

SHARING JOY AND GRIEF

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I have found that over the last few years, as I get older, I tend to reminisce a lot more. I think about things I see my son or daughters experience, remembering a similar experience in my life. I can relate to the excitement of playing a baseball game under lights, and the disappointment of a game rained out. I remember the joy of getting a car, the fun of being in college, the stress of having three classes all give tests the same week, and the enjoyment of spending time with friends.

I am thankful for the things that bring joy to my life. I recently had a friend that welcomed a new baby girl to her and her husband's home. It is wonderful to celebrate that with them, sharing in the joy they have in their life. I have also had the chance to celebrate the marriage of a daughter to a fine young man. There is joy seeing the happiness of the couple. There is also joy seeing the father satisfied with the new phase in his daughter's life.

But there are also times that I experience the other end of the spectrum. Yesterday I called a friend because his wife passed away after a long battle with cancer. I didn't have any sort of wise words to share, I just wanted him to know that I shared in his grief. He wasn't hurting alone.

I learned the importance of this about a decade ago. My wife and I suffered a tragedy, and the initial grief was so intense that the thing that brought comfort was not bible verses or spiritual sayings, but people letting us know how much they hurt with us. My wife and I have often talked about that period, making sure we respond in a similar way when people are dealing with difficult circumstances.

As I try to evaluate the things that are important in my life, they usually revolve around the people I know and the relationships I have with them. Even in my job, the rewarding part is not all of the research or educational programs I conduct. It is the opportunity to work with friends and meet people across the state and nation. There is always room for a new friend in my life.

What is the point of this article? I'm not really sure – maybe it's just me writing to help deal with the sorry I feel for my friend's loss. But it is helping me remember that we should be thankful for our friends. Share in their joy, because knowing someone is truly happy for you increases joy. But also share in grief. Letting someone know that you hurt with them helps lessen the pain. And when you really think about what is important in life, relationships are just about all you have.