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Grief: How It Controls Lives

Everyone has gone through some type of transformation because of a situation. My family has gone through multiple situations, but one stands out from the rest. My father's passing on April 6, 2007 changed my family's lives forever and it has had an enormous impact on what will happen for the rest of our lives.

My father had his first seizure in 1995 when my mom was pregnant with my older sister. On my dad's 35th birthday in 1998, I was born. When I was in elementary school, he had multiples seizures from benign meningioma (non-cancerous brain tumors). He kept going to the hospital to have surgeries to remove those tumors, but they kept growing back. His returns home stopped when he had to stay in the hospital. My mom, my sister, and I visited him a lot. My grandparents started coming over since they knew they needed to help my mom to take care of her two young children. Then, on April 6, 2007, everything changed.

On that day, my grandmother was taking care of my sister and I while my grandfather and my mom went to the hospital. That day felt normal until my mom and grandfather did not come home until later. I was wondering why they were gone for so long, but I was naïve. I thought my mom was out getting presents after her trip to the hospital. Finally, when my mom and grandfather came home there were no presents in their hands. I was sad and confused. My mom came up to my sister and I and then told us that our dad had died. My sister and I were confused and we both cried. Grief was now going to start to take over our lives.

My Mother's Grief

My mom was the powerhouse of the family. After the news of my father's/her husband's death, she knew she had to be strong for her two children. She was struggling to work, take care of us, and do anything else she had to do. She sacrificed everything she had for my sister and I.

Marion Woodman, a Jungian Analyst in Toronto, is an author of many books. One of her books, *The Pregnant Virgin: A Process of Psychological Transformation*, speaks about how everybody has many thoughts, and how many people go through transformations. According to Woodman, "a woman whose survival is thus tied to the masculine spirit has unconsciously sacrificed her femininity to what she believes is the best in life" (40). My mom had to take on a masculine role, and lose her femininity to work through all the problems that my family faced. She had to make our breakfast, lunch, and dinner; clean the house; wake up early to go to a low-paying job and to come home late exhausted; and take care of everything that needed to be taken care of. In "On the Fear of Death," Elisabeth Kübler-Ross explains,

A husband and wife may have been fighting for years, but when the partner dies, the survivor will pull his hair, whine and cry louder and beat his chest in regret, fear and anguish, and will hence fear his own death more than before, still believing in the law of talion—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—'I am responsible for her death, I will have to die a pitiful death in retribution.' (144-145)

My mom had a tough time processing the death of her husband. Her entire world turned around, making her suffer even more. Having my mom suffer made me feel so heartbroken.

My Sister's Grief

Like many daughters, my sister was “daddy’s girl.” With the loss of our father, she did not know how to grieve. She was in denial, like our mom. She may have been angry as Woodman explains: “If healing is to take place, she must not act like a gentlemen; she must not try to understand why he is abandoning her. She is angry and her rage is killer-rage and killer-jealousy that needs an acceptance channel” (45). My sister could have felt abandoned since mostly every father sees their girl grow up to be an amazing woman, but my sister will never get the chance to have our dad see that. Through the years, however, she has grown up to be a smart woman. Nonetheless, she is still looking to fill the void that our father once filled. In “Bless Me, Father” by Leroy V. Quintana, he explains how “there is still a hole in [his] life where a guided father should have been” (141). Quintana did not have a great relationship with his stepfather, so he never really had a great bond with his father to fill that void. My sister only has some memories from when she was a small child to fill that “hole,” but it is not enough to feel complete. Her life without a dad is hard for her.

My Grief

Being the only male in the household was a challenge. When my mom told my sister and I that our dad had died, I was not as sad as my family since I did not really understand death. I also did not remember much about my father. It was still hard for me to process though since he was still my father. Everybody expected me to be the “masculine, macho guy” that men usually are, but with growing up with females, I did not really have an interest in what guys usually do. I was more of a “feminine guy.” Marion Woodman explains exactly how I feel in *The Pregnant Virgin: A Process of Psychological Transformation* by saying,

The ‘mother’s son,’ for example, so vulnerable to feeling guilty that he is not ‘better,’ or ‘more manly’ or ‘more capable,’ thinks automatically of pleasing the women in his life. He may believe that is how he feels, but it is not true feeling. It is thinking contaminated by the mother complex. It is sheer sentimentality, a plea to be loved, and, whether it is answered or not, it breeds resentment because it puts all the power in the hands of the woman. (156-157)



I soon found out that I was grieving, but in an unique way than how most people grieve. I was releasing my emotions through dance. I started to use my hurt to dance even more, but then people started making fun of

me. I tried to stop dancing so people would not make fun of me, but I became out of control. I started doing crazy things and I ended up in a mental institution. My behavioral problems were not just from the hurt, though. I also found out that I liked guys, which changed my entire view on the world. I did not like who I was and I could not tell my family that I liked guys. I felt like I was disappointing myself, God, and most importantly, my family. Keeping my emotions of liking guys with the mixture of my grief landed me in the mental institution for my second time within the same year. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross explains, “Pediatricians have less work with acute and life-threatening situations as they have an ever-increasing number of patients with psychosomatic disturbances and adjustment and behavior problems” (143). I got out of the institution with new medication, my dancing came back, and when I told my friends about liking guys, I felt great again. I felt like I could be myself.

Grief Is Everywhere

There are many stories that I can relate to my family's life about grief. Some examples are *The Bible*, the publication of "Cinderella" by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, and the myth of Theseus and Aegeus.

In the book of "Job" in *The Bible*, the Lord and Satan test Job, who is a wealthy man, by taking away everything of his, including his animals and children. He grieved tremendously when this all happened. Job explained, "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas—no wonder my words have been impetuous" (*The Story of God Holy Bible*, Job 6:2-3). Job ended up trusting in the Lord, and became a patient person. He was tested harshly, but ended with an amazing ending. This relates to my family since my family grieved, but we started to go to Real Life Church. We then were baptized, trusting God with our lives.



According to "Cinderella" from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, the mother of Cinderella died and then the father went off to go to the fair once again. Cinderella did many chores for the family, and went to the tree near her house every day to grieve. This is like my family and how we transformed. My dad is like Cinderella's mother by dying. My mother is a mix of the father and Cinderella since both characters work hard. We are also all similar to Cinderella by grieving from a death.

My family's grieving is also similar to the myth of Theseus and Aegeus. Aethra and Aegeus were together when Aethra became pregnant with a boy (Theseus), but Aethra was also the lover of Poseidon. Aegeus always wanted a son, but he wanted to make sure it was his, so he had a plan to leave Aethra alone with the child until he was old enough to look for his father. If Theseus could find those signs, then it would prove that Aegeus was the father. When Theseus turned that age, he proved he was the son of Aegeus. Later on Theseus sailed to Knossos to fight a bull to avenge his father. The father agreed, but only if the black sails on the ship were changed coming home to white to say that Theseus was still alive. When the ship came back, the crew forgot to change the sails to white, and Aegeus noticed that the sails were still black, so he killed himself, not knowing that Theseus was still alive. Theseus took his father's throne in Athens and



ruled wisely ("Theseus"). This is somehow similar to my family since Aegeus was grieving when he thought Theseus died. Also, Theseus tried to be an amazing ruler like his father, and I am trying to be like my father.

Grief is a huge transformation. My family has lost my father, and recently, my grandfather. Without grief and sadness, people would be like robots: lost and without feeling. Transformation is amazing, especially when people least expect it. I am glad that I got to see my family transform from this. My family became closer, and I hope everybody's families come closer together from grief, or even transformation alone.



Liezel Marie's "Are You Ready?" Colaboratoria 2016 Dance Family



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