



A healing center
for grieving
children & teens

It's 4:48 am.

My heart and mind are racing as I wonder what will happen today.

Life is not the same anymore.

Our world has abruptly stopped.

We have not been through anything like this in our lifetime, and yet this stress and uncertainty feels all too familiar to me.

I *have* been here before.

December 5th, 2014 was a typical night for my family. My husband Scott and I divided parental responsibilities for the weekend. He chose to go to our oldest son's hockey game an hour and a half away and I was with another of our three boys returning pop cans for the 8th grade fundraiser to Washington D.C.

I received a phone call from my oldest son, who was delayed by a car accident. Two hours later a police officer was at my door with a message no one ever wants to receive: I regret to inform you that your husband was killed by a drunk driver this evening.

I couldn't breathe. My body started to shake uncontrollably.

My world had abruptly stopped.

First, there was shock. This isn't happening. Complete disbelief. Is it really happening. Anger. Why is this happening to my family?

Feelings I—and I suspect others--are experiencing right now.

We are, collectively, grieving.

We are grieving the loss of life, certainly given the deadliness of this virus—but also the loss of our way of life. Jobs, social interactions, routines, funerals, celebrations and milestone moments--weddings, graduations, birthdays, senior trips, sports team rituals—have all been wiped out.

I often talk about my life before Scott died and after Scott died. My gut tells me this will hold true for all of us as we come out of this fog.

Becoming a widow at 45 and leading Ele's Place, a healing center for grieving children and teens, has given me a unique perspective on life, death and the grief process.

Many of us are finding the positives of the quarantine. Family dinners, long walks, time to clean and organize and take stock of our lives. It's ok to find silver linings in a challenging situation.

But, we also are sad, angry, and frustrated with the lack of control. And that's OK, too.

Our emotions can change like the ocean. The water may be like a wave that tickles our toes, or knocks us hard at the knees, or it may be like a tsunami.

Right now, anxiety and uncertainty are intense emotions many of us are experiencing. We are worrying about ourselves, our families and our children; Will I have a job? Will my elderly parents be OK? How do I make my child feel better when they are so sad about all that they have lost?

An ice cream cone, a Happy Meal or even a hug just cannot take away the pain.

We are a society that is used to fixing problems—fast. But grief is messy. Grief is not linear. It is ok to not have answers right now. It is ok to just sit with someone and feel sad. Somedays, the best we can all do is take things one day, one hour or one breath at a time. All feelings are ok, one of our guiding principles at Ele's Place.

As the world reboots, in a very different reality than we lived just 2 months ago, we must continue to embrace the grief process and support our kids, teens and families as they journey through it.

If we do that, we can become a better, more compassionate community on the other side. And maybe that is what we gain from the loss.

Kristine Kuhnert is the Director of Ele's Place Capital Region. Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, Ele's Place continues to serve grieving children, teens, young adults and their families across the state of Michigan, at no cost to them. Please visit [elsesplace.org](https://www.facebook.com/groups/elsesplacecr) to learn more about these services and how you can help. Additionally, Ele's Place invites you to share your joys and challenges of this journey through this pandemic <https://www.facebook.com/groups/elsesplacecr>.