

## ONE LIFE

A recent life event has me feeling vulnerable, torn open and exposed.

When you are 10 years old you think 30 is ancient. Over time, as one ages, the number that appears ancient changes, and I discovered that at 52, 72 was too young and far too early for a person to leave behind their wife, daughter, sons, and grandchildren. Yet Dad and God had different plans, and so that is exactly what Dad did. Peacefully, in his sleep, no goodbyes lingering over a weakened worn out body, or on fragile lips as he breathed his last breath. No prior warning that his time was soon to end.

My relationship with my dad was close. He was the one I shared my life with, and even though he didn't always support my decisions or choices, he was still a safe haven I could share with. Sunday was our chat day, as I write this two Sundays have gone by and with each I found myself wanting to dial up dad and say "hello! Do you have the right ear?" (Our little amusement since he received his pacemaker last year.) Then once the phone was on the "right" ear, I would carry on and share with him how the most influential person in my life was gone. He would listen, and eventually turn the subject to something that would make us laugh. Dad was not big on emotions, he had them, understood them, just didn't dwell on them. Anger and laughter were probably his biggest releases of emotion during his whole life. I am not sure if I ever saw him cry, a tear might form in his eye for me to witness but that was the extent.

I know in my heart, and my mind grasps it as well, that he is in a far better place, and he is free. With time, the sense of loss, the ache I feel, and the tears that silently slip down my cheeks will ease. Yet the void in my life that is left by his passing, will forever remind me of how much I love him.

Dad's presence has not left me, it is like he is not here, but walking beside me at the same time. The signs he has given to me and to my daughter since his passing are proof that our loved ones don't really leave us, they truly are just a thought away.

During a hike with my daughter, son in law and husband, Dad came to me. His voice ringing clear and true in my ear "Live each moment to the fullest, Marlene. Get out and do stuff, explore and don't let fear stop you. If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much space!"

I had been home a week, when a message popped up on Facebook, "one life, no regrets." I knew dad was sending it to me. Supporting me, and letting me know that missing him was ok, but I had to live life as best I could, even during this time of loss.

You see the day of our death only comes once. We will not celebrate this day ever. Others left behind will mark this occasion. First with shock and sadness, then as time passes it will become another day on the calendar. A glass will be raised to honor you, by those left behind. Memories of the time spent together will surface and the gifts of self you bestowed upon the one raising the glass will be acknowledged, and cherished.

All the other days of our life are ours to celebrate, cherish, and make the best of. Each marks the passing of our human time. We should honor each and every one of them by making it the best we

possibly can. Make wonderful memories, not only for ourselves in later years, but for those whose will be left after we pass. Leave a mark that will be acknowledged, honored, and cherished. Not for the sake of one upping anyone, but for the sake of having lived life so completely you leave behind a legacy. A happy legacy. One that is rich enough and filled with enough laughter, that those grieving your passing, will have the memories to draw upon when a rough day hits them. A legacy of love, so that they may have a sense of peace wash over them for a moment, to ease their sorrow.

To have no regrets seems a tall order, for in life we will stumble, fall, take wrong turns and wonder why the hell we did what we did. We all make choices that, in the moment, seem perfectly valid and acceptable. Time might turn those choices into regrets, however it is up to us to realize that during the exact moment of their conception, they were valid. The trick to not having regrets is to make peace with them as soon as they arise.

We could debate, that with death, our regrets die as well, so why deal with them? To a degree I believe this, yet I feel that we carry them with us. While we might have clarity once we reach the other side, here on earth, during our human time, they rob us day after day, year after year of fully living life in each moment.

Part of having peace revolves around our choices. The top three regrets of dying people are; I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself – I wish I didn't work so hard – I wish I was brave enough to express my feelings.

As you can see each of these regrets can be changed by us. It might be hard to do the work of shifting them, but at the end of the day it will make a difference.

Part of knowing peace is to use our words. Ask questions when we don't understand something. Seek forgiveness if we hurt someone. Seek answers if someone is hurting us, find out what we have done to them, and get clarity so that we can heal. Far too often, it seems to me that those hurt or upset, talk to all and sundry about the person who done them wrong and never to the person. It becomes a matter of "being right" at the cost of never healing the issue and remaining the victim.

Perhaps the best way to have peace, is to know that everything is happening to *YOU*. It is being processed by you and your mind. It is not happening to anyone else in the exact way it is to you. This then means that we need to heal ourselves or that aspect of ourselves that is not being true, is working too hard, is lacking courage, is frustrated, irritated or hurt. At the end of the day all our experiences come from us.

Living life fully means to experience all the emotions a human can have. It means not holding onto the experiences that cause pain until you draw your last breath. It is about weighing the pros and cons, then determining if you can cast your fear aside and jump in with both feet. What is right for you, might not be right for others, but the life you are living is yours. Make it yours now, don't hold back, for this leads to regrets far more life scarring than having lived the moment and facing any regrets that arise later.

That is the legacy, and perhaps the challenge, dad has gifted me with. Far richer than any material item he could leave me. Instead he shares the wisdom to live my life to the fullest, and in doing so, reduce the risk of regret. On the edge Marlene, on the edge!

*Namaste*

*Marlene Cobb*

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