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ENDING IT: SOMETIMES YOU WANT TO—BUT, DON'T

Bob Baugher, Ph.D

When it first happened, you didn't know how you would survive the moment. When you somehow you got through that terrible day, you woke up the next day and found yourself still alive. Days went by, some of them in a blur. People moved around you, words came out of their mouths—most of their utterances lost to the moment. Gestures of comfort were offered in an attempt to ease your pain. Looks on faces that exposed the truth that they, like you, felt helpless to really do or say anything that could change what had happened. Your brain, in a whirl of confusion.

Then, it was a week. How could a week have gone by? One hundred sixty-eight hours without your loved one. How could you have lived those first seven days? But you did. As the days moved on, into weeks and months, you may have found yourself with thoughts that, at the time, seemed to make sense in a world gone senseless. Your thoughts may have formed into a plan. A plan that seemed the only way to cope with the unremitting pain. A plan to end your life. It was your secret. No one knew. No one suspected. Is it your secret now? Why would you ever consider such a thing? One answer is that it was your mind's way of planning an escape from an

inescapable prison of horror. With one act of life termination you could perhaps solve two problems: you could end the pain—and more importantly—you could be with your loved one. Perhaps as you read this, the plan is still there—sitting somewhere in your brain. You may have thought that this secret plan was so secret that no one would know—no one would suspect that you would ever consider taking your own life, especially after the devastation that the ending of one precious life has caused your family and friends.

Your plan may have been vague at first. For some people it may have gone like this: "I'm not going to do anything to actively end my life, but if I'm driving down the street and a semi-truck is heading towards me, I'm just going to let it happen." Or perhaps you've given up wearing your seatbelt, or you're taking more chances when driving, such as speeding or some other form of negligent driving. ("Go ahead, police officer, stop me and give me a tongue-lashing about how I shouldn't be driving like that. And, when you're done with your little speech, I will let you have it with explicit details of the way my loved one died.

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ENDING IT.

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I can't wait to see the look on your face when I'm done.") Maybe your risk-taking involves alcohol or pill-taking, or both. Or there may be some other risks you are taking while convincing yourself with the thought, "If it's meant to be, so be it."

Perhaps you have considered a specific method that will end your life. You may have a gun or a rifle. Or pills or a rope, a knife, razor blades, or a hose for carbon monoxide. Or you may have considered jumping to end your life.

If any of this is true for you, I am going to say four vital things to you:

1. Millions upon millions of people in grief have had these exact thoughts. As you read these words, there are people out there right now who are considering ending their life because the death of their loved one has convinced them that their life is already over. If you put your life-ending thoughts in context with millions of other people, then such thoughts can only be considered somewhat normal. Normal? Yes. Our brain can come up with countless ideas, plans, feelings, and thoughts. However, as soon as these thoughts become behaviors that move into actions, then the line has been crossed. It's one thing to think it. It's quite another to behave it.

2. Think of all the pain you and your family and friends have been in since the day your loved one died. Then, think of the additional pain your death would cause for each person. I know, it doesn't seem fair to hold up this picture to you just at a time when you are in so much pain. But, I do it because it is absolutely true.



3. If your life-ending thoughts have persisted to the point where you have taken steps or feel you will take steps toward ending your life, tell someone. Get the words out of your mouth. Who is the best person to tell at this point? It should be someone you trust. Someone who is going to take you seriously. Someone who will make sure you get help. It could be a friend, a relative, a counselor, a person on the crisis line, a religious leader, your doctor, or the Suicide Hotline at 1(800)273-8255.

4. Finally, here is one of the most important facts on human emotion:

As terrible as you feel right now, you will not feel this way forever. You won't.

Don't believe this? Ask any parent who has experienced the death of a child. Ask any man or woman who is living each day without their beloved partner. Ask any child or adult whose brother or sister or

parent has left this earth. They will likely say that, while they are never back to the way they felt prior to the death, they found that, with time, they began to feel better. And they want you to know that you will, too.

You will.

Now, stop reading this and do something that will save your life—even if you don't feel like it. It's what your loved one would want for you, isn't it?

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NAN ZASTROW
Co-Founder,
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

This article is written from my personal reflection of what it feels like to be a survivor of suicide. It is not meant to ignore or diminish the experience of other types of traumatic deaths that may have similar responses. My responses are not unique to me alone and may agree with the thoughts expressed by others.

In Memory of Chad Zastrow
12-4-1971 to 4-16-1993

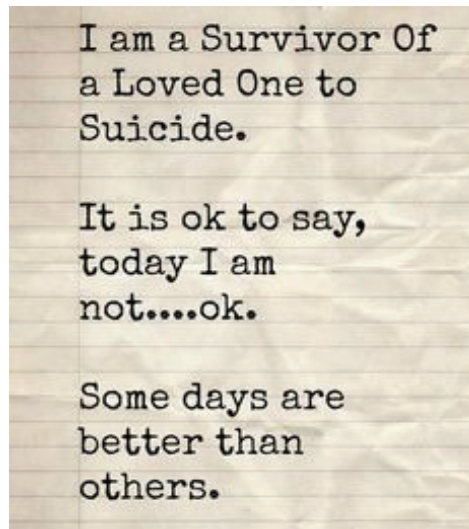
Fall. It's that time of year when the annual walk for suicide awareness takes place in our community. Some people will see the posters, hear the advertisements, and think: "Just another walk/run for a cause. Aren't there enough of them already? What's the sense of it?"

For a smaller part of the community who see the awareness signs, there's a connection, because they have been touched by suicide, in some way. Ask any "survivor", "What's it like to be a survivor of suicide?" You might be puzzled by their surprise! Most people would never ask the question, partly because they really don't want to know; and, the other part is because it's never going to happen to their family.

Our son, Chad Zastrow, died over twenty years ago in 1993 as a result of suicide. His fiancé took her life ten weeks later.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A SURVIVOR OF SUICIDE

Each suicide death was very different from the other. One was random and an emotionally charged response to the end of a relationship; the other, as a result of remorse, well-planned and carried out. Yet, even today, I will meet someone who knew Chad—and didn't know I was his mother. It makes me proud when the person acknowledges knowing Chad. His life mattered, and regardless of the cause of death his life gave us 21 years of memories.



What is a survivor of suicide?

A survivor is someone who exists after a loved one has taken their own life and lives with the traumatic psychological and social distress that impacts their life forever. Survivors include family, neighbors, friends, co-workers, etc. who had a personal connection with the deceased. Statistics show that every suicide victim leaves behind at least 6 survivors of suicide. That's probably a low estimate. Some estimates I've read consider as many as 28 survivors. I am

from a small family. When I count the 4 aunts/uncles, 4 nieces, and 2 living grandparents, I've already surpassed the count of 6 direct survivors. This excludes my son's dozens of friends, co-workers, fellow National Guards men/women, Scouting buddies, classmates, volunteer emergency personnel and many more groups of Chad's social friends. We've well passed the 28 number of survivors. Statistics demonstrate that the loss of a family or friend by suicide is far-reaching. The level of impact varies depending upon the relationship; however, the event of suicide is never forgotten.

What makes suicide different from other deaths?

You can argue that the person made a choice to die while other types of death typically don't include a "choice". In Chad's situation, I felt comfortable believing his death was not a rational choice—but rather an explosive response to a heated moment of pain and the unfathomable burden of the loss of a relationship. There wasn't a cool-down period to work through his emotions and surprise.

As a survivor, I was emotionally and mentally absorbed feeling a sense of guilt, confusion, and disbelief. For years, I commented, if it had been any other kind of death, I probably could have accepted it easier than suicide. I believe, Chad would not intentionally "choose" to die.

Another thing that makes suicide "different" is it is tainted by stigma. When someone dies, most bereaved receive

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THE BEST THING

An Inspirational Story

Author: Tim Nichols (from the Internet)

Sometimes in life, we are challenged by changes that seem impossible to live with. But, many times imposed changes are the best thing that ever happened.

Newspapers from my hometown said there had been a rise in suicides. Crisis centers were straining. Thousands were suddenly out of work. Factories that had given Akron its nickname, "The Rubber Capitol of the World," were shutting down. No retirement would go to those who dreamed mainly of it.

I was stationed with the army in northern Italy at the time. I found a place to be alone and I wept. I lost weight while I got used to the idea, over the next few weeks that my dad was out of work.

Like droves of others in the 1940s, my dad moved from West Virginia to northern Ohio to find work. Grandpa and uncles moved too. The lumber industry in central West Virginia had dried up. Coal mines provided few jobs at that time. So my dad migrated from the mountains to the flatlands, from a dirt farm in paradise to a new way of life where smoke belched among a people who both ridiculed and admired the newcomers from the hills.

He married my mother. They had six children. I'm number four.

The factory pay was good. My dad earned his. He went to work a full hour before he was required to be there. His hands and his tools were already prepared to go to work when the time



clock registered that he was there.

He made up for what he lacked in education in effort and raw ability. Eighth grade was the norm for his generation and place of birth. He had milked a lot from the limited opportunity. He was a fast learner. Without formal training, Dad was a skilled carpenter. When he was not at the factory he was usually working on odd jobs. He roofed houses, built garages and porches, and developed human contacts to help him find more of these opportunities. I recall, as a youngster, seeing only a few books beside his bed. The only title I remember is, HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE, by Dale Carnegie.

He never complained, but Dad did not especially love going into the factory and sweating for more than eight hours at a time. I infer that from his frequent

mention, in those days, of the number of years he had left before he could retire. Every time the union negotiated a new contract the number changed. He had it down to years, months, and weeks. Retirement was the glorious carrot dangling out there, coming closer all the time. Quitting was not an option that he ever mentioned.

He had only a few years left before he could retire when I joined the army. He knew exactly how many.

Then the newspaper came. They stole my dad's carrot. How would he find a way to land on his feet after that? I called home. Dad said they were offering some sort of retraining benefit, but it did not sound like much at the time. It felt like a tiny handout compared with the withdrawn promise of retirement.

A few months later he told me that he was enrolled in a class preparing him

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THE BEST THING

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to take the GED. He passed that. He enrolled in a real estate course. Then he said that he was selling real estate. Then he was building another house. He bought a place in Florida. He bought one property after another, houses needing work. Restoring these and then selling them or renting them, he seemed to be doing well. I don't remember exactly when it first dawned on me that he had recovered from the tragedy that caused me such distress.

I do remember the moment it became crystal clear. I had left the army after my

enlistment, gone to college, married, and was working out my own future. He said to me, "Timmy, you know what? The best thing that ever happened to me was when they shut down that factory."

I think of that when my own options seem limited and when I'm uneasy about forced choices and forks in the road. When I catch myself demanding that the world line up with my own intentions and hopes I remember the "best thing that ever happened" to my dad.

When fate robs us of our carrot, it's probably time to plant brand-new seeds in fresh soil and grow our own carrots. Life is seldom fair. It's up to us to so order our response to changes that we can later return and thank those who've slammed and locked doors. The world is indifferent about our success or failure. That's why we must not be. It is up to you--and no one else--to turn blighted hope and defeat into the best thing that ever happened to you.

On the Lighter Side....

Tombstone epitaphs that bring a chuckle:

Harry Edsel Smith of Albany, New York:

Born 1903--Died 1942.

Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down. It was.

Ezekial Aikle in East Dalhousie Cemetery, Nova Scotia:

Here lies Ezekial Aikle, Age 102.

Only the good die young.

In a Ruidoso, New Mexico, cemetery:

Here lies Johnny Yeast.

Pardon him for not rising.

In a Uniontown, Pennsylvania, cemetery:

Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake,

Stepped on the gas instead of the brake.

Anna Hopewell's grave in Enosburg Falls, Vermont :

Here lies the body of our Anna,

Done to death by a banana.

It wasn't the fruit that laid her low,

But the skin of the thing that made her go.



*Would you like to share
your story or poem?*

If you would like to submit a short story, poem, or article, we welcome it. The material does not need to be original, but if it isn't, please include the author or credits that can be printed along with the material. We are looking for articles that inspire the bereaved, teach, and offer hope which is the focus of our ministry of Wings-a Grief Education Ministry. Poems or material may be submitted in memory of your special loved one.



Remember Me

To the living, I am gone.
To the sorrowful, I will never return.
To the angry, I was cheated.
But to the happy, I am at peace.
And to the faithful, I have never left.
I can not be seen, but I can be heard.
So as you stand upon a shore
gazing at a beautiful sea– remember me.
As you look in awe at a mighty forest
and its grand majesty – remember me.
As you look upon a flower and
admire its simplicity – remember me.
Remember me in your heart, your thoughts,
your memories of the times we loved,
The times we cried, the times we fought,
the times we laughed.
For if you always think of me,
I will never be gone.

– *Anonymous*

How to Connect with Wings:

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- Postal: P.O. Box 1051,
Wausau, WI 54401
- Phone: 715.845.4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted
at the website wingsgrief.org
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter
sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at
www.centeringcorp.com
- Visit Wings on Facebook



W Grief Tip:

Planning the Transition in Your Holiday

It's not too early to have that conversation with family and friends how you will celebrate the holidays this year in the absence of your loved one. Gather everyone together and be honest about your emotions. Planning ahead is essential because no plan at all is bound to leave everyone hurting. Refusing to honor the old traditions doesn't stop anyone from remembering them. Incorporating ideas that honor your loved one or tells his/her story can save the day. Accept that your family is in transition; and perhaps, modifying the tradition to fit the family needs this year is a good way to start.

The first holiday may be the hardest of all, but even consecutive holidays require review about what worked and what didn't work. Sometimes the anticipation is harder than the actual holiday itself. Traditions will continue to evolve as families transition through marriage, divorce, relocation, and death. Be sensitive to each other's needs. You still have something to celebrate.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A SURVIVOR OF SUICIDE

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compassion and support. However, with stigma-related deaths, the survivor deals with some blame, judgment, and social avoidance. Whether this is actual or perceived, cannot be determined for a long period of time because the survivor is dealing with the uncertainty of why the death occurred. Personally, I felt social judgment as a parent who failed her responsibilities. I also struggled with “if only” thoughts of what I could have done differently to prevent the death.

How people respond to survivors of suicide:

I am intrigued by Dr. William Feigelman, PhD's research. As a suicide counselor who lost a child to suicide, he compiled statistics about how people respond to survivors of suicide. He found that 53% of suicide survivors reported harmful responses from one or more family members following their loss and 32% reported harmful responses from a non-kin group. These responses were categorized into 7 types of responses:

1. Avoidance-(People would not acknowledge the death).
2. Unhelpful advice.
3. Absence of caring interest (If I talked about my child, they changed the subject).
4. Spiritual Advice (He's in a better place, or It was meant to be).
5. Blaming the victim (He did a selfish thing).
6. Blaming the parent (Why didn't you see this coming?).
7. Negative comments (“Well at least he didn't kill anyone else”).

Avoidance is probably the most hurtful response. Some think they don't want

to stir up emotions that might cause the survivors to think of the suicide death, so they avoid contact, conversation, and any social interaction. I certainly felt social avoidance.

Answer to “Why did the person choose to end his/her life?”

Often there isn't a clear answer to why someone ends his/her life. For me, understanding “why?” became my quest. Even when there seems to be reasonable certainty why a loved one suicides, some doubt always surfaces. I was without exception in Chad's death. The word “choice” continued to annoy me. I don't think of suicide as an eny, meeny, miny, moe choice. Death may not be the intent...ending the pain is.

I read about a theory that there is an accumulation of pain from life's experiences that builds up throughout one's life and becomes unbearable leading to the suicide. Single incidents or accumulated responses to receiving bad news, misfortune, setbacks, and rejection create negative feelings about life. When these incidents multiply, life may be difficult to manage. I've visited with countless survivors of suicide and their stories support the fact that emotional or physical “pain” was a major trigger. Emotional pain creates sadness, anger and layers of suffering that may not be noticed or may be ignored. Every individual has a different tolerance level to the same kind of stressors, and each person's basic human needs differ. Over time or as an instinctive reaction, pain sparks fear and loss of hope. In my estimation, these two factors precede death by suicide.

We cannot exclude mental illness in

suicide. Statistics confirm that 70% of suicide deaths are linked to depression, bipolar disorder or other mental illness. Undetected mental disease, uncontrolled disease while on medications, and a history of self-destructive behaviors can deteriorate a person's emotional health. I remind myself that because I am mentally healthy, I can't understand what it must feel like to face a problem that seems unresolvable. Suicide becomes the individual's permanent solution to a temporary problem. Prevention begins with aggressive detection of mental health issues in our schools and workplace.

How to let go of the “why?”

Even when I became comfortable with my story about why Chad died by suicide, I was reluctant to let go and live with my personal explanation that should have put me on a path to healing. It wasn't that easy to accept the outcome. I felt helpless. Every indication that life for Chad was good boggled my mind. We had a long discussion with Chad about moving home and saving money to buy some land. Within days before his death, he bought a fishing pole and had a picture of a boat he wanted to buy. Chad “made-up” time for his National Guards drill that he was going to miss so he could attend his EMT class. He bought his fiancé roses and paid his taxes. What was I missing that would allow me to move past letting go?

Understanding how grief works and how I had to heal myself was missing. It took me a long time to determine that I was focusing too much on how/why he died rather than remembering all the good times when he lived. Eventually,

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WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A SURVIVOR OF SUICIDE

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I conceded to “let it go” and live. Grief saps the energy out of every day and I didn’t want to play the role of a bereaved mother (without a cause) any more. Letting go doesn’t betray the love nor does it diminish the relationship we shared. Instead I wanted to turn my grief into healing by helping others in loss. This was my turning point.

the pain are futile.Now I can live without the answer to why?” It doesn’t matter anymore. I remind myself that knowing won’t change a thing.”

What does it feel like to be a survivor of suicide TODAY?

Even after twenty years, the stigma still has its hold. I feel that those who don’t

orange button that reads: “Ask Me, I’m not afraid to talk about suicide”. We accept that even today we are “pointed out” as survivors, and don’t hide from the reality anymore. At one time, I couldn’t say the word “suicide” when I talked about Chad. Today, I embrace the pain and feel blessed to have overcome the personal stigma in my mind.

I don’t feel much different than anyone else who has lost a significant loved one in their life. We are all survivors, in our own ways. Suicide is just death by another name. It doesn’t define who my son was, nor does it define how I lived my life after his death. I continue to heal. I continue to tell my story, and I continue to walk in the light of awareness.

And yes, we actively support suicide prevention and awareness. It’s time for the Fall Walk for Suicide Awareness. I’ll lace up my shoes. I’ll put on that smile that makes people wonder what in the world I could be smiling about. I’ll don the T-shirt that heralds the event and be proud. I am a survivor of suicide. “Because he lived, I remember. Because I remember, he will never die.”

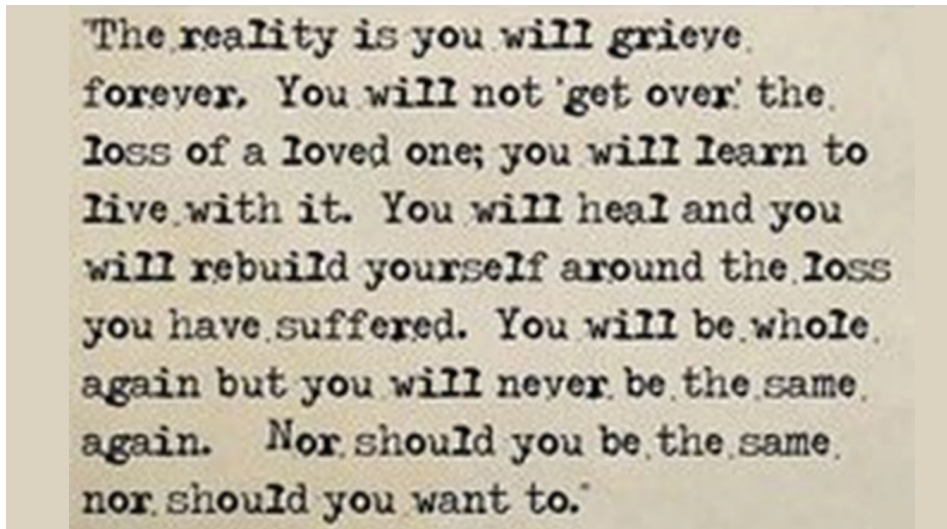
RESOURCES:

Discovering Something Greater than the Answer to Why, Nan Zastrow, Grief Digest magazine, 2006 and 2015.

Narrativestories/confessions-of-a-suicide-survivor website

American Association of Suicidology, Washington, DC, Jeffrey Jackson

Who is a suicide survivor? John R. Jordan, Ph.D. Pawtucket Rhode Island.



The reality is you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same again. Nor should you be the same, nor should you want to.

Accepting the reality is the key to healing. This doesn’t mean knowing your loved one is absent and the death happened. Acceptance means knowing the good and the bad and knowing the challenges and the failures in his life.

When mental health or destructive behavior issues preceded the suicide death, you accept those factors as contributors to the death. You accept that you cannot hold yourself responsible for curing things beyond your control. The cause of death does not define the person who died.

In an article I wrote in 2006, (Discovering Something Greater than the Answer to Why)\ I stated, “When there aren’t answers to satisfy us or the answers are contradictory to what we perceive, we feel resentment...The attempts to neutralize

know Chad’s “real” story have a very stereotyped concept of his death. I think, as a society, we sometimes focus too much on how someone died rather than how they lived; ignoring what they contributed to the community and our lives; and how much they mattered to their survivors. We may forget that their life was similar to ours until something “went wrong.” It becomes easier to label the person with he/she “committed” suicide—a verb with a lasting effect that seriously makes the death appear ugly, selfish, and unforgiving. As a survivor, I’m not capable of changing anyone’s opinion.

When Gary and I speak at conferences now, such as the National Compassionate Friends Conferences, we wear an 8”

Reader Feedback



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

FOR MANY BEREAVED, THE SHORTER DAYS OF AUTUMN ARE A REMINDER THAT THE HOLIDAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER. AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE, TRADITIONS CHANGE. FAMILY GATHERINGS CAN BE PAINFUL. DECORATING OR CELEBRATING IS OFTEN QUESTIONABLE. THERE ARE WAYS TO PRESERVE TREASURED TRADITIONS THAT HONOR YOUR LOVED ONE THAT CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO YOUR HOLIDAYS.

Ever since my brother has passed away going on 5 years on 8/27/15 we always still to this day would give gifts to each other from him. Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day etc. It's our own way to help each other feel that comfort still and to simply look out for each other.

Brittany, Wausau, WI

My husband was a life-time avid Buffalo Sabres fan and season ticket holder; for Christmas, my family purchased a memorial block in his honor and gave it to us for Christmas; in the spring we were able to see it after it was installed. We look to find ways to honor his memory, but build the future and this was a perfect gift

Darcy, West Seneca, NY

This is the first year that Mike and I have been home (in the states) to honor my father-in-law's death. Jay passed away on Oct 17, 2012 – his ashes were spread at his favorite lake in Colorado. We will take my mother in law to the lake and spend some time enjoying the lake, telling stories about the times they were here with Jay and I have some stories from the grandson who can't be there. Now that Mike and I live closer to my mother in law, we plan to do this every year. The holidays haven't been celebrated much since 2012, so Mike and I plan to start

creating memories, now that we are in the states.

Kim, Great Bend, KS

My husband died earlier this year and I really can't predict what the holidays will bring. But one of the traditions he and I had was to buy a special ornament nearly every year we were married, and almost always when we traveled to remind us of places we'd been. I do know I probably won't put up my 7' tree, but I may get a small table top tree and decorate it with those special ornaments from our past. And I'll put up my Dickens Village for which he gave me many pieces for the collection. As for our other "traditions"... of which there were many...I'll just have to wait and see what God has in store.

When my Mom died in 1997, my dad's health deteriorated quickly. Within a few months I had to move him to assisted living and clean out and sell their home. What I found was the 4' table top tree that they stored from year to year that had numerous hand made ornaments from a beloved next door neighbor from my childhood years. She made them each year for many years as Christmas gifts for my folks, and also made several for my husband and I after we were married. And I also found a ceramic bell collection - bells Dad had given mom each year for

many years. We'd moved dad from his home in Virginia to be near us in Wausau. The first Christmas he was near us and for the remaining 6 years of his life we put up a tree with those ornaments in his room. After he died we started to put the tree in our family room as a reminder of my parents. The ornaments that didn't fit the 4' tree found their places on our main 7' tree every year.

Marilyn, Wausau, WI

My son was stillborn on Thanksgiving 1999. Every Thanksgiving after we split the day between each side of the family instead of being at the house all day where I went into labor. We also have purchased a new ornament that reminds us of our son every year. This year we have enough to decorate Philip's own Christmas tree.

Jenna, Antigo, WI

This question is difficult to answer because since Jon's death on 11/27/10 we have not celebrated any one holiday the same way. We had given up decorating a tree years before he died because of our pets. Our daughter suggested that we get a tree (the first month after he died) and put in his room. This way it would be safe

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WHAT DO YOU THINK...

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behind his closed door. Then we moved to Antigo, so the next year I volunteered to serve at the Community Christmas Dinner.

Last year Thanksgiving fell on the 27th, my husband and I went out for a quiet dinner together.

Tara, Antigo, WI

After my husband Dan died it was very hard for me to feel in the spirit of the season. The grief and sadness were weighing me down. My daughter, Michelle, wanted to be able to remember Dan in some way at our gatherings and get together. Michelle purchased an antique looking lantern. She decorated it with charms and other fun trinkets that reminded her of Dan and she engraved his name on a small bent spoon. She attached all of these items to the handle of the lantern. She also got an electric candle to put inside of the lantern.

Our first holiday without Dan, she presented me with the lantern. We took it with us to our family celebration and lit the candle inside the lantern in memory of my husband. We would set the lantern on a table in the area where we were all gathering. It made us feel good to know

that we were remembering him at this time. The lantern traveled with me as I went through Thanksgiving and Christmas 2013 and my 60th birthday party in 2014. The lantern is now resting on the top of my entertainment center in my living room. Whenever I want to honor Dan or remember him, I turn on the candle or use a regular candle inside of the lantern. It is a physical symbol of my love for him. It gives me some comfort. My daughter also made one for my friend Donna in memory of her husband, Jim.

Jeanette, Aniwa, WI

One thing that I did was to take some of the ornaments that Luke made as a child, (the presentable ones) and the ornaments that he had received as gifts (sister Paula gave all the nieces and nephews one each year) and I put them on a small lit tree. So I put it out every year. If someone didn't have ornaments already they could purchase as to the child/person's personality or hobbies. (Luke has one that is a Santa with a soccer ball...etc.)

Sonja, Sioux Falls, SD

Our son, Keith was killed at age 39, as a result of an accident. Keith's wife, Jennifer, and daughter, Hannah, were determined to keep with their tradition of visiting us (Keith's parents) that year at Christmas. Because Keith LOVED CHRISTMAS, we decided to decorate a tree for EACH ROOM IN OUR HOUSE. We carefully labeled each box so when it's not the year Jennifer and Hannah were coming to Fremont they could identify the boxes and only get out one tree. Because Keith's tradition of decorating for Christmas was so important to him, we remember Keith and his love for Christmas by decorating trees

Mary Ann & Jim, Fremont, NE

For our own family the past 2 years we have gathered together for a meal. Later we have a special prayer time using Jim's 10 F's prayer. We each take a word and take turns going through all ten. It has become very special to me and the kids. Also we have given each other gifts with the word "believe" ---keychains, wall hangings, ornaments, etc. Believe was the theme for his service. I gave the kids a memory box; and as I go through Jim's things, I add to the boxes.

Sherie, Fremont, NE

FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE: *What do you think?*

The loss of a parent or both parents presents unexpected emotions and changes to our lives that we are not prepared for no matter what their age. How has the loss of a parent challenged your thoughts about your life, your future, or your family? Or how has their life inspired you to be all that you can be?

Send your response to nanwings1@gmail.com. Please limit your feedback to about 250-300 words.

What's On the Calendar of Wings – a Grief Education Ministry – Sept to December

Sept. 8 through Oct. 20, 2015 Education and Support Group.

Getting Back to Life After Loss—
Part 1, Tuesdays. Meets at Aspirus
Wausau
Hospital from 6:30—8:00 p.m.

Sept. 19, 2015. Wausau. Walk to Prevent Suicide.

American Foundation for
Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Mara-
thon Park, 9:00 a.m.
Registration, 10:00 Walk.

Sept. 26, 2015

Invitation to speak for Nan & Gary.
Presentation for Iron Range chapter
TCF. Virginia, Minnesota

December 1, 2015 ONE IS SILVER AND THE OTHER GOLD

Creating sensible holiday traditions.
A community program for grieving
families.

Howard Johnson's Conference Ctr.
Rib Mountain - Wausau
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Registration is not required.
Public is welcome. No charge.

These are known calendar events at the time of printing this ELetter. Details will be available on the website as information is finalized. Some events are not listed. Call for information if you are looking for resources. Subscribe to Wings and receive updates and announcements by email.

For information about any of these events, contact Nan at nanwings1@gmail.com
Subscribe to Wings and receive updates and announcements by email.

“Life changes every minute of everyday. You lose friends. You gain friends. You realize your friend wasn't ever really your friend and the person you used to hate can make a really good friend. You look for love. You find love. You lose love. You realized all along that you've been loved. You laugh. You cry. You laugh so hard that you cry. You do this. You do that. You really wish you hadn't done that. You then learn from that and you're glad that you did. You have your ups. You have your downs. You see good movies. You see bad movies. You wonder if your life is just a big movie. You look at others and wish you were them. You then realize who they are and glad you're you. You love life. You hate life. In the end you just find yourself happy to be living life no matter what's being thrown at you.”



When the Holidays Hurt...

practical ideas and inspiration
for healing grief

Nan Zastrow

For nearly two decades, Nan, and her husband, Gary, have inspired the bereaved through community holiday programs for those who grieve.

They offer ideas to preserve holiday sanity and sanctity based on their own experiences.

Learn how to unwrap and add heart-warming, commemorative rituals into the holiday that honors and remembers your loved one who died. In this book is a collection of stories meant to inspire you and encourage you as you plan your first holidays after your loss.

\$7.95

What will you find in this book?

Discover new possibilities for a season of good memories and joy through some of these chapters:

- ★ Rejoice in the presence of angels—the earthly kind
- ★ Be entertained by our signature story of hope, “The Legend of the Ebber”—a charming story written in rhyme about a fictitious character that is out to spoil the holidays. Read how the miracle unfolds.
- ★ Gain comforting advice on how to tame your holiday blues
- ★ Find out how to paint your holiday the way you want it to be
- ★ Learn how to tell which traditions are silver and which are gold—to help you decide what you might consider changing or not changing
- ★ Share the priceless lessons of the Gifts of Hope that can heal your holiday grief with a lesson from a fortune cookie
- ★ Determine which boxes are under your Christmas tree that can outshine the mysteries of Pandora’s Box.
- ★ Find ways to decorate your holidays with hope, ideas, and rituals that heal.

Wings[™]
A Grief Education Ministry

Available from:

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