

# **Bereaved Families of Cape Breton**

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## **Seven Years Later**

*By guest writer, Samantha Halle*

In the days and weeks following my Dad's death, countless people told me "it will get easier." Now, seven years later, I can say that yes, in some ways it has. My Dad's death is no longer one of the first things I remind myself of when I wake up, nor is it the last thing I think about before I fall asleep; it no longer consumes me.

But, even though it has been 2,655 days, I still miss him. I still have days and weeks when it's just as painful as it was seven years ago, and I still have moments that make my head spin. There are several things, in particular, that almost always trigger one of these moments and force me to quite literally say hello to my grief. Here are the main five "little things" that get to me:

### **Telemarketers**

Less than two weeks after my Dad died, I answered the phone only to hear a telemarketer struggling to pronounce my last name as he asked for my Dad. Feeling as if I had been slapped, I quickly hung up. In later calls, my response to the stinging words was a curt, defiant "NO." About five years ago, one man dared to respond to my "NO" with, "he's expecting my call. I spoke to him less than a week ago." Most recently, my conversation with a persistent telemarketer went like this:

Telemarketer: "Is Mr. Hale there?"

Me: "No."

Telemarketer: "When will he be in?"

Me: "He won't. Please take our name off your list."

Telemarketer: "Is there a better time I can call back to reach him?"

Me: "Nope."

Telemarketer: "Uh, ok. I'll try back another time."

Me: "Good luck."

Though telemarketers don't bother me as much as they initially did, they still get to me sometimes. They serve as just one more reminder that my Dad is gone.

### **Questions about Family**

There are frequently questions when you meet someone new, and based on the majority of my experiences, these questions are typically asked by curious, or trying-to-be-polite, adults. Many adults I babysit for will ask what my parents do for a living, and I always hesitate to consider my answer.

I typically respond by stating what my Mom does. Still, many adults will complete my answer with "...and your Dad?"

Several years ago I would neglect to mention that he had died and would simply say what he used to do. Now, if necessary, I will quickly add "my Dad died when I was 11."

Of course, the instant I release these words into the air, I see the change on their face. They quickly try to smooth their stunned expression and mutter an "I'm sorry." Then, in an almost ironic way, I console them, letting them know that it's OK—I'm OK.

### **Things that mean something more to you**

There have been countless occasions when I'm watching a movie or TV show, or listening to a song or story with a friend, when something hits me. A line or situation sticks out, reminding me of my Dad in some way. Suddenly something's different; there's a pang of sadness, a feeling of nostalgia, or a flood of bittersweet sentiment.

Sometimes this moment is brief and I bounce back immediately. Other times, I feel the tears rushing to my eyes and am forced to actively remain composed.

### **Accomplishments**

There's something incredibly bittersweet about accomplishments, knowing that my Dad's not here to enjoy them with me.

My Dad was the proud, brag-about-your-kids type of guy. He was front and center at every play and recital, and cheering at the end of the pool during each and every swim meet. Now, if I win an award or have something major happen in my life, I have a moment of longing, wishing he could be here to see what I've done and know the person I've become.

### **Time**

Hands down, one of the hardest things that has come with losing my Dad is the occasional realization of how much time has passed. Birthdays, holidays, and other milestones are all reminders.

There are days when I feel like it was just yesterday that he died, but other times, I feel as if it has been a lifetime and I can no longer imagine my life with him in it.

There are moments when I must consciously think about how long it has been since he died; it's as if having him here was a past life of mine—a movie that I've watched countless times and memorized but never actually lived. There are times when I realize that I'm slowly forgetting things I swore I never would and it scares me. So, I make a concerted effort to replay poignant moments in my mind.

Many people who have not lost someone mistakenly believe that death is something you will "get over." However, the truth is, I still hurt. Seven years later, it's not a constant, overwhelming, consuming grief, but the little things, within which grief hides, that hit me when I least expect it.

From:

<http://www.hellogrief.org/seven-years-later/>