

Name

# The Ruby Slippers

## *by Deb Kosmer*

Most of us are very familiar with the movie; The Wizard of Oz. As a child, I cannot count how many times my sisters and I eagerly sat down to watch it each time it was televised. There were many parts of it that intrigued me but I was especially fascinated with Dorothy’s ruby red slippers and the special power they had.

Today, the longer I work with grieving individuals, the more I see a connection between them and Dorothy. Though they may express it in different ways and with different words, a common theme among the grieving is they just want to go “home” again—home being the comfortable, predictable, familiar place they left behind—the place that has been gone from them since their loved one died, the place where life made sense and they still had hope and dreams, the place where time still passed and opportunities still came, the place it seems that their friends and neighbors still live.

When death knocked on their door, it seemed that home went with it, just as Dorothy’s home in Kansas disappeared in the storm and she was left to fend for herself in an unfamiliar and, at times, unfriendly land. It was a world she just dropped into. It was a place where she didn’t ask  for or want to be. It was a place where she didn’t know the rules and what was and wasn’t acceptable.

When someone we love dies, our world changes. If that person was an integral part of our life and someone who we depended upon or whom depended on us, their death brings not only the loss of their physical presence but many associated losses as well.

We may feel as though nothing in our life is certain or makes sense anymore. We may feel that we don’t make sense anymore as we long to wake up and find that, just as for Dorothy, it’s all been more than a bad dream.

When someone dies, though, it doesn’t matter how many times we wake up; they have still died and we are still left to face a new and uncertain future without them. Though we may wish that we could we can’t turn back time and we can’t stay in bed asleep forever. Like Dorothy, we may look to others for direction and comfort and may hope also that the Great Oz can fix our situation. Dorothy was able to find some comfort in her companions who were also looking for something. Together, each of them felt not quite so alone and they kept each other from giving up and staying on the road.

Much like Dorothy whose answer and way home existed within herself; the grieving have power from within, as well. For the grieving, the magic red slippers can take several forms.

1. Recognition that life will be different.
2. Recognition that they are different.
3. Acknowledgment of what they have lost.
4. Finding ways to honor the memory of their love one.
5. Redefining their place and purpose; present and future.
6. Sharing their experience and hope with others.

In time, home though different will become a comfortable place once more. Then they, like Dorothy, will have found their way home.