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Wings
A Grief Education Ministry

Honoring the Past and
Rebuilding the Future

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What If I Grieved Perfectly?

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As an educator and counselor in the field of loss and grief, and as a bereaved person myself, I have worked with hundreds of bereaved people in severe agony.

The ability of any one person to survive the intense pain of the loss of a loved one is a tribute to the human spirit. While each of us has our own path through the grief process, a common theme runs through our grief: the need to do things "right." Many of my clients have made statements such as, "I'm crying too much," or, "I guess I shouldn't feel so guilty," and "I wish I didn't feel so depressed."

I want to ask you a question: "In your general approach to life, where are you on the "Perfectionist Scale"? That is, when you do things, how perfect must they be in order for you to feel okay about them? Refer to the scale below and circle the one response that matches your level of perfectionism by asking yourself, "How much of a need do I have to be perfect?"

Very Low	Slightly High
Somewhat Low	Somewhat High
Slightly Low	Very High
Medium Level	

Next, we are going to look at several areas related to grieving to see how any of your perfectionistic beliefs can affect your bereavement. The important thing to keep in mind, of course, is there is no such thing as perfect grieving—we all grieve differently. There is no "right" or "wrong" way. It is true that the bereavement process is similar in some ways to all human beings, but it is also true that grief is unique for each individual. Grief is the emotional outcome of bereavement and since perfectionism is more logical than emotional, perfectionism and grief just don't mix.

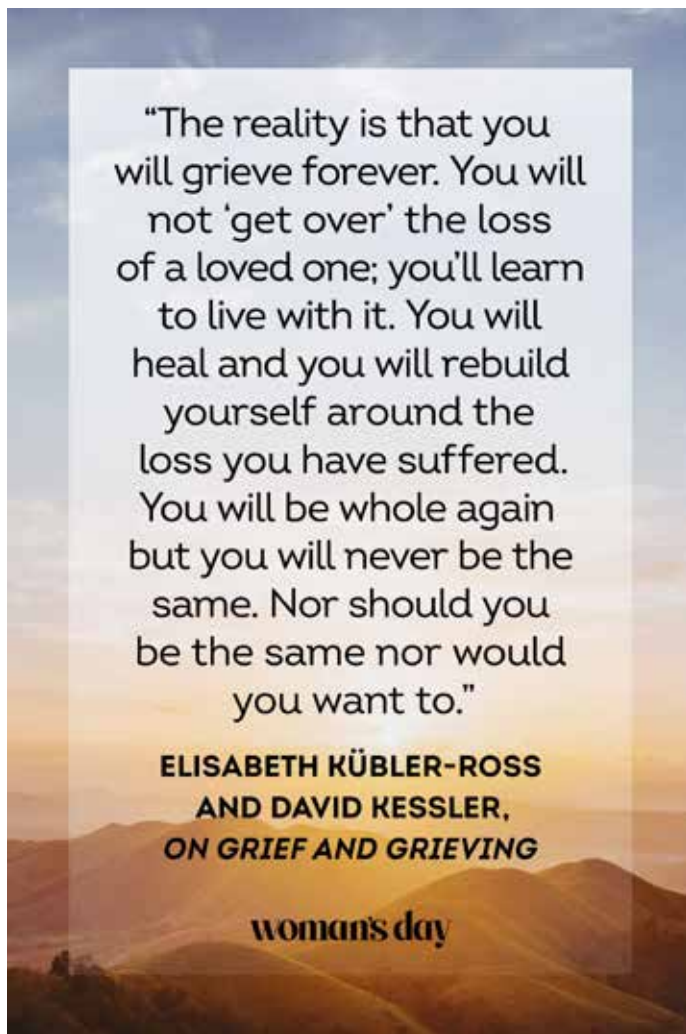
The list that follows is not intended to make light of the bereavement process. It is offered to show that the added burden of perfectionism complicates the bereavement process at a time when emotion, rather than logic, is the rule. Individually, each of the examples below is not a problem, but cumulatively their effect on a bereaved person can negatively impact the healing process. You may want to circle the ones that apply to you and answer the question: "Can I let go of this belief?"

WHAT IF I GRIEVED PERFECTLY...CONTINUED

If I grieved perfectly:

1. I would only miss my loved one a little. Whenever I would go out to places that would remind me of the life that I had lived I would only smile. The memories that flood me would bring tears of joy because I would be so happy that I had this person in my life as long as I did.
2. In conversation, I would mention the name of my loved one just enough. I would do this out of respect for those people around me who would be uncomfortable with “excessive” mention of this person. Thus, people would see that I’m not being obsessive in my need to remember the life of my loved one.
3. I would cry just enough. Tears would be shed for “good” reasons, and though crying on special days would be okay, crying for no reason would not. Also, I would not cry for more than a few minutes at a time, and excessive weeping and wailing would be out.

4. Each day, I would grieve a little less. I would feel myself getting better and better as the days and weeks went by.
5. I would look forward to weekends, holidays and anniversaries. Holidays would be a time of looking back fondly on memories of the way things used to be.
6. I would treat myself well. I would eat a balanced diet, do things that bring me pleasure, get to doctors’ appointments. Go out with friends, and get enough sleep, rest and relaxation.
7. I would feel little, if any guilt. I would have no regrets for things I did or didn’t do during the life of my loved one. Also I would not feel guilty over surviving my loved one, over how I’ve grieved, or over not living up to certain standards.
8. When asked how I was doing, I would say just the right things. I would let others know that I was grieving (but not too much) and that they needn’t worry because I was going to make it and put this thing behind me.
9. I would display just the right amount of anger. I wouldn’t yell, scream, curse or hit anything. I would feel anger only toward those who legitimately deserved it, and even then I would display it tactfully.
10. As I went through each day, I would think about the death once or twice. Because the death is over, there is no need to keep thinking over and over about something that I can do absolutely nothing about.
11. When I do think about the death, I would feel a sense of peace. If my loved one were in pain during the dying process, mainly I would feel relief whenever I thought about the death. If my religious beliefs called for it, I would be glad that my loved one is in a better place.
12. I would feel in control of my life. I would realize that, even though I cannot control death, I can control much of what happens in my life, including my grief.
13. I wouldn’t have concentration or memory problems. I would not let any grief reactions interfere with my job or my activities of daily living.
14. I wouldn’t have the need to join a group to discuss my grief—I would have worked it out myself. Groups tend to be for those who just can’t pull it together themselves. I would not have to sit with a bunch of people and be in misery with them.
15. When reminded of the death, I would smile and say just the right thing. When I saw the pained look of other people looking



at me when the death is mentioned, I would put my own feelings aside, smile and say the right things to ease their discomfort.

16. I would be accepting of the clichés of grief spoken by others. When people say things like, “I know how you feel,” “It was God’s will,” “She’s in a better place now,” or “It’s time to move on,” I would be able to accept their words as supportive gestures.

17. I would never consider suicide because I would realize how much it would hurt my family. I would have a clear reason for living in the future.

18. I would progress step by step through the stages of grief. First I would get rid of all my denial and shock; then I’d work through all my rage, anger, guilt and depression until I arrived at total acceptance.

19. I would look forward to each day. Each day would be considered a challenge to live and the future would not be anything to fear.

20. Any faith I had in God would remain firm. I would not blame God, and my religious beliefs would not be shaken.

21. I would not have obsessive thoughts. The accident or illness would not intrude into my thoughts at various times during the day or night.

22. I would not feel compelled to engage in behaviors or rituals. I would not feel that I had to do things a certain way or follow certain rituals to feel less anxious.

23. I would not ask “Why me?” I would clearly understand that “the ill wind sweeps over everyone,” and that there is no reason why I should be spared life’s tragedies.

24. I would be able to stand on my own. Although I realize that most bereaved people need help from others, I would be able to cope alone with the multitude of reminders, feelings, changes and anxieties.

25. I would visit the gravesite just enough. I would not feel that I was going too often or not often enough.

26. After a year, I would be pretty much over it. When the one-year date came, I would have gone through each significant date once, and I would know how to manage them in the future. In addition, I would believe that it is best to “Get over it, put it behind me and move on with my life.”

27. Seeing other people at the age my loved one would have been would be okay. For example, watching friends of my son graduate, get married and move on their lives (knowing that his

life stopped) would not bother me. Watching couples my age nuzzle and walk hand-in-hand, or seeing a young female shopping with her mother would not affect me.

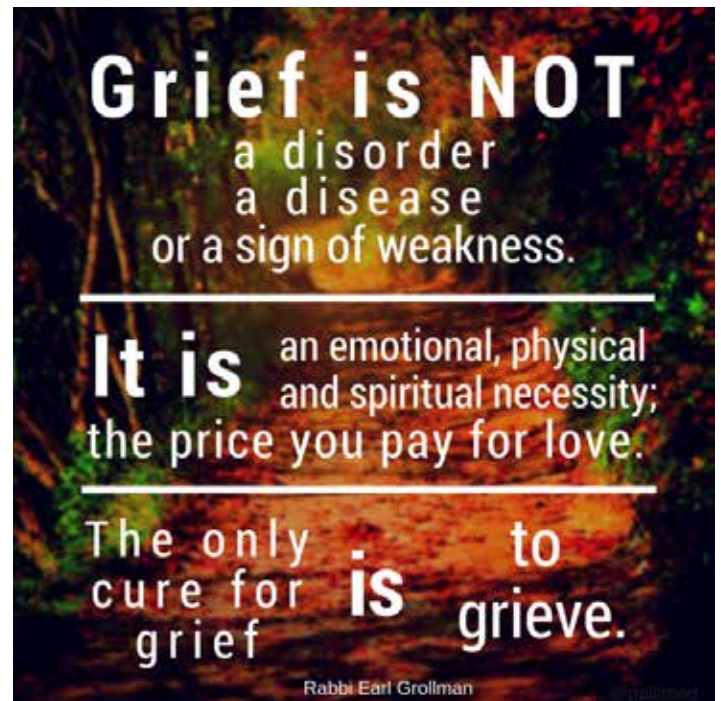
28. I would find meaning in the death. After much work, I would finally make total sense out of this tragedy.

So, how did you do? Are there some beliefs that you know you hold but just cannot let go? Consider bringing this article with you to your next support groups meeting, or show it to a supportive person in your life. Or, perhaps it may be enough for you now if you are simply aware of the areas where you still have perfectionistic needs.

Whatever you do, the important things to remember are:

1. You are a human and are therefore not perfect. Can you permit this to be so?
2. This is not a time in your life to be hard on yourself. Life and death have been hard enough on you already.
3. Let yourself grieve in whatever ways you need to. Eighteen years ago, a widowed woman told me: “I finally realized that it’s okay to feel lousy.” I never forgot those words, and now I offer them to you.

What if I Grieved Perfectly? originally published in Bereavement Magazine, Jan-Feb, 1995, p. 14-15.





EDITOR'S JOURNAL

In my journey through grief, Gary always told me I could find a story in everyday experiences. He was right!

A BROKEN HEART CAN'T BE UNBROKEN

By Nan Zastrow

You never know how you will react to the death of a significant loved one until it happens to you. Even when it happens again. It's been 30 years since the death of our son; and I knew his loss would be with me for a lifetime. I thought I would be prepared for the death of my husband should that happen before my own. But I was wrong. He died in January 2023. Someone recently said to me, "Well you should get over this quickly, you've been through this before and know exactly what to expect."

Stunned by the statement, I didn't have an answer right away. But as I thought about it later, I conceded that there is no way to describe a heart broken twice and try to persuade someone that it can't be unbroken—no matter how much you know about the progression of grief. The best that I could come up with is a story.

In my journey through grief, I've found that everyday thoughts often spring forth into a story. My husband, Gary, would always say to me..." There's another idea for a story to write." He knew how my mind worked and how I felt so many things in life lead us to that moment when an incident or thought can be transposed into meaning quite different than the actual occurrence. Each with a lesson and moral.

As I looked out my kitchen window recently, I saw the Inuit (inukshuk) man, sitting in the garden had fallen over. Gary built him after a trip to Canada where we saw them dotted along the side of the highway. I thought, "Somebody's got to put him together again. Those stones are pretty heavy. Who am I going to get to do it?" That brought to mind an age-old nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty. Sometimes when things in grief seem "out of place", it triggers parallel thoughts. And, behind every unintentional phrase or verse rests a moral to a story:

Grief and Humpty Dumpty: (from a griever's perspective)

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall

Why was he sitting there in the first place? Was he sad? Lonely? Or maybe even grieving? Let's assume Humpty was grieving and just having one of those days when he needed to be alone, but he chose a precarious place where



there was a potential of getting hurt. In grief, we sometimes are challenged by problems and decisions. We ponder what to do. It's very much like "sitting on a wall" to contemplate what next?

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

It wasn't just a fall; it was a great fall! Maybe he fell from the wall because he was unable to accept the reality of his loss. Maybe he felt stuck in a very dark place. He might even have had that "fall" of grief that happens when everything changes, and you feel so overwhelmed and sorrowful that you put yourself at risk. However, you might describe your fall, in grief, it hurts!

All the King's horses and all the King's men

The best recruits were summoned to help put Humpty back together. That would be your loyal family and caring friends who came to your rescue. We all typically have a regiment of caring people who would come in an instance to our aid. They come from many different backgrounds in our life. They all truly want to help but don't know what to do!

Couldn't put Humpty together again!

However, these men were faced with an unrealistic task. No one could reassemble thousands of pieces, especially Humpty's broken heart—assuming he had one. Or his protective body armor—his shell. The Kings men, try as the might, couldn't change his fate.

The moral of this story

This metaphor reminded me about the inability to repair some broken things. Unfortunate life events, like eggshells, can't be unbroken. I can realistically relate to this simple, abstract rhyme. I can also compare it to how my broken heart feels and how my disoriented grief brain juggles thoughts often confusing me more. I feel much like Humpty Dumpty. Not even my family and friends, who have tried so diligently, can put my heart back together again. Once shattered into a million pieces, the splintered edges could never fit snugly together. This would be an unachievable task!

Consider that a one-thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle is precision-cut to neatly fit back together and create the visual we expect after spending countless time and energy to make it happen. But a heart crafted by the Master will never mend back to the way it was. It just can't be unbroken.

Though hearts may heal and scar, they will never be the same nor will they ever function quite like they did before. They will always carry the memory of the damage caused by loss. But amazingly, most hearts survive—in a wounded state. The scars and damage are hidden inside of the grief and silently witnessed only by the bearer of the loss.

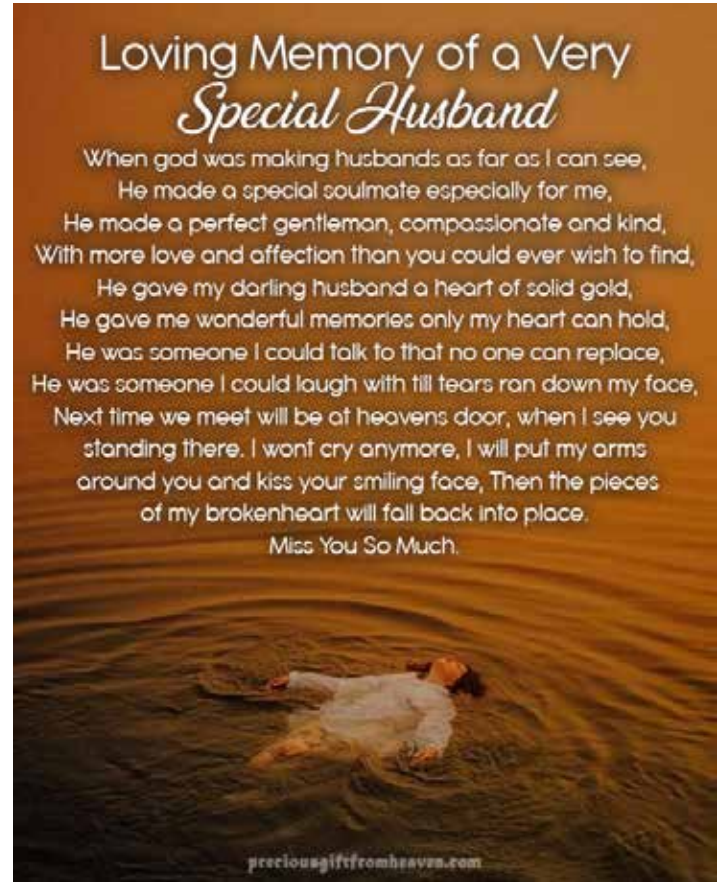
I had a beautiful crystal dish with a hummingbird perched upright in the middle of it. It was given to me by my son as a Mother's Day gift. I displayed it on a little round table in my bedroom. One day, I accidentally hit the leg of the table with the vacuum cleaner and the dish came tumbling down. I panicked as I tried to scoop up all the pieces hopeful that I could glue them back together again and preserve this sentimental gift. But it was an impossible task. All that would remain was a treasured memory of the way it was. It's been decades and I still remember the feeling of losing that broken dish. Though it was something so insignificant compared to my son's death, it was a tangible reminder of his love and one of his final gifts to me. I was reminded of this story when I began this article. Like the hummingbird dish, my heart was shattered all over again with the death of my husband. It reminded me of this beautiful crystal dish, that that unfortunately would never be a sacred gift again. All that remains are treasured memories of Gary's unconditional love.

There is no doubt that grief is a journey. It's a discovery about yourself and a reality of how fragile life is. The more losses you have, the clearer the journey becomes. We are human. We are not mortal. Some things don't get easier. In all my years of grief teaching to the bereaved, I've confirmed that you never get over grief. You just learn to tolerate the emptiness and live a life different than imagined. With time, you adjust to the major chang-

A BROKEN HEART...CONTINUED

es in your life that mold you into someone different, wiser, and more compassionate. It's considered personal growth. You can't protect your heart from ever being broken but you can heal it enough to show the world the other side of grief where life can be meaningful again.

So, what's the moral of Humpty Dumpty as a grief story? It's a reminder that the heart is fragile, like life. After the loss of someone loved, it will feel shattered and vulnerable to feelings, thoughts, and everything around you. Though it can't be unbroken, it can heal in its own way. No one can heal your brokenness; not even the king's horses or men. It must be your decision to live beyond your loss in a way that values family and friends who gratefully step up to walk with you through your grief. Invest in, guard, and protect those kinds of relationships. These are the treasures and the resources for healing and finding peace.



Reader Feedback



After the loss of a loved one in our lives, we find ourselves in a quandary about all the “firsts” that sometimes hit us by surprise. They may challenge us to do something we never did before. They may just be that first emotional event that causes us to wonder, “Can I do this?” Or it may be the first that is a major holiday that changes the way we celebrated in the past.

What was a “first” that you remember challenged you? And how did you feel after it was over?

For example: One of the “firsts” for me was going back to church. When I sat down in the same pew that Gary and I typically frequented, I saw the same people around me that had the same habit. But this time, I was alone. I felt totally abandoned and uncomfortable being there. Gary and I went to this church together since we dated and married in this same church. Our son went to school there and I remember when he died, how difficult it was to go back to church. It took a long time. We went to other churches where no one knew us. I had those same feelings come back this time. Once you do it the first time, the second time becomes easier.

I’m not sure if you will remember me. I attended Dr. Wolfelt’s trainings in for Collins, CO in 2014-15 when I had the privilege of meeting you and Gary in a small group session. My husband Rip was in the final stages of dementia resulting in stage 4 CTE following his years as the first drafted Minnesota Viking middle linebacker. He died a few months after I completed the training. I gleaned so much from my experience making deep connections with the participants. This community of friends has often sustained me with the memories of our shared experiences that modeled hope and courage to muddle through the grief journey.

I enjoy your newsletters - even when I didn’t open them. That may sound strange, but it was just knowing that the link of loving support was just there.

And when I did find/make time to savor the message it was always a confirmation of that love. Your newsletter casts “good ripples.” I just opened the recent newsletter to learn of Gary’s passing in January. I wept with the sorrow only a widow knows. I am so sorry for your loss and hold your grieving heart with loving compassion. I know that you are surrounded by loving support, and I would like to extend my heartfelt service in any way that you might need.

Mary, Loveland, CO

I agree with you about going to church after my husband passed. It is now 8 months since he passed and I still have a difficult time going to mass. I find myself tearing up during our favorite songs and when we pray the Our Father because we always held hands

during that prayer. I also go to different churches thinking it may be easier. But it is getting better.

Kathy, Wausau, WI

My daughter, Marilyn, died on February 7th, 1992. She was born on Mother’s Day weekend in 1959 and that was always a special celebration for the family. The first Mother’s Day was May, 1992 just 3 months after her death. I was basically numb and just wanted the day to pass quietly. However, the family wanted to celebrate Mother’s Day at a special restaurant and I went along with it since everyone else wanted to be there. It actually made little difference to me; I was simply “there” but my mind was elsewhere. After it was over, I felt relief that it was over and a deep sadness that I felt so alone while being

READER FEEDBACK...CONTINUED

with my family. Now, writing this, I can still recall that awful day with much pain.

Bunny, Boynton Beach, FL

Birthdays for me is a hard one, for mine and my friends that have passed, a good example for me is we used to go out to bowl and mini golf every year for his birthday, when his birthday came I didn't want to do anything, but loved ones convinced me to go bowl and play mini golf, although I was sad and it wasn't the same, it was nice to celebrate his life. Now every year on his birthday I make it a tradition to go out and bowl and play mini golf (even though I'm terrible at both).

Jacob, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

My daughter often helped me deliver wedding cakes and she put fresh flowers on them. She was amazing at the way she did this. A month after her passing, I had two weddings in which fresh flowers were needed. The two venues were ones we often went to. Standing in front of the wedding cakes, my tears just came rolling down. It happened at both venues. I made it through the day. Glad the day was over.

Debbie, Schofield, WI

I'm still struggling. I just went back to Church//almost a year in 2 weeks. A friend asked me to go so I went the Sat. before & with her on Sunday. We went to both sometimes. Sunday was the worst because I saw so many people

I hadn't seen. I had gone a few weeks after he died and all I did was cry so I stopped going. I'm going to try to keep going but it is definitely the hardest.

Paula, Mosinee, WI

"Firsts". Nearly 13 years ago for me. Jon left this earthly ground nine days after his birthday, on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Christmas would've been the "first" holiday without his physical presence, but I was so numb from grief, that my alter ego and zombie-self blindly participated with family traditions.

The next Christmas technically was the 2nd year but this found me living back in my hometown, our family unit divided with individual needs to partake in the season. My husband and daughter traveled back to SE Wis. to be with his family, and I found myself volunteering at the community Christmas dinner.

Tara, Antigo, WI

One of the first major challenges for me after losing both of my daughters (one in 2010 and one in 2016) was attending a family gathering. There are anywhere between 25 to 30 of us at my parents on most Sunday afternoons eating and playing cards. I wondered how I could feel so alone surrounded by those that I was closest to and loved the most. How do I go on acting as if everything was "normal" when it would never be "normal" again. I felt like I was on the outside looking in and it was just noise buzzing around me because I couldn't concentrate on anything anyone

was saying. Over time it became easier to be with everyone and to join in the laughter, but it has taken me years to be able to play cards again.

Debbie, Lebanon, TN

One of my very hardest firsts was my first mammogram after my mother's death from breast cancer. I was stricken with grief and immobilized with unreasonable panic and fear.

Jessica, Wausau, WI

My first summer without my mother. Many of my routines, my thoughts, my conversations...they revolved around this person who has been my best friend, my therapist, my cheerleader, my confidant...for my entire life. Until my first summer. I am still adjusting, changing, evolving but she is not here to see it anymore. At least not in the form that I'm used to seeing her.

There have been improvements. I am not waking up every day with a gnawing feeling in my stomach or a literal ache in my chest. That only happens once in a while now. I can talk about her without my eyes filling with tears. I can smile when I recall our lives together and all of the wonderful memories we made. I am not picking up the phone as often, instinctually starting to dial her phone number. Missing our daily conversations is one of my biggest adjustments.

Adjusting...is that what you call this? I'm not sure. It feels so unnatural, so surreal, so unbelievable at times.

Sheila, Schofield, WI

My youngest son, Brad, died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2000. His birthday was the next day. I've never been able to enter a Noodles restaurant again. I brought a dinner from Noodles to his house, but instead I found him deceased on the floor in his bedroom. I used to love to shop for clothing for Brad. He was tall, dark and handsome and even though he wore work clothes mostly, he loved looking nice.

My oldest and only other son, Bill, suddenly passed away two years ago. He was headed "home" for our family reunion. He planned to help me organize years of photos. Then he planned to travel to Sturgis for his VIP seats at their big gathering but never made it. Today I stop in my tracks when I hear about Sturgis and my heart melts. When I see a big, beautiful fifth wheel trailer, my heart sinks again because it was

supposed to be parked alongside our house in Wausau (and sitting at Sturgis). I believe we all have triggers, and these are a couple of mine. Losing a child is traumatic to say the least.

Betty, Wausau, WI

On the Lighter Side...

Three Guys on an Airplane...

There were three men on an airplane somewhere above the atlantic ocean. Suddenly Death appears on the plane. He says "Before I take you all with me I'll give you a chance to survive. Each one of you will throw something to the ocean and if I find it you will die". The first one throws a needle. Death goes down to the ocean searching for it. After a couple of minutes he comes back with the needle. The second one throws a hair. Death goes down and after ten minutes he comes back with the hair. The third one throws something quickly and Death goes down again. About an hour later he comes back and says to the guy "Ok you win, I'll let you live. But tell me what did you throw? The guy says "An effervescent tablet."



Joe the lawyer died suddenly, at the age of 45. He got to the gates of Heaven, and the angel standing there said, "We've been waiting a long time for you."

"What do you mean?" he replied.

"I'm only 45, in the prime of my life. Why did I have to die now?"

"45? You're not 45, you're 82," replied the angel.

"Wait a minute. If you think I'm 82, then you have the wrong guy. I'm only 45. I can show you my birth certificate."

"Hold on. Let me go check," said the angel, and disappeared inside. After a few minutes the angel returned.

"Sorry, but by our records you are 82. I checked all the hours you have billed your clients, and you have to be 82..."

An Inspirational Story...

HOW TO START TOMORROW

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say: When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"



Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood, or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim, or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining, or I can point out the positive side of life.

I choose the positive side of life." "Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested. "Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. Your bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left that industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw Michael about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but I asked him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place.

INSPIRATIONAL STORY...CONTINUED

“The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon to be born daughter,” Michael replied. “Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I choose to live.”

“Weren’t you scared? Did you lose consciousness?” I asked. Michael continued, “...The paramedics were great, they kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read ‘He’s a dead man. I knew I needed to take action.’”

What did you do?” I asked. “Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me, “said Michael. “She asked if I was allergic to anything. “Yes, I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, “Gravity.”

Over their laughter, I told them, “I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.” Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything. “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” After all today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday. You have two choices now.

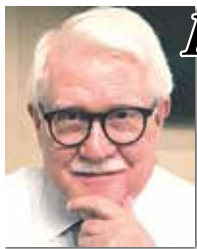
from Friends in Nova Scotia, Canada...



Be Good to Yourself SELF CARE TIP

When you feel like running away, allow yourself to feel scared for one moment.

It's normal to feel overwhelmed after a loss. Know that the solution is not to move to another city, another job, or another relationship. First you must heal the inner self...or your problems will just move with you. Seek help in the present from someone you can trust and begin putting your fears to rest.



Rest In Peace, Mr. President

By Todd Van Beck

Rest in Peace, Mr. President. That was the hope...that our presidents would rest in peace, but that has not always happened. For example, between 1865 and 1901 Lincoln's remains were moved 18 times.

Funerals are a reflection of how people live their lives, and this remains true for the funerals of our U.S. presidents. This series offers a glimpse into the deaths and funerals of our presidents, while offering overdue recognition to the scores of funeral professionals who labored ceaselessly to carry out the wishes of the presidents, their families, and in some cases, the wishes of the United States government. Each account tells an interesting story. —TVB

RONALD W. REAGAN

the fortieth President of the United States of America

President Ronald Wilson Reagan disclosed publicly in November 1994 that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. President Reagan's appearance declined as the disease progressed. Eventually, the former president was living in total safety and security at his ranch home in California.

President Ronald Reagan died after a decade of health struggles with Alzheimer's disease. In the end, the former president died of pneumonia. His death happened at a little after 1:00 PM on Saturday, June 5, 2004.

Ronald Reagan had lived for 93 years and 120 days. Shortly after President Reagan's death, his body was taken from his Bel Air home in Los Angeles to the **Gates, Kingsley & Gates Mortuary**, for preparation of the remains for burial.

President George W. Bush ordered all American flags to be flown at half-staff in recognition of the death of President Reagan. In the announcement of Reagan's death, Bush also declared June 11 as a "National Day of Mourning."

On Monday, June 7, President Reagan's body was transferred from the mortuary and taken in a funeral procession to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley. Upon arrival at the library, the mahogany casket was carried by military casket bearers representing all branches of service. The closed casket was positioned in the lobby of the library. Once the casket was safely deposited in the library, the Reagan family had a private family funeral service.



Members of a joint honor guard escort the caisson bearing President Ronald Reagan's flag-draped casket during his funeral procession.

Following the family service, the library was opened for public homage to the former president's remains. The count of mourner's who filed past President Reagan's flag-draped casket was approximately 2,000 an hour. The library was opened throughout the night. In all, 100,000 people paid their respects.

On Wednesday, June 9, President Reagan's casket was taken by funeral procession to an airfield outside of the Los Angeles area. A tremendous crowd had assembled. President Reagan's casket was flown to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, where it was taken in procession by a motor funeral coach to 16th Street and Constitution Avenue for the transfer of the remains to the military caisson.

A heavy military presence marched with the funeral caisson to the beat of muffled drums. Behind the funeral caisson was a riderless horse, where the President's own personal riding boots could be seen reversed in the stirrups.

The funeral caisson stopped, and the military removed the casket. The song "Hail to the Chief" was played as a 21-gun salute was fired. The casket was then placed on the Abraham Lincoln catafalque under the grand dome of the Rotunda. That evening a brief funeral service took place in which high ranking political leaders from the House of Representatives and the Senate participated.

The doors leading to the Rotunda were opened for the American public to view the closed casket. Some people had waited over seven hours to pay their respects. The doors were left open for 34 hours straight and approximately 105,000 people filed by the President's casket.

When the funeral ceremonies and public viewing had concluded at the United States Capitol, the President's remains were once again placed in the motorized funeral coach and taken to the Washington National Cathedral.

When the funeral procession arrived at the cathedral, President Reagan's casket was removed and carried by the casket bearers up the cathedral steps. There was a pause so that the clergy could recite the opening prayer and receive the remains into the house of worship.

The casket was then carried, resting on the shoulders of the casket bearers, down the center aisle. The choir music consisted of several hymns, including: "Fair Is the Heaven;" "Bring Us, O Lord;" and "I Saw a New Heaven."



Several eulogies were given by world leaders. The one offered by former President George H. W. Bush was particularly memorable and emotional, since he was President Reagan's Vice-President for eight years. Then a choir sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the Catholic Archbishop of Washington delivered a Bible reading from the Gospel of Matthew. The homily was given, two musical solos were sung, and the benediction was read. Around 4,000 people gathered at the cathedral for the funeral service.

At the completion of the funeral service, President Reagan's casket was driven to Andrews Air Force Base to be returned to California on the same day for the final entombment of the remains. The plane journey back to California took five hours. President Reagan's remains were driven in a funeral procession to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, where the final funeral services would be held.

There 700 invited guests were at the entombment services for President Reagan. Three of Ronald Reagan's five children gave eulogies at this final funeral ceremony. When the final eulogies were finished, a chorus sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" and a bagpiper played "Amazing Grace."

The President's casket was moved to the entrance of the above ground mausoleum and placed on sturdy pedestals in front of the entombment site. The final words of commendation were said as the last 21-gun salute was fired. When everything was quiet, the military presented arms and fired three volleys and a bugler played "Taps." Military fighter jets flew over the entombment site in honor of the 40th President of the United States.

Todd W. Van Beck is the Director of Professional Development at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science where he began his career 40 years ago. He is one of the best known and most well-regarded practitioners, educators, writers and speakers in the funeral profession. On May 30, 2018 Van Beck celebrated 50 years in funeral service. You can reach Todd at 615-327-3927.

FUNERAL HOME & CEMETERY NEWS
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NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

Upon the recent death of my husband, I'm brought to task again to have or to hold. It's just as difficult as it was years ago when Chad died, but after re-reading this, I accept that it is also the act of "letting go." It's not the personal items that connect us so much. It's the memories. And the beautiful part about memories is, no one can take them away from me. A few precious things I will place in Gary's Memory Box. The stories are in my head. And the love he had for me is forever in my heart. I couldn't ask for anything more precious to hold me over until we meet again.

TO HAVE OR TO HOLD—LETTING GO OF RUMMAGE AND GRIEF

It's rummage sale time of the year again. In our previous neighborhood, this was more than just a weekend de-cluttering project...it was an EVENT! Big time! It was known for bargains, socializing, and clutter control. Hundreds and hundreds of people swarmed the streets for 2-3 days looking for bargains for everything imaginable. It was about repurposing someone's obsolete items into something perfectly useful for another reason in someone else's home.

Little did I realize before we moved to this part of our city how important this ritual was in consolidating baggage and neutralizing regrets. And especially, how it parallels to another important current "event" in my life.... healing my grief. For years, I've stored items with once-important memories and hung on to the things I bought in a weak moment and later regretted buying. Keeping them was my way of not facing a bad decision or the loss. Now focusing on putting these things in a rummage sale has been a fundamental lesson in "letting go." I didn't understand this important ritual at first, but when I got caught up in its redeeming factors, I wrote an article a few years ago confessing my lessons learned ([FOR SALE: Madness, Memories, and Maybes at my website.](#))

We are a culture who prizes our possessions. Some gather toys—both big and small. Some hoard favorite collectibles for value, whimsy, prestige, or estimated resale. And some possess...just because they can. After the death of a loved one, family members are often charged with distribution of these prized possessions and may be seriously



challenged to make appropriate decisions that would satisfy the deceased if he or she had a say.

We are often asked in our grief groups, "What do we do about the stuff—the personal belongings of our loved one who died?" That's where the pain comes in...that's when the grief bursts hit home. It can be a formidable task to realize you have to deal with your loved one's personal items. The first thing I tell everyone is "You have to be ready to let go of each item. If you aren't, DON'T! There will be a time later when it won't be so painful."

I remember a few years after my son's, Chad's death, I was going to go through a trunk of many baby clothes that belonged to Chad. I was ready to pass them on until I opened a very small shoe box and inside were a pair of baby booties that reduced me to sobbing beyond con-

trol. Of all the things in the trunk, I'm not sure why this item made an intimidating connection. I closed the trunk and instinctively knew; I wasn't ready yet. Years later, I resolved to open it again...knowing the booties were still in there but prepared to make my decisions about distribution at that time. This time I was ready with my emotions and my resolve. It was okay.



And here I am again, just years later facing the same dilemma of repurposing, distributing, and managing the possessions of my beloved husband. It's something we all dread doing because to others it may appear as though we want to remove things that remind us of our loved one's presence in our lives. That is probably the very last reason for this particular act of "letting go" of a loved one's personal items. I surrendered this time around, to accept that it is more about simplifying so someone else doesn't have to do it upon my own death. I admit to feeling weak every time I opened a closet door and saw Gary's things or walked into the garage to a surplus of tools and toys and wished he was here to use them. Truthfully, many items I touched turned my stomach inside out with this awful feeling of anxiety and sadness. Wondering if I should hold on or gracefully let it go. And then I would picture him telling me (like he always did) when I asked about getting rid of items, "It's just stuff. If you feel it has a strong

memory, keep it. If not, it's okay to discard it, because it's of no treasured value to you or me." That was my saving grace for letting go. As hard as this process is—again this time—I'm okay knowing he would approve.

Today I reminded myself, this is a yearly event not something I just dreamed up. It's an annual therapeutic ritual of "letting go" of unused items to the church rummage sale, Goodwill, or Habitat for Humanity. Gary was probably right in that respect. Most things in my rummage sale, are items that deserve to be there. They've out served their purpose; have been replaced with more up-to-date counterparts; are duplicates and not needed; or simply, haven't been used or looked at in the past year or two. Just taking them off the shelves creates harmony within. It's all about making that decision to "let go." Will I miss it tomorrow? Or five years from now? Not likely. That is the key to "letting go."

This year the rummage sale ritual coincides perfectly with the relevant stages in my grief right now. Letting go of things that are holding me back is the only path to healing.

For example:

- When I let go of my anger...I surrendered to the fact sometimes there isn't always an answer to "Why?" We just trust and rely on faith. (It's not the only mystery in my life or question without an answer to Why?.)
- When I let go of my pride in "owning so many great things" ...I accept that life is not about what we have. Things are just things. (I'm comfortable with less is more...and grateful for what I have.)
- When I let go of my shoulda, woulda, coulda I concede that Gary's death was not a choice. (I couldn't have changed the outcome no matter how I tried. Not with wishes, hopes, or prayer. It was to happen.)
- When I let go of my regrets...I take comfort in knowing that I really have nothing to regret. (Our marriage was the best through all the ups and downs. We loved each other unconditionally.)

• When I let go of my fears and uncertainty, tomorrow becomes brighter. I can get up in the morning and know that God's got this and I'm on the right path.

Yes, after all the work, all the decisions, and all the preparation, rummage sales are purposeful. They are exhausting and frustrating but in the end, they are also cleansing.

A great sense of release and relief has come over me.

I ended my past article with this observation and it's still true today.

Rummage sales don't just weed out the unwanted. They open the closet door to the forgotten and the discarded. They persuade us to unclutter our lives, live more simply, and be grateful for and honor the treasures of the past. They allow us to grieve what we have lost, choose to remember what was important and commit to valuing what we have left.

Don't grief and rummage sale then have similar intrinsic values?

- To discard your regrets
- To confirm that you have lived.
- To savor what you have loved.
- To have enjoyed and to have shared.
- To have brightened lives with cherished memories.
- To ultimately give meaning and purpose to someone else because of your experience.

Things We Wish We'd Known About Loss

1. No matter how prepared you think you are for a death, you can never be fully prepared for the loss and the grief.
2. There will be pressure from others to move on, even minutes or hours after the death, and this can lead to regrets.
3. Death is not an emergency. There is always time to step back and take a moment to say "goodbye."
4. Death brings out the best and worst in families, so be prepared.
5. Grief triggers are everywhere. You will see things that remind you of your loved one all over the place, and it may lead to sudden outbursts of emotion.
6. The grieving process is about not only mourning the loss but getting to know yourself as a different person.
7. Grief can make you question your life, your purpose, and your goals. And that isn't always a bad thing.
8. Nothing you do in the future will change your love for the person who died. Eventually, you will begin to enjoy life again, date again, have another child, seek new experiences, or whatever. None of these things will diminish your love for the person you lost.

Source: This is a partial list hand-picked. But there is so much more. We may share more items in a future eLetter. The full list is in this book.

Book: What's Your Grief? Lists to help you through any loss. Eleanor Haley, MS and Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C

Harvest Time Beyond the Stars

©1995 by Nan Zastrow

Harvest time is quickly coming
Across God's great and chosen land.
Time to gather souls of followers
Homeward bound--the Master's plan.

In the soil of life's spring planting,
God plants roots and seeds to sow,
From the bounty of our labor,
One goal, enrich our human soul.

God sends the warm sun to encourage,
God sends the rain for strength to grow.
Rainbows assure us of His promise,
Filled with blessings that overflow.

God may pluck from our favored garden,
The life of someone lost and loved.
Sometimes before he was fully ripened,
On vines nurtured from above.

Did he leave behind rich memories?
Like abundant harvest from the rows?
Of each heart he touched with goodness,
And for God's blessings once bestowed?

Are you ready for the harvest?
Was your journey trod in fertile land?
Or are you strangled by weeds and creepers,
Spoiling the bounty of God's plan?

From this summer's harvest gathering,
Will you find an abundant stow?
Of all you earned to guarantee
Life after life---forever more?

Dear Lord, after each year's harvest,
Remind us how truly blessed we are,
To reap the fruits of our loved ones' labors
From the harvest time beyond the stars.



Cook It... Freeze it... Or Eat it!



Meals for One...
Or Two if you
like leftovers.

One of my biggest challenges since my husband died is making meals. I'm not a lover of leftovers, so that makes it even more difficult. In this new column to my ELetter, I'd like to share recipes and ideas from those in the same situation. Each month, we'll select one or two to share with the readers. (If this column goes over well, it will continue to be a regular feature that anyone can use whether you cook for one or a whole tribe.)

For the next issue, please submit your recipe to nanwings1@gmail.com

Plan with Leftovers

I like to make some of my favorites dishes(roast beef, chili, chicken dinner, etc). I try to make small portions, but still have some leftovers. After the initial meal, I make another plate with everything. Then I put foil over it tightly (for the oven);or plastic wrap over it (for the microwave). I prefer the oven, around 225 for an hour. Add some seasonings if you like. – Ann, Wausau

Bacon Wrapped Cream Cheese Stuffed Chicken Breast

Ingredients:

- 2 boneless chicken breasts
- 4 tablespoons cream cheese
- 1/4 cup Pepperjack cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons green onion, chopped
- 4 to 8 pieces of bacon

Cut chicken into 4 equal size pieces. Pound breast so it is about 1/4" thick.

Mix together softened cream cheese, chopped green onions and shredded pepperjack cheese.

Put 1/4 of this mixture into the middle of each piece of chicken.

Starting at the long side, roll chicken breast up, keeping the cheese mixture to the middle.

Wrap 1 to 2 slices of bacon around the chicken breast, secure with toothpick, if needed.

One piece of bacon wrapped around each breast is enough. But 2 pieces of bacon for each breast fully wraps the chicken and is outstanding.

Place on baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes at 375 degrees F.

Broil topside for about 5 minutes to fully brown and crisp bacon.

Turn each breast over and broil for another 3 minutes or so to crisp up the bottom side.

Ham and Cheese Crescent Roll Bake for Two

Ingredients:

- 1 can (4 oz) refrigerated Original Crescent Rolls (4 count)
- 2 oz Sliced Swiss Cheese (2-3 slices)
- 2 oz deli sliced ham (2-4 slices)
- 1 ½ tsp honey

1. Heat oven to 375°. Spray 4 regular size muffin cups with cooking spray. On cutting board, unroll dough and separate into two 6x4 rectangles. Place one rectangle next to the other to create an 8x6 rectangle. Pinch seams together.
 2. Place cheese slices evenly on top of dough. Top with ham. Start on the short side and roll up tightly. Then pinch seams together.
 3. Using sharp knife, cut roll into 4 equal slices. Place cut side down in prepared muffin cups. Bake 16-20 minutes or until dough is deep golden brown and baked through. Cool 5 minutes in pan and remove from pan with metal spatula.
 4. In small bowl, mix Dijon mustard and honey. Spoon mixture over rolls. Serve warm.
- (Advertisement in popular magazine)



There is no charge for these groups. Registration is required for virtual groups to receive the link and for in-person groups to save a spot.

FINDING THE OTHER SIDE OF SADNESS— WHO AM I NOW?

Newly revised. ZOOMGRIEF.

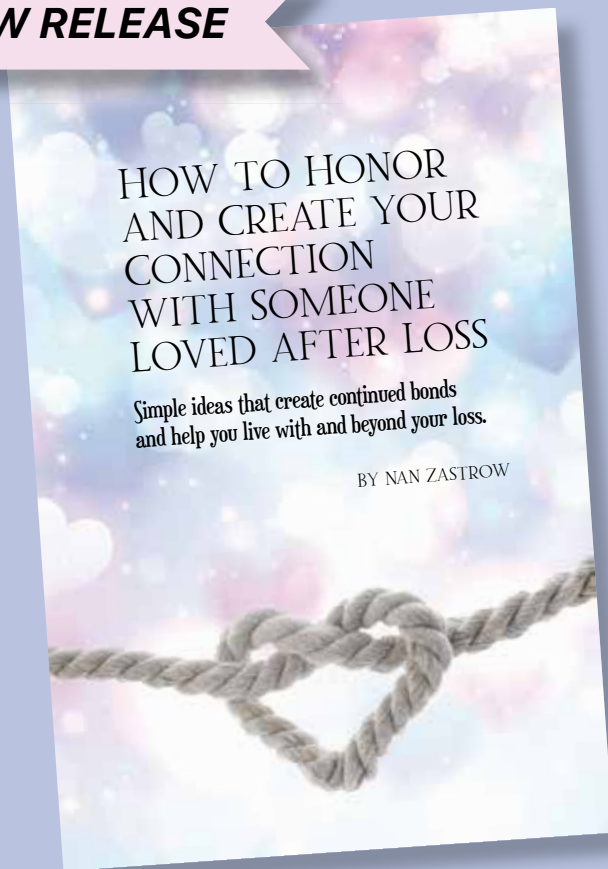
ZOOMGRIEF
Oct. 17, 24 and
Nov. 7, 14



Loss has significantly changed your life. This isn't something you chose; however, you realize there comes a point when you must balance life in your new reality and move forward. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting. In this 4-week group you will learn the secrets to moving forward. It's not about escaping the sorrow of grief, but it's about finding how to build courage to live your life differently. This series is designed for participants who are ready to discover their authentic self, challenge their fears, create a stronger sense of purpose and meaning, and discover who they are without your beloved physically present.

Register online at wingsgrief.org or email nanwings1@gmail.com

NEW RELEASE



How to Honor and Create Your Connection With Someone Loved After Loss

Simple ideas that create continued bonds and help you live with and beyond your loss

By Nan Zastrow



What is your motivation for getting out of bed in the morning

when the alarm goes off rather than turning it off, rolling over and going back to sleep? Grief has a way of robbing us of our energy, spirit, and hope. The action we take going forward can help us live comfortably with our grief in our new reality.

Research shows that it's normal, healthy, and healing for the bereaved to stay connected with their loved one through bonds like rituals or habits. It's a way to honor grief creatively rather than holding on to it and provides motivation for living with your loss today and beyond your loss through tomorrow. Simple everyday behaviors offer ways to never forget your loved one. They offer ways to discover that Ah Ha! Moment when you realize that life can go on and you are willing to engage in its wake-up call again.

In this book, Nan shares over 60 simple, applicable ideas that she has personally completed since the death of her beloved husband. Use this book as a "tool" to track your progress by checking off the ideas you've tried and record how it made you feel. Nan confirms that grief never ends. However, continued bonds give you power and control over grief. Nan shares glimpses of "forever love" challenged by grief. It reveals a broken heart creating a path to healing allowing you to survive in a world that may always hurt. Don't just wish things would be different. Doing nothing prolongs your sadness and despair. Doing something brings you closer to finding hope, peace and joyful moments once again.

Cost: \$8.95 | Available from Wings – A Grief Education Ministry | www.wingsgrief.org or email nanwings1@gmail.com. Also through Centering Corp. www.centeringcorporation.org | 1-866-218-0101

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF SEMINARS

In-Person | Fall 2023



Bob Baugher, Ph.D., FT (Fellow in Thanatology)

Dr. Baugher is a recently retired Psychology professor at Highline College in Des Moines, Washington where he taught courses in Psychology and Death Education. As a trainer for LivingWorks he has trained more than 1,500 people in suicide intervention.

Dr. Baugher has written books and articles on grief and loss and has given more than 800 workshops across America, including England, South Africa, Australia, Namibia, Australia, Singapore, Canada and the Philippines. He is the professional adviser for both the Seattle widowed support group (Widows Information and Consultation Service) and the South King County Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. [Visit his website at www.bobbaugher.com](http://www.bobbaugher.com)

SEMINAR ONE

Your Story of the Life and Death of Your Loved One

A community seminar for grief, healing and hope

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 | 7-9 p.m.

Complimentary public grief seminar. No charge.

Registration is not required. Offers 2 professional CEUS-DSPS

Grief is complex. Along with it comes a set of grief reactions. One includes the painful step for you to tell the story of the life and death of your loved one. Telling the story of life and loss can help begin to make sense out of the loss and perhaps ease some of your grief. By sharing the heartache with others, we can break down the barriers that make us vulnerable and human. You did not ask for the life you are presently living. However, by building resilience, you can learn to live a life your loved one would be proud of. This presentation is for you if you play a key role in helping someone through grief or if you are struggling with telling your story. This program will help you understand the importance of Story in the lives of people struggling with significant loss in their lives. For full description, objectives, and professional CEUs, visit the website. www.wingsgrief.org

Professional CEUs applied for by WI DSPS. Check our website for a posting about the approval of CEUs.

Both Seminars will be held at

Holiday Inn & Suites-Cedar Creek
1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild WI

For more information, contact:

Wings-a Grief Education Ministry
Nan Zastrow 715.845..4159 or email nanwings1@gmail.com

SEMINAR TWO

Coping with the Trauma of an Unexpected Death

A seminar that explores grief and compassionate bereavement support

Wed., Sept. 13, 2023 | 9:00 a.m.—Noon | Fee: \$50

Registration Required: Pre-Register Online at www.wingsgrief.org or register at the door.

As we are well aware, unexpected and traumatic death such as suicide, homicide, accident, medical mistakes, and overdose can intensify grief reactions. Even in the case of a terminally ill person, the death may occur in a way that seems sudden. How an individual receives notification of the death and the support received (or not received) from professionals and family can complicate the grieving process. Trauma includes images of pain, struggle, and fear that challenges the survivor's ability to cope. In this seminar, we will explore how sudden death can create a sense of powerlessness and can affect the way people cope with guilt, anger, obsessive thoughts, sadness, and other grief reactions. We will finish with positive strategies to help survivors. For full description, objectives, and professional CEUs, visit the website. www.wingsgrief.org

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

(For Wed. Sept. 13, 2023 - \$50)

Mail to: Nan Zastrow, 302 S. 56th Ave., Wausau, WI 54401

Advance Registration: To save time, mail your check with form to Wings.

Save a Seat: Pre-register online at www.wingsgrief.org. your voucher will be held at the door and payment can be made by cash or check the day of the event.

Name _____

Company _____

Mailing Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

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Presented by:



Partner Sponsor



Presented by Wings™ a Grief Education Ministry who partners with Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services to provide these seminars as a community service. Other major sponsors include Brainard Funeral Home, Helke Funeral Home, and Peterson/Kraemer Funeral Homes & Crematory. For a complete list of sponsors, visit www.wingsgrief.org



There is no charge for these groups. Registration is required for virtual groups to receive the link and for in-person groups to save a spot.

SEPT. 12 & 13, 2023

**INVITED GUEST SPEAKER: BOB BAUGHER
INPERSON SEMINARS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Professional CEUs applied for.

Location: Holiday Inn & Suites,
1000 Imperial Ave, Rothschild, WI 54474
For more information on these programs,
visit the [website www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

TUES., SEPT. 12, 2023

7:00—8:30 p.m. **IN-PERSON** No Charge

**YOUR STORY OF THE LIFE AND DEATH
OF YOUR LOVED ONE**

A painful step after loss is telling the story of the life and death of your loved one that helps you make sense out of your loss. Learn how to break down the barriers and build resilience to live in the present.

WED., SEPT. 13, 2023

9:00 a.m.–Noon **IN-PERSON** Cost: \$50

**COPING WITH THE TRAUMA
OF AN UNEXPECTED DEATH**

Unexpected deaths are complicated by pain and fear that challenges a survivor’s ability to cope. How individuals receive the notification and support can complicate the griever’s process. Learn how this can cause guilt, anger sadness and other grief reactions. The seminar will finish with positive strategies to help survivors.



**FINDING THE OTHER
SIDE OF SADNESS—
WHO AM I NOW?**

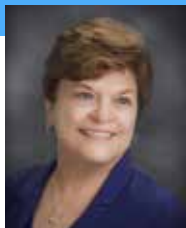
Newly revised. ZOOMGRIEF. Register online for a link.

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Register online at wingsgrief.org or email: nanwings1@gmail.com



Certified Grief
Educator | Facilitator:
Nan Zastrow

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