

“Some people believe holding on and hanging in there are signs of great strength. However, there are times when it takes much more strength to know when to let go and then do it.”

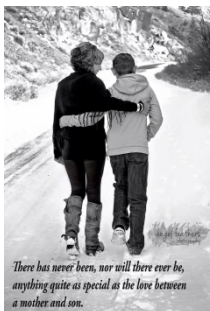
- **Ann Landers**

Before I get started I wanted to let you know I recently appeared on a podcast, where I talked about my health coaching business and ways to stay healthy. I hope you'll check it out and let me know what you think. Here's the link:

<https://rumble.com/v4sxdf-episode-130-headmasters-homeroom-wguest-susan-monaco.html>

This quote really hit home because it's an emotional time for me. Just last week, I watched the absolute love of my life, my son Luke, walk across the stage at Virginia Tech and graduate with a degree in Business Information Technology. The day was a long time in the making, but it was over in just a moment. As a single parent, who raised Luke with essentially no help except from a few family members who are no longer here and a few friends who still are, the day was bittersweet. To say I'm beyond proud of the man he has become would be a gross understatement. He excelled despite the losses he endured and the storms he weathered. I know it wasn't easy for him to grow up without an earthly father, but he was clearly guided by a heavenly one. I'm certainly not the only parent who now must watch her only child fly away with the wings I gave him. But our relationship is an especially close one, which makes his pending flight more difficult. So now, in addition to his safety, success and happiness, my prayers include asking that those wings bring him home, even if only for an occasional visit. The topic of letting go was put on my heart this month, for obvious reasons. I truly hope it helps those of you who must also watch the children you've loved since they were conceived begin the life you (hopefully) taught them to live.

Letting Go and the New Normal



It's been a long time since I've been "Susan." For over 22 years, I've introduced myself and considered myself "Luke's mom." Isn't that how we as parents typically describe ourselves? Even when I met his friends' parents at graduation festivities last week, it happened. I still got the "Oh, you're Luke's mom. It's so nice to meet you." It was another reminder that my identity and my world have completely revolved around him. Now that he's a college graduate and moving nine hours away from me in less than two months, I find myself asking the questions: "Now what?" and "Who am I without my son?" As hard as it was to raise him alone, I realize the harder task now will be learning to live my life without him. Nothing has adequately prepared me to let him go, but I know it's part of the process of life. The fact that he got a job (especially in this horrible economy) is confirmation I did my job. I gave him wings to fly and he's flying. That doesn't make the inevitable any easier. Letting go is hard. Letting go is emotional. Letting go is my next assignment and I need to be able to do it well, with courage and strength. All this upcoming change got me wondering how can I possibly let go of someone who's so tightly held my heart for so long in order for me to move on to this new stage of my life. Here are some thoughts God has put on my heart. I'm hoping they help you as you read them and that they help me as I write them. Please share any others you have because many of you are going through the same thing and we need to be a support system for each other.

Letting go doesn't mean you don't care about your child anymore. It's actually a sign of love to let go. When you love someone as much as you love a child, you want to just hold on tightly and never let go. But unfortunately, life doesn't work like that. I liken it to a bird that's been caged for many years. What happens when you open the door? It flies away. That's what we're doing with our children. We're opening the door so they can be free and use the wings we gave them. But hopefully, they know they always have a home to where they can return and that we still love them unconditionally.

You have to let go in order to have the life that's waiting for you. You can't move forward if you have something or someone holding you back. I think that means you have to leave who you were, love who you are and look forward to whom you will become. For me, I'm going to trust that God has a post "Luke's mom" life for me. What is it? I have no idea. But I'm going to simply take one day at a time and be open to whatever opportunities come my way. When they arrive, I'm going to just say yes and see where they lead me. I'll know I'm on the right track when I don't have any interest in looking back. I'll just need to remind myself to take my foot off the brake, push down the gas pedal and GO!

In letting go, you'll lose a lot of things from the past, but it will help you find yourself. That statement raises the question: *How do I find myself?* As I mentioned above, I have to learn to go from being "*Luke's mom*" to once again being "*Susan*." What does that even mean? Does it mean I'll find a new hobby? Maybe. Does it mean I won't worry about him anymore? Absolutely not! I'll worry about him until I take my last breath. I think what it means is that I need to simply take one day at a time and adapt to my new normal. It will help me learn to do things as *Susan* and not as *Luke's mom*. I think what it really means is that I'm going to have to turn the page on my own book of life and start a new chapter. It doesn't mean Luke's no longer in the book. It just means he'll now be playing a supporting role and will no longer be the main character. Although I'm a bit nervous and definitely sad, I'm pretty excited to see where this new chapter takes me.

Letting go is about having the strength, the courage and the wisdom to embrace the present. This goes back to the whole, "*one day at a time*" advice. You can think about all the wonderful memories you created and cherish them. You can look back on certain events and smile, knowing that you did your job and gave your kids the best life that was in your power to give. I'm sure as I look back, even the happy times will sometimes make me sad, knowing that they're in the past. But my goodness, how thankful I am for the tremendous gift I was given of being Luke's mom. Memories are a powerful thing. They've given me comfort with loved ones I've lost and I'm sure they'll give me comfort with a son who's just a plane ride away. I'm not going to worry about the future or have regrets from the past. I'm going to live for the gift called today. That's why it's called the present.

One thing that's important to remember is that our children don't belong to us. Essentially, they're on loan to us for a specific period of time and in the time we're given, it's our job to provide them with the tools they need to survive without us. When they move onto the next chapter in their book of life, while it's difficult, it means we were successful. I don't think kids look back like adults do. It's easier for them to let go and move on. Kids are like trees in the winter who lose their leaves. They're experts at letting things go.

For those of you who are experiencing the same emotions as I am, take comfort in the fact you're not alone. There are many of you who will need to learn to navigate life without your children by your side. Even if you're a strong person, this transition can (and probably will) make you question that strength. Most likely, you'll still worry about your child and how he or she is doing. But it will be a different kind of worry. It will be a worry about whether you properly prepared him for life without you. It will be a worry about whether he'll be successful in a new job or in the next level of education. It will be a worry about whether he finds the perfect mate and successfully (eventually) settles down and raises a healthy and happy family. It will also be a worry about whether he comes home to visit as much as you'd like.

What I've come to realize is that all the times my son whispered into my ear about something when he was little, he was actually whispering into my heart. That means he has a piece of my heart I'll never get back because it belongs to him. I must come to terms with the fact that while I've been his sole provider and his protector for his entire life, that's now his job. Don't get me wrong, if he ever needs me, I'll be there for him faster than a speeding bullet. I'm sure everyone who's reading this and is the same boat as I am will agree. So please, if you see any of us around the next couple of months, keep in mind that behind our smiles is a hurting heart that's missing a special piece of it. Letting go isn't easy, but it's a necessary and important part of life.

The good news is that daily life without your child in it will eventually become the new normal and it won't hurt quite as much as it does right now. I'll have to get used to introducing myself to people I meet not as *Luke's mom*, but as *Susan*. What hopefully will give you the most comfort is knowing that you did your job and that you're a survivor. Remember, you never really know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have! Every new beginning in life comes from the end of some other beginning you once had. It takes enormous strength to love your child enough to let him go when all you want to do is hold on tighter.

By accepting the process of letting go and successfully living your new normal each day, you'll be able to treasure the time you had together and cherish those memories as a wonderful part of your history.

Have a wonderful month.

With love,

Susan (but still Luke's mom)