PEACE
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It's ironic that I never really thought about the word *peace* and how important it is, until Aug 6, 2009, the day my daughter, Jordan, my only child was killed in a car accident. She was 18 years old and had just recently graduated from high school. She was riding with a friend to a concert, the friend was speeding and lost control of the car. My daughter was killed instantly. *Peace* was taken from me that day. Prior to this date *peace* was a word associated with war and how we hope for *peace* in the world. It rang the familiar tune of "Let there be peace on earth, along with Christmas music of peace and greeting cards adorned with "Peace on Earth." I would even associate it with the 60's and 70's peace sign.

Now that has changed for me. *Peace* is what I long for each day. My heart aches daily for my daughter and the life I miss with her being gone. When the accident first happened I couldn't get peace to come. I cried and wailed throughout the day, in the bed, in the kitchen, in the shower, on the dining room floor, in the car. Once I went back to work, I cried in the bathroom daily. I didn't want to be there, I couldn't be there. One of the first times I experienced my first transformation into peace happened sometime in the first couple years that I lay wailing crying on the dining room floor. (The reason I use the word wailing is that I had never experienced that before, I had never cried like that before as an adult anyway. I didn't even know I could cry like that. I almost didn't recognize the sounds coming out of my own mouth.) While the wailing continued my body literally ached with grief. I wanted to stop but I couldn't. I suddenly remembered something Robert Duvall did in the movie "The Apostle" and I began crying and begging God to give me peace. I repeated over and over "Give me peace, give me peace, please God give me peace." I don't know how long I repeated this, maybe five minutes, maybe longer, maybe less. Suddenly I started feeling a calmness, a peaceful feeling coming over me. I actually stopped crying almost immediately, I couldn't feel anymore tears coming, anymore pains for now. It was almost mesmerizing. I truly believe God gave me the peace that I needed for that moment, as I never could have brought that sudden change on myself.

I have since felt God bring me peace when I have called out to him over and over. I also know I have to work on finding daily ways to have peace, and to keep peace in my life. I had to learn, over the years, that putting myself in situations that I didn't have to be in, whether other people wanted me there or not, was not going to bring me peace. I also found after returning to my full time job that I was not going to experience the daily peace I needed while I was there. I left my full time job in payroll from an irrigation company to work part time at a local daycare and preschool. I love working with children and even though it cut my earnings significantly I knew this was the only way I could have that peace I needed for the work day. I became choosey on what I attended and if I did attend I made sure to have a back-up plan so that if I needed to leave that I could, and I gave myself permission to do so Many times I was able to stay through events because of having the backup plan in place.

Here is a list I that helped give me some peace for the moment.

- reading
- starting a face book page for people who lost an only child/or all their children
- sleeping
- spending time with my daughters friends and cousins
- hugs
- attending The Compassionate Friends monthly group (for people who have lost a child)
- attending The Compassionate Friends Conferences
- doing something in memory of my daughter on her angelversary date and birth date
- crying out to God for peace
- discussions with my husband

Additional things that bring me some peace now that it's been 10 years:

- Reading various books and my Bible
- praying and especially spending quiet time with God (the first 2 years this was extremely hard for me)
- taking walks

- admiring God's nature, hikes, sitting by a lake
- wind chimes
- traveling (although this sometimes still causes me anxiety)
- watching comedies, laughing
- singing (I love music and singing however it was non-existent for me the first year and half after the accident)
- Spending time with family and/or my best friend (although sometimes I still need to be alone)
- my husband
- our puppy – I have found dogs provide wonderful therapy
- coffee
- journaling
- Facebook
- children
- signs from my daughter
- volunteering for projects or organizations that matter to me
- helping and being there for other bereaved parents

Peace stealer's: things that I have identified that do not give me peace.

- Bible verses people would speak to me in the first several years only hurt me more
- cliché statements from others who have not experienced the loss of a child
- politics, arguments, heated discussions
- holidays no longer give me the peace they once did even after 10 years they are hard
- attending events without a backup plan if I need to leave
- Halloween decorations, haunted houses, horror movies
- amusement parks (in the past I loved them, not anymore)
- in the first several years when being photographed for extended family photos was painful
- face book
- when my dog rolls in dead animals (it happens and it's truth)

   I live with the tragic death of my daughter daily. It replays in my head more often than not. So for me, finding healthy things that offer me peace is extremely important. I believe these peace-givers are part of my grief survival tool belt now and have helped me get this far and will continue to bring me hope and life. If you have experienced the loss of a child and/or loved one, my hope is that you can identify what gives you *peace* and what doesn't give you *peace* and stick with what does.