

PARTING IS NOT ALWAYS SUCH SWEET SORROW

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In February of 1990 my 14 year old daughter, Brigette, died suddenly.

One situation that I found very difficult was sorting through her personal belongings.

Knowing that we all grieve in our own way, you should never feel that you have to go through your child's belongings if you do not want to. You will know when and if the time is right. If you do decide that the time is right, following are some suggestions that you may find helpful:

Golden Rules/Getting Started

1. DO NOT PUSH YOURSELF

When my daughter first passed away I never thought I would touch anything in her room. Three months later I found myself going through her personal items. My normal spring cleaning and rearranging a room or two helped get me in the mood.

2. TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME

Do not expect to do it all at once. As you begin sorting through your child's possessions, do not get upset if you cannot part with any of his or her belongings. It took me three attempts just to be able to stop crying long enough to go through them.

3. ASK FAMILY MEMBERS OR CLOSE FRIENDS FOR HELP. Having someone there to help is a good idea. I invited a friend to help me go through my daughter's hat and t-shirt collections. She sat and listened to the stories about how and where we acquired each hat and t-shirt. It was so much fun talking about my daughter and having someone there to listen. After it was all over, she thanked me for letting her help!

4. THE DECISION ON WHAT YOU WANT TO KEEP SHOULD BE YOURS. Do not feel guilty about what you want to do. I sold my home approximately a year and a half after my daughter passed away and once I began packing, I found that there were many items that I did not want to move. If you decide you want to part with some of your child's belongings, I suggest that you get them out of the house on the same day or very soon after. I found that if I left the items in my home more than two days after I had initially gone through them, I was going through them again and again. Remember, letting go is very difficult.

5.

SET A PLAN FOR ACTION. Set up a schedule and write down the items that you would like to go through. It gives you something to start with. Be sure to note your progress! It will make you feel better.

For Those Items You Decide To Keep:

1. FIND NEW USES AND NEW PLACES. My daughter's red wagon was converted into an indoor garden. A favorite worn-out sweatshirt of hers became a pillow cover. I had some of her gold jewelry melted down and made into a pendant that I wear often. A shelf in the guest room proudly displays her doll collection, her shell collection is in the family room, and one wall of my study proudly displays her pictures.

2. KEEP THEM NEAR AND DEAR. I bought a cedar chest that is filled with many little remembrances from my daughter. I organized some of the remembrances in clear storage boxes that I labeled so that they are easy to get to. The cedar chest is a beautiful addition to my home and it keeps many loving memories secure and near.

3. PACK THEM AWAY. There were some items that I needed to keep, if only for the comfort of knowing that I still had them. For these items, I packed them securely in boxes, labeled the boxes and then stored the boxes in a safe, dry place.

4. RECYCLE ITEMS. By recycling I mean changing which items I leave out. My daughter collected small boxes, teddy bears, sea shells, and other items. Sometimes I will have the teddy bears out on my bed or maybe her little boxes arranged nicely on my dresser. I find it comforting when I get to go through one of her collections. ****NOTE****I keep a 3x5 card catalog with cards listing all of her items and where they are. This saves time and panic when I need to locate something of hers.

For Those Items You Decide To Give Away:

1. KEEP THE MEMORY. Parting with many of my daughter's possessions was extremely difficult. I knew that once they were given away, I might not ever see or remember them again. Prior to giving some of her things away, I wrote down my thoughts and notes about the items of 3x5 card catalog. Now, whenever I want or need a memory, I just go to my file and pick one.

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2. SHARE THE MEMORIES. I gave many of my

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3. SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND HOLIDAYS.

Holidays and family affairs are always so hard to get through without your child.

Some of her handmade Halloween costumes were given away as presents along with a picture of her in the costume. They made for very special and unexpected presents. The children loved receiving the costumes and it helped me to get through Halloween.

Her pearl earrings were given to my best friend's daughter for her First Holy Communion. It is still very difficult to attend these events without my daughter. As the little girl went around and showed everyone her earrings, I felt my daughter's presence there with us.

My mother received her birthstone ring. It was over 12 years old and had been resized at least five times. I wrote a story to accompany the ring and gave it to my mom for Christmas. Although it was difficult to part with this ring, my mother takes great pride in wearing it and that has helped her to deal with the loss.

4. RETURN ITEMS TO THOSE THAT GAVE

THEM. Whenever I gave any items back to the people who originally gave them to her, they were overjoyed. Over the years some of my daughter's school friends had given her little stuffed animals, posters and other gifts. I asked the children if they would like to have these items back and they were so appreciative of my kindness. I know it helped them with their grief.

5. NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

There are many not for profit organizations that help others. You may have some organizations that you are fond of or maybe one that your child chose to acknowledge. Whichever agency you choose, most are very grateful for any donated items. All donations to non profit organizations are tax deductible.

Remember, there is no right way or wrong way when it comes to dealing with the loss of a child. Each person is unique and so is each person's grief. Maintain a network of honest friends and/or family members who you can talk to. Above all, remember to be patient with yourself. You have been through a very difficult experience.

- lovingly lifted from 'We Need Not Walk Alone'
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