

Loss Timeline Reflection

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**Reflection**

While reflecting back on the last 21 years of my life I have experienced loss and death in various different ways. Although I experienced death when I was under the age of 10 my account of the many losses that came in my late adolescence has stuck with me the most as I entered adulthood. While creating my timeline I was able to reflect on the various losses in my life and see how my emotions and thoughts that I have now might be connected to the losses I faced in high school.

Remembering the losses that took place in my early childhood was not hard because loss is something that we have always talked about in my family. My first real touch with death was when I lost my family pet. I was only three at the time and my mom always tells me the story of how when she told me they were putting the family dog down I asked if I could get a stuffed puppy at target and never looked back. I was too young to really understand that my dog was leaving and not coming back, the stuffed animal they purchased for me in remembrance was more of a toy than something symbolic in my little three-year-old brain.

I had no real encounters with loss through relationships, medical trauma, or even death until I was 9 years old. This was when I experienced the death of a relative for the first time. Although my memories and accounts of this situation are few and far between, I remember mostly how upset my parents were at this time. When I was 9 years old I lost my great uncle. I knew him, knew him quite well actually, and understood at this time what death was and that he would no longer be around at holidays and family dinners, although I did not grieve his loss. I

can recount my parents crying at his funeral and sharing stories but I was more upset to see my parents grieve the loss of him rather than myself knowing I would never see him again.

My senior year of high school is when I really experienced the most grief. My family likes to joke there needs to be a movie made out of the family account of loss as we experienced 6 deaths in 9 weeks. It started with my next-door neighbor Kurt when he died of a massive heart attack in his own home. I remember getting woken up at around 2 am and watching all of the ambulances and police cars roll in. He had a smiling face I knew I would miss seeing. Just a week later while my parents were on vacation I saw on Facebook my uncle had passed from a cousin's post. Confused and visibly upset, I remember calling my dad and asking if his brother had died, to which he responded he didn't want to tell me until they were home. I was upset and for the first time lost someone close to me. While grieving the loss of my uncle I experienced a loss that I still think of daily even 3 years later.

Just two days later, while at my best friend's house I was staying while my parents were gone, I got a phone call from my mother who was choked up on the phone. All she said was "Bridget is Dead", she was so upset it was hard to hear. She hung up and I remember falling to my knees crying as this loss was so significant. My aunt Bridget has always been a second mother figure in my life as my cousin, my absolute best friend, is only 8 weeks older than me. We were raised as sisters, doing everything together from traveling, shopping sprees, casual weekends, and holidays. Because we were so close, I looked to Bridget as another parental figure. I knew she had been battling cancer for two years and that her cancer had returned but I was unaware of how fast it was progressing. All Bridget ever said was she wanted to make it to her only daughter's high school graduation. Unfortunately, while taking her daughter and her 6

friends to Hawaii on a spring break trip Bridget's cancer progressed and attacked her brain where she died in her favorite place of Maui. When I heard this news it felt like my whole world was crashing down. I was so sad. I worried for my cousins. I didn't know how to be there for her when I knew I was going to be grieving her loss. Because of the significance of this loss in my life, the next three deaths that occurred in the following weeks all felt numb. I don't have much recollection of these losses as I was fixated on my aunt's death and being there for my cousin.

While completing this assignment I felt it brought up many emotions. I was able to go back to each thought and process the loss that I had experienced at that time. Reflection goes on how I comprehended loss and grieved at age three was significantly different from when I lost my aunt. I deeply grieved more the older I got. After losing my aunt I was able to know what loss was and that I am capable of the emotions of grief as I had not experienced them before. As I grow older and expand my knowledge of this topic I am excited to learn more about grief and reflect on my own princess through my experiences with death. My goal in this course would be to be able to understand the process that I went through regarding grief and loss. So far I have been able to identify many.

I believe that my culture and upbringing with loss has impacted the way I deal with loss. For example I have been raised in a christian home and do believe I will meet loved ones again in an afterlife. This is a peace of mind to myself when experiencing loss as I believe they are truly in a better place. I think because of this I have coped in a healthy way. Talking with therapists, being open with my peers, allowing myself to feel the emotions of anger, guilt, and sadness. With my aunt this process was a little bit harder for me to do because I was distraught and so mad. This loss even affected my relationship regarding my faith as I was mad that

something I believe so strongly in would let something so bad happen in my life. For all loss, death and non death related I try to always find meaning in it. For example, If I lose a friendship and make a new friend I always think maybe I would not have been close to them if I was still in that friendship.

Death and loss to me is something that I find hard to talk about. I seem to always joke about my life and what I have experienced even though I am hurting deep down and filled with sorrow. In my future field of work where loss is something that I am guaranteed to see whether it be a loss of a patient or helping a child who just lost a parent I think having my own exercises with loss will help me connect to them more. If I had not experienced my own grief in my own personal life I would not understand the thoughts and emotions I will be seeing. I think losses of parents and helping children through that will be particularly hard because I witnessed my cousin lose her mom at a young age and how that has impacted her. Overall this assignment gave me a lot to reflect on. I was able to draw out my losses in my life and see how they will impact my future work.