

Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterward.
- Vernon Law

This month everyone will be heading off to school and back to the routines of the season. I was thinking how we usually are excited and anxious to see what we will learn in the coming year. Since I don't know what that will be, I decided to review what I did learn from my experiences. I am in year 6 of not having Adam in my life the way I want him to be. Every year has been a little different and I have learned something new from each of them.

Here are some lessons I have learned regarding the grief process and myself:

- No matter how long it has been, the hurt does not go away. It may ease up, but never goes away.
- If I miss my Loved Ones, others do too.
- People who have lost someone many years ago still grieve like it was yesterday.
- Momentous occasions such as graduation, a family wedding, birth of a child, bring all the raw emotions to the surface.
- When someone asks me how many children I have, I can still get heart palpitations and a flutter in your stomach.
- Moms don't miss their children any more or less than Dads do. It's just different. Same for siblings missing siblings and friends missing friends.
- If you ask people to attend a memory service or honor your Loved One in some way with you, (our balloon launch), they will respond with gratitude because you included them.
- People still love a hand written "Thank You" note. Write to someone who has remembered your loved One or been kind regarding your feelings. It will make you feel great and them feel even better.
- Even 6 years later, some people feel funny about mentioning Adam's name. They think it will make me sad. What they don't realize is that I am sad all the time and mentioning his name makes me happy. No one wants to know that his or her Loved One or Friend has been forgotten.
- I can't blame others for comparing the loss of their Loved Ones to the loss of my son. They just don't know and I'm sure I responded the same way before I knew. I am glad they did not have the experience I have.
- Raising money and volunteering for a cause you believe in, (JDRF), can give you back so much more than you gave.
- A support group becomes the one meeting you will not miss no matter what. These fellow grieverers are your source for information, comfort and perspective you may not have thought of on your own. The camaraderie is a gift.
- You come to accept that every event in life is precious.
- Tears still come and are necessary. (Check out Oct 2006 in the Archives)
- Pets grieve too.

While you are preparing for the hectic months ahead, take the time to reflect on what lessons your experience has taught you. Focus on how they helped you to resolve your grief and mourning issues. Maybe you haven't even realized that something you encountered actually did help. Share it with other loved ones or friends. That's when you know you've passed the test!