

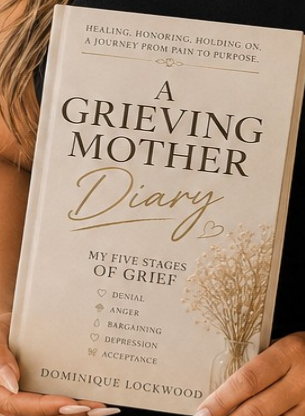
HEALING. HONORING. HOLDING ON.
A JOURNEY FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE.



A GRIEVING MOTHER *Diary*

MY FIVE STAGES
OF GRIEF

-  DENIAL
-  ANGER
-  BARGAINING
-  DEPRESSION
-  ACCEPTANCE




YOU ARE
STILL BECOMING
EVEN IN YOUR
silence.


A GRIEVING MOTHER'S DIARY

My Five Stages of Grief



**Healing. Honoring. Holding On.
A Journey from Pain to Purpose.**

DOMINIQUE LOCKWOOD

Expanded Edition

DEDICATION

You Are Not Alone

This book is dedicated to every mother, father, sibling, grandparent, and loved one who has had to learn how to keep breathing after the loss of a child.



In Loving Memory of

ABDUL-LATIF WILSON

December 13, 2010 - April 13, 2015

“We LOVE you Teefy.”

Always and Forever.

When I took this picture I said, “Look at you looking like an angel.” I did not know that soon after, those words would become part of my reality.

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DEAR GRIEVING MOTHER

Before you turn another page

If this book found you because your child is no longer physically here, I wish I could sit beside you before you read another word. I would not rush you. I would not tell you to be strong. I would not tell you that everything will be okay. I would simply let you be exactly where you are, because grief does not need to be corrected before it can be witnessed.

There are losses that change your plans, and then there are losses that change your identity. Losing a child changes the language of your life. There is a before and an after. There are dates that everyone else sees as ordinary, but your body remembers before your mind even catches up. There are songs you can no longer hear the same way, places you cannot enter without remembering, and moments when laughter itself can make you feel guilty.

I wrote this book from inside that reality. I did not write it as a woman standing safely outside of grief explaining what grief should look like. I wrote it as a mother whose life was split open and who had to learn, slowly, how to live while carrying a love that had nowhere physical to go.

The five stages in this book are not a staircase. You may move from denial to anger and back again. Acceptance can sit beside depression. Bargaining can return years later on a birthday, an anniversary, or a quiet Tuesday afternoon. Your grief does not have to behave perfectly for your healing to be real.

My hope is not that you finish these pages and stop missing your child. My hope is that somewhere in these pages you recognize yourself. I hope you feel less isolated. I hope you realize that surviving one more day is still a form of courage. And I hope, when you are ready, you begin to believe that loving your child and living your life are not opposites.

You do not have to leave your child behind in order to move forward. You can carry love with you.

INTRODUCTION

How do you prepare for the unthinkable?

How can we prepare for a tragic loss? The short answer is: we cannot. There is no rehearsal for the moment your life becomes divided into before and after. There is no instruction manual that teaches a mother how to walk out of a hospital without the child she expected to bring home. There is no schedule that tells you when the shock should end or when your heart should stop reaching for what is no longer physically there.

After losing my son, I felt as though I had been held captive by the worst day of my life. The world kept moving while I remained emotionally attached to one date. People still went to work. Children still played. Cars still drove past. Bills still came. Morning still arrived. None of it made sense to me because the person I wanted most was gone.

There was no emotion I had not felt. Fear. Anger. guilt. confusion. resentment. numbness. desperation. love so deep that it hurt physically. At times I wondered whether I would ever feel like myself again. Eventually I realized that the goal was not to become the woman I was before. That woman had

been changed forever. The work was learning to live as the woman I had become.

One truth came to me early: even when grief convinces you that nobody understands, you are not alone. There are mothers waking up in other houses with the same ache. There are fathers learning how to cry in private because the world expects them to hold everyone together. There are siblings who lost not only a brother or sister, but also the version of their family they once knew.

Faith became one of the places where I wrestled, argued, questioned, and eventually found enough strength to keep going. I asked God questions I could not answer. I became angry. I bargained. I questioned everything I thought I knew. But even when my faith felt small, the possibility that I would one day see my child again gave me something to hold on to.

I began this diary during the peak of my tragedy. These pages are not a promise that grief disappears. They are a testimony that pain can change shape. I have walked through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, sometimes in that order and sometimes all in the same day. What I can tell you is this: there can still be light after the

darkest season of your life. It may not look like the life you planned. But it can still be life.

STAGE ONE: DENIAL

When your mind knows, but your heart refuses to believe

For the first six months after April 13, 2015, denial became part of my everyday life. “No. No. No.” Sometimes I said it quietly. Sometimes I screamed it. Sometimes I said nothing at all, but those words were still running through my mind: This cannot be my life. This cannot be my baby. This cannot be happening to me.

There were moments when I would call his name and almost expect him to come running. My mind knew what happened, but my heart could not accept what my eyes had already seen. That is one of the hardest things about losing a child. You can know the truth and still reject it at the same time. I knew my baby was gone. I knew. But knowing and accepting are two completely different things.

At night, sleep felt impossible. Whenever I closed my eyes, my mind replayed everything I desperately wanted to forget. I could see the street. I could see the blood. I could remember the ambulance ride. I could remember wanting the cars to move faster and the road to become smoother. Every pothole

and every delay felt personal because all I wanted was for somebody to save my baby.

A mother's instinct is to protect her child. We kiss cuts. We check fevers. We hold their hands when they are afraid. We try to fix whatever hurts. But what happens when something happens that a mother cannot fix? That question broke me.

I would wake up in the middle of the night praying that somehow I had dreamed everything. Maybe he would be in his room. Maybe I would hear his voice. Maybe I would see him sleeping peacefully. Maybe I would get one more ordinary morning. I would have given anything for an ordinary morning.

Grief teaches you how valuable ordinary moments really were. The noise you once complained about becomes the sound you would give anything to hear again. The toys on the floor become something you wish you could trip over one more time. The little voice calling “Mom” becomes the voice you search for in your memories.

I watched doctors walk away from my baby's small, limp body. In that moment, somewhere deep inside of me, I understood what had happened. But my spirit refused to cooperate with reality. I kept screaming for him to be okay. I

kept wanting somebody to tell me there had been a mistake. I kept waiting for a miracle.

That was my denial. It was not that I did not understand death. It was a mother's heart trying to survive something it was never designed to experience. For a long time, I believed denial meant pretending something did not happen. Now I understand it differently. Sometimes denial is the mind giving your heart the truth in pieces because receiving all of it at once would be too much to carry.

The calendar moves forward while part of you remains on the worst day of your life. People return to work. Traffic continues. Stores open. Children laugh outside. Bills arrive. Everybody seems to keep living. And you want to scream: How is the world still moving when my baby is gone? Life continued without asking my permission.

Eventually, I learned that moving forward did not mean leaving my son behind. There is a difference. I will never “get over” my child. He is my child forever. Death changed our relationship, but it did not erase motherhood. I still love him. I still speak his name. I still carry him. I still mother him through memory, purpose, love, and everything I do in his honor.

If you are waking up hoping everything was a nightmare, I understand. You do not have to force yourself to accept everything today. Sometimes surviving today is enough. Take grief minute by minute if you have to. Then hour by hour. Then day by day. Your heart is learning how to carry something incredibly heavy. Give it time.

Denial was not the absence of truth. It was my heart learning how to survive the truth.

JOURNAL AFTER DENIAL

A quiet place to tell the truth

What part of your loss still feels impossible to believe?

What ordinary memory do you miss most?

What would you say to your child if you had one uninterrupted minute?

What do you need permission to feel today?

STAGE TWO: ANGER

When love and rage live in the same heart

Does your love outweigh your hate? That became one of the biggest questions of my grief. The anger I experienced after losing my son was unlike anything I had ever felt before. I was angry at the person responsible for his death. I was angry at life. I was angry at myself. And yes, there were times when I was angry with God.

People are sometimes afraid to admit that. They believe being angry with God means they have lost their faith. For me, anger became part of my conversation with Him. Why would You take a child from a mother who loved him? Why didn't You protect my baby? You are God. You could have stopped this. Why him? Why not me? Why would You allow this to become my life?

I asked questions that did not have answers. Every unanswered question seemed to create another layer of anger. I wanted justice. Then there were moments when justice did not feel like enough. I wanted the person responsible for my pain to understand my pain. I wanted her

to know what it felt like to wake up and realize somebody you loved was never walking through your door again.

I wanted the world to feel as broken as I felt. That is the side of grief people do not always talk about. Pain can convince you that somebody else hurting will somehow make your heart hurt less. But eventually I learned something: another person's suffering could never resurrect my son. My hatred could never bring him home. My anger could not rewind April 13, 2015.

I had to decide what I wanted to carry. I was already carrying grief. Did I also want to carry hate? That question changed me. My baby had such a pure heart. He was joyful, intelligent, loving, and protective. He was loved as a son, brother, grandchild, nephew, and cousin. When I thought about who he was, I began to think about who I wanted to become because of him.

If he could see me, would I want him to see anger destroying his mother? Would I want hatred to become the biggest thing his death created? No. I wanted his love to create something bigger. My love for my son had to become stronger than my hatred for what happened to him.

Forgiveness did not mean pretending what happened was okay. It did not mean forgetting. It did not erase consequences. For me, forgiveness meant deciding that another person's actions would not control the rest of my life. I wanted peace. And I slowly learned that peace and hatred could not occupy the same amount of space inside me forever.

Healing did not happen in a straight line. Some days I released the anger. Some days I picked it right back up. Some days I questioned God all over again. Some days one memory brought the rage rushing back. That did not mean I had failed. It meant I was human and grieving.

Eventually I could answer my own question. Does my love outweigh my hate? Yes. It does. Because hatred ties me to the worst moment of my son's life. Love connects me to every beautiful moment that came before it. And I choose his life over the way he died. Every time.

I did not forgive because the pain was small. I forgave because I refused to let pain become the only thing I carried.

JOURNAL AFTER ANGER

A quiet place to tell the truth

Who or what are you angry with right now?

What do you wish people understood about your anger?

What would releasing one small piece of anger make room for?

Which memory of your child reminds you that love is bigger than the worst day?

STAGE THREE: BARGAINING

If I could have just one more chance

“Take me instead.” “Please take this pain away.” “Lord, I will do anything.” “Just give me one more chance.” These were the conversations that played inside my mind. Bargaining is grief trying to negotiate with something that has already happened.

You start creating impossible deals. If I had done this. If I had called sooner. If I had known. If we had stayed home. If God would give me one more opportunity. If I could trade places. If I could rewind time. If. If. If. That tiny word can torture a grieving parent.

I wanted April 13, 2015 to become a nightmare that only I remembered. I wanted to wake up. I wanted my baby beside me. I wanted normal. Not a new normal. My old normal. The one where all of my children were here.

I would have traded almost anything for another conversation, another hug, another laugh, or another chance to say, “Mommy loves you.” But grief does not bargain fairly. It offers questions without giving answers. One of the hardest

realities I eventually had to face was this: I lost a child, but I never stopped being his mother.

Motherhood does not end when your child leaves this earth. That instinct stays. You still wonder about your child. You still worry. You still wonder where they are. You wonder if there really is another side. You wonder if somebody met them when they arrived. You wonder if they know how much you miss them. You wonder if they can see you crying. You wonder whether you will see them again.

As a mother, I was accustomed to knowing where my children were. A mother asks: Where are you? Who are you with? What time are you coming home? Did you eat? Are you okay? But after death, you cannot call. You cannot check the location. You cannot drive somewhere and pick them up. You have to surrender your child to something greater than your own understanding.

That surrender took time. Bargaining slowly became less about trying to change what happened and more about learning how to live with what I could not change. I stopped making imaginary deals and began trying to make peace with reality. Not because I liked reality. Not because I wanted

reality. But because fighting the truth every day was exhausting me.

I still wish that terrible day had only been a nightmare. I still wish I could wake up and see my son sleeping peacefully. I still wish I could hear him. I still wish I could touch him. Acceptance did not erase those wishes. It simply taught me that I could wish for yesterday while still choosing to live today.

*I could not rewrite yesterday, but I could stop allowing
yesterday to erase every tomorrow.*

JOURNAL AFTER BARGAINING

A quiet place to tell the truth

Which “if only” thought returns most often for you?

What are you trying to control that grief has placed outside your control?

What would you tell yourself if you spoke with the same compassion you would give another grieving parent?

What is one way you can honor yesterday while still choosing today?

STAGE FOUR: DEPRESSION

When the world keeps moving and you cannot

There was a time when my eyes became so swollen from crying that it felt as though I could barely see through them. Tears became part of my routine. Grief exhausted me mentally, emotionally, and physically. Years could pass and one memory could still make the pain feel brand new.

Depression can make your world very small. The world continues moving while you remain mentally trapped in one moment. People laugh. People celebrate. People complain about little things. People make plans. And you sit there wondering how any of it matters because your child is gone.

For a period of time, I handicapped myself. I did not want to cook because cooking reminded me that I was preparing food for fewer children. I did not want to go grocery shopping because certain foods belonged to him in my mind. Walking past something he loved could suddenly turn a regular trip to the store into a painful memory.

That is something people who have not lost a child may not understand. Grief hides inside ordinary things. A cereal box. A

television show. A smell. A birthday. A song. A school uniform. A child walking down the street who looks about the same age your child would have been. A holiday. A photograph you forgot was inside your phone. Suddenly you are not standing in a grocery store anymore. You are standing inside a memory.

There were moments when I did not want to breathe, but I had children here who still needed their mother. That reality became part of what kept me moving. Teefy loved his brothers. I knew loving him also meant continuing to love and care for the children who were still here with me.

Slowly, I started doing little things again. I started buying some of the foods he used to enjoy, even when the other children had not wanted them before. Eventually, something as simple as seeing them eat Jell-O became connected to him instead of only connected to pain. That taught me something important: memories do not always have to remain painful. Sometimes the very thing that once makes you cry will eventually make you smile. Sometimes you will do both.

Grief and gratitude can exist together. You can be thankful that your child lived and devastated that your child died. You can laugh at a memory and cry thirty seconds later. You can

have a beautiful day and still miss your baby. You can heal and still hurt. Those things are not contradictions. They are grief.

I eventually stopped believing that healing meant returning to the woman I had been before April 13, 2015. That woman was gone too. I had to meet the woman I was becoming: a woman carrying pain, memories, children who still needed her, faith she was rebuilding, and a reason to wake up again.

That woman was different. But different did not have to mean destroyed. Surviving something unimaginable created a strength in me that I never asked for. I would have chosen my son over that strength every single time, but I could still use what remained of me to help somebody else. That is when my grief slowly began turning toward purpose.

If you are somewhere inside this stage right now, do not measure yourself against somebody else's timeline. There is no correct number of days to miss your child. There is no expiration date on love. Do what you can today. Tomorrow, do what you can again.

The goal was never to become who I was before. The goal

was to learn the woman I was becoming.

JOURNAL AFTER DEPRESSION

A quiet place to tell the truth

Which everyday things have become grief triggers for you?

What does your body need when grief feels heavy?

Who is safe enough to sit with you without trying to fix you?

Name one tiny thing that helped you make it through a difficult day.

STAGE FIVE: ACCEPTANCE

Learning to live without leaving them behind

Acceptance was the stage I resisted the most. For a long time, accepting my son's death felt like betraying him. I thought: If I accept this, does that mean I'm okay with it? Does acceptance mean I'm moving on? Does it mean I do not care anymore? Absolutely not.

I eventually learned that acceptance is not approval. Acceptance does not mean I am happy my child is gone. It does not mean the pain disappeared. Acceptance simply means I stopped fighting reality every minute of every day.

My son died. I hate that sentence. I will always hate that sentence. But I can say it now without believing that saying it somehow diminishes the love between us.

I like imagining him in Heaven. I imagine children with golden wings. I imagine family members welcoming loved ones with open arms. I imagine laughter. I imagine peace. I imagine a place where there is no fear, no violence, no accidents, and no goodbye. And I imagine my baby wanting his mother to live.

That thought became important to me. I spent so much time believing that staying miserable somehow proved how deeply I loved him. But my pain was never the measurement of my love. I loved him while he was here. I love him while he is gone. I will love him for the rest of my life.

Nothing can take motherhood away from me. Nothing can remove Abdul-Latif Wilson from our family. He lives in our stories. He lives through his brothers. He lives in the work I do. He lives every time somebody says his name. And he lives in the purpose that grew from one of the most painful experiences of my life.

That purpose became Embracing God's Angels. There are far too many hit-and-run tragedies happening to families. I could not change what happened to my son. But I could decide what I would do because it happened. I could advocate. I could speak. I could serve. I could help another mother. I could make communities think about children's safety. I could turn the love I still had for my child into action.

Through Embracing God's Angels, we began putting up signs reminding drivers: SLOW DOWN. WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN. Hundreds of signs became more than pieces of material placed around neighborhoods. To me, every sign

said: My son's life mattered. Every sign said: Somebody else's child matters too.

We began giving back through book bag drives, toy drives, clothing drives, shoe drives, food drives, and support for grieving mothers. We recognized that after an unexpected death, a family can be grieving emotionally while also struggling financially. Service became one of the ways I transformed pain into purpose.

That is what acceptance eventually became for me. It was not forgetting. It was remembering differently. It was not leaving my baby behind. It was learning how to carry him forward.

I stopped believing that moving forward meant moving away from him. Now I understand that every step I take can include him. Every child we help can honor him. Every mother we comfort can honor him. Every driver who slows down after seeing one of our signs can honor him. Every time I choose love instead of hatred, I honor him. Every time I choose to live, I honor him.

I am still a mother. I am still grieving. I am still healing. I am still becoming. If you have buried a child, you do not have to stop loving your child in order to start living again. Your

grief may change shape. Birthdays will arrive. Anniversaries will arrive. Memories will surprise you. Some days will feel heavy. Others will feel beautiful. Slowly, you may discover something you once thought was impossible: you can miss your child and still experience joy.

You can grieve and still laugh. You can remember and still build. You can carry heartbreak and purpose in the same heart. And most importantly, you are not alone.

Acceptance did not ask me to love him less. It taught me how to carry that love into the life I still had to live.

JOURNAL AFTER ACCEPTANCE

A quiet place to tell the truth

What does acceptance mean to you - separate from “being okay” with the loss?

How does your child continue to live through your family, memories, or purpose?

What would living in your child’s honor look like this season?

What joy do you want to give yourself permission to experience again?

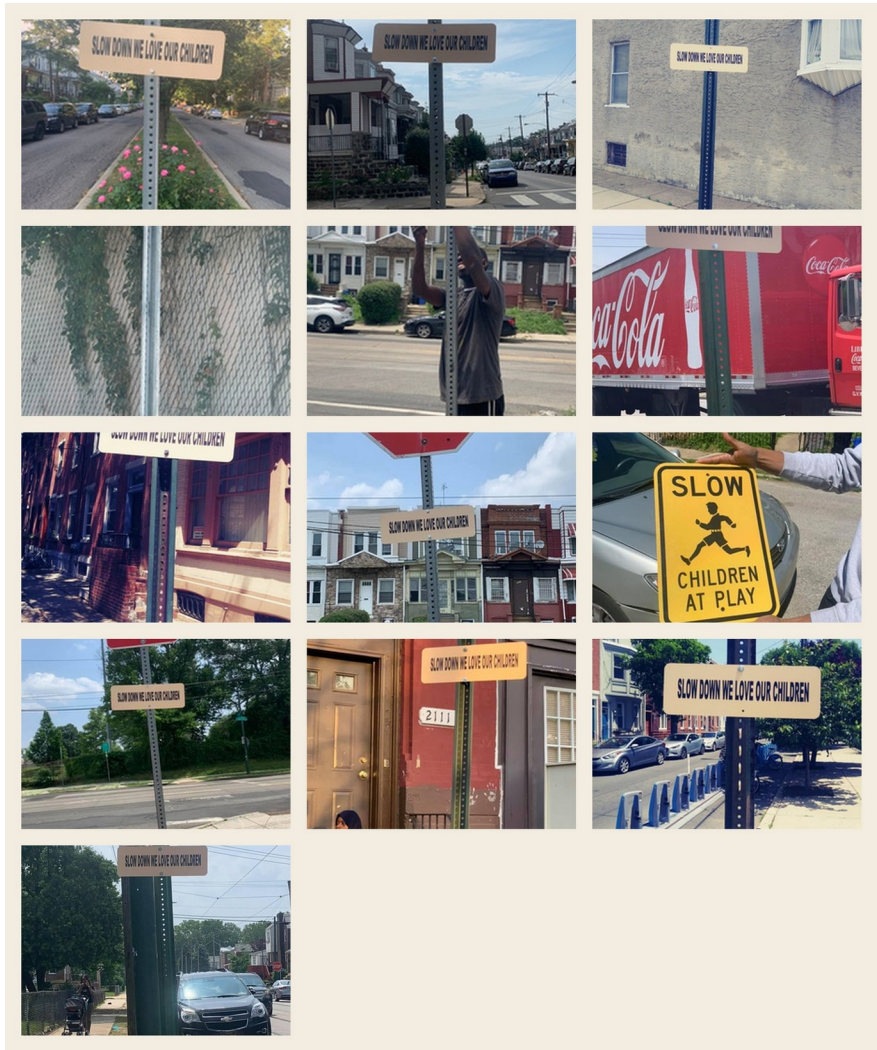
FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

Embracing God's Angels

I did not choose this mission because I wanted to become an expert in grief. I chose it because grief entered my life and demanded that I decide what I would do with the love I could no longer give my son in the way I once had.

Embracing God's Angels became a place where that love could move. It became advocacy, safety awareness, community support, and comfort for families who know what it feels like to receive the kind of news that changes everything.

When we put up signs that say SLOW DOWN WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN, I do not see only a traffic message. I see a mother's plea. I see a child's future. I see a neighborhood being reminded that a few seconds of patience can matter. I see Teefy's name living inside work that protects somebody else's child.



Community action in honor of our children.

Purpose did not replace grief. It gave grief somewhere to go. Helping another family did not make me stop missing my

son. It helped me make meaning from a pain that once felt meaningless.

*Sometimes purpose is not what removes the pain.
Sometimes purpose is what teaches the pain how to serve.*

A LETTER TO TEEFY

Always and forever

My baby, there are days when I still imagine what you would look like now. I wonder what your voice would sound like, what jokes you would tell, what your favorite things would be, and how you would walk into a room. I have learned that grief does not only mourn the memories we had. It also mourns the memories we never got the chance to make.

I want you to know that you are still part of everything. Your name is spoken. Your brothers carry you. Your mother carries you. The work I do carries you. The signs on the streets, the families we help, and the mothers we comfort all contain pieces of the love I still have for you.

I wish I could hug you. I wish I could hear you say my name. I wish I could tell you all of this while looking into your eyes. Until the day I believe we meet again, I will keep loving you in every way I know how.

You were here. You mattered. You are loved. You are remembered. And you will always be my baby.

*Love,
Mommy*

MY WORD IS “BORROW”

By Semaj Lockwood - Age 8

In the dictionary the word borrow means with intent of returning. In the Bible dictionary the word borrow means to lend to those in need. I would like to talk about my little brother Teefy. He was borrowed to us for a little while. He was only four years old. He was a very special gift from God. He is now in Heaven.

I think the moment he passed away God opened up the clouds in Heaven for my little brother. I cry for him because he is not here. I miss him, but one day I will see him again and Uncle Todd too. I think I know what Teefy is doing - running around and playing in Heaven.

My little brother Everett says he misses playing with Teefy too. We all miss him, but Mommy cries a whole lot. She's very sad. I said to her, “Stop crying, Mom.” I tried to comfort her. I tell her, “Wouldn't you rather have him up there than down here?” He's with God and Lord Jesus Christ. I think that Jesus is awesome and amazing for His love for us.

I love you little brother and the family does too. You were borrowed to us by God.

A LIFE REMEMBERED

Love does not end



Memories are proof that love happened here.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A closing word

If you remember only one thing from this book, remember this: grief is not a test you pass by stopping the tears. Healing is not proof that you loved your child less. Smiling again is not betrayal. Laughing again is not forgetting. Building again is not leaving them behind.

Your child is part of your story. The goal is not to erase that chapter. The goal is to learn how to keep writing while carrying every page that came before.

Some days you may feel powerful. Other days getting out of bed may be the victory. Honor both. Speak your child's name when you want to. Protect your peace when you need to. Ask for help when the weight feels too heavy to hold alone.

And when you begin to feel moments of joy again, let them come. Joy does not cancel grief. It can sit beside it. Love is big enough to hold both.

I am a real mother with real pain. I have learned that there can be peace on the other side of anger, meaning on the other side of helplessness, and purpose on the other side of

devastation. My son will always be part of my life. I will keep saying his name. I will keep serving. I will keep loving. I will keep becoming.

And so can you.

Healing. Honoring. Holding On. A journey from pain to purpose.

— **Dominique Lockwood**

A GRIEVING MOTHER'S DIARY

MY FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

“You are still becoming, even in your silence.”