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September Tears

By Dr. Dorree Lynn

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September is that ritualized time of year when children of all ages leave home for school. This week, our twenty-two year old daughter left home for what seemed like the zillionth time. This time it was to return to college, and this time she left total chaos in her wake. She had transferred to a new school and her hitherto well-understood leaving and packing process seemed forgotten. It was as if she had never been away before. She experienced periods of anxiety followed by times of elation. According to her, she needed everything new and there were several significant altercations as her stepfather and I pointed out that what she already possessed was perfectly fine. She took an extra job to earn money for what she wanted and she vacillated between pride in her accomplishments and anger that we weren't giving her all that she asked for.

At times, I burst with pride at the many wonderful things she did. Other times, I wondered where this "bratty" young woman came from. She refused help with packing and for a week the entire house looked like a college dorm, although historically, her college room unlike her room at home, was in fact military neat. As parents who had been through school starting with several children before her, as well as many with her, we found ourselves surprisingly torn about how much help to give her. Should we impose the much-needed structure that we thought she would benefit from, or should we respect her growing edge and let her do things as she saw fit? We wanted to maintain our feelings of good will and send her off with our support and blessings, but could we? Would she let us?

Some days were easier than others. Sometimes she snapped at us. Other days we snapped at her, and still other times, my husband and I snapped at each other. It was clear that her new adventure was both exciting and scary for her. Since the decision to transfer to a new school was all hers, she tried to hold her anxiety inward and present a brave face to all.

Her new roommate was someone she had known in her old school, but they had not known each other well. The girls, or shall I call them young women, made most of their own arrangements and although they lived in different cities figured out how to drive the several thousand miles they needed to go together.

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My husband endlessly and obsessively fretted and worried about the details that he knew they would have to deal with. He made lists that the girls barely paid attention to as he worked out banking and travel links, downloaded map quest, and tried to instill a sense of order, all with little acknowledgment or thanks from the quasi independent females. Our other children had been far more generous in their responses to our efforts, as had she in the past, so the girls' behavior was difficult to take.

I focused on stressing academics, lecturing as little as possible and I tried to keep in check and remain silent about my constant terror surrounding their journey. 'Do you have your charger for your cell phone' was about as verbal as I got. Did I say it one hundred times, or just think it? I am not sure.

Finally the big moment came. A good-bye celebratory lunch and off they went. Relieved, that they were on their way, I wanted to applaud how well my daughter had done. As her car pulled away, the all too

familiar feeling came over me. My heart broke and the well-remembered September tears rained down my cheeks. She may be almost all grown up, but she's still my baby. I imagine I will smile and cry during these bittersweet moments forever.

The house is quiet now — and clean. Order has been restored. I tell myself I like the quiet. And, I do. So why do I find reasons to go into her empty room so often? I guess I miss her presence, chaos and all. I imagine I always will.

Life is too hard to do alone,

Dr. D.

Dorree Lynn, PH.D.

Dr. Dorree Lynn is co-founder of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Psychotherapy and a practicing clinician in New York and Washington, DC. Dr. Lynn served on the executive board of the American Academy of Psychotherapists and she is on the editorial board of their publication, Voices. She is also a regular columnist for the Washington, DC newspaper, The Georgetown. Dr. Lynn is a noted speaker and well known on the lecture circuit.

Remembering

By Joanna M. Carman

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As the anniversary of September 11 approaches, we find ourselves once again drudging up compassion and patriotism, ready to light candles and join hands with strangers for the sake of peace and unity.

Countless memorials across our nation will host thousands of tears praying, begging for a better world where planes are not flown into

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our mothers, brothers, and friends. Just as the weeks that followed September 11, 2001, Americans will stand together, united in our hope for love and kindness for all mankind.

Everyone I know wants to do something grand, wants to hold hands and give hugs, maybe take dinner to an elderly woman. We'll turn our headlights on that day and hang our flags at half-mast. We will honk at the painted man holding his flag high on the highway overpass.

However, as great as it is to have this unity back in our hearts, I can't help but feel disgusted that in the last half of the year, everyone forgot that little feeling of togetherness that carried our nation through those first few months of recovery. After the debris was cleared away from Ground Zero, after all survivors' wounds were dressed, and all television programming was back to normal, it seems as if Americans also returned to our old ways.

It didn't take long for some of us to attempt to fraud the various charities setup for the families and victims of 9-11. In fact, some news reports tell of husbands killing their wives, passing off teary-eyed stories about how their soul mates were killed at the World Trade Center – lies that are true for many of our neighbors. This less than a year after we all held hands and cried together. Television news brings you reports of parents having sex with their 3-year-old child over a webcam, all for the pleasure of their fellow abusive parents. There's fighting everywhere.

We must not only remember that 9-11 happened, but that all of these other things have happened since. Have we already forgotten how ugly the world can be that we're back to hurting each other again? Americans are disconnected from one another. We're back to hating, to slamming doors in each other's faces, tramping on flowers to save three seconds around the garden. Again, a fellow American isn't much more than an inconvenience, a traffic jam, or a lazy slob taking up air on the Eastside of town.

As we light candles in memory of those lost on September 11, 2001, we should light the sun to remember how we felt about each other during those weeks that followed the attacks. With that much love for human life circulating on a more permanent basis, America is sure to change for the better. While we remember what was lost, we must take the time to remember what remains: walking past you on the street with a bag full of groceries, the children jump-roping in a parking lot, the elderly man that takes up smoking because he's tired of being alone. There are so many people in our country who are still alive and in

need of our love and compassion.

We will mourn again for those lost on September 11, 2001. But how long will our change-of-heart last this time? What about next year? We must be careful not to let it slip away again. If we don't take the time to pay some positive attention to those that are still around, September 11 will happen again; perhaps this time from within.

Get up, America, and remember everything that happens. Sure, it's easy to turn the page and flip the channel, but, then the channel is the only thing that changes.

To read more of "The Connection" or to read poetry, short stories, and essays, visit GarbageDog online at <http://www.garbagegod.net/garbagegod.html>. Joey can be reached at joey@garbagegod.net.



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