

Grief has become a part of Mother's Day

By Sherri Gardner Howell

Mother's Day is both joy and sorrow.



Strange statement, I know, especially from someone who is so blessed with phenomenal children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. My life is enriched and made worth living every day by the husband and family who will shower me with cards, phone calls and Skype time on May 14.

It will be a good day, I'm sure. Still, every year I am Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde on an emotional roller-coaster. So happy, so blue. So grateful, so angry. So filled up and so emotionally drained.

Dr. Jekyll Sherri battles with Mr. Hyde Sherri. Jekyll Sherri says, "Stop it. Count your blessings. In spite of the tragedies life handed her, your mother poured happiness into the lives of her children. Without her, you would not be who you are, and your children would not be who they are."

But Hyde Sherri is angry that she died too soon, that there wasn't one-more-day, one-more-year. "I need her today, too. I need to talk to her. There are things I need to tell her. I have new questions – questions I didn't know to ask when I was 36. I want her to be here, to be a smiling 93-year-old, holding her great-grandsons."



After 27 years without her, I still can't get past Mother's Day without being sad. I know that some time on that Sunday, I will feel the grief wash over me and ruin part of the day. There is nothing anyone can do about it. It will come as surely as the joy that replaces it.

Grief is tricky. It hangs around unnoticed most of the time, then, wham, hits you like an angry ocean wave. The truth is that my mother's absence leaves me just slightly off-balance. I can walk, but there will always be a slight sway, a small fear of tumbling over. There is something missing that nothing can replace.

Do you ever get over the death of your mother? No. You recover. You can be happy, satisfied, grateful, joyful and fulfilled, but the feeling of loss is always with you.

So what should all the Mr. Hydes do on Mother's Day? I am best when I just let it happen, recognize that there is going to be part of the day when I don't want to smell the roses. I may cry or rage against unfairness or just sit gloomily and look at old photo albums.

Then you have to let it go. Run straight to the joy of today and embrace life and the living. If your mother was anything like mine, failure to do so would get you a hard swat on the rump.