

Fall 2021

**Wings**  
A Grief Education Ministry

Honoring the Past and  
Rebuilding the Future

[www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

Published by Nan Zastrow

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## 64 Ways to “Meet Grieving People Where They’re At”

*Printed with Permission from “Where’s Your Grief”*

“Meet them where they’re at” is a common (and sound) suggestion for how to support a grieving friend or family member. Apologies if you don’t like sentences that end in prepositions, it’s just what we’re doing today. It’s a suggestion I often want to offer but don’t because I’m not sure what it actually means to other people. In this context, where we’re not just talking about physically meeting someone but also emotionally meeting them, it’s abstract.

So the other day, I decided to ask our communities on Instagram and Facebook what this phrase means to them in the context of their grief. How has it played out for them, or how do they wish it would have been? We got many great responses, which I want to share with you here.

First, however, it’s important to note that there can be many different interpretations when talking about something abstract. And we’ve found time and again that the idea of “good grief support” is subjective. What helps or comforts one person, another may find off-putting and undesirable.

So if you’re supporting someone else, take what you read here with a grain of salt and,

above all else, consider what you know about your loved one and your relationship with them. And if you’re grieving yourself, please feel free to share your interpretation of the phrase in the comment section below.

### What does it mean to meet someone where they’re at in grief?

1. Let go of expectations.
2. Just allow them to be who they are and where they are, and to feel what they feel.
3. If the grieving person seems lost—be lost with them – only they can truly find their path.
4. Don’t make the grieving person come to you.
5. Don’t expect them want to raise their spirits or rush through their grief.
6. Don’t minimize their thoughts or feelings.
7. Don’t minimize how they feel about the magnitude of the loss.
8. Know that what a person thinks and feels in grief isn’t always rational – and that’s okay.
9. Allow the person’s grief to exist without trying to change it.

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## “MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY’RE AT”

*Continued from page 1*

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10. Just listen.
11. Really actually listen.
12. Don’t feel the need to come up with something comforting, helpful, or inspiring to say.
13. Don’t search for silver linings.
14. Be comfortable with silence when there isn’t anything to say.
15. Try not to compare the person’s grief or loss experience to yours or anyone else’s.
16. Try not to imagine how you would think, feel, or act if you were them. In reality, you have no idea how you would think, feel, or act – even if you’ve experienced loss yourself.
17. Follow the grieving person’s cues.
18. Allow the person’s grief to exist without trying to change it.
19. Don’t try and fix things.
20. Don’t feel the need to offer solutions.
21. Don’t try and force the person into new feelings or perspectives.
22. Just show up and be present.
23. Be willing to allow the pain to exist.
24. Be willing to sit with the pain.
25. Put your own awkwardness or discomfort aside.
26. Recognize if your own discomfort with a person’s thought, emotion, or experience is guiding the support you’re providing.
27. Don’t judge or shame emotion – whatever it may be.
28. Be there for someone the way they need you to be, even if it’s not the way you want to be.
29. Validate that it’s okay to feel the way the person is feeling.
30. Respect the person’s pace.
31. Check in often – especially on difficult days.
32. Understand that the person may experience grief flare-ups months and years later.
33. Be as supportive on day 365 or 500 as you were on day 1.
34. Don’t force the person to talk about “it” if they don’t want to.
35. Don’t discourage a person who wants to talk about their experiences from doing so.
36. Don’t try and rush the person away from what they’re thinking or feeling.
37. Match the person’s mood and tone.
38. Don’t put the grieving person in the position of having to support you or make you more comfortable.
39. Be mindful how much you talk or complain about day-to-day stressors and minutia when your grieving friend clearly isn’t in the headspace to hear about it.
40. That said, don’t assume they don’t want to know about you or your life. Just be tactful, and if you’re not sure if they want to hear about something – ask.
41. Don’t expect a response when reaching out to offer help and don’t be offended if you don’t get one.
42. Don’t make the grieving person feel guilty for opting out of things and focusing their energy on their grief.
43. Don’t project your own beliefs or expectations onto the grieving person.
44. Don’t try and make meaning of the loss for the person. This is something they have to find themselves.
45. Don’t expect them to be the same person they were before their loss.
46. People change – allow them to change – and embrace who they are becoming.



## "MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY'RE AT"

*Continued from page 2*

47. Have patience.
48. Don't be afraid to ask them what they need.
49. Don't be frustrated if the person doesn't know what they need.
50. Let them find ways to cope that work for them.
51. If you're worried a person's coping is harmful or self-destructive, don't shame them. Understand they're struggling and find ways to offer help and support instead.
52. Offer to do the hard things with them.
53. Ask the person how you can support them on difficult days or when facing potentially painful experiences.
54. But give them space when they need it.
55. Accept if the person wants to grieve and cope privately.
56. Know that even the smallest things – like sending a text checking-in – can be helpful.
57. Accept if they aren't ready to enter certain physical spaces.
58. Don't force them into social situations they aren't ready for.
59. Let them change their mind about doing things or going places without guilt.
60. Don't expect them to explain themselves or provide a rationale.
61. Be sensitive that events like celebrations and milestones may be bittersweet for the grieving person.
62. Try not to comment on how well a person is doing. Often what you see on the outside isn't even the half of what they're feeling. Instead, try asking them how they're doing.
63. Don't walk away.
64. Don't abandon the grieving person.

*To view this article, go to this link:*

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/meet-them-where-theyre-at-in-grief/>

### *On the Lighter Side*



### *Magic That Stirs the Soul*

*May you find reasons to gather  
Reasons to celebrate.*

*May you find laughter in shared memories,  
Happy tears in stories told.*

*May you discover how magic unfolds  
As you embrace family and friends*

*Who honor your loss and feel  
The rhythm of your heartbeat.*

*May you find peace...in knowing  
Your loved one lives on forever.*

*Life and love are eternal.*

*This is the magic that stirs the soul  
and sings within you!*



## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

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NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,  
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

# ONCE UPON A STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

What do people do when they can't sleep? I don't have that answer, but I do know that diversions can help. Recently, Gary and I decided to break the string of my sleepless nights with a diversion. At about 12:30—1:00 a.m., we drove to a remote spot to observe the star showers that the meteorologist was talking about on the news. (Specifically, Perseid meteor shower- August 2021) Sitting in the dark, peaceful quietness of the universe and focusing on something so much bigger than us was beyond therapeutic.

The first night, we weren't sure what we were really looking for. I counted 7 shooting stars and thought for sure this was what we were supposed to see. On the second night Gary saw the "mist of stars" and a few "shooters." Though neither of us could be sure if we were seeing what we thought we were, the majestic, tranquility was all we needed to "believe" that we were witnessing a beautiful phenomenon. According to a recent article I read, when we look up, we only see about 6000 stars within our galaxy which is a fraction of all the stars in the universe. But the rest are too far away for us to see. One would think we were observing multiple galaxies of starry brilliance. Things aren't always what they seem.

Like many things in life, things aren't always what we see...or believe! In today's techno/wizard world, it's hard to distinguish what's real and what's not. Movies are a good example of another realm of wizardly that challenges our assumptive minds with its computer-generated imagery. Politics, news, and even social media has found ways to cleverly portray their version of the story.

Even throughout the pandemic, we watched people on television perform on a stage suggesting they were all in the same room, shoulder to shoulder, and later discovered with a split screen they could be miles away from each other. Isn't our world amazing!

In grief, things aren't always what they seem either. I remember those early days of grief and thinking "I'll never be normal again." Pain and hurt, whether internal or external, has a way of tarnishing one's attitude. Our life that seemed to be moving along smoothly suddenly seemed to lose its purpose and meaning. We put on the "happy face" to get us through the day. People believed "we were over it." They thought now we would be just like we used to be. But grief doesn't work like that. We changed. Our priorities changed. Our world view changed. We tried to camouflage our grief with courage. Things aren't always what they seem.

Grief is tenacious and has a way of interrupting every part of our lives. Our world becomes much more vulnerable. As we emerge from the fog, we wander in oblivion and try to make sense of this new reality. Suddenly we realize that having meaning and purpose is a big deal. We spent our lives, up to that moment, searching for the right passion that gave us the desire to get up in the morning and face the day. Grief has a way of resetting the "best-laid plans".

I am convinced that the ultimate reward of the grief experience or journey is getting in touch with yourself and discovering what really makes you tick. I read that purpose can be equal to this:

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*Fall 2021 ELetter: Wings - A Grief Education Ministry*

*Honoring the Past and Rebuilding the Future*

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## STARRY NIGHT...

*Continued from page 4*

- “If you get up in the morning and you smile and/or encourage someone who is having a bad day, you have a purpose.
- If you go out of your way to help a neighbor or remember a friend who is hurting, you have a purpose.
- If you spend quality time with someone loved, you have purpose.”

I like this description of meaning and purpose. It suggests that no one remains a “speck” in the universe or an unnamed star. If we set our internal compass to true north, we will be driven by what we are willing to give to others. Each of us holds the ability to give someone more such as encouragement, compassion, and joy in the present moment of life. Each of us can make the choices that allow us to go on living after loss.

Like that night observing the star showers, we are not always sure that what we are seeing is what we are meant to see. God’s path for us may not be quite as obvious and brilliant that it outshines anything we may have pre-determined our path to meaning and purpose should be. If we just have the patience to take each step and trust that the way will be shown, it will be. You don’t have to look for your meaning and purpose. It will truly find you...once upon a starry, starry night.

## *I’m Spending Christmas With Jesus Christ This Year!*

I see the countless Christmas trees  
Around the world below  
With tiny lights, like Heaven’s stars  
reflecting on the snow.  
The sight is so spectacular  
Please wipe away a tear  
For I ‘m spending Christmas  
With Jesus Christ this year.  
I hear the many Christmas songs  
That people hold so dear  
But the sounds of music can’t compare  
With the Christmas choir up here.  
For I have no words to tell you  
The joy their voices bring  
For it is beyond description  
To hear an angel sing.  
I know how much you miss me  
For I feel your breaking heart...  
But through our memories so dear  
We’re never far apart.  
I can’t tell you of the Splendor  
Or the peace here in this place.  
Can you just imagine Christmas  
With our Savior face to face?  
I’ll ask him to light your spirit  
As I tell him of your love.  
So then pray for one another  
As you lift your eyes above  
So please let your hearts be joyful  
And let your spirit sing.  
For I’m spending Christmas in Heaven  
And I’m walking with the King.



### *How to Connect with Wings:*

- Email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)
- Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54402-1051
- Ph: 715.845.4159
- Visit Wings on Facebook
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)
- Subscribe to the free online Eletter sent quarterly.
- Visit [centeringcorp.com](http://centeringcorp.com) for grief articles and resources. Follow Nan’s articles published by Grief Digest.

# Reader Feedback



## I BELIEVE IN ANGELS....

Our FALL eLetter moves us towards the holidays. Along with that comes a lot of thoughts about special people in our lives. We selected the subject of "ANGELS" for a good reason. During the past year or more, you were likely privileged to have an angel—unaware (or very aware) in your life who helped you through the tough times. We are also interested in the "angels" in someone's life who just happen to be there when you needed them the most. This can be long before the pandemic, during the pandemic, or just everyday angels in your life. Briefly tell us about a "special angel(s)" in your life that guided, protected, or companioned you when you needed it the most.

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The evening before Ollie passed, he was not responsive and laying flat on his back. Suddenly out of nowhere, he sat up with his arms stretched in front of him, looked up and then laid down without speaking. I knew at that moment Ollie's soul was being taken up to meet his Savior and Lord. This doesn't happen to all who are believers, but I watched for some signs when Mom passed in 2008 and Dad in 2009 and nothing. But God blessed me with His angels bringing me the joy of knowing I would see Ollie again. October 2nd would have been our anniversary date for 56 years. As I near the date, I still feel some pain.

It has been 7 years since Ollie has passed and like Elizabeth Kubler-Ross says: **THE REALITY IS THAT 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 RE-BUILD 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.**

Ruth  
Athens, WI

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During the several years of my husband's illness, due to both dementia and heart disease, I had the wonderful fortune to meet "my angel." "S" came to care for Jay and became my friend in the process. She was with me, in every possible way, during his illness and passing. She spent days with me in the hospital, listened to me and shared with me. This began before the pandemic began and continues to this day. While he was in the hospital and then in hospice, she was with me every step of the way. She understood my grief at his impending death and understood, at the same time, my desire for it all to be over. After he passed, I knew I could never let her leave. She has become my dear and precious friend and, definitely, "my angel" forever. We laugh, we share, we remember. It is not often that one finds a friend, a "sister" and an

angel all wrapped up into one lovely person.

Bunny  
Boynton Beach, FL

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My arch angels were there for me...I got messages telling me they are there for me and telling me that all I have to do is ask...That got me through my day-by-day hurts, troubles, etc. I love my arch angels.

Sandy  
Wittenberg, WI

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I have had so many instances of Angels in my life. My main angel is my Mom, who passed away 9 years ago. We were very close. I have felt her close by me every day since she passed. The day after she died, she led me around to many different places. There was actually a detour on the road and she took me to all her favorite places. I wrote and gave her Eulogy and greatly felt her needed strength. I never cried once while I was speaking. Sometimes I can feel her touch and I have even heard her voice once or twice. One day when I

was having a really hard time, I spoke to my mom and told her I needed help. Right after that, my dad called me out of the blue. I felt that she “made” him call me. My son and I find pennies and we think that it’s her “sign”. We usually find 2 pennies and laugh that she is giving us her “two cents”. When my last grandson was born this year, just 5 days after my mom’s birthday, I felt a very strong bond with him. He has her same beautiful blue eyes. I feel somehow she will always be near me!

Terri  
Weston, WI

During the pandemic especially, I believe that people online in grief communities have been the angels I’ve needed while grieving my loss. I’ve learned that sometimes even people you haven’t met in real life can give you words of comfort and support, and during the pandemic, technology has become more important than ever in finding connections when we can’t connect in person. Angels in my life have also included family members and friends who’ve reached out on days I’ve needed it the most.

Rebecca  
Wausau, WI

I adored my father who passed away in 2013. The following year was tough; but my family and friends helped with my grief. I’d also received many signs of his presence along the way.

In 2016, I received the best sign from him to let me know he was still with me and knew what was going on in my life.

I was driving my car and talking to him. I said, “Dad, should we move and build this new home?” (After 23 years in our first house, it was a scary and expensive venture). I then turned on the car radio and heard “A change will do you good.” by Cheryl Crow. The next song was “Don’t you worry about a thing” by Stevie Wonder. Wow, great answer. Thanks, dad!

Marjorie Faes  
Clarence Center, New York

I lost my precious son in September 2000, one night before his 36th birthday. I lost my sister that morning to cancer and was consumed with her passing during the day. When I arrived at my son’s place with his birthday dinner in tow, I discovered he died. I was traumatized. The next week of funerals and arrangements seem like a blur. All I knew was that I had no “inner spirit” and felt like my entire core was missing.

When I looked in the mirror, I was surprised to see that my body was intact because emotionally my center was completely hollow. Being forced

to return to work several days later, I couldn’t concentrate, felt numb, and wasn’t sure I could keep a job where I had to smile and be smart. But I endured those first months, thanks to a TV program I found while changing channels one night. It was called “Crossing Over” with John Edward. He communicated with the souls of those who had passed over to Heaven. I could not get enough of his program because he made me believe that our loved ones aren’t “gone.” They’ve simply left their worldly body and passed over to God’s spiritual world. They still know we exist and could possibly be with us every day. I still miss my son enormously but know he’s in a safe place now in God’s loving arms. Every Sunday I light a candle at church and ask the Lord to wrap his loving arms around my son now that he’s safely back home with him in Heaven. This is very consoling to me.

Betty  
Wausau, WI



# WHAT HAPPENS IN HEAVEN

*Author unknown (from the Internet)*

I dreamt that I went to Heaven and an angel was showing me around. We walked side-by-side inside a large workroom filled with angels. My angel guide stopped in front of the first section and said, "This is the Receiving Section. Here, all petitions to God said in prayer are received."

I looked around in this area, and it was terribly busy with so many angels sorting out petitions written on voluminous paper sheets and scraps from people all over the world. Then we moved on down a long corridor until we reached the second section.

The angel then said to me "This is the Packaging and Delivery Section. Here, the graces and blessings the people asked for are processed and delivered to the living persons who asked for them." I noticed again how busy it was there. There were many angels working hard at that station, since so many blessings had been requested and were being packaged for delivery to Earth.

Finally at the farthest end of the long corridor we stopped at the door of a very small station. To my great surprise, only one angel was seated there, idly doing nothing. "This is the Acknowledgment Section." my angel friend quietly admitted to me. He seemed embarrassed.

"How is it that there is no work going on here?" I asked.

"So sad," the angel sighed. "After people receive the blessings that they asked for, very few send back acknowledgments."

"How does one acknowledge God's blessings?" I asked.

"Simple," the angel answered. Just say, "Thank you, Lord"

"What blessings should they acknowledge?" I asked.

"If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep you are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy."

"If you woke up this morning with more health than illness ... you are more blessed than the many who will not even survive this day."

"If you have never experienced the fear in battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 700 million people in the world."

"If you can attend a church without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death you are envied by, and more blessed than, three billion people in the world!"

"If your parents are still alive and still married ...you are very rare."

"If you can hold your head up and smile, you are not the norm, you're unique to all those in doubt and despair."

"Ok, what now? How can I get started?"

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers,  
To make music in the heart.

*- Howard Thurman-*





# IN THE PRESENCE OF ANGELS



NAN ZASTROW

In 1995, I wrote an article for *Wings*, and I said, “I can’t say I’ve ever seen an angel. But I do believe they have intervened in my life, without showing me their presence. I continue to feel and believe in the presence of angels and could relate countless times that at least one of them has soothed my tears, given me courage, comforted me when I felt hurt, protected my loved one, guided me with directions, renewed my faith when I had doubts and just held my hand. Angels are everything I want them to be, whether they are the heavenly or real-life kind. I can see visions of angels in the bright morning light, in the essence of my dreams, and in the realities of life’s experiences. But I admit to knowing some real-life angels too.”

That article still intrigues me because it was written at a time when angels brought me lots of hope. I collected Seraphim angels. I created an angelic Christmas tree. I felt comforted by the thought that these heavenly beings existed and brought goodness, protection, and peace into the souls of grieving people. On more than one occasion, I was also reminded about the real-life angels and the messages they sometimes brought to us when we

really needed them. Some brought messages that comforted me after Chad died—because I missed him so much. There were messages like this that I wrote about:

On a misty autumn day, I visited Chad’s grave to say a prayer. I needed a place to go to be all alone. Just a short time to gather my thoughts and strengthen my sense of hope. Some place where I felt close to God. Planted in the wet soil, near the stone, were two fresh carnations, tied with a bow. A message on a card read, “I miss you, Chad.” The young woman (I’m assuming a woman) who left this thoughtful gift is still a mystery to me. But she brightened my day with a ray of hope. She still missed Chad, just like me. It was nice to know that even people I didn’t know missed him.

Only a few days later, I received a phone call from one of Chad’s friends. I missed his friends. Before Chad died, someone was always at the house getting ready for the next hunting trip; gathering camping equipment; raiding the refrigerator; or watching movies sprawled on the floor. The first year after his death (1993),

## IN THE PRESENCE OF ANGELS

*Continued from page 9*

it was common to see one of them at the door or on the phone, but as the years went by, life got busy... and in the natural sequence of things; we didn't see his friends anymore. But on this particular day, the phone call was the message reminding me how often he thought about Chad. Even from Marlboro (for several years), he received a birthday card. I guess they finally quit sending them when he wasn't redeeming coupons anymore. Even years after his death, I encountered people who knew Chad and made a point to tell me about their relationship with him. What better day could there be than someone from Chad's past who was willing to speak his name and let me know he was not forgotten?

Lately, I've been especially intrigued by angels of the earthly kind—those that happen into our lives, just because. These angels can touch, feel, see, and get to know us on a very intimate level. We bond with them. We experience life with them. There is no question about their existence.

I've met a lot of special angels during my journey through grief. Many of them I've met through our grief work and called them "friends." Like me, they were people struggling to make sense out of this turn of events in their lives that changed who they were and what their purpose was. I've been blessed with countless angels who have served as my mentors. Oh, how significant you have been! God placed you in my path, and I had the sense to value all that you gave to me. Your encouragement and connection are priceless!

During this holiday season, I want to acknowledge all my angels. I can't name you by name because the list would be too long. And more than one of you would protest saying you don't feel worthy of your name being on a List of Angels. That's what makes you so special. You don't have to feel like an angel to be one. But, in my heart, I believe you are.

You were there when I needed you. You were there when the day wasn't as bright as I wanted to be. You were there when the news I received wasn't as good as I wanted it to be. You were there when I didn't feel as good as I thought I should. You were there to pat me on the shoulder with a sincere pat that meant, "it's okay". You were there in tragedy and triumph. You



were there. You may have come to me in your own grief and allowed me to feel your pain. I felt humbled by the raw emotion, I thought I forget my own pain, but one never truly forgets. You graciously allowed me to share my stories about Chad—and witness to life's transition. We shared the burden of buried grief. You allowed me to teach you about grief and welcomed my support on your own journey. What you didn't realize was that listening to you continually

heals my own spirit. In those times, we are angels ministering to each other bearing witness to life changed by loss.

Even on great days, you were there. You gave me accolades on something I wrote. You flattered me In the Presence of Angels! when I shouldn't have been flattered. You were there to laugh with me. You even found fun in laughing at me for my comical blunders. You were there to enjoy good times, fun times...great events. You shared old memories and created new ones. You are family. You are a friend. You are a relative. You are my spouse. You are a neighbor. You are a casual acquaintance. You are a co-worker. You are someone I've recently met or someone I've known forever.

You know who you are...but you don't know that you are an angel. Let your light continue to shine. Let your goodness continue to bless those around you. You are special. You are appreciated. You are loved. You'll always be my angel. I'm honored to live in the presence of angels. God Bless Them Everyone!

(Update 10-2021)

# Ten Ideas for re-Creating Your Holiday after a Pandemic

In our holiday ZOOMGRIEF presentation last year, Wings offered many ideas of how to enjoy the holidays when gathering was not recommended. We are well into our second year of safe practices and the promise of getting together with family and friends seems very possible.

However, the question arises of how we can create a new tradition to rejuvenate the holidays of Christmas Past. This year presents an opportunity to add some creativity to your celebrations that can become a “new” tradition going forward. Borrow from these ideas we introduced last year and find your favorite.

1. Create a Challenge Game like unwrapping Hershey candy kisses with mittens on. Or challenge family to put together a meal for a predetermined amount (Like \$12.37). The winner is the family that gets closest to \$12.37 without going over. Donate the meal.
2. Create a Holiday Scavenger Hunt that spots Christmas decorations. The participants will record the address where they found decorations such as: nativity scene, snowflakes, the word “Noel”, etc. They can also take a picture on their phone to log their “find”. Time should be the limiting factor.
3. Host a Goodwill Gift Swap. Find a desirable item within a predetermined dollar amount. Wrap and share.
4. Unwrap a Memory. Put a spin on traditional gift giving. Instead of purchasing something give a meaningful gift you already own. If you are bereaved, a touching gift is giving something that belonged to the deceased that would be meaningful to someone else.
5. Make a Kindness Pact—to go out of your way to help someone in need. Share your accomplishment.
6. Make a Difference Letter. Make Thanksgiving something to be really thankful for. Make it a point to thank someone in your life who has made a difference. Send a special letter letting someone know how important they are. Thank a worker for showing up at work today. Many times people who have influenced our lives are never aware of that special moment or act.
7. Simple Gathering. It doesn't have to be a large family gathering or a dinner with all the trimmings. It can be pizza for a few. Or cocktails or coffee and cookies by the fire on any day around the holidays.
8. Campfires are perfect places to spend time outdoors. Gather when it is snowing and roast marshmallows. Share stories about loved ones who died.
9. Dinner-time Candle Lighting. Each person gets a tea light or candle. One starts by lighting the candle and sharing a memory of the person who died. He then lights the next person's candle, and they share their memory.
10. Create a Gratitude jar for 2022. Once a month or more, each person should deposit a slip of paper in their jar of something good or positive that happened in the month. Read them when you gather at the end of 2022.

## *Examples for Jotting down your Joys:*

- *A place in nature you found that is safe and relaxing*
- *Something that is going well in your life*
- *Things you enjoy doing alone*
- *Things you enjoy doing with a friend while social distancing*
- *Something kind about a friend that you may have taken for granted*
- *Something you did for someone else that made you feel good*

# Be Good to Yourself

## SELF CARE TIP

### The season of the heart

There are no simple suggestions for taking away the pain you might be feeling as the holidays approach. Expect that there may be some sadness, tears, and emptiness. Think about changing your thoughts to “what can I do to make this holiday as good as possible under the circumstances?” One key to making them less emotional is to blend the traditions of the past with something new for the future.



Grief doesn't mean you can't laugh, have fun, and enjoy the presence of living family and friends. On the contrary, it is essential to healing your grief. “The holidays are not a season... they are a feeling in your heart.”



## 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

### ULYSSES S. GRANT

*the eighteenth President of the United States of America*

All Grant did was take a bite of a peach, but the pain in his throat almost made him faint. In just a few weeks, the famous commander during the Great American Civil War would be dead of throat cancer. Grant's death was ultimately a long, drawn-out process which caused the old General much pain and suffering. Because the medical profession routinely used cocaine as an anesthetic, it is probable that Grant became addicted to the drug during his long illness.

President Grant went down in history for accepting the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. He later was elected for two terms as President of the United States. After serving as president, Grant made a world tour and later retired, but due to bad investments, he lost everything.

At the urging of his friend Mark Twain, he wrote his famous memoirs and finished only days before his death. The income from “Grant's Memoirs” brought financial security to his widow and family.

As his throat cancer progressed, Grant relocated to his

mountain retreat in Mt. McGregor, New York. He was there on July 23, 1885 when he died. The family prohibited an autopsy, and at his death, Grant weighed less than 100 pounds.

**Ebenezer H. Holmes**, who was an undertaker in Saratoga, New York, was summoned to Mt. McGregor to prepare Grant's remains for burial. At the same time, notification was made to the society undertaker in New York City, the **Rev. Stephen Merritt**, that he was to take charge of Grant's funeral. Sadly, the result of this competition was lawsuits that lasted for years.

The pioneer embalming educator **Felix Sullivan** was engaged by Merritt to embalm Grant, but in the end, the embalming failed and Grant's remains were in a deplorable condition during the New York City funeral ceremonies.

Each of the undertakers blamed the other one for the embalming failure, but the truth was never determined. Unfortunately, the records of the lawsuit trial later brought and held in Ballston Spa, New York vanished when the local courthouse burned to the ground.

Grant's casket was made of oak with a copper interior and had impressive silver handles. A gold plaque engraved “U.S. Grant” was attached to the top. It was hermetically sealed with a glass top, and Grant was dressed in a Prince Albert black broadcloth suit with a white collar.

The first funeral was held on August 4th at the cottage in Mt. McGregor. His body was then taken to Saratoga, where the cortege switched trains to New York City.

On August 8, 1885, New Yorkers awoke to the solemn sound of tolling bells. Most needed no reminder that this was the day of the funeral of Union general and twice-elected president Ulysses S. Grant. Befitting his already larger-than-life legacy, 1.5 million people gathered in New York City to view Grant's funeral procession and the burial ceremonies.

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Ulysses S. Grant

The death and funeral of Ulysses S. Grant became a vehicle for a religiously tinged, emotional and political reconciliation of North and South, and as such, is a critical event in the history of the political culture of the United States. “I am sorry General Grant is dead,” proclaimed ex-Confederate general and pallbearer Si-

mon Bolivar Buckner, “but his death has yet been the greatest blessing the country has ever received, now, and reunion is perfect.”

In New York City, the body of Grant lay in state at City Hall. It took 320 policemen to control the crowd of 300,000 people who passed by the open casket. More than a million people attended his New York City funeral, and the procession is said to have stretched 7 miles long.

Grant's temporary entombment took place on Riverside Drive, and in this mausoleum, Grant would repose until 1897 when the new Grant's Tomb became ready. Grant's Tomb was dedicated on April 27, 1897 — 12 years after Grant's death and the 75th anniversary of his birth. Ulysses S. Grant remains the only president interred in New York City.

“Who's buried in Grant's tomb?” No one. Since the tombs are situated above-ground, there is no body “buried” in Grant's tomb.



Rev. Stephen Merritt



Felix Sullivan

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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# Things aren't always what they seem

Two traveling angels stopped to spend the night in the home of a wealthy family. The family was rude and refused to let the angels stay in the mansion's guest room.

Instead the angels were given a small space in the cold basement.

As they made their bed on the hard floor, the older angel saw a hole in the wall and repaired it.

When the younger angel asked why, the older angel replied,

“Things aren't always what they seem”

The next night the pair came to rest at the house of a very poor, but very hospitable farmer and his wife. After sharing what little food they had, the couple let the angels sleep in their bed where they could have a good night's rest.

When the sun came up the next morning the angels found the farmer and his wife in tears. Their only cow, whose milk had been their sole income, lay dead in the field.

The younger angel was infuriated and asked the older angel how could you have let this happen?

The first man had everything, yet you helped him, she accused.

The second family had little but was willing to share everything, and you let the cow die..

“Things aren't always what they seem,” the older angel replied.



“When we stayed in the basement of the mansion, I noticed there was gold stored in that hole in the wall. Since the owner was so obsessed with greed and unwilling to share his good fortune, I sealed the wall so he wouldn't find it.”

“Then last night as we slept in the farmers bed, the angel of death came for his wife I gave him the cow instead.

“Things aren't always what they seem.”

Sometimes that is exactly what happens when things don't turn out the way they should. If you have faith, you just need to trust that every thing happens for a reason. You just might not know it until some time later.

# Angels are Watching Over Us

By Gary Denniss, Bracebridge, Ontario, Canada

On the stormy winter afternoon of January 28th, 2004, our twenty-six-year-old daughter Londa was killed in an automobile collision on Highway 26 west of Barrie. The death of any child, regardless of cause or age, is overwhelming to parents, family, friends and the surrounding community. Though we are people of faith, our family experienced intense, long-lasting and complex grief just like anyone else would in similar circumstances.

The section of highway where the three-vehicle accident occurred is straight and uninhabited. Londa's big car slid sideways across the slippery, snow-covered road, into the opposite lane where the passenger side was struck by a vehicle which in turn was rear-ended by a truck. Shortly after the collision, a mother and her sixteen-year-old son Jimmy came along returning from Barrie to Elmvale following his driving test. They were the first on the scene and stopped to see if they could assist. Additionally, the O.P.P. and paramedics were called.

Later that day, Londa's husband called our home and asked us to come immediately to Royal Victoria Hospital. Londa was in an accident and would be flown by helicopter to Sunnybrook in Toronto. By then, family members, including Londa's pastor from the Barrie Free Methodist Church, had started to gather. Much prayer

and anxiety ensued, but the impact of the collision had damaged Londa's internal organs so badly that the prognosis was not good.

It was the attending physician at Sunnybrook who gave us that Londa died. Our family's journey of grief began around her bedside. Even with our family's strong faith, we couldn't change the fact that she was now with her Savior, Jesus Christ. At Londa's Celebration of Life we shared our common sorrow, common affection and common hope with seven hundred mourners who came to support us. We knew Londa was in heaven, but the heartache of her loss was very much with us that day and still is.

## **An Answer to our Prayers**

It's only normal for Grace and me to wonder if Londa had suffered at the time of the accident. God provided an answer in His own time and way. A few days after the funeral, I visited Macaulay Public School from which I had retired in 1998 having no idea that God was about to answer our question and bring a strong measure of comfort and peace to our hearts.

A gift of peace and comfort was given to us by Tracy, a parent volunteer and a friend of ours. She asked to speak to me in the school hallway and with brokenness related this story. Her Dad, Peter, and Jimmy's Dad were co-workers. In chatting at work a day or so after the



accident, Jimmy's Dad told Peter about the sad encounter Jimmy and his mother had that fateful afternoon. Peter realized that it was our family that he was talking about.

Jimmy told his Dad that when he went over to the car to see if he could help, there was a young man sitting beside the woman in the driver's seat. He was quietly comforting her and covering her with a yellow blanket. When questioned later, Jimmy and his Mom told the police officer about the young fellow but he was nowhere to be seen, or the blanket, not even his footprints were near the car. There was no house from which he could have walked without being noticed. We later learned from Jimmy's Mom that there was an unusual calmness and quietness at the scene, and she also commented that Londa's distinctive blonde hair looked so beautiful.

The climax of the believer's association with angels comes at the close of our earthly journey. If the Lord tarries, everyone presently alive will someday pass out of

this life into the world beyond. When that happens, the Bible teaches that the angels carry the soul of the believers to their eternal home with God in heaven. (Luke 16:22 says that "...the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.") We have every reason to believe this is true!!

The fact that a teenage boy would draw attention to a yellow blanket in this scenario was highly unusual in our thinking, but it was the defining factor in confirming that Londa had passed away peacefully at the scene of the accident and had not suffered undue physical pain. She had been gently escorted to her heavenly home by ministering angels. Of course, Jimmy and his Mom could not have known that in Londa's childhood, her "go to" item of comfort (security) was a yellow blanket.

God works in mysterious ways His wonder to perform, and for that we are grateful. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; our God is compassionate." Psalm 116:5





## All I Want for Christmas Is the Right to Grieve

**Tues, Dec.14, 2021, 6-7p.m. CST**

How is it possible to celebrate togetherness after the death of a loved one? Social situations are hard. Holidays often magnify the loss. Pretending that you don't hurt when you do just doesn't work. There isn't any right or wrong way to handle the holidays when you grieve. For many support and distraction is the best cure. For others, it helps to understand that you have certain "RIGHTS" that can help you choose what is right for you. It's okay to be selfish with your needs but it's also okay to let family know that you need extra support right now.

In this program, we'll share 30 of the most common complaints grievers reveal and how you can satisfy expectations without compromising your feelings. We'll explain how you can exercise your 10 Rights as a griever for holidays and special days. Additionally, we'll share tips that make it possible to "save the day" and create a meaningful holiday experience for this year and for years to come.



## HOW TO BEGIN A NEW YEAR WITH HOPE 3 ATTAINABLE FRESH STARTS FOR THE BEREAVED

**Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, 6-7p.m. CST**

As the New Year approaches, those who grieve realize that life moves forward whether they like it or not. Just because the calendar changes, it doesn't mean you are "over it." You are facing the reality of "how will I go on without my loved one."

Those around you may be full of energy with resolutions and plans while you are still trying to survive one day at a time. It's possible to glide into the New Year if you can approach it as a new opportunity to heal from the pain of your past.

This program offers an opportunity to face the New Year with Hope. Committing to most resolutions often fails. This isn't about resolutions. We are suggesting 3 attainable FRESH STARTS that you can stick to. They can intentionally give you a new perspective about your grief and a desire to heal emotionally. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or many years since, now is the time to heal. You will not always be bereaved so consider starting your personal transition now. Take this step to move forward in the future, find joy, and live your life with meaning again.

Register online at [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org) or email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)



Facilitator:  
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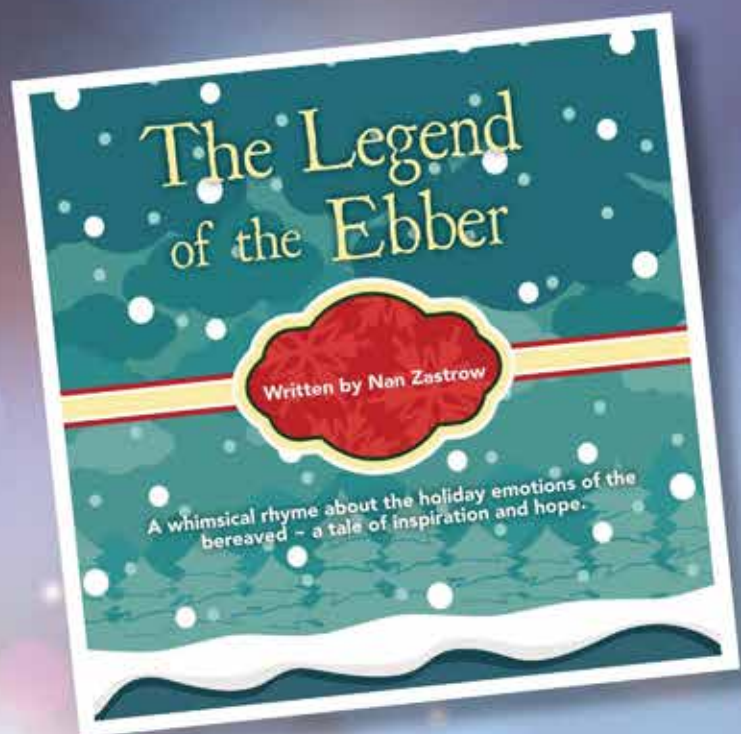


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# The Legend of the Ebber

## an Inspirational Holiday Story of Hope for the Bereaved



## Download the Story

The Legend of the Ebber (pronounced E..burr) is a whimsical story written in rhyme. This inspiration story offers hope for the bereaved of all ages during the holidays and special days when emotions are delicate and the loss of a loved one seems unbearable.

The Ebber is a nickname for a "grief burst"—the sudden, unexpected emotional response to a thought, event or memory that often creates a moment of sadness. In our story, Mr. Ebber plans to destroy Christmas for families who have experienced loss. Entering homes, he finds no decorations, gathering feasts, or singing and joy. The Ebber thinks he's won! But his plan fails when a miracle unfolds and he learns what heals a griever's heart.

Share the memory and experience that love never ends. Guaranteed to raise good bumps and delight you with mystical charm! The Legend of the Ebber is a story tradition that you will repeat year-after-year, as a symbol of hope for the bereaved.

*"We read this story on Christmas Eve, as a family, after the loss of a beloved grandparent. With a mixture of tears and joy, we honored his memory. Highly Recommended."  
- Sarah, St. Paul, MN*

*"We share this story every year in December in our support group. Love the Memory Tray ritual." - Cindy, Green Bay, WI*

*"I had the privilege of reading this story at a community holiday program. I was delighted to watch the reaction of the audience as they waited for the surprise ending." - Judi, Wausau, WI*

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