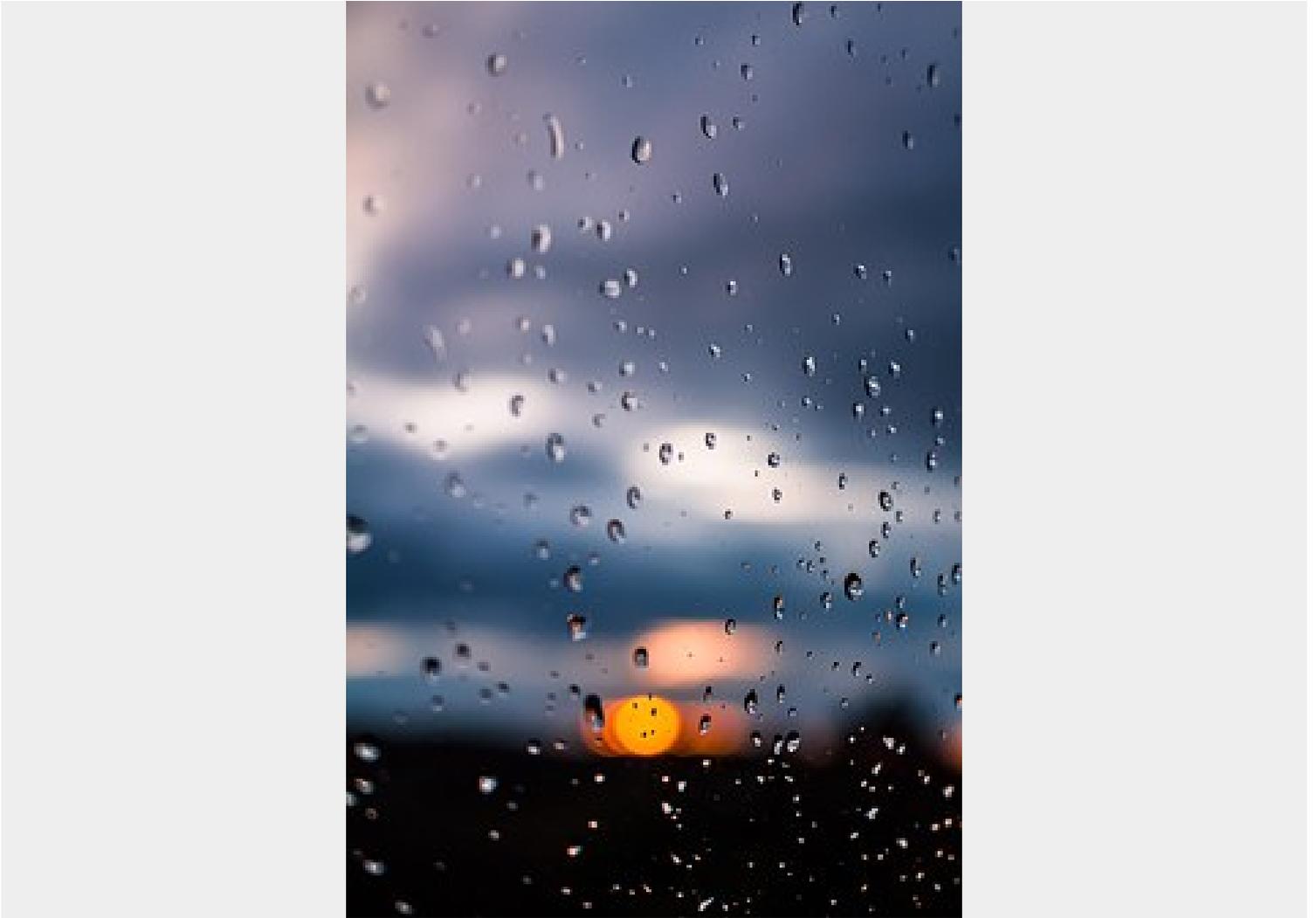


LIVING FORWARD IN LIGHT

Posted on January 14, 2018 by Jennifer Stern, LISW



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Living forward in light is the act of mindfully caring for yourself while grieving. Allowing yourself to feel the many intense, gutting, numbing and complex feelings of grief while still finding ways to recognize and let light in. Living forward in light is not denying or minimizing loss, serving up platitudes or rushing to "get over" what can never be "gotten over". Actively looking for ways to live with grief, to live with sorrow, to actually live in a world we could never have imagined without our loved ones in it (and to do so without becoming defined or limited by our grief) is not done to minimize or dismiss the true, and at times enveloping powers of grief, nor is it done to make others feel more comfortable with our grief, it is the powerful act of learning to live with duality. We will always carry the pain of loss *and* the potential of living a meaningful life within us. Each sacred in their own. At times blended and at times compartmentalized but always present. Each person vacillates in their own way between the need, the intense draw, to be in grief and the instinctual need to live forward, to integrate the loss, and to try and find comfort, healing, connection, and purpose once again. Not because we are "getting over" or avoiding but because we are here. Life continues on in spite of us, our hearts, our suffering, our needs and wishes for life to return as it once was. So we must find a way to live with grief. To live forward. This is not the work of rainbows and butterflies, but that does not mean that in our darkness we can not stop to appreciate the beauty of rainbows and butterflies, to be aware on a cellular level that even in our darkest despair there is beauty still. This perspective is not fluff, this perspective can be as necessary as air. Life pulls us forward in spite of ourselves (just as it robs us of love that we so cherish). There are no true steps to follow, there is no timeline, no roadmap, no recipe or magic to grief work. It is experiential and personal and unpredictable. Grief is messy. We are left with the shattered remains of our life and we must find a way to rebuild. It will be different. There will be sharp edges, fractured seams, gaping holes but there will also be familiar pieces that fit, new connections made, greater depth realized. Some pieces will get lost and others discovered, ultimately there will be a different representation of what *together* and *whole* looks like, as it is now. Loss does not happen so that we can grow, become stronger or more compassionate. Loss does not happen so that we learn to live life with greater awareness, appreciation, gratitude or purpose. But loss does happen. Loss guts us. Loss brings us to our knees. Loss disorients us. Loss takes away what we want most and sticks us into the abyss of the unknown, deep grief. We do not get to choose if, how or when but I do believe we can choose how we endure our pain and devastation. We can choose to live forward with a resilient heart and an open mind. This is not the silver lining of grief and loss (there isn't one) but this is an option, a possibility, a grief goal, to carry our loved ones with us as we move through the trenches of deep grief to the life that awaits us. Yes, this life will most certainly be different, challenging and scary but it can also be beautiful, meaningful and purposeful in a different way (not because of our loss but because of our life). We are living. So yes, I believe that we can become transformed by our grief. I believe we can rise from the depths of our sorrows. I believe we can endure immense suffering. I believe we can feel our sorrow without letting ourselves become defined by that sorrow. I am a woman, a wife, a mother, a sister, a friend, an orphan, a grieving daughter, granddaughter, cousin, niece, friend. I am a therapist, a writer, a nature lover, a cook and

baker, a gardner and a pragmatic realist who lives with a heart of measured optimism. I am not my grief. I do believe a quote can create space in my thinking for a new and different perspective. I do believe a walk in nature can remind us of the beauty that surrounds us in our darkness. I do believe that positive and productive self-talk can gently push us forward. I do believe in, and find comfort in, the sacredness of co-destiny, believing that our loved ones can continue to have meaningful impact on the world through our choices and how we live forward. I do believe in the power of positivity (not as a means to deny, avoid, dismiss, sugar coat or placate) but as a way to endure. I much prefer to drive through a storm with my lights on (It doesn't take away or lessen the intensity of the storm but it does give me a sense of security that I will get through it). It is my belief that living forward in light, tending to grief while embracing life, is the way, my way, through the storm that is grief.

Comments



Jennifer Stern, LISW - 2018-01-16 11:49:35

You can, you are, and you will continue to weather this storm of grief. Take good care and thank you for supporting my work.



Diane Tear - 2018-01-14 22:14:24

Jennifer, As always, your posts are truly powerful! Your analogy of grief being the storm that we endure, yet moving through it with a sense of positiveness-light-hope, helps me to see that I can weather this storm of grief. Thank you for sharing your gift of insight.