

**HOW GRIEF, HOPE, AND THE JOURNEY OF HEALING SHAPED  
SECOND STORY DUO'S DEBUT ALBUM**

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Grief is overwhelming, and as time goes on it lessens, never going away completely. Loss has a way of reaffirming that time is precious, moments are irreplaceable, and although death feels like a thief, it can never take away the memories.

In the 10 years since losing my wife to suicide, the anniversary date has always had a way of creeping up on me. April 20, 2010. The dread I feel leading up to the date is usually worse than the date itself. I realize when I am drowning in the sudden flood of emotions, it's usually around April, and the thought always comes to mind, "will it get any easier?"

Trauma, by definition is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, it affects everyone differently. There is not one person that can prepare themselves for how they will respond to traumatic loss, and there isn't a set time on how long the grief will last. Some people may grieve for longer periods of time than others, some never stop grieving. In my case, those feelings of grief continue to this day, and while I am better able to cope with them, I am still affected by the devastation of the loss.

I am a firm believer in grief counseling and support groups, having had a direct positive effect on how I am able to cope. I'm also very fortunate to have found love and support in a new partner who understands how I process when April comes every year. Through our relationship, we found ourselves on a journey, exploring what joy, healing, and love look like after loss and putting pieces together that fit a new framework.

A big part of my healing came in the form of music and writing with my partner Lynn. All the years of her support led to us crafting an album that perfectly blends both our experiences with trauma (she is a suicide loss survivor as well). We titled one of the songs "When April Comes Next Year." It's a song about sticking with each other through grief. It beautifully explores the intimate nature of healing, where Lynn's voice weaves through the truthful lyrics of "Emotions flood above him, all I can do is love him," depicting her support of my (Doug) struggle to find myself and happiness.

I remember jotting down some notes for Lynn, who then wrote the lyrics for this song off those notes and a journal entry she had written. Lynn has been my most valuable support for recovery, but it doesn't mean her walk with me was easy. She endured my darkest moments, and cradled me when I couldn't stand. Through it all, we found our story in the music, healing the places inside of us that we didn't think would ever see light again.

Many times the past can intrude into the present, but with music and therapy, I've learned to live and love again, grow and sometimes shrink. April is always going to come next year. It's always going to be a reminder. I feel privileged to be a testament to healing, and finding support in my recovery through music and new love. The journey of healing is never easy, but through it, I've found my creative core, a supportive partner, and a little bit of bravery.

You can watch the lyric video for "When April Comes Next Year" here:

<https://youtu.be/CbuEf2ir5ec>