



The agony of
my feelings
allowed me
no respite;
no incident
occurred
from which
my rage and
misery could
not extract
its food.

Mary Shelley
(1797 – 1851)
Novelist

Life shaped by a pandemic is life altered by loss. Loss stirs feelings, most often a range of them. We may attempt to rank our losses – small to large, passing to enduring – in hopes of understanding or perhaps muting these feelings. Recently, as our losses add up, so does the intensity of our personal and communal emotions. We live now with cumulative grief and with the accumulation of feelings.

Powerlessness can feed rage or empathy.

Powerlessness – distinct from weakness – reminds us of the limits of our control. It is not weak that we do not have the power to stop volcanos, to lift oceans, to control the decisions of others; it is that we were not created with a particular type of strength. We accept some of these limits with serenity; we resist others with frustration. Mapping what we can't control may reveal power we simply don't have...

...as well as choice that we do. Powerlessness – distinct from helplessness – reminds us of the breadth of our options. We can choose how to respond to situations we face. We can act in ways that reflect the highest aspirations we have for ourselves. We can decide to live our vocation as an expression of our values, not a reaction to the values of others. We always have the power of our commitments.

Powerlessness – distinct from numbness – reminds us of our humanity. As emotional creatures, we can honor our feelings while finding our best way to be present to those we serve. Acceptance or struggle can co-exist with emotions. We still feel while we also honor our principles by choosing on what, rather than toward whom, to direct our passion.

We can both live in our emotions while we live out our call.

What grief has been building within me? How might I show acceptance today?