

# Living While Grieving - the real meaning of moving on

By: Emily Long, StillMothers.com



If my daughter had lived, she would be 12 years old. She would be dealing with the challenges of middle school girls, heading fast into her teenage years, figuring out who she is as a young person, and, if she was anything like her mother, determined to do everything *her way*.

At least, that's where I imagine she would be.

I don't know, because she isn't 12 years old now. Grace remains forever my tiny baby, born still, gone before she ever took a breath. Some days, I imagine the girl she might be now, all the while knowing that I will never really know. It is an ache that has not fully eased over the 12 years since she died.

When I talk of this ache and this longing to know who she might have been, I almost always hear some version of "perhaps it's time you moved on" or "don't you think you need to let go of this?" Some times people say the words out loud (or write them) to me. Others just have it written on their faces and speak it in silence in their head. In general, I find that people's intentions are good. They don't want to see me hurting anymore. They don't want to see me sad. What they don't realize is that hurt and sadness aren't the worst things in life.

My answer to these folks is always the same. I have moved on. I am letting go. I will continue to move on and to let go every day of my life.

The people who want me to "move on" and I, well, we just have different ideas of what moving on and letting go actually mean. To them, it means that I forget. It means I stop missing her and stop talking about her and forget the absence of her in my life. Perhaps it would be easier if I could live my life in that way. Maybe I should want that.

But I don't want that. I don't want to forget about her life. I don't want to stop talking about her or to forget about her. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. She is as much a part of my life and me as I am to my mother and my mother's life. I don't need to be rescued from my hurt or sadness. What I need is to remember her and love her.

Besides, moving on isn't about forgetting. In my experience, moving on is more about learning how to live while grieving. I miss my daughter every day. I wonder who she might have been and who I might have become as a mother to a living child. I picture her face and try to imagine the sound of her laugh. I light a candle and eat a cupcake on her birthday. I send someone yellow daisies in her honor each year on her birthday.

She is very much a significant part of my life, and she is no longer all of my life. Even as I miss her, I laugh a lot. I am fulfilled and passionate and ambitious about my work. I have fun and play and enjoy life with my friends and family. I live and love my beautiful, full, happy, and creative life.

Moving on isn't about choosing an either/or life. It isn't about missing her or being happy. It's not about grieving or living. It's not about moving on or mourning. It's about learning to live a both/and life. I can live a great life and still grieve for my daughter. I can love my life and still miss the one that might have been. I can be happy and still feel sad sometimes. I can be grateful for the beautiful life I have and ache for Grace's absence in it.

This is what moving on looks like. This is what it means to let go. This is what it means to live after loss. I am living while grieving. I am living a both/and life. I am learning to let that be enough.

---

*...Don't Worry About a Thing...Cause Every Little Thing Is Going to Be Alright...*