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- Wellness
- Work-Life Balance
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SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Winged Spiritual Messengers or Coincidence?

By Barbara Rubel

Mom no longer speaks. She no longer watches television, gets out of bed or eats solid food. I have not heard her voice in months. She no longer wakes easily. I have to shake her to wake her. As a college graduate who served in the armed forces during World War II and as a NYC Police Officer for 20 years, she was smart, savvy, and strong. Now, Mom is bound to a hospital bed, barely opens her eyes, and can't even speak her own name. *Mom . . . is no longer there.*

I spoke with Mom's physician today and made the decision to withdraw her cardiac medication, which was prolonging a life that was slowly ebbing away. Mom does not have any quality of life. Only a few minutes have passed since that call to the doctor and the call I immediately made afterwards to her compassionate hospice nurse, who recognized that although I am an expert in the field of death, dying and bereavement, this was my mom and my personal narrative of loss. *Mom . . . is no longer there.*

As I was writing the above paragraph, I needed to take a break and spiritually reach out to my dad who died by suicide several years ago. He killed himself while I was in the hospital awaiting the birth of my triplets. I could not attend Dad's funeral or partake in mourning rituals. I was on complete bed rest until my three sons were born only a few weeks later.

I needed to feel Dad's presence as I struggled with end of life decisions she would want. I asked him to watch over her. I wished he was a fly on the wall silently watching me and listening to the conversations between myself, her physician, and her hospice nurse. My mind wandered from flies to butterflies. I believe that butterflies are symbols of life's transition. I asked Dad for a sign that he was there for me.

I knew my dad was no longer there physically, but spiritually, I asked him to be a fly on the wall and listen to me as I struggled with letting go of Mom. I asked, "Daddy, show me a butterfly. Give me a sign that everything will be okay."

I walked over to a skylight window and looked outside. I could not believe my eyes. Right on the frame of the window— a butterfly and a fly. Is it a sign? Is it a coincidence? Am I going crazy? I run for my phone to take a picture. When I return, only the fly remains. I snap the shot and realize later that I neglect to save it.

I wait patiently for the butterfly to come back. But the butterfly, like my . . . *Mom . . . is no longer there.*

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