

# 11 Ways Losing A Parent Changes You

Today is the one year anniversary of the death of my mother. She was 79 years old when she passed away. Her death was not unexpected. Cancer is terrible and no one deserves the pain she endured. Through all the agony, you are not the same person you once were. You change. Here are 11 ways losing a parent changes you.

## 1. There is a sense of relief after a suffering parent dies.

My mom suffered greatly during the past few years of her life. Cancer did that to her. Even though it wasn't confirmed until a week before her death that her cancer was back, we had suspicions. Even so, hope is always present. Always. Hanging on to any little smidgen of hope until there is none.

## 2. You become angry. You want the last word.

Even though having the "last word" doesn't change the result, the "last word" marks a symbolism and it gives you a brief sense of standing up to it. As soon as she passed, I asked that her catheter be taken out immediately. That damn bag and tube. It defined her and I wanted it gone. Now. We also had a [burning party](#) a few days after the funeral. Our emotions were raw and we wanted to stare angrily at cancer and proclaim, "we hate what you have done to our mother" and we burned EVERYTHING my mom had that said "Cancer."

## 3. You realize that family is more important than ever.

Our immediate family has this sense of unspoken devotion. My parents were never ones to say, "I love you." And, unfortunately, that does not come easily or natural to me because I never grew up that way. But my brothers and I have a very special family connection. We are there for each other, no matter how different we are from each other. We accept who we each are and would never want to change that.

I relied heavily on my family to get through this. All of them. One of my brothers (lives locally) tagged teamed with me quite a bit towards the end. It was just too much for one person to bear. When one of us was emotionally spent to the point we could not go on, the other one took over. *Thank God for siblings.*

## 4. Life is short.

Work on your bucket list. Just do it. No excuses. I make no excuses for checking off items on my bucket list. I remember my mom saying numerous times, "I wish I could go here or do this or that." And it was always when her health was not good. I don't want to live a life of regrets. I look back

now and am so thankful for some of the activities we did do. I took my mom and my aunt to Glen Campbells Farewell Tour. So glad I did because shortly after that is when many of her health problems started.

## **5. You are more empathetic towards others going through the same.**

I am at the age that many of my peers are experiencing parent deaths. You know firsthand what they are going through. I now will absolutely either attend funeral visitations or send a sympathy card. It means a lot to those grieving. And if you question whether you should do go, just do it. I was truly amazed at the people that attended her funeral and visitation. My heart was full.

## **6. You spend more time thinking and rethinking.**

I find I spend more time just thinking, reminiscing about life in general. What does this all mean? What should I be doing? Where should I be headed? Why did this happen? Making sense of life and all. Not saying I have any answers but I sure do think about it.

## **7. Sometimes, you feel robbed.**

I also felt I was robbed. The last few years of her life, about 90% of my conversations with her was health related. I had to hear everything about her health. And I mean everything. We couldn't talk about what was happening in the world because it was no longer relevant. I missed that. Because of those experiences, I try not to talk about my health. There are more important conversations to be had. Don't get me wrong, I don't blame her. I am sure that was part of her coping mechanism. Now my brothers and daughters can look back at those "interesting" conversations in a humorous way. Humor goes a long way to help you grieve.

## **8. You have a tendency to feel guilty.**

When a parent has chronic health issues, there are times you feel like you didn't do enough. Guilt. And, perhaps, said things you should not have. Guilt. For me, the fact that I had no control over Cancer (that damn cancer) and it's terrible effects made me just angry.

But I had to stop feeling guilty.

*I knew there was nothing I could do--it was out of my personal control. Nothing other than pray.* And pray I did. Many times. Many times, I thought I could not go forward only to find out that God carried me through. We truly have an amazing God, even through terrible crap.

## **9. Stuff doesn't matter. It's just stuff.**

This really isn't something that changed in me, but maybe just more of a reinforcement. People matter, not stuff. People always trumps stuff. Always remember that. And live your life accordingly.

## **10. You don't realize how much you can miss a person.**

Many times this past year, I found myself wishing I could talk to her. My mom was always there for all of us kids. Probably more than she should have been at times. And even though we don't have her in the physical sense, we know in spirit she is still with us. Also, realize it doesn't matter how old you are, she is still your mother. And the pain is always real.

My mom wasn't perfect. She swore perhaps a little too much at times. Perhaps a little rough on the outside, but that is just who she was. She also never wanted to talk about death. So we couldn't have "those" conversations. More than anything, I think she was worried about my dad and how he would cope with her not being there. She did *everything* for my dad. I think that is why she didn't want to talk about death--even at the end. And, honestly, us kids were worried about that too. But dad is doing okay. I know he misses her daily, but he is doing fine.

But the one thing she did have was a huge heart. She loved us kids even if she didn't tell us. We *always knew* it. She was always concerned about the people around her. Calling them frequently asking how they were doing. A very caring person and mother.

## **11. Cat lives matter.**

I know "cat lives matter" sounds weird. You may be raising your eyebrows, but hear me out.

All of us in the family say we would never be able to go through the pain and agony she went through. She had many ups and downs and close calls the past few years. She was a strong lady and just never gave up. Just amazing to think how ravaged her body was and the stamina she showed all of us. Many of us in the family said she was like a cat --- having nine lives as we reminisced about all her past medical issues and emergencies. On April 11, 2016 she used up her ninth "cat" life.

Having a parent die, you do change. And that is okay. Because, honestly, in the big scheme of life and as crazy as it sounds, you end up being a better person. In a sense, life becomes more defined and more pronounced. It can bring family closer together if you let it. But, boy, do we miss her. . .