

NEVER DISMISS NEWS OF SOMEONE PASSING

What if they wanted one more day?

HERB KNOLL | herb@widowersupportnetwork.com
Widowers Support Network

Self care articles for the bereaved

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LIKE MOST PEOPLE, I USED TO DISMISS THE NEWS OF A PERSON PASSING

I found I could rationalize the death of others, as people often do, with wild conjecture such as "Well, s/he had a long life," or some other insensitive comment.

But now, having been a caregiver for one as ill as my beautiful bride, Michelle, and having witnessed her final breaths, I feel very different. I now become extremely sad each time I learn of the passing of another human. It doesn't matter their age or the circumstances surrounding their death. I wince whenever I hear someone offer aloof statements such as, "But they were smokers, weren't they?"

SO WHAT IF THEY WERE? IS DYING THEIR PUNISHMENT?

What if they wanted to live just one more day so they could finish their crossword puzzle or the volunteer project they pledged to fulfill? What if they wanted to say they were sorry to a friend for an old misdeed, or perhaps, say, "Goodbye for now," to a grandchild rushing to his or her bedside but hadn't yet arrived?



Each person, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the passing, was someone's beloved child. Their mother loved, protected, and sacrificed for this person from the moment she learned of their conception until she delivered him or her safely into this world. A moment so special, so unique in all the world, only women will ever fully understand and appreciate its significance. This fetus—this person—mattered. At least to his or her mother, if to no one else.

Perhaps the deceased was someone's father or mother or their sister or brother.

They may have been someone's friend; another's first love, soul mate, or perhaps someone's mentor. They may have been the good-hearted

neighbor from down the street who always smiled when passing.

They were likely to have been someone's colleague, or perhaps; it was they who made a difference in your cousin's life when faced with a series of insurmountable challenges and did so without tribute.

It could have been the deceased that years earlier saved another life when they donated a kidney to a dying teenager in need of a donor. It may have been the deceased that were among those who regularly donated blood to the Red Cross as the rest of us slept.

The deceased may have proudly served our country in uniform with little regard or appreciation from those they protected. It may have been their performance in an elementary school play that brought the assembled parents to their feet shouting encore! And it may well have been their efforts that created jobs for others in our community.

This child of God may have been among the Americans who always paid their taxes on time and never even attempted to beat the system, even when times were tough as they are today?

Perhaps, just maybe, it was
they who served as someone's
hero or another person's only
reason for living.

The loss of someone close will likely broaden anyone's perspective about life in general. Life's senses become sharpened. Life's wounds become exposed. We each become veterans. Veterans of a kind of war most are not prepared to face.



And sometimes, in war, we incur wounds. Deep wounds, contributing to a new appreciation for the gift of life, including the lives of those lost. For me, I can't help but wonder how others can accept death with so little discomfort. As a society, have we become so mechanical, so programmed that we have shed our compassion and feelings. I pray this is not the case.

So the next time you speak with someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one, please don't offer up one of the lame comments we have all become accustomed to hearing in such situations. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding one's passing, it is the end of a human's life. It deserves better from all of us.

Death comes with living. I got it. But lets at least learn to turn a deaf ear to anyone inquiring as to "How old were they?" or "Did they have any life insurance?" for neither question has no value. Instead, upon learning of another person's passing, let's inquire into their life's deeds, and their loves.

Let's celebrate their unheralded contributions to our world as we pay tribute to their life and all that it touched.