

Graduation Day

Graduation Day: A day cherished by the graduate and for his or her parents; one of the long-awaited "rites of passage" to the new status called "adulthood."

Laughter is heard among the students; tears of joy and nostalgia from the parents.

The teachers heave sighs of relief and feel a mixture of accomplishment with just a tinge of sadness for the days of laughter and childhood attachments that must be left behind.

Awards are given.

Gifts are received.

Parties are planned.

Future plans are discussed.

New goals are dreamed.

There are hurdles to climb.

Disappointments are intermingled with success.

All of these things are a part of life for those fortunate enough to have survived the dangers and pitfalls of this complicated society in which we live.

There was no prom night at or house.

There were no award ceremonies to attend.

There was no graduation gift to buy.

There was no college to choose.

There was no future to plan...

Jimmy doesn't live here anymore.

His home now is a neatly trimmed patch of grass with bright-colored flowers; a tombstone inscribed with love; a small space carefully tended and watched over lovingly by someone who finds it most difficult to cope, to accept, to go on, or to find joy or peace in anything.

Tears are a way of life now, and spare time is filled with emptiness.

There is sorrow now for a cheerful young boy who will soon be forgotten by all but a few.

Broken dreams. Unanswered prayers. Disbelief. Loss of faith.

And maybe years of endurance of a situation so unacceptable, so intolerable, that from the inner depths, a scream is stifled.

With one word my entire being cries out, "WHY?"

By Ann Ianni, Bereavement Magazine, May 1990

What Does *That* Mean? ~ excerpt

When children are faced with life-altering changes such as terminal illness or the death of someone close to them, they are often confused by all the new words and complex concepts they are being exposed to. Children turn to trusted adults to

help them understand. Frequently, adults are also at a loss to explain what is happening and they are searching for the right answers. *What Does That Mean?* Is an excellent resource for those times. This dictionary of death, dying and grief terms is designed specifically for grieving children and the adults in their lives who love and support them. The authors have included instructions in the front of the book to help parents and other adults begin the process of explaining complicated words in direct, simple terms.

For example, what does *cremation* mean? Other words in the book include grief, casket, obituary and pallbearers.

This necessary book was written by Harold Ivan Smith, a grief educator for Saint Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, and Joy Johnson, the co-founder of Centering Corporation, a worldwide grief resource center that is the gold standard for resources on death, dying and bereavement.

The book is published by the Centering Corporation and can be ordered through their website at www.centering.org or by calling 866-218-0101. Book cost is \$8.95 each and free shipping is offered for TCF chapters and members.

By Pamela Gabbary, M.A., FT, Program Director for The Mourning Star Center for Grieving Children, Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Winter/Spring 2009-2010

