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Wings
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Honoring the Past and
Rebuilding the Future

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Grief is Not a Disorder.

My Position on the New “Prolonged Grief Disorder” Diagnostic Category in the DSM.

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., C.T., www.centerforloss.com

Our phone at the Center for Loss and Life Transition has been ringing off the hook in recent weeks with requests for my opinion of the new “PGD” diagnosis. Yes, everyone’s talking about the new “disorder” included in the latest release of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM-5). Psychiatrists and other mentalhealth professionals can now, at their discretion, diagnose an adult patient with “prolonged grief disorder,” or PGD, one year or more after the death of someone loved (just six months for children).

According to the DSM, PGD is characterized by daily, intense yearning for the person who died and/or a preoccupation with thoughts or memories of this person. Three additional symptoms from the following array are also required: identity confusion, disbelief, avoidance of reminders of the death, intense emotional pain, difficulty engaging with others and with life, emotional numbness, feelings that life is meaningless, and intense loneliness.

According to recent studies, say the experts who lobbied for the inclusion of PGD in the DSM, about one in ten griever suffers from PGD.

My position is this: I disagree. I’ve been a grief counselor and educator for more than forty years now. I’ve spoken and worked with thousands of grieving people. Here are the essentials they’ve taught me:

- Grief is normal and necessary. It’s simply love after loss.
- Because love doesn’t end, neither does grief.
- The normal melancholy of grief often continues well beyond a year.
- To integrate it into our ongoing lives, grief takes expression (i.e. mourning), the support of others, and an indeterminate amount of time.

Here’s another way of thinking about it: Grief is love’s conjoined twin. Grief is what we feel when we are separated from the object of our love. Without love there would be no grief. And if love is not a disorder, illness, or diagnosis, then neither is grief. I’ll say it again: Grief is not a disorder. In my experience, even grief meeting the criteria set forth under “prolonged grief disorder” in the new DSM is not pathological. If it were, most of us would be diagnosed with PGD at some point in our lives. Historically, we better understood that

Thomas Kempis was right when he observed that if you live very long on this earth you will experience some “proper sorrows of the soul”.

Pathologizing Grief and Mourning

Mourning is grief gone public. It’s the outward expression of our inner thoughts and feelings of grief. It’s our shared social response to loss. Whenever we cry, talk about our grief, or in any way express our anger or sadness or shock or any other thought of feeling about a loss, we’re mourning. And mourning, like grief, is necessary. Mourning is what allows us to ultimately reconcile our grief and find our way to a new normal. Unfortunately, some in our culture have decided that open and honest mourning is inappropriate and improper. Many mourners are pressured to keep their normal and necessary grief inside of themselves. Spoken or unspoken, messages such as “carry on,” “keep your chin up” and “keep busy” all too often prevail. That’s why myself and other authors often refer to North America as an “emotion-phobic” or “mourning avoidant” culture.

I would say that even the inner experience of grief has been tainted by this thinking. We are told we have a right to happiness. We are told that emotional and spiritual pain are bad and that we deserve to quell them as quickly as possible. But if sadness is maladaptive, then grief is also maladaptive, right? No wonder we ended up with grief and mourning too often being considered illnesses. No wonder we ended up with this unfortunate diagnosis.

“Grief is love’s conjoined twin.”

Complicated Grief

We all need the support of others if we are to reconcile our grief and go on to live a renewed, full life of love, meaning and purpose. But sometimes we need extra help. In those situations, I call it “naturally complicated grief.”

First, let me clarify that I believe all grief is complicated. Just as love is always complex and multifaceted, so too is grief. Whenever someone we love dies, we naturally have lots of different and everchanging thoughts and feelings about the death. Grief is often profoundly challenging and chaotic. In fact, it’s common for griever to feel like there is something wrong with them because their inner experience of loss as well as their outward behaviour are so different from their usual thoughts and feelings. The experience I’m calling “naturally complicated grief” is grief that has

gotten extra complicated somehow. It’s a matter of degree, feature prominence, and sometimes, yes, duration.

My professional experience has taught me that complicated grief is grief that has gotten stuck or off track somehow. It has encountered barriers or detours of one kind or another, and as a result has become stalled, waylaid, or denied altogether. It is not, however, abnormal or pathological. It is not a disorder. Instead, it is a normal response in what is almost always an abnormally challenging loss situation.

I use the word “complicated” to describe stuck, offtrack, or denied grief because it better honors the unavoidable spiritual challenges of human life. It’s also more hopeful. If something’s complicated, you can uncomplicate it. You can tease apart and work through the complexities. What’s more, it’s not the human being who’s “disordered” – it’s the potential convergence of numerous factors that can contribute to the complications of grief. I have found that we often label things “disorders” when we lose an understanding of them.

Caring for Verses Curing

Under the traditional medical model, the aim is to cure disorders. Curing is a medical term that means “remedying,” “correcting,” or “eradicating.” Yet grief is not an illness. It’s a normal human response to being “torn apart,” which is what the word “bereavement” means. It can only be cared for.

Caring is about honoring a transformation of the heart and soul. Caring is about being a companion who walks alongside – not in front of – and accompanies grieving people as they find their way out of the darkness and into the light.

Grief therapists do need frameworks that help them understand, identify and support griever struggling with complications of grief. If you’re interested in the companioning model of complicated grief care, I would refer you to my book *When Grief is Complicated: A Model for Therapists*.

In Summary

The difference between “prolonged grief disorder” and “complicated grief” may seem like semantics, but it’s more than that. First, the term “prolonged” implies that one year is sufficient for deep grief, but this is an arbitrary cutoff. The truth is that there is no timetable to healing in grief. Besides, working toward reconciling grief waits on welcome, not on time. And second, the term “disorder” shames griever at the very moment when what they need most is affirmation, empathy, and compassion.

GRIEF IS NOT A DISORDER...CONTINUED

I agree that stasis in grief is ultimately not tenable or healthy. While it's normal to get stuck now and then and even to go backward in the healing process, symptoms that don't soften over the course of years are actually signs that the mourner would benefit from extra support. However, even those mourners who do reach out for additional support are not disordered. They are not experiencing pathological grief. Yes, they are struggling, usually because of circumstances that anyone would struggle with. In these situations, seeing a compassionate grief-informed therapist can often help get the mourner unstuck and help them regain healthy momentum towards integration of the death into their life.

I believe that the pathologizing of grief is a profound error in judgement by the American Psychiatric Association. This decision is a form of secondary victimization of those experiencing grief. It increases stigmatization and attacks the very core of the mourner's self-esteem.

In a culture that lacks an understanding of "proper sorrows of the soul" and perceives grief as a medical condition requiring "treatment" (the pharmaceutical companies are celebrating), it becomes impossible to view mourning in a way that honors its inherent wisdom. Grief invites the mourner to slow down, not speed up. Grief invites the mourner to befriend pain, not deny pain. Now, there is an increased risk that a person will go to their physician (often not grief-informed) twelve months after a death, acknowledge being in the wilderness of grief ("intense emotional pain") and be prescribed a pill to lift their spirits.

This new timeline-defined disorder gives the false impression of being "hard science" when it is actually naïve, mis-informed, and reinforces that the dark emotions that come with deep grief are essentially taboo in our culture. "This decision is a form of secondary victimization of those experiencing grief."

I hope you'll join me in rejecting grief as pathology. A few years back I proposed an initiative I called the Slow Grief movement, which acknowledges that loss is as much a part of the human experience as love. It recognizes that loss changes us forever and

that grief is a normal, necessary, and, yes, ssslllooowww process. It also proclaims the need for people to express their grief and to be supported by their communities. And it asks us to look to the past to recapture the healing wisdom and customs we have almost lost.

In the Slow Grief movement, it's time to remove grief from the purview of medicine altogether. Let's strike it from the list of illnesses and take it back as a normal, natural, and necessary spiritual process that in fact fosters wellness. The Slow Grief movement also supports caregiving that is as slow as the mourner needs it to be as well as heart-based.

If you'd like to share your thoughts about prolonged grief disorder or the Slow Grief movement with me, I invite you to write me at DrWolfelt@centerforloss.com.

About the Author

Author, educator and grief counselor Dr. Alan Wolfelt is known across North America for his compassionate messages about healing in grief. He is committed to helping people mourn well so they can go on to live well and love well. Dr. Wolfelt is the founder and Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, located in Fort Collins, Colorado. Past recipient of the Association of Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, he is also a faculty member of the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine.

His books have sold more than a million copies worldwide and have been translated into many languages.

To learn more, visit www.centerforloss.com.



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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,
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FOR SALE: MADNESS, MEMORIES, AND MAYBES

In a world of sadness and grief, hope is the spark of sanity that allows us to look at something differently and imagine the bright spot. Hope allows us to believe that a minor change can bring about a miraculous makeover, worthy of the time or few dollars spent. Rummage sales are therapeutic for this.

A rummage sale can be defined as a collection of madness, memories, and maybes...all for sale. It a time for restrained grief and grateful hallelujahs. Restrained grief meaning, "I hate to see it go, I'll miss it." But a rejoicing hallelujah that there is now room on the shelf for something more purposeful. It takes days (maybe weeks) to go through the accumulated clutter and decide what you are willing to part with. For Gary and me, it was even more eventful because it was the climax to moving into a smaller home with less storage and my personal vow to de-clutter my life.

Grief is defined as the loss of something valued. We don't often get a choice about grief, but this was a grief I was ready and able to handle. It should be easy, I thought. There should be no emotions to get in the way. I was we removed had served its purpose. This was not a reaction to crisis but was voluntary and uneventful. I could do this without tears, without fears and without reservations. After all, it was just stuff.

As I began to assemble the potpourri of items, I was enthusiastic because the first mountain of "stuff" was purely madness. It was composed of tablecloths, silk flower arrangements and home décor of every color in

the rainbow (depending on which decorating scheme I was emphasizing at the time). As prospective treasure-seekers looked through the items ranging in values from variety store to very nice interior design, I could easily recite the story about the item and the pleasure it gave to me and my home. Each of these items, with their stories, confirmed a purpose in my life.

Kitchen tools and dishware, long crammed into tight storage shelves and drawers, once fueled my obsession with dishes for all seasons and all reasons. The gadgets that make life easier were soon forgotten because I recognized that as a rule, like life, you still had to figure it out for yourself and pick what works best for you.

Young Mennonite women dressed in cotton frocks with white aprons happily scooped up some of these items for their homes. One proclaimed it was her first wedding



gift, and since my husband couldn't find a price sticker, he told her to just take the item.

Small nudges of emotion began to pester me, as I soon realized that every treasure on those tables could be labeled for a particular period of our lives. Selling them was beyond just "stuff"—each one had a story. Each was blanketed with vivid memories. All emotion could not be avoided, it was attached with fine sensitivity to the role these "things" once played in our lives. I didn't expect that. Rummage sales weren't about emotion. One shouldn't grieve the voluntary departure of something once treasured.

I bagged the framed, hand quilted blocks I crafted by my grandmother along with the matching pillows. Someone quickly claimed the white hand-croqueted quilt that weighed a ton. Both were irreplaceable items shouting out a legacy of craftsmanship, but now seldom seen.

A selection of Chad's toys brought sweeping waves of emotion. They reminded me of my loss of dreams. I watched toddlers leaning against an adult with a supportive hand attempting to sit on the floor and play. Young adults (the age of my Chad) picked up the items that brought back a reflection of many happy playtimes with memories of their own. The John Deere tractors, the Fisher Price farmyard set that still mooed, Sesame Street finger puppets, and Tinker Toys had been coveted items in years past and most were over thirty years old. They were items a grandchild might have enjoyed.

A tattooed young woman spied Chad's slicked-up, highly polished, like-new army tanker boots. Managing her telephone camera, she sent pictures to someone describing the unique strapping and "like new" qualities. She wanted approval before she spent \$10 on a \$200 pair of boots that she was shipping to California to her biker boyfriend. I knew Chad would approve—and chuckle at their destination.

Finally, all the items that sold in the classification of "maybes." "One man's trash is another man's treasure," so aptly defined the items once used that now could bring all kinds of possibilities into someone else's life. I parted with small furniture, lamps, quilts, wall sconces, rugs,

framed artwork and curtains. A prospective buyer would pick up the item, turn it around and envision the perfect spot for the abandoned piece.

This gave me a glimpse of hope about a new beginning the item would see. There was a tingling feel of joy that someone else desired an item that I, too, once treasured. My eclectic array of treasures was moving on, given new purpose, new life and new possibilities.

In a world of sadness and grief, hope is the spark of sanity that allows us to look at something differently and imagine the bright spot. Hope allows us to believe that a minor change can bring about a miraculous makeover, worthy of the time or few dollars spent. Rummage sales are therapeutic for this.

Rummage sales don't just weed out the unwanted. They open the closet door to the forgotten, the discarded. They persuade us to unclutter our lives, live more simply, and be grateful for 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.

Would you agree that grief and rummage sales 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.

If parting with personal items and treasures is an act of grief, this was, by far, the easiest moment of grief I have ever experienced. It was a perfect rummage sale; one with great rewards; one that will be welcomed again next year, as I continue to walk my path of letting go and living on. A holistic experience of its own kind.

(This article is from the Archives of Nan Zastrow's writings. For more inspiration, visit our website www.wingsgrief.org.)

Reader Feedback

Each of us remembers our loved one for some special personality trait, a simple philosophy about life, or a strong vision of something they wish to accomplish.

What do you remember about your loved one that was special to you or a quality that you would like to integrate into your own life?



My mother had many traits I admired, but the one that stays with me was how she was my biggest fan. She never missed an opportunity to compliment me whether it was about fashion, or how I handled relationships. I use that attitude with my daughters daily. I FIND things to remind them how special they are, things they may not even realize are important life skills, like handling disappointments with grace. My mother didn't criticize my choices, even though I know she felt some of them were wrong. She knew I was making my own way. I keep that in mind when parenting my kids and am so grateful to have learned that from my biggest fan.

Ginny,
Atlanta, GA

This question made me instantly think of my Mom who loved unconditionally and never said a bad thing about anyone!

Kitty,
Wausau, WI

Mom loved to garden. She would always say that digging in the dirt was good for her. Each year she would pickle beets for her favorite Uncle, Burleigh Muerette. She made the best homemade soups also and would give her soups out to many. My mom left this earth

in 2016. Dad continues to prepare and maintain the labor of love in the garden. Last year I asked Dad to plant some beets (not his favorite) and my friend Jennifer Falkowski and I tackled the project of pickled beets for the first time. It was a messy ordeal, for sure, but I cherish the memories of my mom and her love for gardening and giving. I'd like to do the same. She would always say that digging in the dirt was good. In Memory of my Mom, Dianne.

Paula,
Wausau, WI

I will always remember my daughter with love and admiration. Her personality trait was a strong desire to live a normal life in spite of physical difficulties. Her philosophy of life was to live every day to the fullest and she did just that. She never gave up and followed her heart. She gave to others with caring and empathy. I guess personality and her simple philosophy meshed into one. I was the lucky one to know someone with so much determination to succeed.

Bunny,
Boynton Beach, FL

My 18-year-old son Evan marched to the beat of his own drum. He was creative and witty and had a unique style of his own that didn't follow the trends. I guess, in a word, I admire his individuality and I strive to have his self-awareness and courage. His Dad, who passed a few years later, had always been an inspiration to me, even after we'd divorced. He was a dreamer who had the grit and determination to make his dreams come true, even against all odds. His life showed me that anything is possible and hard work pays off.

Stephanie,
Seattle WA

There are, of course, many wonderful and touching qualities one remembers in their loved one. I think the one that stands out for me, is our daughter always made the effort to dress well, do her make-up and hair, etc, because no matter how terrible she was feeling, she would put her best face forward. It was a pick me up for her too.

I have since met friends of hers that mentioned they adopted that philosophy, as it helps them, too.

Gale,
Schofield, WI

My husband Steve was a lifelong learner, always interested in how and why things worked. At the time he passed away, he had been curious about light and color, especially the colors we see in the sky at sunset. He had several books at home from the university library about the topic. Days after he passed, I was so angry at his untimely death, I threw the books across the room. As time has gone on, I can now marvel at the gradation of colors in the evening sky and think, now Steve knows how and why, and I smile. Then I pick up my latest book of interest and keep learning.

Peggy,
Verona, WI

Without a doubt, my Mom had more Moxie than anyone I've ever known. Moxie means all of the following things: spunk, bravery, courage, guts, heart, spirit, courageousness, fearlessness, grit and nerve. And she had them all! At the age of 15 the doctors told her she needed to have open heart surgery, or she would never make it until she was 30. She bravely said...no I'll take my chances. Every birthday after 30 was very special to her, and she was able to live until 80. Through those years she was hit by a car as a child, fell out of a hot air balloon, was seriously hurt in a motorcycle accident, broke many bones, and had a stroke at 78, after which she could not speak, but she threw her walker away and walked again. In those last years she had

to relearn how to crochet and made hundreds of Afghans for nursing homes, etc. Never did she let any of those things change her joy for life. I'd choose to be just like Mom.

Nanci,
Arbor Vitae, WI

I sadly lost my husband 8 months ago. What I remember and cherish most about him was his big heart. Gary loved everything and everyone. He made everyone feel like they were special. We miss him very deeply but trust his legacy will live on in the hearts of all those that were lucky enough to know him.

Sheila,
Edgar, WI

On the Lighter Side



The Titanic Test

Recently a teacher, a garbage collector, and a lawyer wound up together at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter informed them that in order to get into Heaven, they would each have to answer one question. St. Peter addressed the teacher and asked, "What was the name of the ship that crashed into the iceberg? They just made a movie about it." The teacher answered quickly, "That would be the Titanic." St. Peter let him through the gate. St. Peter turned to the garbage man and, figuring Heaven didn't REALLY need all the odors that this guy would bring with him, decided to make the question a little harder: "How many people died on the ship?" Fortunately for him, the trash man had just seen the movie, and answered, "1,228." "That's right! You may enter." St. Peter then turned to the lawyer. "Name them."

The Most Grief

A dietitian was once addressing a large audience in Chicago. "The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago.

Red meat is awful. Soft drinks erode your stomach lining. Chinese food is loaded with MSG. Vegetables can be disastrous, and none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water.

But there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all and we all have, or will, eat it. Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?" A 75-year-old man in the front row stood up and said, "Wedding cake"



Inspirational Story

Carl was a quiet man. He didn't talk much. He would always greet you with a big smile and a firm handshake. Even after living in our neighborhood for over 50 years, no one could really say they knew him very well.

Before his retirement, he took the bus to work each morning. The lone sight of him walking down the street often worried us. He had a slight limp from a bullet wound received in WWII. Watching him, we worried that although he had survived WWII, he may not make it through our changing uptown neighborhood with its ever-increasing random violence, gangs, and drug activity.

When he saw the flyer at our local church asking for volunteers for caring for the gardens behind the minister's residence, he responded in his characteristically unassuming manner. Without fanfare, he just signed up.

He was well into his 87th year when the very thing we had always feared finally happened. He was just finishing his watering for the day when three gang members approached him. Ignoring their attempt to intimidate him, he simply asked, "Would you like a drink from the hose?"

The tallest and toughest-looking of the three said, "Yeah, sure," with a malevolent little smile.

As Carl offered the hose to him, the other two grabbed Carl's arm, throwing him down. As the hose snaked crazily over the ground, dousing everything in its way, Carl's assailants stole his retirement watch and his wallet, and then fled.

Carl tried to get himself up, but he had been thrown down on his bad leg. He lay there trying to gather himself as the minister came running to help him. Although the minister had witnessed the attack from his window, he couldn't get there fast enough to stop it.

"Carl, are you okay? Are you hurt?" the minister kept asking as he helped Carl to his feet.

Carl just passed a hand over his brow and sighed, shaking his head. "Just some punk kids. I hope they'll wise-up someday."

His wet clothes clung to his slight frame as he bent to pick up the hose. He adjusted the nozzle again and started to water. Confused and a little concerned, the minister asked, "Carl, what are you doing?" "I've got to finish my watering. It's been very dry lately," came

the calm reply.

Feeling satisfied that Carl really was all right, the minister could only marvel. Carl was a man from a different time and place.

A few weeks later the three returned. Just as before their threat was unchallenged. Carl again offered them a drink from his hose. This time they didn't rob him. They wrenched the hose from his hand and drenched him head to foot in the icy water. When they had finished their humiliation of him, they sauntered off down the street, throwing catcalls and curses, falling over one another laughing at the hilarity of what they had just done. Carl just watched them. Then he turned toward the warmth giving sun, picked up his hose, and went on with his watering.

The summer was quickly fading into fall. Carl was doing some tilling when he was startled by the sudden approach of someone behind him. He stumbled and fell into some evergreen branches.

As he struggled to regain his footing, he turned to see the tall leader of his summer tormentors reaching down for him. He braced himself for the expected attack.

"Don't worry old man, I'm not gonna hurt you this time."

The young man spoke softly, still offering the tattooed and scarred hand to Carl. As he helped Carl get up, the man pulled a crumpled bag from his pocket and handed it to Carl.

"What's this?" Carl asked. "It's your stuff," the man explained. "It's your stuff back. Even the money in your wallet." "I don't understand," Carl said. "Why would you help me now?"

The man shifted his feet, seeming embarrassed and ill at ease. "I learned something from you," he said. "I ran with that gang and hurt people like you. We picked you because you were old and we knew we could do it. But every time we came and did something to you, instead of yelling and fighting back, you tried to give us a drink. You didn't hate us for hating you. You kept showing love against our hate."

He stopped for a moment. "I couldn't sleep after we stole your stuff, so here it is back." He paused for another awkward moment, not knowing what more there was to say. "That bag's my way of saying thanks for straightening me out, I guess." And with that, he walked off down the street.

Carl looked down at the sack in his hands and gingerly opened it. He took out his retirement watch and put it back on his wrist. Opening his wallet, he checked for his wedding photo. He gazed for a moment at the young bride that still smiled back at him from all those years ago.

Carl died one cold day after Christmas that winter. Many people attended his funeral in spite of the weather. In particular, the minister noticed a tall young man that he didn't know sitting quietly in a distant corner of the church.

The minister spoke of Carl's garden as a lesson in life. In a voice made thick with unshed tears, he said, "Do your best and make your garden as beautiful as you can. We will never forget Carl and his garden."

The following spring another flyer went up. It read: "Person needed to care for Carl's garden."

The flyer went unnoticed by the busy parishioners until one day when a knock was heard at the minister's office door. Opening the door, the minister saw a pair of scarred and tattooed hands holding the flyer. "I believe this is my job, if you'll have me," the young man said.

The minister recognized him as the same young man who had returned the stolen watch and wallet to Carl. He knew that Carl's kindness had turned this man's life around. As the minister handed him the keys to the garden shed, he said, "Yes, go take care of Carl's garden and honor him." The man went to work and, over the next several years, he tended the flowers and vegetables just as Carl had done.



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

WOODROW WILSON

the twenty-eighth President of the United States of America

The funeral for Woodrow Wilson was the first presidential funeral conducted by the world-famous firm of Joseph Gawler's Sons in Washington, DC.

Gawler's was founded in 1850, so they hadn't opened when William Henry Harrison died in 1841 and John Quincy Adams died in 1848. In 1850 when Zachary Taylor died, undertaker Samuel Kirby was called. Lincoln's funeral was handled by Harvey & Marr Undertakers, Garfield's funeral was conducted by W. R. Speare, McKinley's funeral in 1901 by J. William Lee, and Warren G. Harding by John R. Wright in 1923.

However, in the next year when Woodrow Wilson died, the call went to Gawler's, and they have held onto this presidential relationship for decades. Wright's and Speare's were still in business in 1924, so why did Gawler's get the Wilson service?

The reason goes back to when Woodrow Wilson's first wife died in 1914, and the next year, President Wilson remarried. The President's new bride was Edith Bolling Galt. Mrs. Galt's first husband was Norman Galt, whose family owned the prestigious Galt Jewelry Store, founded in 1818 in Washington. In 1908, Norman Galt died suddenly. The Galt family had always engaged Joseph Gawler's Sons when a death occurred. Upon the death of her husband, the First Lady Edith Wilson engaged Walter A. Gawler to serve her,

and as they say, the rest is history.

In 1919, President Wilson suffered a stroke which paralyzed his left side. Wilson hung onto office until his second term ended, but many historians have claimed, with some credibility, that Mrs. Wilson was the first woman president. After all, it was Mrs. Wilson who decided what issues would and what issues would not be given to the President.

In their retirement President and Mrs. Wilson lived in a mansion on S Street in the Kalorama neighborhood in Washington. Over the next few years, President Wilson slowly deteriorated, and he died on Sunday, February 3, 1924 at 11:15 AM. He had lived 67 years and 37 days.

By noon on Sunday, Joseph Gawler's Sons had been notified, and Walter A. Gawler and seven assistants arrived at the S Street home to embalm the remains.

Interestingly, even as ill as Wilson had been for several years, no funeral decisions had been made.

On Monday, representatives from Arlington National Cemetery urged Mrs. Wilson to have the President buried within those hallowed grounds, but Mrs. Wilson decided to have her husband entombed at the unfinished Washington National Cathedral.

The funeral would take place in the Bethlehem Chapel, and the first entombment would be in the crypt in the Chapel Floor.

On Tuesday, Gawler's delivered the casket. Wilson's casket was made by the Belmont Casket Company and was elliptic-shaped, lead-coated steel covered with black broadcloth. The casket was also hermetically sealed with an inner full-length glass top. The interior of the casket was made of tufted ottoman silk. Afterwards the Belmont Casket Company named this casket the "Wilson."

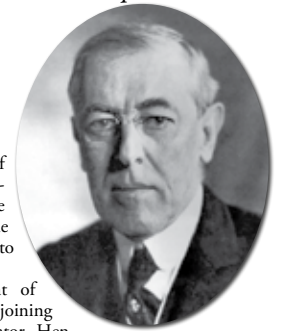
After Wilson's body had been casketed, the body was moved to the library where Wilson would repose until the funeral.

Woodrow Wilson's failed dream was to have the United States join the League of Nations, which was the predecessor of the United Nations. Wilson was the architect of the League. His stroke



WALTER A. GAWLER

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in 1919 was a result of his overexertion in attempting to persuade the American people that this was the way to ensure world peace.

The main opponent of the United States joining the League was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. Mrs. Wilson held Lodge responsible for her husband's eventual collapse and even his death. She was stunned when she discovered that Lodge was on the list of Senators who would attend the President's funeral.

Mrs. Wilson fired off this telegram to Lodge:

My dear Sir,

I note in the papers that you have been designated by the Senate of the U.S. as one of those to attend Mr. Wilson's funeral. As the funeral is private and not official and realizing that your presence would be embarrassing to you and unwelcome to me, I write to request that you do NOT attend.

Yours truly,

Edith Bolling Wilson

Senator Lodge did not attend.

Wilson's funeral began promptly at 4:00 PM in the unfinished Bethlehem Chapel. The crypt was lit with candles as the casket was lowered into position.

In 1952, construction on the Cathedral had progressed enough that the permanent Wilson Tomb was started. The remains of the President were moved in 1955. Mrs. Wilson lived to see President John F. Kennedy inaugurated in 1961.

Todd W. Van Beck is associated with John A. Gupton College in Nashville, and has been an author, teacher, practitioner, and speaker for over 40 years. On May 30, 2018 Van Beck celebrated 50 years in funeral service. You can reach Todd at 615-327-3927.



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INSPIRATIONAL STORY...

CONTINUED

During that time, he went to college, got married, and became a prominent member of the community. But he never forgot his promise to Carl's memory and kept the garden as beautiful as he thought Carl would have kept it.

One day he approached the new minister and told him that he couldn't care for the garden any longer. He explained with a shy and happy smile, "My wife just had a baby boy last night, and she's bringing him home on Saturday."

"Well, congratulations!" said the minister, as he was handed the garden shed keys. "That's wonderful! What's the baby's name?" "Carl," he replied.



The Power of Hope:

I believe in the power of HOPE. I believe that through grief everyone can find the gift of hope.

I believe Hope is found in:

- *Saying yes instead of no.*
- *Loving the concept of living; dying can wait.*
- *Turning the sad memories into stories of a living soul.*
- *Forgiving the unforgivable, not planning for revenge.*
- *Counting your blessings; not your challenges.*
- *Mending relationships instead of replacing them.*
- *Saying, "I'll always remember," not "I'll never stop missing you;"*
- *Getting up, instead of laying down.*
- *Giving in gracefully when you have nothing to gain.*
- *Letting go when you can't change the outcome.*
- *Looking for the miracle; not just waiting for it to happen.*
- *Strengthening your spiritual self, not being angry at God for your lack of faith.*
- *Counting your steps forward; not the ones that sometimes drift back.*
- *Saying, "what next?" instead of "why me?"*



Hope begins your journey. Believe in it. Trust in it. Imagine it. Build a strategy! Feel the energy! Allow yourself to be enveloped with its radiant embrace. You have begun. You will see dignity and grace in others. Compassion in the human touch. Faith in a power far greater than you. Peace in the order of all things. Wonder in the roads not traveled. Promise in what is yet to be.

@2020 All Rights Reserved. Nan Zastrow, from "Hope Is Not a Strategy"

Be Good to Yourself SELF CARE TIP



Take a Vacation From Grief

Grief is time consuming and exhausting. While vacations of the past may bring emotional memories of happy times together, a grief diversion can have a calming, relaxing affect. A grief diversion is something that totally puts you mentally in another place or another time where your focus is on someone or something else. It gives you the privilege of not focusing on your loss for at least one day. It's a time for laughter; a time for either doing something you enjoy or something you've never done before. It's about YOU. Choose your diversion wisely and choose often. You owe it to yourself.

HOW TO ENJOY SUMMER BY NAN ZASTROW

Summer holidays bring with them family reunions, graduations, weddings, gatherings at favorite vacation spots, picnics, travel, and a time to suspend. Each of these summer events can bring painful reminders of how things have changed and quickly dampen the energy and enthusiasm necessary to mingle socially with family and friends. You owe it to yourself to enjoy the peace and serenity of warm summer days.

Holidays and special days happen all year long...not just in October, November, and December. Every single year for the rest of your life, you will be faced with these repeated events. So, how do you honor your loss, but continue to participate in events when you are still grieving? It's good to have a plan (at least initially) to do something that keeps you active. Your plan may include a ritual of remembrance that honors your loved one first. It's okay to have fun! Here are a few ideas of what you can do for a brief ritual. In honor of your loved one:

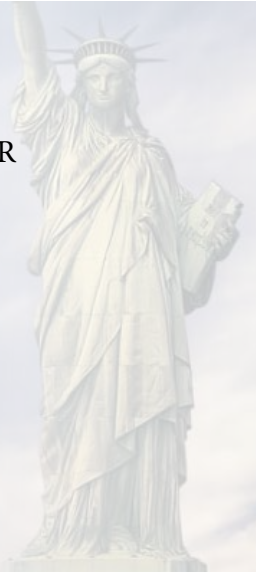
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|---|--|--|---|
| ★ Post a flag at the cemetery. | ★ Eat a ripe, red strawberry covered with chocolate. | ★ Pack a picnic and eat it with friends. | Before each ritual say your loved one's name. This can create a sense of peace and a connection. |
| ★ Watch a marching band at the parade. | ★ Eat watermelon until you feel you could bust. | ★ Wear flip flops to a summer concert. | |
| ★ Grill a just-perfect hamburger. | ★ Dive into a pool of cool blue water. | ★ Slather on sunblock and consider it a hug. | Remember that you are never truly without those you love. They are a part of your heart and mind, even after death. It's okay to enjoy the present moments with family and friends. Living after loss is the goal of grieving well. Catch a tear. Whisper his or her name and SMILE! (Your loved one is smiling too!) |
| ★ Chuckle during a water balloon fight. | ★ Ride the roller coaster at a theme park. | ★ See a funny movie on a rainy day. | |
| ★ Skate across a busy boulevard. | ★ Catch a colorful dragonfly. | ★ Plant a perennial or tree and watch it grow as your grief matures. | |
| ★ Bike a difficult trail. | ★ Swing at the park. | ★ Tell memories and stories around a campfire. | |
| ★ Walk an extra mile. | ★ Walk your dog on a wooded trail. | | |

I Wonder What She Thought

unknown

REMEMBERING SEPT 11.2001
 I WONDER WHAT SHE THOUGHT
 AS SHE STOOD THERE, STRONG AND TALL.
 SHE COULDN'T TURN AWAY
 SHE WAS FORCED TO WATCH IT ALL.
 DID SHE LONG TO OFFER COMFORT
 AS HER COUNTY BLEED?
 WITH HER ARM FOREVER FROZEN
 HIGH ABOVE HER HEAD?
 SHE COULD NOT SHIELD HER EYES
 SHE COULD NOT HIDE HER FACE,

SHE JUST STARED ACROSS THE WATER
 KEEPING FREEDOM'S PLACE.
 THE SMELL OF SMOKE AND TERROR
 SOMEHOW REDUCED HER SIZE.
 SO SMALL WITHIN THE HARBOR
 BUT STILL WE RECOGNIZED.
 HOW DIGNIFIED AND BEAUTIFUL
 ON A DAY SO MANY DIED,
 I WONDER WHAT SHE THOUGHT,
 I KNOW SHE MUST HAVE CRIED.



AUGUST
**** IN-PERSON ****



*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.*



**GIVE
SORROW
WORDS**
SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN

August 16, 23, 30 and Sept. 6, 13 (Tuesdays)
6:00-7:30pm
YMCA Downtown Wausau - The Landing
REGISTER ONLINE

We live in a culture that avoids talking about loss and one that wants us to move quickly through mourning to become our former selves. But grief is a process that takes time and work. Silence is not golden. When you give sorrow words, you express how you are feeling and begin to release your personal anguish. You teach others about your grief. Grief that goes unnamed and unspoken, remains unresolved. Grief is an emotion that can rule your life. In this 5-week ZOOMGRIEF series, you will learn what's normal and what's necessary to heal your grief. Learn how grief challenges your common sense. Giving sorrow words after loss helps you find peace and meaning in your life going forward.

OCTOBER

FINDING THE OTHER SIDE OF SADNESS

**Creating Balance
in Your New Reality**

Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25 (Tuesdays)
 VIRTUAL-ZOOMGRIEF Register for a link.

You now live in a new reality after loss. This is not something you chose. However, you realize that 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 series, you will learn the secret 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, make forward choices and become a seasoned griever gracefully.



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



Certified Grief
 Educator | Facilitator:
 Nan Zastrow
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715.845.4159



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Holding Onto Hope When Loss Hurts

Finding a reason to shine!

“We must be willing to let go of the life we planned, so we can accept the life that is waiting for us.” (Joseph Campbell)

When the darkest moment in life changes everything you know to be true, it doesn't mean that your divine spirit can't be revitalized. After the suicide death of her son, Chad and his fiancé just 10 weeks later, Nan found that she was desperately searching for new meaning and purpose. Accepting that “this is real” and holding on to the belief that “I can do this!” begins the process of re-engaging in life again.

Nan vowed to live the best life possible under the circumstances and honor the precious memories of her son. She believes that everyone transforms through grief and moves onto to another stage, just as our loved ones who died move onto a new stage. They still live within us and influence our future choices and who we become after loss. Every dark cloud can have a silver lining of hope strengthened by not giving up or giving in. Nan offers her readers significant suggestions for healing after loss. This book is a testimony that the sun will shine again!

“Nan's writing is always fantastic. She shares her knowledge and experience in terms that everyone can relate to and understand. She has an amazing knack of putting feelings of pain and loss into hopeful thoughts. I highly recommend everything she writes.”

- Bunny, Florida



NAN ZASTROW

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