

I did not know him: a cycle of pain

## Description

My brother died. I went to Boston to be with his wife and children. At first the pain and suffering was all about my loss. In Boston I became one grieving sister in a sea of grief. I did not know all these other grieving people. Not his wife of thirty-five plus years and their three children, and all of his wife's siblings, their spouses and their children. And then his friends from high school and college and his medical practice and their church and his men friends. Six hundred people in various degrees of pain.

I listened. I discovered that I have not listened well; I let the stories of others come in unfiltered. These stories gave me my brother. How bitter sweet to have him and lose him at the same time. The acute pain is mediated by the truth, the fleshing out of the man he was these years we had been separated by a continent and our too-busy lives. Today back in Seattle, I feel less pain. I also have far more compassion for his wife and their children who now begin the work of knitting a life without him physically present.

How are emotional pains like our body pains?



ite called the [Arthritis Management Program](#). They  
re cycle which you may find helpful.

In a closed loop, each new painful experience pulls

you further down into the pain and suffering. In this downward spiral, pain leads to

depression which makes exercise difficult. One abandons the good diet. Sleep is challenging. All of these challenges occur while a loved one is struck down and then dies. Each of these symptoms can by themselves contribute to the other symptoms, and all can make pain and fatigue worse.

Even worse, they can feed on each other. For example, inflammation from the arthritis can cause pain, which causes stress and anxiety, which can cause poor sleep, poor sleep can cause depression, depression can sometimes make it hard to eat as we should, and these can lead to more pain or fatigue, and so on. The interactions of these symptoms, in turn, make our arthritis or fibromyalgia seem worse. It becomes a vicious cycle that only gets worse unless we find a way to break the cycle.

A support group for arthritis sufferers, a good blog (hehehe) or web site can trigger a cycle-breaking strategy. A memorial service in which all the sufferers participate can show the way to break the grieving cycle. Neither strategy is permanent. I have lost two husbands and this loss brings all that pain back. It was hard to sleep, to focus my mind on anything. I felt as though I was spinning. How must those much closer to my brother have suffered from the physical and emotional disruptions of death.

I always go back to my mantra of Keep Moving. If your arthritis pain gets too great to move in the usual ways, find new ways to move. A warm-water pool and a class for arthritics; gentle Feldenkrais movements; a quick trip to the Korean foot massage place (that was my strategy when I couldn't sleep from the anxiety of my brother lying in the ICU with a stroke.) Call a friend and ask them to help you get out of the doldrums. Eat a salad with toasted pine nuts instead of chocolate cake.

You no doubt have been on this closed circuit pain path. How did you get out of it? Let us know.

If this has been helpful, pass it along, post it on your face book page, and like my [business page](#) while you are at it. ?

Fondly, Betsy

Be well, Do well and Keep Moving.

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## Category

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