Losing a Loved One

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Exploring Grief

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Loss is something you don't know how to deal with until it is experienced firsthand. Everyone in their life will eventually experience a loss, whether it be big or small. However, the loss is something no one can prepare you for. In my life, I have experienced a couple of losses in my family. The most prevalent loss to me was the loss of my grandfather. My grandfather was one of my best friends and a big role model in my life.

When I lost my grandfather, it was like time stood still. On February 19th, 2020, I got the call that my grandfather was not doing well and was in the hospital. This was not an unexpected call; he had been not doing well for a couple of months and was in and out of the hospital for different problems. It felt different this time though, I remember sitting in my anatomy lab class staring at the bones thinking to myself that from this moment on everything would be different. I prayed all day, asking God to just let him live a little bit longer to say goodbye, to let me tell him what he meant to me. No one had to tell me that night, that he was gone. I just knew. I sat in my dorm room and just cried. Unsure of the future, unsure of how it would shift my family, and unsure of what life would now look like without him. I spent hours crying, laughing, and on the phone with my family. For the next few days, I felt like it was not real, since he lived in New Jersey it was easy to pretend that he was still alive. I try suppressing it and pretending he was still here, so I did. I was able to live in this denial for a couple of days until it was time for his funeral. This is when I started feeling angry, I was angry at my dad for not telling me sooner that he was going to the hospital, I was angry at my grandpa, I was angry at myself. I felt angry because I felt like I was prevented from saying goodbye. I never got to say the last I love you and I was angry that I never got goodbye and everyone else did. With the anger I felt, I remember bargaining with myself. It was my freshman year of college, so I never called as much as I used to and wasn't able to see him as much as I would have liked to have. I thought to myself so often

“What if I just called more, instead of going to parties with my friends?”, “What if instead of a trip for my enjoyment, I went to spend time with him?”. Questioning what if I had done things differently, would I have gotten a goodbye. My friends and family were all there to support me whether that be late-night ice cream runs, rants about how sad I was, or just sitting there while crying. Even now I still have friends that help me. A couple of weeks ago, when we were in the renal unit of medsurg I had a mental breakdown because it all reminded me of my grandfather. I sat in the car with my friend for a couple of hours, as he comforted me and reminded me of all the good. Small moments like that have been so important in my grieving process.

I think I have been suppressing his death for a while now, and it truly was not until I took this class did, I really accept his death. This semester I learned so much about the phases of grief, it made me have a deeper understanding of the emotions I was feeling as well as how to cope with those emotions when I feel them. I think moving forward as a nurse, by me having a better understanding of what it looks like to go through the stages of grief and so I can help the families around me learn to grieve after they leave my care. I also think by learning how different types of cultures react to death and grief was an important lesson to have learned. Going forward with nursing I will experience many types of cultures and when the time comes, I now feel like I will be better equipped to handle another culture’s process with death and better aid them in beginning their own personal grieving process.

Grief is not a simple process; it is long and it is hard. Losing a loved one will never be easy, and it will never look the same for everyone. I finally realized that it is okay to miss the loved ones you have lost, it is okay to feel sad sometimes, but I finally came to terms with that they are gone and I am content with the fact that hopefully, they are in a better place.

References

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