

How I say goodbye.

I'm struggling with myself. I know that might be strange to hear, yet it's true. My struggle is that I love someone and believed in my heart that my love was unconditional. I was at her birth and held her a minute afterward. I held her as high as I could above my head, and the air around her changed to show the universe surrounding her and from where she had just come. That's when the love started. And immediately after that, my love became unconditional.

Two years later, the process was repeated when her brother was born. I was doing just fine until I held him in my hands and then arms, and from that time on, I loved him like no one else ever would.

One year later, their mother, my wife, left us all to pursue a new life. We stayed together and went through all that life offered, including the good and the bad. I needed to go back to college to update my education so I would qualify for better paying and less physical work, and I did that. I loved my children every day. I told them every day I loved them, and for a long time, they were the compass for our direction.

When my daughter became a teenager, I remarried, hoping for a less stress-filled time. But an insane rebellion began between her and her stepmother that inevitably drew me in. My home became a place I didn't want to go to, but I still went to work every day and came home every day. Only now, I no longer had my happiness. I feigned it for everyone, of course. I barbequed and kept the pool clean; I laughed with friends who visited and tried my best to appear happy. I bought my daughter the new car she wanted and tried to fix the negativity in my home by giving everyone anything they wanted. I watched my children fail, but because I always bailed them out, I never let a child of mine fail.

Ten years passed, and I decided to stop giving them money because, as I told them, I was enabling them to repeat their bad choices and fail because there were never any negative consequences. All they ever had to do was contact me, and I fixed the problem. Both children stopped speaking to me once I cut off the money.

Two years went by, Father's Day and my birthdays passed without a word from them. But then I was contacted and asked if I would give one of them a significant sum of money, to which I answered no. The scathing, hate-filled rebuke that followed via email was so horrendous that my heart ached after reading the first email, but then another followed, and then several more until I could not stand them any longer. I forcefully defended myself to a person I loved unconditionally.

The hatred contained in those emails was as intense as a million-acre forest fire sweeping through my life and destroying every vestige of not only the life I had created for my children but also the memories. I sat in my home alone, empty and confused. I wrote a few things to help me escape my confusion, but my love for them kept me captive. I even thought I wouldn't have read past the first email if this was anyone else.

Perhaps I finally have my answer, and it is simple. When I love, I love deeply. My love is deeper than any argument or disagreement we will ever have. I have never walked away from a person I have loved. Also, I stayed when a relationship turned bad, and I tried to show the depth of my love while hoping my love would make me acceptable. So, in almost all cases of separation, it was the other person leaving or telling me to leave, and even when that happened, my love for the person didn't stop.

I have had people come back, and I accepted them with open arms, only to be shunned again and sometimes again and again.

So, how do I say goodbye? Or should I? How do I stop looking over my shoulder for those I walked away from and those who walked away from me?

The truth is, and I have only learned this recently, I have said goodbye to everyone I have left. I just never said the words out loud because when I heard someone say goodbye to me, it hurt me so badly that I never wanted to hear those words again, even if I was the one saying them.

Written by Peter Skeels © 6-5-2024