

# ROLLER COASTER EMOTIONAL RIDE

My emotions after Irene's death have been a roller coaster ride whenever I think of her. It lifts me up when I remember with smiles the fun and crazy times we enjoyed together - the bond we shared while burning the midnight oil encouraging and supporting each other through *WhatsApp* at 5am while working on our gruelling CELTA course and the joy and relief we felt when we passed; the passion and commitment we shared working at our Kiwanis Club projects; the prayers we prayed when in need and how it scared and amused us when we realized we think so much alike.

And then suddenly, my emotions would go downhill at accelerated speed when I remember she is gone forever (at least until we meet again in heaven!). We were both the same age and that fact alone brought us closer. Now, just the thought of not being able to do things together or share our lives gives me the feeling of being in suspended animation in a roller coaster with no restraint to keep me from falling.

Today 20th August, is the birthday of a very dear friend whom I miss very much. Irene passed away exactly four months ago. Last year, a few of us celebrated her birthday with a dim sum brunch and we gave her a candle in an egg tart resembling a birthday cake. This year, all we have are just memories on her birthday.

We are often told to be strong for others during the death of a loved one. Can we just suppress or do away with emotions altogether at the snap of a finger? I learnt during these four months to pause and ask why I am having this roller coaster 'emotional' rides and I started to appreciate bit by bit what these rides are telling and teaching me. There is a purpose for everything in life... even emotions.



The roller coaster 'lift' I feel each time I remember Irene is not just because of the laughter and fun we shared... I realized that through the years I had grown to love her very much as a friend, like a sister. For a start, just putting that into words helped me understand why I feel joy when I think of Irene. She was valuable in my life and our memories together will always be mine to keep and treasure. The joy I feel reminds me of the gift and bond of friendship I shared with her.

The 'free fall' feeling was me being overcome with grief by her sudden death. Yet I usually read of deaths in the news without any unpleasant intense feeling. Why is that? It's because with Irene, I have lost someone dear and important to me. Feeling sad and feeling grief-stricken for deaths in the news are just different levels of emotional intensity. I feel more for Irene's death because she was someone I loved and love is definitely an emotion that is intense.

The expression of my emotions here is not just a reaction to what has happened but to help me understand myself better. It may not help me solve my problems or bring Irene back but my feelings affirm she was a friend I loved and always will. Even if my emotions may not go away with time, it is alright just remembering her with a smile or a tear.

I can choose to remain depressed and sad or I can choose to just appreciate the memories I have with her. If Irene and I didn't have the precious but brief time together, I know my life would have been short-changed. But now I'm richer for the wonderful memories we shared.

Happy Birthday Irene!

“What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes part of us.”  
Helen Keller

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