

I thought I knew how the news of my imminent mastectomy would affect me. I cried in the doctor's office, and my husband cried with me. And yet, it wasn't over. I went home that night and cried again in bed. I could barely approach the idea that this defining part of my body was going to be lost forever.

So I cried again the next night. And the night after. The grief and loss was like a well without a bottom.

My husband wasn't prepared to grieve with me to that extent. Two weeks in, after trying to comfort me night after night, he finally asked, "Are we going to go through this, like, every night?"

It was funny because I sensed his frustration. He just wanted me to feel better. And I also recognized that he wasn't prepared to plumb the depths of his own feelings about what was happening to me.

By the time the day of the surgery came, I had cried all my tears. When the doctor came to my hospital bed and started marking me up in prep for the surgery, I was able to laugh about it. My husband, however, seemed to finally realize that he was seeing my breast as it was for the last time. The unplumbed feelings overcame him a little, and I saw him tearing up. I understood. He was finally experiencing the loss that he had been avoiding for weeks.

We all process these feelings differently. The important thing is that, somehow, somehow, we DO process them.

~Jael Lippert
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