Bereaved parents want ….

As a bereaved parent, I believe I have the experience and expertise to speak with authority about how and what grieving parents think and feel and what they want to know after the death of a child. First of all, none of us, myself included, wanted to be a member of this group. Most all of us don’t remember making our life charts and choosing our life situations before we came into this life. Of course, every one of us, if we had the power to do so, would choose to have our children back with us in the physical form. But, we planned it this way and because our wishful thinking cannot create our reality, we use our imaginations to answer our impossible questions.

After the immediate shock of our child’s death and the initial numbness that accompanies this shock (which thankfully enables us to bear the rituals such as the funeral and the immediate traumatizing decisions that must be made) bereaved parents begin asking the difficult questions of why their child’s death occurred. Answers to these questions cannot be grasped in early grief. Parents do not and cannot comprehend spiritual answers until they have had some grief experience. This recognition is not related to one’s intelligence or understanding but is related to the grieving parent’s inability to think clearly on any level. Grief engulfs one’s entire being. With the death of a child our life shatters, our heart breaks and we are in the pit of despair. We feel totally destroyed because our life is wrenched apart.

Traveling the roller coaster of grief is lonely, confusing and feels like living a nightmare that one cannot escape. Due to the attempts to cope with this horrific situation, we lose touch with our previous values, morals, and beliefs. The ability to recognize these parts of our previous life are lost due to our attempts to navigate this daily roller coaster. Traveling this endless appearing road of pain is often met with a detour when we begin to view our child’s death from our child’s perspective.

Acknowledging our child’s perspective of death allows us to begin to asking *where* they are and *how* they are. Our focus is jarred and begins to shift. A sliver of change occurs when we are not entirely consumed by “my emptiness, my hopelessness and my crying.” At that time, the grieving parent’s eyes open to a hint of variation in their life. This is not a major shift in thought at this point but if one held a previous belief in eternal life, (a belief expressed in nearly all religious traditions) it only makes sense to wonder about our loved one’s present existence.

Depending upon our prior belief system around death and the afterlife, we might start to question how are children are, where are they, did they “make it” to the other side, heaven, nirvana (or any other descriptor of our next level of existence) and does he/she hurt? As a mother, I needed the reassurance that my baby (regardless of their chronological age, they are still our “child”) did not hurt and that he was “okay” since I could no longer care for him. Not only did I need a break from my excruciating pain, but viewing his death from his perspective created a detour in that never ending road of pain.

Viewing their death from our child’s perspective shifts our grief from one of living in death to living in life. The grieving parent’s life will not change if they continue to live the death of their child. Our children still “live.” We just can’t experience them though our five senses as we did before their death. We must learn to experience them using a different language. Their energetic language will be displayed through recognizable signs in their own familiar way as they have their own experience and personality and each child will communicate differently to each family.

People believe they want “closure” on grief. There is no ending to grief as it will last a lifetime. But learning to open your heart to your loved one’s new life opens the griever up to their new life. It’s the way to recognize that you have a new relationship with your loved one and if you choose, you can communicate on a different level, through a different sign language.

Prior to entering this life, we chose all of our life situations to further our life journey. We chose to experience the death of our children. It is only until we have been traveling on our grief path for some time that we are able to understand this and hopefully change our bereavement. It doesn’t matter if we held these spiritual beliefs prior to our child’s death as our grief is so deep that we question all of our morals, values and beliefs after being thrust into the grief and loss. But, although we don’t have control over how we planned our life, we do have control over how we continue to live it. We can all choose life and choose to maintain a relationship with our children differently.

Grieving parents want relief from the pain, they want to feel “normal” again and they want to know that their children are ok. Through hope, faith and trust their desires can be realized and they can find comfort, peace and their new life. Having the courage to open one’s heart to living after their child’s death and the willingness to recognize their new relationship with their child can promote a parents healing as well as recognize that we are forever connected to our children.