

THE NEED TO MOURN
By Diana Kerievsky, LCSWR

The theme of the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy's conference on 9/11 concerned itself with transforming grief and fear into pathways of healing and wholeness. While reflecting on the title I recalled the biblical statement "blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:3) I considered what this meant. It seems that mourning is a universal and inevitable process. We grieve for the loss of our loved one and we grieve for ourselves. Not only do we encounter feelings of loss and abandonment; at the same time we become more aware of our own sense of mortality. The existentialists call it "the dread of non-being."

So how does mourning lead to comfort? First we have to know that mourning is a sacred time. It initially allows us to react to the shock of our loss in a variety of unique ways. Once our reactive, emotive stage has vented itself, we then have the opportunity to turn within and reflect on the meaning and effect of the loss. Mourning is about giving up something very important to us. It is a process of letting go of our attachments, be they person, place, thought or thing. Some of us defend against attachment. But this mode of being is avoidance. So it seems that to be attached or to avoid it is the same coin, only opposite sides.

If attachment leads to pain...and avoidance leads to isolation, what's a mourner to do?

Thomas Hora developed 11 principles to live by. The first one states "Thou shall have no other interests (attachments) before the good of God, which is spiritual blessedness." This tells us that when we become attached to persons, places, things and ideas, we tend to lose sight of God. {Hora defines God as a cosmic principle which manifests in the world as Love and Intelligence.} We may want to consider that these objects, like our loved ones, are "symbolic structures" that point to what really is. These symbols can represent a multitude of existentially valid values such as love, beauty, harmony, joy, transcendence, abundance, truth, etc. In the chapter on Enlightenment in his book "Beyond the Dream," Hora states that "Problems in human experiences arise from unwittingly confusing symbolic structures with Reality."

So in our mourning and grieving process we need to become aware that material life is ever evolving and manifesting in new forms and that the essential life force is neither form nor formless, but dynamic, eternal and immutable. The path of mourning can lead us to comfort when we come to realize that we are merely "beholders." Not doers. Hora tells us that we need to come to see ourselves as "individual, non-dimensional units of awareness, a beneficial presence in the world who is here for God." In order to enhance this awareness he recommends that we meditate on the "4 W's." "Who am I? What am I? Where am I? and What is my purpose?"

"I must leave you in order for the comforter to come." (John 16:7) Jesus must have realized that some disciples began to rely upon his physical presence and that that could be preventing their realizing that God's love was always available in spite of the comfort of his presence. This is the most difficult thing for all of us to realize. We tend to rely on and receive comfort from, the physical presence of our loved ones or even those we hate or feel hated by, to the extent that both feeling liked and or hated can confirm our sense of existing in the world.

I suspect that Jesus knew that the physical form in which he was embodied was an energetic body state, a "symbolic structure," a manifestation of divine beauty, love & intelligence. The meaning of its disappearance is that ultimately these symbolic structures are here to point the way to the ever-present, ever-manifesting principles of joy, abundance, truth, kindness, generosity and love.

Mourning is a solitary and sacred process where life teaches us that the only thing that we can allow ourselves to become attached to are spiritual values. In the end, or sooner or later, we need to come to learn that "what we want and what we don't want;" "what we think should be and shouldn't be;" "what we cherish hate and fear" are in reality all illusory and self-confirmatory ideation, which only serves to ward off existential anxiety and the "dread of non-being." The mourning process needs to begin now. We need to remind ourselves on a daily basis that our loved ones are not here for us; that they do not belong to us, that we cannot possess them. This is not an easy task, but somewhere in consciousness we need to acknowledge this reality. In this way we continuously work on "letting go and letting God." This means that we need to affirm that we are all here for God and that God works through us all, if we let It.

Plato reminds us that material phenomena are inherently ideas. Dr. Hora tells us that what we see in the material world is the One Mind manifesting in myriad ways, which points back to the source of all love and intelligence. Perhaps the Zen Koan states it best when it says: "we are not what we seem to be, but neither are we otherwise."

Finally, in Genesis we learn that Jacob is in the wilderness and frightened. Having nothing: -- not even a pillow to rest his head. Upon laying down he dreams that he sees a ladder with angels going up and coming down and God sitting at the top of the ladder. "When Jacob, awakes," he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." (Genesis 28:16)

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