

I am often asked, “How are you? How are you coping? How are you managing following the loss of the love of your life?” In fact, the last few days have been filled with tears; tears of regret, tears of unfulfilled dreams, tears of loss, and tears of loneliness.

The first week in January marked the end of “Shloshim,” the first thirty days following the loss of a loved one. Despite the overwhelming expression of love and concern expressed by so many of you—it was so very much appreciated—today is painful. I cannot escape the stark reality of Wende’s demise. . .it accompanies me everywhere.

I have said to some that the first thirty days seemed like both an eternity and a tempest. The outpouring of support was indescribable; it provided the scaffolding we needed to navigate the first few weeks of our loss. Yet, we were numb to the new definition of our world.

Yesterday Jordana said to me, “the surrealism of Mommy’s death has been replaced by the painful reality of Mommy’s death.” That is an accurate assessment of where each of us is right now. Our days are filled with tears—tears expressing our grief and tears signaling the beginning of the healing process. Each of us is grappling with the new normal that defines our life, a painful reminder that things will never be the same.

I share these words with you because I know I am not the only one grieving right now. Death is part of life; no one is immune to its reality. Not one of us is immortal. The deeper our appreciation for the blessing of life the greater our capacity to accept the exigencies associated with death.

As my girls and I transition to the next phase of mourning—reciting kaddish for an additional ten months—I know that time and distance will become our allies. The proximity to Wende’s death stymies us from moving forward now. The pain does not want to leave us.

The wound is still too raw; the psychological confusion is too real. One day in the future we will be able to say with confidence that the past was our gift and not our loss. Today, we are not ready to embrace such a sentiment.

Shortly before Wende’s death, I spoke to a visitor who attended our daily minyan. She was struggling with the loss of her mother but distraught at the response she was receiving from friends. They wondered why a smile had not returned to her face two weeks after her mother’s death! I said to her that far too many of us are unwilling to contend with our emotions. . .it is such an important step in our healing process. Our culture is so fast-paced; we are encouraged to bury our emotions, to escape the reality that needs our attention. Our Jewish tradition is so wise at it leads us down the path of healing via its accumulated wisdom so deeply embedded in our death and dying ritual.

We need to grieve. We need to cry. We need to acknowledge the pain of loss to enable healing. How sad it is that we need confirmation, assuring us it is ok to mourn two weeks after a parent has passed away!

I profoundly thank each of you for gently helping my girls and me along our path of healing. The beauty and wonder of the wisdom in our Jewish tradition displays itself every day. Thank you for walking with us during this difficult chapter in our lives. Your friendship, your support, and your guidance will never be forgotten by any of us.

With the deepest sense of gratitude.

Shalom,

*Danielle and Gilad, Jordana, Adina, and Stefan*