



Finding a new normal

By Kristi Strawser

My story with grief of course begins with a loss, the loss of my beautiful daughter Corynna.

Corynna was my daughter, my best friend, and my life.

How do you continue on after losing someone who was so much? I have gone through many stages of grief as most have. I don't think we focus enough on what grief is like for a parent who is also a caregiver of a child with a long-term illness. I remember the first night I slept in my own bed. I had slept in my daughter's room the last months of her life. She kept the TV on when she slept. I would hear the BiPAP and the oxygen machine. I slept on a futon in her room.

The first night I went to bed after she passed away, my husband shut off the television and I will never forget how dark and quiet it was. From the moment she passed away nothing felt right. What I watched on TV, what music I listened to, most everything revolved around her. My whole life revolved around her medical needs and then also being a mom. All of the sudden it was just me without her.

Corynna was our only child. I lost a daughter and also being an active mother to a child. This loss I also don't think we talk about enough. Losing an only child adds a dynamic to the loss. It was almost like I lost two people at once. I lost my daughter and me as a mother. The days after her death I fell asleep crying and woke up crying and cried in between. I looked to a friend of mine to tell me that this intense pain would not last forever. She assured me that my heart will hurt forever but not in this intense way. At that moment I am not sure I believed her but the good thing is she was right.

I wish there was a magic wand you could wave and make grief better instantly. I had to learn to embrace grief as a part of my life forever. I had to learn that continuing to live did not mean I wasn't grieving. I grieve every day. I just have to learn to experience life and grief together. I truly had to find a new normal. My daughter knew just how important and what a gift life was. I try to embrace life and be thankful for the life I have to live. I just hold on knowing I have a purpose even though many times it didn't seem clear.