

No one can tell another how to grieve. Grieving the loss of a child does not come with a “how to” manual. Our individual ways of grieving are as different as our genes, and grief is not a linear process. At first, I’d wished myself dead; I couldn’t eat or sleep. Everything hurt—even the radiant color of a flower. I had lost all meaning and purpose in life. I was learning to accept that this was not something I would ever just “get over.” Just yesterday in fact, I found myself curled up in a ball, sobbing uncontrollably over the pain, and yet, today is okay. As the minutes, hours, days, and weeks evolve, life begins to feel worth living again. I realize finally that the only wrong way to grieve is not to grieve at all.

Just as the scars on a precious antique are markers of the life it has led, so too do my scars of loss mark out my grief. What keeps me going day after day is the undying love and support of those who promised to stick by me without placing a time limit on my sadness. The pain may not abate, not after one year, or five, or ten. To others, such periods might seem sufficient for healing and closure, but for grieving parents, a year is a mere blink of an eye.

Hope is the only true magic word for me, for with hope I can endure the heart-wrenching reality of Erika’s absence; hope that it will get easier with hard work and time; hope that I will go on to live a meaningful life, as others have done; and hope that my indescribable loss will lead to help for others traveling this unwanted path of grief.

In that spirit of hope, we have come full circle.