

Life Of Death



When my mom died (Jan 19, 2012), I was exposed to death as never before.

The passing of Robin Williams bubbled those feeling to the surface and I felt the need to share my heart on this topic that we all share.

Sharing is the best medicine in helping emotional wounds to heal, and so, I would like to share with you her last days of life and how our private journey slammed into my soul.

The week before the last moment, I received a phone call from my dad that mom was not doing good and in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the hospital. This was the first I had heard she was not healthy, enjoying life.

I flew down that night (from WA to CA) and arrived at my parents' house as soon as my feet/time/finances could carry me.

For the next four days, I spent time with my dad, only sibling (brother) and my mom, roller coasting from the house to the hospital. The emotional/physical toll was a landslide destroying everyone before my eyes. My dad had already spent weeks on that ride without worrying us.

Because of the stresses, my dad could no longer make the journey and my brother bravely stepped up to stay at the house and support our dad. Both of their hearts shredded to pieces with very little energy left.

Because I had already come to terms with what was happening, I built up protective scar tissue on the emotional parts of mine. And so, on the 5th day, I drove to the hospital on my own, internally promising myself not to leave again, and see my mom to her end.

I arrived at the room to find mom continuing her journey from vibrant spark of the world, to a dimmed bulb preparing to turn off.

Except for walking the five feet to the bathroom and twice going to the food court for some food, mom and I were together every moment for the next three days. At one moment, this really sinking in when I heard the nurse outside the room exclaim to a new nurse coming on duty "and in this room is this patient, and her son who NEVER leaves". She really emphasized the word 'never' and at that word, I realized what I morphed into.

The first of the last three days had moments of consciousness and a few glimmers of my mom still shined through. Which was amazing, as the amount of drugs (mostly pain killers) being pumped into her would make any chemical junky feel euphoria. Since she didn't experiment with

drugs, I can only imagine the power they had on her brain cells and the psychedelic colors that must have been firing off in her memory nerves.

One single humorous moment came when I was massaging her feet to help with the pain. After hours of massaging, I stopped to crinkle my fingers and release the joint tension built up. I looked up to the top of the bed, and my mom was looking directly at me. She pointed to her feet and very clearly stated "FEET!". I responded with "yes, mom", beaming with a big smile as I could give her pleasure in the midst of the storm. I honored her wishes and continued.

As the 3rd day bled over into the 2nd to last, the verbal interactions changed from small short infrequent sentence exchanges, to only responding (sometimes) with "oops". This would happen when I would take the stuffed giraffe, I had bought her, and snuggle it against her face, and she would then look at the plush thing, back at my face and exclaim "oops" and smile. I then realized that the giraffe's name was now to be "oops" and later come to know how special that inanimate object would become.

Mid-way into the 2nd to last day, my mom was no longer awake and clearly her body was beginning its final shut-down. A doctor confirmed this by changing his statement from the day before, where he had said "you know, no one knows when the end is", to now being "it is close, you should say your goodbyes".

During the next hours, I could see through the door-frame, other families with other people dying, moving in/out of the ICU. At one point, there was a group of family members near the room next to ours, it included some kids, one of them being a daughter. I would guess her age about 16/17. Her mom was slipping before mine and soon slipped away. The screams/whaling of that family verified the status of their mom. The teenage daughter stating "I can't lose my mom, I need my mom".

Through my life, as I hit valleys of bad things, I have tried (not always succeeding) to look down to help myself deal with those situations. I strongly believe that if you look down more than up, you make it easier to be content with your life. Looking up at a person with more money makes you want more, but, looking down upon a person with less, makes you cherish the level you are at. When I get physical issues, I think of those with worse off bodies and become thankful for at least having what I do/have had.



There was a moment about 16 years ago when my current 17 year old middle child was one year old. I was getting sick/tired all of the time and knew something was up. I finally went to the doctor and for a time, they thought I had lymphoma. They told my mom (not me), that I had 6 months to live. I looked at my life. I was 30, had two kids now, was able to get married, which is more than many other people. How could I be angry or discontent with being knocked down at 30? This helped me to focus on others and what their needs might be when I was gone. They took a large portion of my neck out to diagnose how far it was, etc., only to find out that it was 'cat scratch fever' and that I could be cured easily. Hence, I am here today to be able to share with you.

I became fixated on the machines hooked to monitor her vital signs. The heart monitor and breathing screens became hypnotizing as I watched both go up/down, show signs of improvement, then back to visually proving things were bad.

Near the end of the day before the end, the doctor came in for a short talk. Up to this point, the nurses/doctors/etc. had come to see me as a fixture and that I was solely focused on her with no energy for conversations/interactions. He very distinctly let me know that watching the numbers/dots move did her nor me any good and that it would not change the outcome. He added that it also fed me false hope when they went up. A suggestion of turning them off, as I and they no longer needed to monitor, was provided. I agreed and the modern tools lost their power and no longer joined me in watching over her.

I held her hand most of the time, sometimes laying my head on her chest, moving her arm over my head/neck, in the pretending that my mom was actually reaching out and letting me know she was still there and helping to support my supporting of her.

Her body grew more lifeless and I watched the signs of a person losing grasp with the living. Her head would continue to tilt off to the side, her mouth would start to droop, and the aura of her being was fading before me.

The last day is pretty much a blur of those same moments, hand holding, fake arm hugging, watching her body drift.

At the end of the last day, she made a very long exhaling breath, one that filled the room, my head and what felt like the world. There was a nurse just outside the door, and my peripheral vision could see her turn and observe me and my mom. Even though I had never been in this situation before, I knew the look on that nurse's face.

I went up to my mom's face, felt her nose and chest. There was nothing.



I hugged her tight, laid my head on her chest one last time, in acknowledgement that she fought the battle and now could rest.

Again, I could see the nurse to the side, this time she was waiting to verify. She moved over to us, took her measurements and wrote down the time of death.

Well, there you have it. My personal journey of having death in my life.

We each have ways of expressing our most inner emotions. Mine is to doodle (almost every day) and share those with others.

My mom died on Jan 19, 2012. The first doodle I could manage to get out was on Jan 25, 2012 called "My Mom Died".

Seeing my state of mind and how I needed to force myself to look down once again, I made another doodle the next day called "Even though, I keep happy".

And as my reflection continued, my next doodle came out called "Wonder About Life".

That is my medicine, my mechanism of sharing and continues to this day. Each day at lunch, I sit down with paper and thoughts, create what hits my mind for the day and share.

To you, the reader/viewer of my world, thank you for being part of my medicine, for joining me in my journeys.

I know we all will experience death during our life. It is my hope that by sharing my personal anguish, that you realize you are not alone, that death is a part of life, and that if you look down, it may give you the strength to continue on with the possibility of not only honoring those that we lose, but, allowing ourselves to enjoy what we have and cherish those moments where life may actually be good and maybe even smile, laugh from time to time.

I held onto that giraffe non-stop for a couple days, but, finally found times when I could lay it down and build up my strength to live. Today, it sits in a glass cabinet, looking at me with those "oops" eyes each day I walk past. I take it out from time to time to cherish my mom.

With sincerest appreciation for YOU, I end my story. I would love if you shared yours.

Here are links to the three doodles mentioned:

My Mom Died: <http://timeforyourmind.com/davesArt/tfymArtIndex-34.htm>

Even Though I Keep Happy: <http://timeforyourmind.com/davesArt/tfymArtIndex-28.htm>

Wonder About Life: <http://timeforyourmind.com/davesArt/tfymArtIndex-26.htm>

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