



www.rebeccaburns.com

~~~~~

All poetry/articles protected by copyright laws © 2006 Rebecca J. Burns

Items may not be resold or copied in anyway

To use an excerpt of any poem or article please email for permission

[Rebecca@rebeccaburns.com](mailto:Rebecca@rebeccaburns.com)

Welcome! Thank you for visiting my websites, check back often, new products, e-books, articles and resources are added almost daily.

***Your payment was Successful!*** Thank you for purchasing my e-book, "Tiny Hearts, Big Wounds." You will receive a confirmation email shortly. If you wish to review your payment visit your [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) account.

I encourage you to return to my site and visit my motivational product store. I offer unique Motivational & Inspirational gifts of poetry and specialty items for children.

I appreciate your purchasing this e-book but ask that you please do not sell or change this book in any way. I do appreciate your telling others if this e-book was helpful and for encouraging them to visit my site. Word of mouth is always appreciated.

Email [Rebecca@rebeccaburns.com](mailto:Rebecca@rebeccaburns.com) if I can ever be of any assistance.

*Love & Peace,*

***Rebecca J. Burns***

*Writer, Dreamer & True Believer you change your life by changing your Focus!*

[www.RebeccaBurns.com](http://www.RebeccaBurns.com)

*Resources & Products to Motivate and Inspire*



### ***TINY HEARTS BIG WOUNDS***

If your child were to fall and cut their knee would you throw them in their room, close the door and wait for it to heal? No, you would comfort your child, clean the wound and tell them everything will be all right. You would nurse the wound and change the dressing. Layer by layer the wound would heal and day-by-day your child would forget about the initial fall.

The death of a parent is the most severe wound a child can experience. Only now can I say if allowed to mourn his or her loss a child can heal, not completely though as no one really can after such a deep loss. Not discussing a death can be more painful than the actual death. Death happens in the blink of an eye, the crash of a car or the completion of a heartbeat. No

matter how someone dies, you must talk about it in order for one to heal, especially a child.

My estranged husband had not seen our son for over a year when I received word he died of a heart attack. It sickened me I would have to tell my six-year-old son, that the father he already mourned, as a child does when a parent leaves, was gone forever.

The conversations that follow took place between my son and I the year following his father's death. My hope is in sharing the stages of my son's mourning another child will realize the feelings they are experiencing are normal. I also want parents to be aware their children's behavior, even months after their loss, is most definitely connected.



## ***"A Forever Wound"***

### **Day 1**

"How did he die?"

"He was sick and his heart was tired. One night while he was sleeping his heart stopped beating." I heard the words coming out of my mouth yet I felt as if someone else was speaking for me.

I carried my son's trembling body to the couch. I wrapped my arms around him and we cried. Nothing mattered except my son's sadness.

His Great Grandfather died several months earlier and I felt he was too young to attend the services but on his insistence, I answered his questions. Questions like, "where will he be buried, what will he wear and will his body really go to Heaven?"

"I want to see Dad before he is in the ground!" he demanded.

I tried to talk him out of it, knowing it would cause horrible nightmares, but he stood his ground.

"I'll never get to touch him again. I don't remember when I saw him last, this is my last chance," he begged.

I knew no matter what I decided the decision would come back to haunt me. I wanted to spare my son any further anguish. I knew if I let him go, he could be scarred for life. I also knew if I did not let him go, he would wait for his Dad to knock on the door and ask him to play ball. After struggling with the decision, I knew I had to allow him closure. I had thought he was too young to realize how final death was, but now I knew he somewhat understood.

We spent the next few days consoling each other. My son insisted on sleeping with me for fear I too would die in my sleep. I tried to assure him that I was perfectly fine and was not going to die. As his mother, all I wanted was to make everything better. The only thing I could do was help him grieve for his father.

The following morning we attended his father's wake. Strangers tried desperately to comfort us. All eyes were on us yet it felt like just the two of us saying good-bye to his father.

"He looks different. How come he doesn't look like Dad?"

I was not prepared to explain, "When a person dies they don't usually look the same. Daddy's soul is in Heaven and his body is in the coffin."

My son trembled as if the ground was about to swallow him. I carried him to an empty room and bolted for a chair in the corner. As I rocked him,

he cried a cry I had never heard before, shaking the foundation of my soul. We were two very broken hearts, his for the loss of his father and mine for the loss of his innocence. I wanted to flee this sad place, after all, I am his mother and that is what mothers do. My son did not share my feelings.

“I want to see Dad one more time before he is in the ground forever.”

The line of people moved to the side and allowed us to walk directly to the casket. We were standing for only a moment when he fell into my arms, frantically sobbing. I hurried back to our chair in the quiet room. We sat and cried some more. Even after he had stopped crying, my son was not ready to leave. I was relieved he did not ask to see his father again. We had been sitting for a half hour when he announced he was ready to go home.

We walked to the car hand in hand.

“That didn’t look like Dad; he looked different than I remember.”

He continued to mumble how different his father looked as he fell asleep.



### **"Sad so Bad"**

#### **Day 5**

"Mom, you know what I wish?"

"What?"

"I wish I hugged Dad in the coffin. If I hadn't let go of him do you think he'd still be dead?"

"Yes, he'd still be dead."

"I miss him. I wish I could just hug him one more time. I hate being this sad."

"It is normal to be this sad. You missed your Dad long before he died."

"How come God takes people you love? He took Grandpa but Grandpa was old. Dad wasn't old, he shouldn't have taken Dad."

"Your Dad was sick. God took Dad so he wouldn't be in so much pain."

"I am in so much pain," he wailed. "I hope I die tonight!"

"I hope not! I would be so sad if you were not with me."

“Well,” he said as he stomped his feet, “now you know how I feel!”

“Yes, now I know. I just love you,” I whispered in his ear.

“I know mommy, I am just sad so bad.”





***"I'm afraid to close my eyes"***

**Week 3**

"Mom?"

"Yes."

"Will you sleep with me tonight?"

"I can't. I need to sleep in my own bed."

"I'm afraid to close my eyes."

"What's wrong?"

"Didn't Dad die because he went to sleep and couldn't open his eyes again?"

"Dad died of a heart attack, not because he went to sleep. His heart was tired."

"My heart is tired too. It has a big hole in it. That's why I'm afraid to close my eyes."

"I will lay next to you until you fall asleep tonight."

"Mom, will you die tonight?"

"No, I won't die tonight."

“How do you know for sure?”

“Well, Mommy is healthy. You don’t need to worry about me.”

“Do you think Dad is watching us?”

“Yes. I bet he wishes you didn’t fear dying.”

“Did he fear dying?”

“I don’t think so. It happened quickly.”

“Mom, can I be a doctor when I grow up?”

“Of course, you can be anything you want. Why would you like to be a doctor?”

“I can save someone else’s dad if they have a bad heart.”

“I love the heart you have. Goodnight sweetheart.”

“Goodnight ... (yawn) ... I still love Daddy.”

“He loves you too, night now.”

“Night...”



### ***“Every second of every day”***

#### **Month 3**

My son came running in the house crying.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“I had a fight with Matt. He was being mean!”

“Friends fight. Why do you look so sad?”

“I miss my Dad.”

“I know. What made you think of him all of a sudden, you were having such a good time playing outside?”

“It’s not all of a sudden Mom! Even when I am happy and laughing, I am thinking of Dad. I think of him every second of every day,” he blurted out as if unable to understand how I did not already know this.

After the incident I never took for granted he was not thinking of his Father. He cried for a few minutes, had a drink of water then told me he was going back outside to play. I watched from the doorway as my son continued to mourn.



## ***"I wish you died instead of Dad"***

### **Month 4**

The end of the day was catching up with my son and he began a long meltdown, one of many. "Hurry up, time to clean your room."

"I can't clean my room, I'm too tired."

Before I could respond, he started yelling at me.

"I wish you were dead instead of Dad! He was nice you're mean!"

I leaned against the wall and let him yell. I did not want to say the wrong thing. Later, friends would tell me I should not have let him yell. I knew he was only verbalizing his anger over his Father's death. Even four months later, it was still fresh in his mind.

"You always make me clean my room, take a bath. Dad never made me do stuff. I hate you!" he yelled, as he threw pillows from his bed at me.

As I walked down the stairs, I heard stuffed animals hitting the floor by my feet. I was at a loss as to how to handle this situation. He did not want me near him. I sat on the couch and listened to my son crying the

saddest tears. Eventually, maybe an hour later, he became silent. A few minutes went by when I heard a faint, “Mom, can I have a drink?”

He was laying face up on his bed; his face soaked with tears. “I’m sorry for what I said. I don’t wish you were dead. I just miss Dad. At least if I was dead I could see him.”

“I know. How come you don’t let me talk about Dad?”

“It makes me sad. I told you, never say the D word,” he demanded.

“I know, but sometimes you need to talk about sad things.”

“I don’t want to. I just want to see him one more time.”



## ***"I wish I was dead too"***

### **Month 6**

"I flipped my desk over in school and the teacher didn't get mad."

"Why did you flip your desk?"

"My mind wasn't working and I couldn't do the stupid math."

"Did you tell the teacher?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She said to put my head on my desk and rest for a few minutes."

"Did you?"

"NO! I flipped over my desk!"

"Why did you flip over the desk?"

"I told you! The math was stupid, I'm stupid, my mind won't work, I hate school, I hate the teacher, I hate my life, I miss my Dad. I am sad all the time. I wish I was dead too. I wish I could see him one more time."

After he finished blurting out what was wrong he fell into my arms. He had become overwhelmed with everything. "I don't want you to die."

“I wouldn’t have to do work in school and I wouldn’t have to be alive. It hurts all the time to be me. You said Dad wasn’t in pain anymore. Well I don’t want to be in pain either.”

“You can’t just die.”

“Yes I can. I can jump in front of a truck or stab myself,” he demanded.

I sensed a new fear and was jolted into my son’s reality. Would my little boy really try to harm himself?

The next day I met with his teacher, principal and guidance counselor. The counselor was worried about my son’s anxiety and suggested he enter counseling. Then my son’s teacher informed me he had been tearing up his class work and throwing books on the floor. When I asked why she had not told me this sooner she said she was giving him space since he was dealing with his father’s death.

I managed to find a counselor but was not able to get an appointment for a few weeks. A few nights later, my son became enraged when I told him it was time for bed. He began breaking everything, knickknacks, toys, books, anything within reach. His anger shocked me. He then took a large knife from the kitchen and held it to his chest. I knew at this moment I had to do something drastic to save him from himself.

I did not know whom else to call tonight so I called a crisis hotline. I had called a local crisis center earlier in the week for assistance in obtaining a counselor. The staff tried to calm me down and asked what was going on. I told them he had a counseling appointment soon but something needed to happen immediately. They advised me the only thing I could do was to call for an ambulance. They would bring him to the center as a child in crisis. I did not want to resort to anything so drastic. I told the woman on the phone that I would call back if he did not calm down.

He was becoming even more violent. I made one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make I called an ambulance. It ripped out my heart as several men and I tried to catch my son who now was running around the front yard screaming, "I want someone to kill me!"

He was placed on a stretcher and restrained because he was kicking the attendants. I rubbed his head and tried to soothe my little baby. Once we arrived at the hospital, he seemed to have almost completely calmed down. The ambulance attendant untied the restraints him and he leapt into my arms. I carried him into the emergency room.

After he completely calmed down, they sent us home and said we needed to wait to attend his counseling appointment for any further



treatment. My only other choice was to have my son admitted to inpatient facility. There was no pill to take his pain away.

Once counseling started, we had an argument before each appointment. I had to drag him to each appointment. I sat in the back of the room while he sat across from his counselor, refusing to talk. Once I felt comfortable with the counselor, I did not attend the sessions with my son. He had a hard time opening up but later in the evenings while we were eating supper, he would open up a floodgate of emotions. He was finally able to express what he was feeling in words for the first time. I found out his anger was not just about his father. Every day things like finding the bathroom at school and missing me became too much for him to handle.

This is where his healing began.



### **"The D word"**

#### **Month 7**

No one is allowed to say the word Dad, Father or Daddy in the presence of my son. He would fly into a rage if the counselor talked about his father's death. As much as we tried to avoid this topic, it was the reason we were here. I realized my son needed to hear the words and I stopped avoiding them.

"I hate to hear his name; it reminds me of who I don't have anymore. Do you think I'll be like Dad when I grow up?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Do you think I'm as smart as he was?"

"Yes, you are a smart young man."

"Not lately."

"Lately doesn't count."

"Why?"

"A person's brain and heart can only handle so much. You have been having a hard time with most things since your father died."

“I hate when you say the D word. I hate it. Why do you say it?”

“I say it because he is your Dad. You don’t hate the words, you hate that your Dad is dead. Maybe it isn’t the dad word you hate, maybe it is the word dead.”

“I hate the word dead too. I hate words. I hate me!”

“Why do you hate you?”

“I don’t have a dad anymore. I just have you. Not that I don’t love you but ...”

“It’s okay. I understand.”



### ***"Punch the Pillow"***

#### **Month 8**

"How is punching a pillow gonna help me when I'm angry?"

"The counselor said having something to hit could help. Why don't you try it?"

"Fine," he said.

My son was angry and started throwing pillows off his bed. He seemed to be enjoying himself at first and then he became very angry. He began throwing the pillows at me and verbalizing his anger.

"Why did God take Dad? I hate God. He can't be a good God, he took my Dad and I loved him. Dad was good. I hope God dies," he screamed.

Eventually he collapsed onto the pile of pillows on the floor and cried for a long time. I rubbed his back and cried for him. I was grateful he was finally expressing his pain yet I was heartbroken because of it.

I realized mourning is a painful wound with many layers that need to heal. Like any other wound, it takes time for the healing to begin to show.



## *“I love Dad more than I love you”*

### **1 Year**

A picture of my son and his father sat on my son's dresser years. This picture became very important in my son's grieving process. The past few weeks my son carried this picture with him everywhere. Sometimes I would find the picture under his pillow as he lay on the floor watching television.

When he was angry, the picture was on the floor or turned upside down.

When he was sad, he would lay next to the picture and talk to his Father.

The location of this picture became a guide that helped me determine my son's mood at that moment. This picture served many emotions. I knew he had begun to heal when the picture sat on top of the television and he did not walk around with it daily.

“I love Dad more than you. Is that all right?”

“Hey, as long as you love me.”

“Because Dad is dead I love him more.”

He continued to talk as if he needed to let me know why he loved his Dad more than me.

“He wasn’t with me for as long as you and he was sick. He is with God forever and I just love him more because he is dead.”

“He loves you so much and wishes you weren’t so sad.”

“I’m not as sad as I used to be but my heart will always miss Dad.”

---

Three years after his father’s death I asked my son to pick a word that showed his feelings from a book we were reading.

“I am happy because I have you,” he said cheerfully and sad because I don’t have my Dad.”

I realize my son’s tiny heart still has such a big wound. Mourning is difficult for anyone, even more so for a child. It can ruin a child’s life if they not allowed to show their true feelings, deal with the anger and go through the stages of grief. It amazes me the strength my little boy has shown me.

Please give your child or a child in your life the tools to mourn. Listen, listen and listen some more. Sometimes all they need is a big hug, someone to listen to them and lots of pillows.



**HELPFUL TOOL:** Wink, Wink™ cards, the cards with Feelings.

**Why another greeting card for children?** The unique line of cards was designed out of my necessity to help my son deal with major temper tantrums and inner turmoil after his father's death. The multiple choice cards became a signal for me to know when the, "time out in his room," had worked.

This unique tool helps open up discussions of feelings and emotions young children are often unable to verbally express while giving parents or caregivers a way into the mind of their troubled, sometimes hurting child.

**Where it all began:** My son was about to turn 5-years-old when his estranged father died of a heart attack. Dealing with the aftermath of this loss my son began having frequent temper tantrums and ended up punished in his room most days. During this time my son was unable to verbalize what was wrong and his acting out became routine. I would enter his bedroom after a short time out to see if I could find out what was really bothering him. Normally my questioning turned into another fight about nothing. After a while my son began throwing pieces of paper down the stairs with scribbled notes like, I miss my dad or I am just so sad, now offering me a glimpse of what was bothering him.

The next few years I watched as my son tried to express feelings he didn't yet understand. As I continued to see my now 8-year-old son struggled to communicate I yearned for a way to help him. I thought of all the pieces of paper he had tossed down the stairs over the years and created an interactive parenting tool that my son would eventually call, Wink, Wink™ the card with feelings. My son colored artwork and we designed each card around issues he was dealing with on a daily basis.

We then discussed how the cards should be used and placed a few packages in his bedroom. Eventually shortly after my son was sent to his room as a punishment I would see a card laying at the bottom of the hallway stairs. Of course the first few cards told me how awful I was, but eventually he circled items of how he was really feeling, which allowed me the opportunity to enter his room and talk about what was really bothering him.

The cards helped him to quickly calm down as he now had a coping tool that he was excited to use.

The cards now come in 4 different topics: *Help Me, Just Because, I'm Sorry & Something Happened*. The cards allow children to select from a list of feelings and emotions they are unable to verbally express along with what they want and need from their parents or caregivers. The cards are sold in separate sets of the following 4 topics: ***Help, I'm Sorry, Just Because and Something Happened***.

Return to [www.rebeccaburns.com](http://www.rebeccaburns.com) for a Free Wink Wink Card. You can also purchase all 4 cards for immediate download for just \$3.99 or purchase pre-printed cards and envelopes.

Always remember, they are only children for a short time so **Love them up!**

Love & Peace,  
**Rebecca J. Burns**

The **"Just for Kids,"** section includes Journals designed especially for children. You may also email me a masterpiece your child has created and I will place it on a t-shirt, mouse pad, coffee mug or any other item from the site that you select.