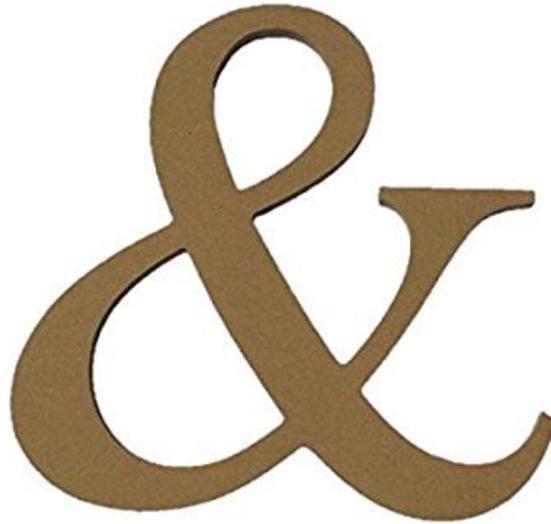


# SORROW AND JOY

*Posted on November 30, 2018 by Jennifer Stern, LISW*



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Duality. It is most certainly possible to feel two things at once, even sorrow and joy.

I was born to a woman who taught me by example to hold sorrow and joy. My twin brother and I were born one month after our Dad died suddenly of a heart attack. Our Mom knew sorrow yet she chose joy, laughter, and everything in between.

On the first day of my senior year of college the phone rang, it was my Mom she had been diagnosed with a Glioblastoma. She began treatment while I finished my senior year. I graduated college and moved home to honor her wishes, for her to die at home surrounded by family and close friends. This time would be gifted time. It was filled with more sorrow and more joy than I knew possible. We laughed, we cried, we talked, we planned, we reminisced, we joked, and we grieved. We were deeply connected in our sorrow and in our joy.

Soon after she died I moved to Chicago to pursue my masters degree in social work. It was there that I met and fell in love with my husband one year after she died. Our wedding was joyful, love- filled, celebratory, and yet, along with immense joy, I knew deep sorrow. I missed my Mom and wished she were beside me. I would feel this duality profoundly at the births of our children.

The concept of duality is familiar to those who are grieving. At any moment one can feel deep sorrow and also authentic love, joy, even hope. You are here. You are alive. Whenever possible choose joy, choose hope.

When you lose someone you love, someone you respect, life becomes bittersweet forevermore. Your work, your daily practice, is to feel and acknowledge the bitter while choosing and growing the sweet. This does not mean there won't be dark days. Dark days are normal and completely okay. Just don't get stuck in the darkness.

After all, the greatest way to honor your loved ones, your teachers, your friends, is to live forward in their light. Honoring their memory with love while creating new memories in their honor, on behalf of how they lived their lives. By choosing to live in such a way that their life, their values, continue to have meaningful impact on the world.

This is the legacy work of holding sorrow and joy. Their light continues to shine through your acts of kindness, compassion, self-care, and advocacy.

You have the ability to live with and hold both sorrow *and* joy. To grieve *and* to live. It is possible to feel sad, depleted, scared, overwhelmed and not give up. To continue to experience life, connection, love. To find and experience purpose and meaning.

It is important to acknowledge the duality in your life. To not be defined by or give power to any one emotion or experience. This allows you to create space in your thinking for what challenges and what carries you. This recognition, that life happens in the gray, can give you a greater sense of balance, the grace of acceptance, as well as gratitude for what IS good even as you struggle. This duality can

anchor you to your resilience, to your ability to hold both sorrow and joy.

You must never lose sight of hope even as you struggle. Hope is the reconciliation that the intense pain of deep grief is temporary even though the missing, remembering, loving and honoring is everlasting. Hope is the clarity that remaining in deep grief perpetuates suffering and that it is worth the effort to try and live forward with courage, strength, and faith in yourself and in your life. It is possible to feel more than sorrow, you are not your grief, you have the ability to carry your loved one's memory as you continue on.

Sorrow depletes, joy fuels. Self-care is essential for creating balance as you hold both.

Where do you find peace? How do you self soothe? Is it through prayer? Is it losing yourself in nature? Journaling? Work? Do you feel comfort when getting a massage or reiki? Do you find respite in meditation, exercise or dance?

Take a moment and think of something you can do each day to take care of yourself. To self soothe. To buffer your pain and sorrow.

For me nature provides great respite. I find comfort and security in the order of nature. Nature is restorative, reminding me of our ability to change, adapt, grow, transform. Nature reflects back our inherent resilience.

Positive remembrance is an integral part to living forward through grief, for remembering well, for integrating loss and honoring the love, for holding sorrow and joy.

### **There are many ways to remember:**

Scrap booking

Legacy writing

Contributions made in your loved ones honor

Enjoying their favorite foods, rituals, music

The holidays can hold both sorrow and joy for those we love and wish were here. Making their recipes and honoring their traditions can bring comfort as well as a deeper sense of connection. Sharing memories while creating new memories is bittersweet yet so very meaningful.

Self-care, positive remembrance, recognizing the power of duality and holding onto hope helps us to accept sorrow as a companion, not a barrier to, joy.

## Comments



**Jennifer Stern, LISW** - 2018-12-04 11:49:10

Diane, Your strength and commitment to finding joy in every day is inspiring. Thank you for sharing. It takes great strength, grace and courage to live forward through grief, making each day the best it can be.



**Diane Mars** - 2018-12-04 02:54:01

So much of what you said ,it home. My son died from a massive heart attack at 43. I also lost a brother to a brain tumor in 2007 at 64 years old. I was taught in Grief Counseling' and Parents Support Group, to find the Joy in every day life which I honestly say that I have done. Some days it is harder than others. I keep busy and I said from that first day, I was going to try to make each day the best it can be. Thank you for your wonderful story and to look for Joy♥



**Jennifer Stern, LISW** - 2018-12-01 02:36:49

Monica, It is more than okay for you to experience joy....never apologize for living forward and for believing in the possibility of living in joy.



**Monica Carter** - 2018-11-30 18:13:34

Thank you Jennifer! This definitely hit home with me these past few days, as you are aware. Thank you. I know now that it is ok for me to experience joy along with my grief and sorrow. For 3 weeks I had such great joy and I will not apologize for feeling this way. Because that's all it was JOY!! Thank you again!