

Getting Through Your First Holiday After Losing Your Husband

It's a gray, snowy Monday here in our little mountain town. We've had a lot of gray this year, which isn't at all typical.

Our city's weather resume proudly lists "300 days of sunshine per year," and I can feel the population collectively scanning the sky for signs of Merry & Bright.

I'm not doing much sky-gazing this week. I'm keeping my head down and my shoulder to the wheel because I'm busy, y'all! It's wedding week. Plus also it's finish-the-basement-remodel-week.

It's also Tori-moves-down-to-the-new-basement-apartment week, which means Bo-has-so-many-closets-to-clean-out-down-in-that-thar-basement week is also upon us. Two big things that are very important to each of my wonderful daughters have converged at the same fixed point on the calendar. A point on the calendar, by the way, that on its own carries such weighty reminders of Steve's absence. I often find myself wanting to text him with wedding updates or remodel issues and it takes a minute for reality to splash up in my face and remind me he's really, truly not here.

What I'm learning through this is that for any given situation, there are multiple vantage points, multiple realities, and each one is valid. Weddings are a lot of work and money and stress. So are remodels.

So is moving. So are the holidays. Each would be so much easier to do with my beloved here. Grief is hard to carry during already-emotional life events. These are just really real, and there's no point in arguing with them. However, I'm finding that the whole key to whether a day is grim or

glorious is in my willingness to find alternative vantage points which allow me to see the equally valid, *positive* realities.

- I have a home we love, with plenty of room for the people who share my life and my heartache. All this remodeling business means I can share my home but have my own space, which is just about ideal in every way.
- Doing all this during the last week of the year means we will all start the New Year with fresh, new spaces—and one of us will even start it with a fresh, new name! I adore new beginnings.
- The people I love most are about to converge upon my home to celebrate with us. For five years, I have wondered how I will survive my first New Year's without Steve—now, I know for sure I won't have to do it alone.
- Biggest of all: my sweet daughter is about to marry the man of her dreams. He is the man Steve and I have prayed for since before she was born. Together, they will climb mountains and build dreams and *give me more grandbabies!* (No pressure, Tess!) Truly, this is a remarkable gift, and it is worth the long to-do lists and the late-night planning sessions and 17 trips to Goodwill to find “just one more glass vase candleholder thingy” (I've collected well over 100 through the past 12 weeks.

There are multiple realities this week. Some of them hard, but many of them holy and so, so beautiful. I get to choose the way I see these things and I know that no one would argue if I wanted to cry big, drippy tears of self-pity for a minute or a month. But I can't.

I won't. I don't have time! This week of wonder is too precious, too perfect, too important to sacrifice on the altar of a life-is-against-me mindset. I may (read: definitely will) cry tears of joy and I may cry tears of wishing Steve could see all of this, but I refuse to view this week as bad or unfair or anything but a gift. This is my solemn vow. Yes to

the New Year. Yes to weddings. Yes to new life.

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