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Nobody ever said grief would be so personal. You may find yourself thinking all I wanted to do is straighten up, and I end up with a box of Kleenex. How? It's the grief gremlin. He shows up when least expected. Enclosed is an article entitled, "The Grief Gremlin."

Sincerely,

**Becky Haagsma
Bereavement Coordinator**

“THE GRIEF GREMLIN”

The toothbrush holder, the laundry basket, the magazine rack, a kitchen shelf - each of these is such an ordinary, simple part of any home. Yet, each can be so completely associated with grief as to cause our chests to heave deep sobs with just one glance.

That seems obvious to all of us survivors, but to the outside world, that first sentence must appear to border on insanity, don't you think?

Let's take a look at them, one by one. Who can forget walking into the bathroom for the first time after death has visited your home and seeing one toothbrush that won't be used again? It doesn't seem important to those not trying to survive a loss, but just the sight of a never to be used again toothbrush is akin to a body blow. Oh, how it hurts! Is it possible that it was being used only yesterday? Maybe your laundry basket was always full, and load after load of clothes were washed and dried, keeping you plenty busy. Suddenly, you look in there and without your son or daughter, it seems nearly empty. Just the sign of that basket seems to scream out “She's gone!” No cheerleader uniform to clean, no soccer shirt to coat with Spray 'n Wash, no grumbling to be heard if the socks got mixed up or one is missing. Or maybe you've not always emptied the basket, but focused on doing the essentials first. Suddenly, with less wash, you notice your son's football socks lurking in the bottom of the hamper. Oh, to have the opportunity to wash them for Friday's game; to see him proudly running onto the field in his uniform!

A magazine rack seems non-threatening, doesn't it? Why in the world would that be associated with instant grief? Maybe you don't dig down into it very often but just keep piling on the latest issues. At some point, you mindlessly curb the overflow by weeding through the old issues. Suddenly, there it is: his Golf Digest; her Teddy Bear catalogue; his Cruise Travel. Oh! It literally sucks the air out of your lungs. Nobody ever said grief would be so personal, so every day, so vicious to attack in such unexpected ways!

Those kitchen shelves appear innocent at first glance, too. But then, the summer heat is replaced by fall's nip in the air, and a hot mug of cider would be just right. So you reach up and, oh! There's her mug. The Precious Moments winter scene she loved to show off at work, or his favorite row of free Credit Union mugs that you tried to retire to the Goodwill box, but he insisted were vital to life itself! Ugh. It's that blow to the heart again. And you think, “But all I wanted was a cup of cider, and I end up with a box of Kleenex?”

How? It's the Grief Gremlin. He shows up when least expected. He seems to have an internal clock that tells him to avoid holidays, birthdays, anniversaries - those days when we would expect to be zapped by grief reminders. The Grief Gremlin puts in his appearance when we're going about our daily routines, when we finally have a grip on the start of another day and think we might survive a few more hours of it; when someone has cracked a joke, and we actually chuckled just a little. Then, wham! Without warning he jumps us and suddenly turns an ordinary minute into a gut wrenching memory moment instead. It isn't easy when he appears, is it? I think the hardest part is that we can't get ready for him. We try to plan ahead for hard holidays, but when the Grief Gremlin shows up, we can never be prepared.

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