



TRIGGERS THAT CALL THEIR NAMES

By Mitch Carmody

Motions of grief are always there, and they can be activated by our own directed thought or by unconscious reactions to stimuli that I call 'sense triggers'. Every one of our six senses can trigger thoughts of our children.

To others I may appear normal and even be engaged in intent conversation, driving, walking, at work, at play, in line at the movies. I will carry on my normal routine day as best I can the rest of my life. I do my job and pay the bills. But underneath that 'normal routine' there are still receptors for hundreds of triggers that bombard my psyche forever more; a part of the nature of my new universe. Unnoticeable to most, people have no idea how often my thoughts stray to my child. I have thoughts of my child hundreds of times a day. From the moment I wake up there will be triggers that bring to mind my child.

I believe each of our six senses has been reprogrammed and sensitized to recognize anything about our children's lives and deaths. Immediately our thought synapses start firing, bringing memories of our children into our active consciousness. In the early years of our grief journey these "triggers" are hair triggers, and they can initiate tears, anger and even gut wrenching agony in seconds. The first few years can be raw survival, and nearly anything can be a trigger.

- The sense of touch: Feeling the silky hem of a baby blanket, the rough leather of hunting boots, Terri-cloth "jammies," the slimy skin of a frog, the warm forehead of a sick child, the cold wind of a winter storm, the hard feel of vinyl on a tightly clenched steering wheel, endless more "touches" can evoke their names.
- The sense of smell: The fragrance of a child coming in out of the cold, the smell of hard work emitting off an old denim jacket, the scent of hairspray, strong perfume or baby powder in the air, the aroma of their favorite meal cooking on someone else's stove, zillions of other olfactory triggers can evoke their memories.
- The sense of sight: The sight of any child or person their age that resembles them at any time in their lives, or even how they might appear if they had aged. The sight of a hospital, driving past a cemetery, sighting a hearse, a funeral procession, a flower spray, a sunset, a sunrise, a roadside marker, a billboard a lunch box on the counter, a puppy, a penny on the sidewalk. Countless triggers are launched when our eyes are open.
- The sense of hearing: Hearing a siren, a telephone ringing late at night, a baby's cry, brakes screeching, the ding-ding of a heart monitor, the overhead announcement of a "Code Blue," Pomp and Circumstance played in June, or "Good evening; it's the six-o'clock news, Christmas carols at the mall, or someone whistling down the hall. Every word, every sound can be another trigger.
- The sense of taste: A Dairy Queen Blizzard, the taste of tears, warm Kool-Aid, soggy Cheerios grilled cheese sandwiches dipped in tomato soup, Spaghettios, movie-theater popcorn Every taste a potential to trigger memories of absent children.
- The sixth sense or psychic sense: We may have vivid dreams of our children, where we hear, feel or

smell their presence and even taste their tears. We can call them dreams, visions, hallucinations, visitations, psychic connections, messenger-connecting experiences, ADCs, or angel hugs, but for us, they are valid experiences.

Unless physical limitations prevent it, we shall all experience the triggers of the five senses, and our children will always be in our thoughts without our real control. Not everyone will have a profound experience of the sixth sense but it is not unusual but we shall all experience triggers that call their name.