

Making the Choice to

LOVE

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When a loved one passes away one often experiences deep loss and often feelings of regret. “What could I have said or done differently to have made a difference?” we wonder. For many, these feelings can last for a lifetime whenever they think of the person who has crossed over. I don’t believe this is what was intended by God or the Universe, however. And certainly not by the soul of the deceased, who has happily let go of all the petty details of earthly life and is now continuing its evolution from where it left off. Many believe that the soul hovers around Earth for a short time getting oriented and watching over the people it loved, wanting to make sure they’re alright. It is heartbreaking indeed for it to see all the needless suffering of the loved ones left behind. Grieving is healthy and necessary but should ultimately be replaced with acceptance, forgiveness and thanksgiving that the beloved is in a much better place with a perfect new body to enjoy.

I recently lost my mother, a most wonderful woman who truly made a difference to many around the world throughout her magnificent eighty-five years. Although her tired body had been struggling for years to keep up its mojo and zest for life, she knew that she just had to make it to eighty-five. Over the past few years she’d make up a little song to sing to keep her going. Her

most recent song was, “Oh dear Lord, it’s so good to be alive, please help me make it to eighty-five!” She’d always have another song prepared to help get her through to the next year, except for this year when she had no new song.

She had traveled to Cape Cod for her birthday and was surrounded by the love of her daughter’s family at their lovely cottage home. On her special day she rejoiced over all the wonderful treats that my sister and brother-

in-law prepared and all the cards and calls she received, especially from her children, and her most favorite of all, the annual lobster feast with 85 ounces of lobster (one ounce per year)! Throughout the day she kicked up her heels as they laughed and danced and sang and lived it up to the fullest. That night she was tucked into bed lovingly and caringly by my sister Leslie and peacefully, happily went to sleep.

In those early morning hours, sometime between moonlight and day break, she presented herself at the gates of her new heavenly home to be joyously welcomed by those who had traveled on ahead of her.

What could have easily been the kind of death that we all fear, the painful tribulation of the body not wanting to go and struggling to hold on at all cost, became one



of triumph and a miracle of grace. She simply went to sleep that night and crossed over in peace, and was discovered the next morning lying there with a smile on her face. How could Mother have known, how could any one of us have known in our shock when we were told, that her birthday would be her last day?

What we do know is that the kind of life she lived was one that touched a great many people and modeled what it is to love unconditionally, give fully and savor each day as if it were the last. Although she had severe hearing loss (was nearly deaf), she was still outgoing and traveled frequently so she could meet people all over the world, people who became her dearest friends. "Look for the positive," she'd always say, going out of her way to make others happy with a smile that lit up the room. "Here comes Toni!," we'd exclaim as she'd enter doing her happy little jig. When you were in her presence you knew it—you could feel it. I believe her light is now shining brightly above making Heaven an even more beautiful place.

When someone we love passes we realize more fully that we each have life right now and that one day we won't. I've read that the waiting list for a soul to be allowed an opportunity for a life on this plane is lengthy beyond belief. Knowing that, and how special and valuable life is, we can ask ourselves, "How am I living this life I've been given? Is it one that I could be proud of if I were to be called back right now? Am I serving those in my life with the gifts I've been given? Do my words and actions express love, kindness and positivity? Have I left the world a better place than when I found it?" Basi-

cally we're really asking ourselves, "How am I loving?," the answer to which we'll carry with us forever.

Throughout our lives all of us have had issues with our parents, me included. As a psychotherapist I help people deal with these questions everyday, issues that are important and worthwhile. In working through them we have the potential for great healing. At some point however, especially as we get older and see that life is short, we realize it's time to give up our issues and get over ourselves. After all, what difference does it make now what Mom or Dad did or didn't do back in their twenties when they were probably trying to do their best with what they had? We can choose to accept them now for who they are and *we can make the choice to simply love them*. I did that with my dear mother some years back and it made all the difference in the world to her and I assure you, all the difference to me now in her passing.

For me I realize again that it's time to up the ante in my life: to shift my attitude to acceptance, to call back my judgments of others (they really don't deserve them) and to try each day to love a little more. In doing so, I'll be living life to its fullest and hopefully will make my mother proud. I may even notice a shining star out there sparkling a little brighter each time I say a kind word, share a smile with a stranger or give a little more than what might be expected.

Toni made a great difference in this life and that's the least I can try to do, as her son. You might stop and ask yourself the same, about the difference you could be making and the legacy you're creating right now.

In honor of the passing of a wonderful woman, devoted mother, true friend, and great soul:

Antionette Mongno
March 18, 1927 – March 19, 2012



Michael Mongno MFT, Ph.D, LP is a licensed psychoanalyst, relationship counselor and holistic practitioner in Manhattan. He brings a wealth of successful experience with a wide range of couples issues as well as down-to-earth wisdom and modern sensibility to what it takes to create healthy, loving and empowered relationships. Please visit PresentCenteredTherapies.com or call (212) 799-0001 for more information.