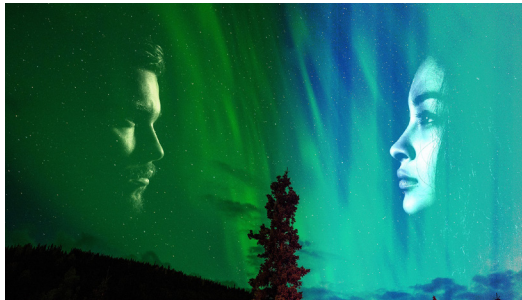


The Colors of Grief

By Jo Christner, Psy.D.

Spring is finally here!

Winter felt like forever this year. Now, we're watching the miracle of Nature as life slowly comes back to our landscapes that were changed by the harshness of Winter and natural disasters. The charred California mountains are now filled with beautiful colors of blue lupine, orange poppies and the golden mustard plant. Do you feel it? The colorful blooms heal our souls and give us hope. Rebirth is happening.



Have you noticed that we often refer to life in terms of colors? Sunny days are yellow or golden. Holy days are purple. Rainy days and sad days seem blue and darker. Lonely days seem gray. You've most likely heard expressions like, "I see red" when someone feels angry; "I feel blue" when feeling sad. There's an entire spectrum of color to life with many hues and shades.

That all changes when a loved one dies. Grief seems like that long gray Winter.

Life seems to drain of color. It seems to transition from the harsh and glaring trauma of loss to the darkness and gray of loneliness, sadness and despair. It might feel like you're in a long dark tunnel with no light anywhere to be seen. Will you ever see Light and color again?

There was a movie years ago called Pleasantville. I won't go into the theme of the movie. I'll let you look that one up... but I can tell you that everyone in Pleasantville was portrayed without color, they were all black and

white just like an old classic movie. Throughout the drama, as forgiveness, compassion, kindness and love enters the town folk, so does color. By the end of the movie, the town people have changed and color has blended into them and their lives.

When you're in pain and hurting with loss and grief, it's hard to believe that the beautiful colors of life will come back. Yet, color does come back, sometimes without your awareness. If you do your grief work, you'll notice one day that you might smile, even laugh, just a little more often. You might

notice that you notice other people and realize that you're connected again. If you've had a spouse die, you might begin noticing others and start feeling stirrings of wanting to connect romantically again. You might actually enjoy "you" and some of your alone time that used to only bring pain. Others might even comment that you look different... more alive somehow.

Color is beginning to come back into your very being and into your life.

The Colours Of Grief, a poem written by Christine Beington, captures the feeling:

How hard it is to fathom,
The sadness in the soul,
How that pain and heartache,
Leave us feeling less than whole,
If grief it were a colour,
It would like it to be known,
That there are so many facets,

Each emotion is a colour on its own.
Black would hold the terror,
Gold the love so true,
Red the fiery anger,
Missing you is blue.
Yellow when a memory,
Flies in to make you smile,
Green is for the calmness,
We feel once in a while,
Violet soothes the torment,
Orange the occasional laugh,
We allow ourselves so rarely,
Grief is not an easy path.
Then pink it draws you to me,
Your colour it is so,
Many colours to remind me,
The pain of letting go.
Then purple is the colour,
Of healing I've been told before,
So purple wrap around me,
My heart is truly sore.
So many colours I've discovered,

Make up the griever's soul,
So many emotions to encounter,
In an attempt to make us whole.

Color does come back. There is Light and Life at the end of that transitional tunnel of grief. We too are a part of Nature... and Nature wants to survive and bloom. It takes time and work to heal the grief in our bodies and in our lives.

Maybe it just starts by taking it a small step at a time, believing and staying open.

There is an old jazz song by Sam Cooke entitled... *Change is Gonna Come*.

These few lyrics say so much:

I tell you that it's been a long
And oh it's been an uphill journey, all the way

But I know, I know, I know

I know my change is gonna come

Just like in the movie "Pleasantville... forgiveness, compassion, kindness and love help us to heal." Be kind to yourself, take your time and allow yourself to heal.

Believe... and take at a step at a time.

The Colors of your Life will come back.