

TO LOVE AGAIN?

Posted on December 27, 2018 by Jennifer Stern, LISW



The choice to open yourself to love again is personal. What feels right one day may not the next. Just know that if you choose to open your heart to another it is not cheating on your spouse or partner. They are gone and nothing can or will change this truth. Not loneliness and not connection.

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There is no timeline, no right or wrong, no *too soon*, no *should*, *shouldn't* or *ought to* when it comes to deciding if (ever) you are ready to open yourself up to the idea of dating after the death of a partner. The primal need to connect, to give and receive love is natural. The meaningful experience of being seen, heard, valued and considered beyond your grief. The intoxicating excitement of an unanticipated look or touch, of engaging in playful banter, of feeling connection...if you feel you are ready, lean in. If you do not, don't.

Companionship and connection can come from many places...work, hobbies, exercise, support groups, places of worship, volunteering, classes, clubs, friends and family. You may never feel comfortable with dating again and that is okay. There is no pressure to do so. Trust and honor yourself.

Just know that any relationship that may develop moving forward is not replacing or diminishing the love you shared in any way. It is completely separate. You are alive. Your loved one died. You are here and deserve to live a happy, healthy, connected life full of love and companionship (whatever that might look like). Our hearts have the capacity for great love. Love that is not replaceable or even comparable but felt in unique and special ways. The love you shared remains protected, untouched, in time.

Only you can decide if you are ready to explore the possibility of dating. There will be plenty of opinions but none matter more than your own. Only you know what you need. What makes your life meaningful, satisfying and fun.

Some find solace in solitary remembrance, of filling the silence with family and friends, and that is enough for them. However, some find the loneliness unbearable and the need for companionship, for touch, moves them forward in a different and unexpected direction. There is no one path that is right for everyone.

It is healthy to live forward. To honor your needs, whatever they might be. A platonic companion for movies, concerts, travel. A connection rooted in shared religion, faith, service. An opportunity to love and be loved deeply when time welcomes emotional and physical intimacy.

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Life is meant to be lived. How you choose to live yours is personal. Honor and trust yourself to know what is best for you.

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