

Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Artist's Family*, 1528



****First Question First****

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

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Losing who we love breaks our hearts. Broken hearted. Our language speaks to the intimate devastation of our loss. Yet, our everyday realities show our hearts to be not only *in* working order, but almost heroically so. How many of us feel this rupture while simultaneously extending our hearts to our grieving loved ones? Barely able to get out of bed after the death of our spouse, we tend to our children through their pain. We grieve the death of one parent while supporting and caring for the other.

There are countless times when we may feel it is all too much, wishing we could hole up in a cave for a while with only ourselves to care for. But that is not the reality of our lives, or of our love. We have been allotted the practice of, as Ram Dass writes, “keeping our hearts open in hell.” We could no more turn away from the heartbreak we see in our kids’ eyes, or the fear and sadness in our parent’s voice. So, we learn to grieve alongside them. We are not allowed to shut off our hearts, proclaiming a moratorium on love. Our hearts continue loving because that is what we must do.

Q.) Whose grieving heart lives in your own? Who are you caring for as you care for yourself? Write about this dance of grief and empathy.