

WELCOME TO THE LIFE OF A GRIEVING MOTHER

I wasn't sure I could survive

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Self care articles for the bereaved

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The warm summer day started out just like any other. I was busy organizing the kids, planning dinner, making a mental note to fill the car with gas on my way home from their soccer game.

Suddenly without warning, I was engulfed by a raging fire. I suffered third degree burns over my entire body. Not an inch of me was spared.

People rushed to my side to help but there was nothing they could do. Medical care was limited and the best medications did little to ease the agony.

I wasn't sure I could survive the suffering. Worse, nobody could tell me how long such agony would last. Doctors gently gave me the news that although my physical self would heal, the disfigurement would remain for life.

My family, friends, and coworkers no longer recognized me. I no longer recognized myself.

At first, doing little things like sitting up in bed were so excruciating they took my breath away. The mere thought of eating, bathing, and dressing left me feeling helpless and hopeless.

Pity and sadness were apparent in the eyes of everyone who came to my side. I understood the sadness but hated the pity. Why on God's

green earth was I spared the peace of death?

Learning to live with complete disfigurement and extreme pain is overwhelming. Excruciatingly slow and exhausting, it takes years of great effort to master what were once basic activities. Some days I hurt too bad to even try.

When out in public I pretend to be normal to ease the discomfort of others who are brave enough to approach me. Those who avoid me merely add further angst to my broken spirit. Pretending to be normal is exhausting and quickly depletes all my reserves. By the time I finish errands and return home, I'm utterly spent.

Worst of all, there is absolutely nothing that I nor anyone else can do about it.

For you see, that complete disfigurement and intolerable pain described above is on the inside of my body. The pain is unchanged, the disfigurement is still complete, the scars permanent. The new life thrust upon me that day when my child died caused a firestorm that engulfed every part of my life. The only differences between me and the patient who suffered third degree burns over her entire body is that I lived. And my pain is invisible to the world.

Welcome to the life of a grieving mother.