

WALKING THROUGH THE BELLY OF HELL

What I didn't know then that I know now

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Self care articles
for the bereaved

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I didn't think I could survive

Ten years ago today, my life changed in unimaginable ways. My 15-year-old daughter Aly died in a car accident, and life as I knew it ended.

Confused, shocked, and helpless, I was engulfed by a firestorm of indescribable pain.

Every breath was pure agony. It underscored the saying, "hell on earth."

**I was 43 years old, sitting in
the belly of hell from which
there was no escape.**

I didn't think I could survive.

What I didn't know then that I know now is that the belly of hell is actually life's greatest classroom. While in there, I discovered valuable lessons I wouldn't have learned any other way.

While in the belly of hell, I discovered others who were there for the same reason. I wasn't alone, and there's comfort in numbers.

While in the belly of hell, I learned that many lacked the support I was blessed with. I learned that this lack of support can make the difference

between surviving and thriving.

There in the belly of hell, I learned that I could be part of the difference. When I learned how, I discovered that it helped my own heart to heal.

**While in the belly of hell,
English became my second
language, and Grief
became my first.**

I learned that speaking Grief made me unique on the outside. It set me apart in ways I didn't like. Yet, when I learned to use it to help others, it became something I loved.

The belly of hell afforded many more lessons



that not only taught me about myself, they also molded me into an improved version of who I once was.

I'm no longer afraid of trying. I'm no longer afraid dying.

I'm also no longer afraid of living and giving.

I am no longer afraid to laugh, to love, and to embrace hurting strangers.

Perhaps the most important lesson my daughter's death taught me is that the language of grief is also the language of love. And when we teach the language of grief, we're also teaching the language of love.

Ten years ago today my daughter died and I found myself in the belly of hell.

What I didn't know then is that it was actually a classroom through which I would learn life's most valuable lessons, making grief the greatest teacher of all.