

Tending to My Garden of Grief

This morning, as I grappled once again with the loss of my daughter through estrangement by her choice over the last three years, my Higher Power gave me a perfect metaphor in a quote from the July 5 reading in *Courage to Change* (B-17). The quote at the bottom of the page reads, “Love your neighbor, yet pull not down your hedge.” This program is teaching me to turn my attention and reliance inward to the sustaining strength of God as I understand this presence within me.

I’ve been fighting an invasive species I planted 15 years ago: Russian sage. It is in one of my garden beds and has taken over all the other plants, and, through its traveling tendrils, it threatens to expand even further. In other beds where I planted it around my house, its spread has been curtailed by cherry trees from volunteer seeds that blew in, took root, and became stronger than the sage. But on this one side, it had free rein.

While contemplating my plants, I began to see them as metaphors for the spiritual lessons I’m learning. The grief I face daily from the loss of the relationship with my daughter can feel overwhelming, causing fear and despair. Like with the sage plant, I can’t fight grief alone, without the help of my Higher Power. The tendrils of grief pop up when my defenses are down, and I realize my powerlessness. But the grace of God can work below the surface without my assistance and, like the cherry trees, fight battles that are beyond my control. These competing species are like the “hedge” in the *Courage to Change* quote, representing the healthy boundary that must be firm yet porous. I thought about how I’m learning through the principles of Al-Anon to anchor my roots in the soil of God’s love. Instead of sending out tendrils of worry and misplaced desire to help or solve my children’s

problems, which are beyond my control, I can reroute those flailing little insecure roots toward my home within, to my sacred center.

Though I will always grieve the loss of the relationship with my daughter, I have to accept, for now, that this is her decision. Through the principles of Al-Anon, I am finding wisdom, happiness, hope, strength, comfort, and healing, for which I am thankful every day.

By Janet L., New Mexico

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