

Loss creates discussion and speculation

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"An awareness of one's mortality can lead you to wake up and live an authentic, meaningful life."
??Bernie Siegel

The loss of a longtime friend and colleague took many by surprise recently.

When you lose a peer, you become a bit shaken. It's a wake-up call, and reminds us all of our mortality. We all know that as mortal human beings, we will one day pass on, but we do everything we can to avoid this eventuality. Many don't like talking about it, either.

After the funeral of my colleague, our family discussed everything from religion and heaven, to near-death experiences, eulogies and celebrations of life. We even talked about whether it was best to have a pay monthly funeral plan set up to ensure your relatives aren't left struggling afterward which, although a difficult conversation, was definitely one worth having.

Some avoid these topics, but I think it's healthy to have a family round table at times. It was a lively conversation and even my youngest daughter Kyleigh contributed a lot considering she's only 12. She has also been a lot more loving in recent days.

In my eulogy for Bill Rea, I noted we don't realize what we have until it's gone. It may be cliché, but it's very true.

We are creatures of habit. We revel in the comfort of our homes, lives and family situation.

Being a Virgo, I'm not big on massive change and I rely on routine. Odd, since I chose journalism because it's anything but ordinary. Each day brings a new array of people, places and things to write about.

I am utterly terrified about the possibility of eternal darkness that may lay ahead.

I simply can't fathom or comprehend "nothingness" and it has caused some sleepless nights.

I am in touch with my spiritual side, and lately I've become even more connected.

During my career, I've encountered many spiritual souls, from Reiki Masters and psychics, to religious scholars, ministers and those fascinated by the supernatural.

There is plenty to think about, and the possibilities are endless.

Christian religions teach us that heaven ? in whatever form that takes ? awaits us. We are welcomed and brought into the fold.

Others believe in reincarnation and a reappearance of our soul time and time again.

Given the complexity of humanity, and the magnitude of the universe, I think there's more at work here than we can even comprehend. Our Milky Way galaxy, like the thousands of others whirling through space, is not a random collection of suns, planets and cosmic dust. There's a distinct pattern and rhythm to it all, which leads to me to believe there's a source of great coordination and purpose.

The sheer scope of this requires immense power and control, perhaps even beyond the power of creation itself!

A single solar flare from our sun puts out more energy than humans have ever produced!

Maybe this is why humankind has been drawn to the stars. Since the dawn of our species, we looked skyward and pondered. We

measured the visible objects in the night sky. We prayed to the heavens; were guided by the stars, and calculated the orbits of our solar system's bodies.

All of this fills me with a sense of calm, and security. Have I abandoned faith and spirituality in favour of science? Not at all. To believe the universe is the result of a concerted effort is a leap of faith in a power, a force, an all mighty supremacy.

The big bang, until proven otherwise, is still just a theory. There's no question some huge force brought the entire universe together, in tumultuous fashion.

Scientists speculate the universe is growing and one day, maybe another billion years down the road, it will shrink, contract and maybe cease to exist.

Most of us will be long gone by then so that's something we don't have to worry about.

But life, and death, well those are matters that continue to worry us.

Just think about the biological aspects. A spectacular unity of cells created us. One second we're nothing, the next, we're a tiny creature that turns into us!

We grow up, find a spouse and have more children. The mystery of life continues, in miraculous ways.

Is this biological process random, or is there a design, a plan to it all? Was I always meant to be me, and be here on earth?

The mind boggles.

We go about our daily lives, not giving much thought to our predestination. As we make lunches for our kids and drive them to their part-time jobs, we don't really think about the grand plan and our role in it. As we work towards the weekend, we seldom ponder the meaning of life and everlasting life among the star dust.

Forrest Gump brought up this very point:

"I don't know if we each have a destiny, or if we're all just floatin' around accidental-like on a breeze, but I, I think maybe it's both. Maybe both is happenin' at the same time."

Max Planck said he believes there's a conscious and intelligent "mind" behind all matter.

But Carl Jung was a little more down to earth when he said "As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being."

And the late, great Stephen Hawking said: "The universe is not different to our existence ? it depends on it."

Maybe it is a little bit of everything happening all at once. And perhaps it keeps happening even after we're gone.