

*Dear Survivor,*

*It is said that death is part of life; that it is the other side of birth.  
I believe that death can also give meaning to life,  
a meaning that may escape you now while your grief is fresh and raw,  
but which may someday bring a special quality of peace to your spirit.*

*As terrible as your loss seems now, you will survive it  
even though that may seem unbelievable right now.  
Once that happens, you will have touched upon  
a new and incredible inner strength.*

*But for now you may be a mixture of thoughts and feelings.  
Despair, longing, anger, guilt, frustration,  
questions and even understanding, tumble over each other,  
striving for but not quite reaching comprehensible sense and shape.*

*You seek relief — you need to heal.  
It is a journey, and you must work on it.*

*And so, cry.  
The pain is real, but the tears are healing.  
Often we must struggle through an emotion to find the relief beyond.*

*And so, talk.  
Talk to each other about your loss and pain.  
Don't hide or deny real feelings.  
Tell others that you need them.  
The more you deny something or address it in silence,  
the more it can claim destructive power over you.*

*And so, search.  
Over and over, you will ask "Why?"  
It is a question you must ask.  
Though you may never find an answer,  
realize that it is still important  
to wrestle with the "why" question for a time.  
Eventually, you will be content to give up the search.  
When you can willingly let go of the need to question "why,"  
it will lose its hold over you, but it will take time.*

*And so, speak.  
Speak as often and freely of your loved one as you need to.  
He or she will always be a part of you.  
Not to speak of the deceased denies his or her existence.  
To speak of the deceased affirms his or her life.  
Believe that in time, the pain of loss fades  
and is replaced by precious memories to be shared.*

*And so, grieve.  
This time of sorrow can be used  
to draw a family together or pull it apart.*

*You may be one who needs to feel and express guilt  
so that eventually you will gain a more balanced view  
of your actual responsibility.  
You may need to give yourself permission to feel and express anger  
even though you think it's inappropriate.*

*And so, grow.  
We know we cannot control all that happens to us,  
but we can control how we choose to respond.  
We can choose to overcome and survive it.  
When we choose to grieve constructively and creatively,  
we come to value life with a new awareness.*

*And so, become.  
Become the most you can become.  
Enter into a new dimension of self-identity and self-dependence  
as you come to love others more fully and unconditionally.  
In letting go of love, we give it freedom to return to us.  
Become all that your loved one's death has freed you to become.*

*And so, accept.  
Accept that in some strange way,  
his or her death may enable you to reach out with a new understanding,  
offering a new dimension of love to others.*

*I believe in a loving God who is with us,  
offering strength, guidance and solace  
as we struggle with our anguish.*

*I believe as we regain balance and meaning in our shattered lives,  
we can come to see that death  
can indeed bring a new meaning to life.*

*This is my prayer for all of us.*

*By Eleanora Ross*

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