

Losing Everything... Continuously

THE TANGIBLES

By

Raymond M. Fox GC-C

As you may of already discerned from the website, I'm a quadriplegic. I was hurt at the age of 7, hit by a car while riding my bicycle. Seems a million years ago to me but it was just 21 years ago at the time of this writing. In this essay I want to share with you how I experienced severe trauma and overwhelming loss but how I adjusted and continue to do so. Effectively.

The first aspect of any loss and grieving episode is denial. I had denial I suppose, who wouldn't? Being just a child at the time it's hard to determine if I was just full of life or truly in denial. I suspect that it was a mixture of both. Kids don't always see things as they truly are and that might of been a saving grace. But the key aspects of my coming to terms was a close knit family. Very important to the grieving process.

Some of you are probably curious about the title of this essay. Well, it's just one crucial part of what I've lost and come to terms with. When someone is still a child of 7, the world is still being explored through the sense of touch and other senses. It doesn't stop as a toddler. When I became a quadriplegic I lost the ability of movement, couldn't feel below the neck and lost the ability to breathe on my own. A horrible loss for anyone, especially a child. The losses were more tangible at that age.

What did I lose overall? Well, I could no longer run and play with friends anymore. I couldn't do much of anything. Being paralyzed at that age one tends to atrophy. Thankfully there was concerned and caring family to motivate me into an accepting point. I lost much but still got to experience my world and understand it to the best of my reduced abilities. I was still a part of the world around me.

My parents encouraged me to do what I could do rather than focus on what I couldn't. I was told to think on how I could do something I wanted. There was never "You can't do that..." type talk. They encouraged me to think on how I could do it, achieve the same thing, just differently. That was helpful, I had a sense of accomplishment whenever I did something. And at some point, it wasn't even special. Just Ray doing what everybody else does.

Parents and siblings were all helpful. It was with their involvement that I flourished and understood the world. I still remember that when something was heavy, not too awful heavy, it was placed atop my head so I

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could understand how heavy. If something was soft, I wasn't just told. The object was placed upon my cheek so that I could understand how soft. I wasn't allowed to fall into the traps of depression and anger. Those came and went as that is normal. But it was with the familial contact that acceptance and redirecting the energies of loss were directed into something positive.

I was still able to be a kid... just different. And Christmas was no exception. I still explored the presents under the tree. Seeing how heavy or soft they would be. Opening them? Of course I opened them. Just differently. A small tear would be on the corner of a gift and it would be held to my mouth so I could rip away at the wrapping for all my worth. Was a special time. Now, as I've gotten older I've stopped the tearing of the presents. I just have someone do it for me. However, my sister still insists I do it. I must say, I love her for it too. Thank you Kathy.

That's not all that they did for me. I can remember still being in the hospital after my accident and mother insisting I learn all the aspects of my care. I had to learn everything. That was a good thing also. It gave me a sense of empowerment over what was happening to me. It's been helpful all throughout my life too and has on occasion saved me from dying. Not all people helping me are altogether competent and the fact that I know everything about my care has been instrumental. Mother empowered me with knowledge. I could take measures to help myself on some level. That's the wisdom of my mother.

Now all this isn't saying that they consciously did these things, they did not. They didn't know what they were doing, they were just trying to help and in so doing, they've helped me on into adulthood. I understand my world, I have a level of confidence that is healthy. I have strong grasp and understanding of music and the guitar because of Joe. I have know-how on people and how to talk with them because of Larry. I have understanding of hunting and carpentry from Tim. Most important though, I have firm grasp of compassion and forgiveness from Kathy. And you know what? None of them know they've given these things to me. But they took time to share with me. I'm a part of the world through them.

You see, it's not that these things happened purposely. It's just because they cared that I was gently pushed through the stages of grief to live life. Who wouldn't want to proceed with this much life going on around them? They helped redirect grief and loss into something with

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positive energy. That's really the goal of a good grief response, to go through the stages of grief and ultimately use those energies that were previously used for something positive.

I've mentioned mother here, she is probably the most instrumental person in my life. I'll write about her at a future date. Father? Pops, as I call him. He is a very powerful force in my acceptance of my loss. Pops is a force unto himself and, by all measures, a force unto his own essay. I'll write about how he helped later as well.

This is just an essay so that you, the reader, can understand that your loss is great indeed. But you too can achieve tranquillity with the loss and redirect your energies into something positive. It's been said that the secret of life is to have no endings, but only beginnings. How will you adjust to your loss?

An ending?

Or a beginning? Just different.

As an aside, I'm currently figuring on a skydiving adventure. Impossible? I say... possible.

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