

Wes Moore Reflection Guide

Author



Wes Moore was four years old when his father suddenly became ill and died. Wes saw his Dad collapse and felt confused and fearful. Wes also recalls that he was bewildered at his father's funeral. He thought his father might be sleeping and expected him to sit up and come home with the family.

Wes' reactions are very common among young children. It takes time to understand what has happened, talking and asking questions helps young people gain a better understanding of death and grieving. Think about a time when you have felt confused about a death of a loved one or a funeral in your own life. How did you learn more about the situation? Who helped you understand?

Over the years Wes saw other young people with their parents, doing things with their fathers. He felt cheated because he didn't have the chance to do things with his Dad. He also realized that his father's death changed his relationship with his mother, who had a very difficult time after his father died.

Think about the times that you may have had feelings similar to Wes. What did you do or who did you talk to when you had those thoughts and feelings?

Wes said that his family tried to "move on" as quickly as possible. They didn't want to talk about his father's death, although he wanted to understand more. Wes believed that not understanding his father's death and his family's difficulty talking caused him a great deal of anger.

Wes is very honest about his anger. He makes the connection between his emotions and his family's silence about his father's death. What connections have you made between your own feelings and things that might have happened in your family or even among your friends? How do you think talking helps?

Sometimes kids deal with grief in ways that are less helpful or healthy. Wes admitted that he had trouble in school and first "felt handcuffs on my wrists" when he was 11 years old. In order to help Wes, his mother enrolled him in military school when he was 13 years old. Wes said that being at the school gave him the chance to be around many role models and gave him a sense of belonging.

Describe the role models in your life and how they have helped you develop a sense of belonging – to your school, sports team, club or community?

After military school Wes attended college and graduate school. He joined the Army and served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He worked in government and wrote two books. He is married and successful, and talks about his father very openly.

Would you have predicted such success based on Wes' early childhood experiences, especially his reaction to the death of his father? What do you think helped Wes become successful and find fulfillment in his life?

Wes said that he misses his father every day but he also points out that he feels like his father is "there" for him, especially for the "big" things in his life. During the smaller moments he misses him the most. Sometimes we prepare more for the big events, think about our loved ones. It's the smaller moments catch us by surprise!

Wes mentions that he intentionally thinks about his father for big life-changing events. What do you think he means by that? Wes also mentions that he misses him more during the smaller moments in life, describe some of those smaller moments that have occurred in your own life.

Wes reminds us that healing has to be on our own terms- our own emotions, and we must feel free to talk, free to cry, free to share and even free to be silent.

Wes has offered many suggestions for healing after a death in one's family. What do you think is the best advice Wes has offered to young people who have had someone close to them die?