

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Preparing for the Death of a Loved One

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It often makes for interesting discussion whether or not knowledge of survival evidence makes one more prepared for the death of a loved one. Raw emotion will almost always win out over intellectual reasoning, so the very notion of being prepared may be nothing more than fanciful thinking. However, a recent occurrence in my life has led me to believe that knowledge and experience can lead to acceptance.

After losing my 15-year-old daughter in the blink of an eye 16 years ago, I was firmly entrenched in materialist thinking and I looked upon the suggestion of life after death as ridiculous and hurtful. I was mired in the deep chasm of despair with no hope of ever escaping the horror. Although I was apparently the recipient of what many would call striking examples of after-death communications, I summarily dismissed each occurrence as coincidence. Despite the preponderance of the evidence, I fought the acceptance of such a possibility for several years. Fortunately I journaled each episode and eventually sought the help of a statistician to help me calculate the odds against chance of each communication occurring. Only after seeing the hard numbers involving 20 incidents, each with odds against chance exceeding a million to one, did I relent.

So, after spending the last 16 years immersed in the investigation of survival, learning extensively about the empirical and anecdotal evidence, would I be better prepared for a future death of a loved one?

After doing very well for a few years after receiving a dire diagnosis of end-stage lung cancer, my mother's health started to deteriorate and we had her in the care of home hospice. During her final days I knew enough to pay close attention. Several days before her passing, it became apparent that she was conversing with deceased relatives who were not seen by others in the room. Despite moving in and out of consciousness, she would occasionally awaken and stare wide-eyed at a particular focus in the room, and at one point called out to her mom.

During the last day that she was able to sit in the recliner that gave her comfort, she stared at the empty chair that was placed directly in front of

her for caring visitors. My father entered the room, saw the empty chair, and sat down in it. My mother became extremely agitated, yelled “No!” and ordered my father to move. It was very apparent, at least to me, that my dad had sat down on someone who was already occupying that chair.

Later that day, after being returned to her hospital bed, I leaned over and told that it was okay to let go. I reassured her that she would be reunited with loved ones who were waiting for her, some of whom she was apparently already seeing. Even in her weakened state, she opened her eyes to acknowledge what I was saying.

On her final day, with our immediate family gathered together for the first time since she became ill, I whispered to her, “OK mom, we are all here. Do you know that we all love you?” She acknowledged with a barely audible “yes.” I then said, “It is now time for you to shed this broken body and take flight to the next adventure.” Less than an hour later she took flight.

Moments later, my daughter called from her home in Virginia. She and my four-year-old grandson had just completed a private ceremony calling upon the Universe to help “GiGiMa” heal. And when they were done, my grandson said to my daughter, “Mommy, I just looked out the window and saw GiGiMa flying on a rocket.”

Of course I grieve the loss of my mother, and my knowledge of a world beyond the physical did not prevent the tears and sadness. However, this time there was no anger, no guilt, and no wondering what could have been. Much in the tradition of cognitive behavior therapy, the way we think most often affects the way we feel. When it comes to life beyond the physical, in my opinion, those who are able to progress from vague hope, to belief, and ultimately to knowing have a distinct advantage in transforming their grief than those who believe in the finality of death.

—**ROBERT GINSBERG**
FOREVER FAMILY FOUNDATION