Tackling Grief...

July 22, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

Grief is a monster! I'm learning that it also sticks to you like Gorilla glue. Honestly, these last three weeks dealing with the lost of Sophie has been new territory for me. I've never felt this level of sorrow for anything even when I lost my first two dogs. When Imani died I was sad and I cried a lot, but it didn't effect my bottom line. She had lived 12 years and while I was very sad, I was not overwhelmed. I had also done everything possible for her lung disease and was at peace with that fact. Of course I still had Nambi, who was Imani's baby and she was my constant companion. I had Nambi for 16 years. She and Sophie overlapped for almost four years. When I put Nambi down, I felt like she had lived a long and good life. I blogged about Nambi when I first started. You can

read it here.

Imani and Nambi

When I put Nambi down there was Sophie, who was full of life and demanding. She was not having it; not too many sad moments in my house. Sophie even knew the difference from when I was actually sick, verses those days filled with depression. On those days, she insisted that we get out of bed. Her mission in life seemed to make sure that I lived in my life. She accomplished her mission. There was never a dull moment in my house with Sophie.

Sophie Demanding Attention!

Maybe that's why losing her has taken me for a loop. She was the life of the party each and every day. I'm sure loosing her unexpectedly and at a mid age has also impacted my grief level. The average Poodle lives 12-15 years. Maybe my grief is also impacted by the fact this is the first time that I have been without a dog in 21 years.

What I know for sure is that my grief is all consuming. Even with the lost of my mothers, both of them, I didn't feel this kind of sadness. I remember my friend, recording artist, Teresa Griffin telling me that she cried more over the death of her little Pomeranian Poppy, then her father and she loved her father dearly.

I know some people want me to move on, but its not so simple. While there's no easy way to deal with grief, I'm learning to tackle it head on.

For sure avoiding it or pretending that you are not hurting will only send you into a deeper depression. Right now my depression is what my doctor calls "situational depression," but if I don't

deal with it in a healthy manner, it could become long term.

It’s no secret that I have dealt with depression living with HIV/AIDS. However prior to Sophie, I was doing well. In fact, a few months ago my doctor and I decided for me to take a break from anti-depressants, to give my body a break. For sure less drugs are always better. But that first week I lost Sophie, I was popping valium just to sleep. I knew that had to stop, so I switched to an antidepressant that would help me sleep with the advice of my doctor

I’m also an emotional eater and the last two weeks I have eaten more comfort food then I had in the last 6 months. The end result has been weight gain, but I had to decide which battle I could fight effectivity, so I’m going with the flow.

It was way to much pressure forcing myself to eat “clean” and deal with the grief at the same time. I took the pressure off before it sent me into self- loathing and a deeper depression. I’m finding that with the pressure off, I tend to have a tad more balance. I’m living in the now. I don’t punish myself if I don’t have the balance, I just start with each new meal or snack and accept that which is. In time, I’m sure that healthy choices will become my norm again. The thing about me is that I never seem to let one thing control my life forever. I tend to regain control in time. Going with the flow is the theme of the hour, even with activities. If I feel like it, I do it, if I don’t, then I don’t. Nothing is forced. I wait until my heart is in it before I do it. Added pressure leads to added depression. I want to get through this, not stay in it, so I’m using the methods that work best for me. There is no one way to tackle grief I think we all have to do what feels right.

Working out is also helping my mood swings. I find that the days I do Crossfit, I tend to be less sad. I know working out does increase your serotonin. After the BlogHer Conference this week, I'm hoping to get back to five days a week.

One of the most cathartic things I've done is to turn Sophie's Instagram account into a memorial page. I go there and post pictures and while there is an element of sadness to it, it also reminds me how special she was and how much joy she brought to my life and that always makes me smile. Equally importantly, it keeps me grounded, looking at her pictures and remembering in this way, reminds me that it is for sure better to have had her, then to not have had her at all. It also reminds me that she was such a happy dog and to have her suffer would have been worst than her death for both of us.

I’m not sure how long it’s going to take me to get to a better place and I’m not putting pressure on nor am I allowing others to put pressure on me. If someone is tired of me talking about her then don’t talk to me. Tried of me posting about her and my feeling about losing her on Social Media then unfollow me. Don’t make me hide my emotions because you don’t understand, care, or its depressing. Wonder how I feel to be the one experiencing the lost.

It is what it is. I miss Sophie terribly so and I’m giving myself the time. This grief that I’m feeling will go away in time. I will always miss her but the hurt I’m sure will soften in time. For sure, I’m not totally stuck anymore. I can see improvement from that first week I put her down when I didn’t even wash my body or a dish. Three weeks in, I am back to work, blogging, working on RLT Collection trying to get my site up to date and preparing for BlogHer 2014, I think that is progress. The one thing that I don’t intend to do is fill my life up with activity as a well to avoid the pain. I’m allowing my grief to go through a natural process on it’s own terms so that I can emerge a better person to have experience this lost. They say what does not kill you, makes you stronger.

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