

CRY HEART BUT NEVER BREAK

Dr. Linda Miles

After a year of great challenges, we all need inspirational reminders of how to handle pain and loss. There are a number of stories, as quiet and as brilliant as gemstones peeking from the ground, that deal with the momentous themes of mortality, the meaning of life, and the meaning of death.

Some of the most powerful and poignant of these are found in children's books. One such riveting tale was written by Danish author Glenn Ringtved, illustrated by Charlotte Pardi, and translated to English by Robert Moulthrop. It is stirringly entitled: Cry, Heart, But Never Break.

The story tells of Death's house call to four small children who live with their grandmother, whom they love very much and who is dying. In the story, Death is portrayed as a remarkably tender and empathetic character, who leaves his scythe at the door to not frighten the children, who compassionately accepts their invitation for coffee because the children believe that this will delay and deter him from his mission, and who seems genuinely heartbroken by the duty he must do.

To brace them for the reality of their grandmother's impending departure, Death shares a story with the four children, trying to give them hope by revealing a different way of seeing things. Death's story is about two brothers—named Sorrow and Grief—who lived in a dark valley and “never saw through the shadows on the tops of the hills”... until they met and fell in love with two sisters, aptly named Joy and Delight.

Perfectly balanced, with the respective boys and girls completing each other, these two couples reenact the theme of essential balance in the universe: day and night, health and sickness, sun and rain, life and death, and so forth.

This narrative is Death's way of gently reminding the children that death itself helps us appreciate and enjoy life. It is a cycle and a balance. When the children head upstairs and realize their grandmother has died, Death whispers: “Cry, heart, but never break. Let your tears of grief and sadness help begin a new life.”

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Apart from depicting the balance of life and death, *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* subtly illustrates the power of human perception to deal with loss and grief. Pediatrician Amy Lee Bredlau has also explored this concept in her article entitled “Where Do You Put the Pain?” where she recalls the heartbreaking cases of her young patients who were facing death.

N.O.W.

The steps of living the NOW parallel Dr. Bredlau’s journey of self-discovery and her revelation of how to deal with loss.

NOTICE.

A colleague who trained with Dr. Bredlau once asked her, “Where do you put the pain?” This doctor, like Dr. Bredlau, had noticed that the pain of dealing with dying children affected her deeply and heavily. Finding a way to deal with all this emotion was essential as a doctor and as a human being.

OPPORTUNITIES.

Asking the question allowed the young doctor to find answers, and exposed her to Dr. Bredlau’s strategy: her way of dealing with the pain of being a pediatrician to very sick and dying children was by visiting the child in his or her family home.

There she’d watch the child and the siblings running in the grass and enjoying the blessings of nature and familial love, and she’d pinpoint scenes and moments that reminded her that life and joy still surrounded her even in the darkest hours. She also let herself be inspired by the parents’ bravery and in the ways that some families simply made the best of their situation.

WITHIN.

Dr. Bredlau chose to see the question—where do you put the pain? As an opportunity to become curious and delve within herself to search for answers. She was able to determine what she needed in order to cope and to thrive.

SORROW AND GRIEF MEET JOY AND DELIGHT

You can learn to create space within yourself for all the emotions, and find times to focus on those which bring you joy and peace. You drink in all the goodness of all the blessings: giving thanks for the humans who are alive, for the sun, for the rain, for the traits of bravery and integrity and generosity that exist in the world around you, and so forth.

You are able to sit with the pain, to let it wash over you before it inevitably ebbs away, coming and going as naturally as a wave. Just as in the story of Sorrow, Grief, Joy, and Delight described in the Danish storybook, Dr. Bredlau discovered that joy and delight exist alongside sorrow and grief, and it is impossible to fully appreciate or fully conceive of any of these concepts and emotions without contrasting them against their counterparts.

YOU ALWAYS GAIN BY GIVING LOVE.

Reece Witherspoon (Born 1976) Award Winning American Actress, Producer, and Business Owner.

