to heal. It can take 36 months or longer to make the adjustment. Third, one of the most effective ways of dealing with this loss is to talk about the father, sharing stories about him with other people. Expressing and exploring thoughts and feelings is what relieves the pressure which builds from grief.

MYTH

Family and friends will be helpful.

FACT

A few people will be comforting and make the time to be there for you but many will not because they just don't understand the depth of grief.



MYTH

The sooner you get over a loss, the better off you are.

FACT

There is no quick fix for grief. It cannot be rushed and moves on it's own timetable. Attempting to rush the process limits healing and learning.

MYTH

Funeral services are expensive and a waste of time.

FACT

Funeral services need not be expensive, and they are extremely therapeutic. They create space for the expressing of emotions and the receiving of support.

MYTH

Grief is a negative experience.

FACT

Grief is a painful experience which everyone will encounter at one time or another. Handled properly, it often becomes a positive learning experience.

MYTH

After a year the grieving process is basically over.

FACT

Very few people adjust to loss in one year. The majority take from three to five years and some, even longer.

MYTH

Grief eases over time in a constantly decreasing way.

FACT

The grief recovery process is never a straight line. It is often a case of making progress and then regressing briefly. Some describe the process as "taking two steps forward and one step backward."

MYTH

Grief is something you just have to endure.

FACT

Grief is a heavy burden, but the process can be lightened by doing what is called "grief work," that is, educating yourself about bereavement, joining a support group, and sharing feelings with a good listener.

MYTH

It's better not to talk about it.

FACT

Talking about your experiences, both positive and negative, facilitate healing.

MYTH

It's important to be strong and control your feelings.

FACT

Expressing feelings helps release grief. Being too rigid emotionally inhibits grief recovery.

MYTH

Children need to be protected from death and grief.

FACT

It's impossible to "protect" children from this painful reality. However, children need to receive two things.

- 1) Age-appropriate answers to their questions
- 2) Supportive adults to guide them through the grief journey.

Worth Thinking About...

Sometimes well meaning friends or co-workers may say within weeks, months or even after the first year that "you must be over it by now." In reality we don't "get over" the death of our loved one. With great determination, hard work, faith, friends and time we get to a better place in our grief. We learn to live without grief. It becomes a part of the fabric of our daily lives. And ever so slowly our grief does soften. Others may encourage us to get back to our old self. That is not possible. You will never be the same. However "you" can be a "good new you" learning to appreciate what you do have... remembering the warm memories with your loved one... being more sensitive and compassionate to other's pain... becoming determined to make something positive come from the ashes of your grief.

- Therese S. Schoeneck



"LITTLE BY LITTLE YOU WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN."

If only someone whom I respected had sat me down after Martin died and said: "Now, Lynn, bereavement is a wound. It's like being very, very badly hurt. You will grieve and that is painful. And your grief will have many stages, but all of them will be healing. Little by little you will be whole again. And you will be a stronger person. Just as a broken bone knits and becomes stronger than before, so will you."

- Lynn Caine from her book "Widow"

