

"The Hug"

By Tanya Bodzin

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With my dearly beloved husband living in a 24/7 facility for those with dementia I have found myself hug deprived for more than 18 months. Probably add another 6-12 months to that and you have more than 2 years.

I find that I miss the hugs we shared; and we shared several a day. I took them for granted. Being able to hug your loved one and be hugged back for more than 54 years is something you normally don't stop to think about. Now I do and realize how important hugs are to my well-being.

A hug makes you feel important; it makes you feel loved. At times it makes you feel desirable, maybe sexy. It makes you realize that it means you are recognized in the world; that people care for you. Without a daily dosage of hugs one can feel not quite whole.

Resolution: I ask for hugs from my loved ones in my family, from my friends, from acquaintances. I ask for hugs from my doctors. They happily oblige. My support groups are into hugging and I always feel better when I am with them. We hug when we meet and we hug when we say goodbye. One group is 4 women of which 2 are widows, and 2 are journeying with their husbands. I have 3 support groups that have my back. The hugs connect us all one to one and one to the group. These hugs are good, but they are not the same as the ones I shared with Steve.

I require hugs from every staff person I run into at Arden Courts, where Steve is living. The staff gives them freely: from the executive director, the receptionist on duty to the caring aides who help feed and dress Steve. The hugs and the people mean a great deal to me.

I have a new support group: wonderful people from Hospice. They include a social worker, a case manager, a nurse, and now a volunteer visitor. Every time I see them we hug with feeling.

My community friends are very dear to me and their hugs mean a lot. Today I wonder what will happen when Steve is no longer with me. I see how I am supported and know that these loving, compassionate people will be there for me months and years after Steve is gone.

I had posted on Facebook the need for hugs and received virtual hugs, and a wonderful hug from the movie Monsters, Inc. I play it over and over. The magic of Facebook is outstanding. Within a few moments I received more than 30 hugs after I posted how I needed hugs. I felt enveloped in love.

My advice to my children, grandchildren and friends is: give your hugs freely and with great feeling. You will receive them back a hundred fold.