

My Mother, Linda Perry's, Victory Over Death Through Love

Limi Bauer
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It was a year ago I got the news that mom wouldn't make it through the year. My friend, my home, my guide in this mess called "life;" my mommy received a stage-four pancreatic cancer diagnosis. The news rippled across our family, extended family, and community; leaving devastation and heartache in its wake.



Cancer is my new "c" word.

As I reeled and stepped into the foggy whirlwind that my life would become, one of my best friends, Grace, sent me this message. She had also lost her dad to cancer, and knew exactly what I was going through.

She sent me a list of to-do's for the precious time left. This list was a series of guideposts that helped me to navigate the completely unfamiliar territory of the loss of a parent.

She wrote, "There is nothing that I can say that will make this any easier for you. But I will be here for you through it all....listening...comforting...crying with you. And every once in awhile, I might just do something to make you laugh!"



1. Make a list of anything and everything that is important to you to ask your mom, or to do with your mom. Take the time and think about things, memories you might want to make with her or information/stories you want her to tell. It is so easy to forget little things. There are little things that I wished I'd remembered to ask my dad, like his "special formula" for timing hard and soft boiled eggs. No one, not even his brother, remembers it now.

2. Remember that the doctors can be off on their timing. Do things NOW. We were told he would have about five more years, and he died in under a year. Talk to her while she is still alert and at home. Hospitals and medications change people.



3. Make a list of all the things you want to tell her. Good and bad. Clear the air. If you have a list, you'll be able to find the right time and you won't stress about forgetting something. No regrets. Just lots of love.



4. Find something, some special item that can be your thing (hers and yours). Whether it's her favorite flower or a sunset or something that you did together that made you feel warm and fuzzy. Try to connect with that item or place while she's still here. Then, once she has passed, you'll have it as a connection. She'll be able to send you little messages of love and you'll be able to think of her when you see them. For me and my dad, it's his little yellow screwdriver that I carry with me.

5. Take photos, take photos, take photos....and not just the smiling ones. Take profile shots or ones of her typical expressions that you'll miss. Take photos of other things besides her face. I will

always regret not taking a photo of my father's hands, because I held them so much as a kid, and loved them, but can't remember them now....

6. See if you can get a recording of her voice. One of my dearest possessions is a recording we have of my dad singing a song for my sister's birthday. It is one of the only recordings of his voice, since HE usually recorded US; especially if she would be willing to record a message for your children.

7. Allow yourself to EXPERIENCE the grieving process. Often, we want to hide from pain or stuff it down; but this process is much easier if you are present in every part of it and own every part: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sometimes, if the feelings are ugly, a journal is a safe way to express them!"

Thank you, Grace, for this message and for your friendship.

Now, the year has passed and so has mom.

