

Making My Way with Grief

Category: Coping

written by Barbara Felton | August 8, 2022

I make my way with grief. Our son Max died by suicide eight years ago. Quickly deciding against suicide for myself, I've found ways to cope.

I do twenty push-ups each morning, dedicating them to Max and using the physical pain to exorcise the emotional pain. I began this ritual soon after Max died, when I would start in on my day oblivious to the pain lying in wait beneath my sleep-refreshed, early-morning optimism. Then, at some moment, maybe hours later, I'd remember that Max was dead and double over in grief.

Beginning my day with Max headed off that nasty surprise. And physical exercise seemed the perfect honor for Max, whom many believed to be wild and impulsive, but whom I know to have marshalled gut-level discipline to get through his days.

I picture his beefy biceps, forever 31 years old, as I struggle through my elderly version of push-ups. I talk to him, yell at him, tell him I love him. To me, the key is to keep loving him, living with the odd intermixture of daily joys and ongoing pain that is my life.

It's a good-enough life.

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