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Grief Rituals Can Help on Valentine's Day

Marty Tousley

*Part of my mourning is not "hanging out" with memories of the last years of mother's life as dementia wreaked havoc. I am not ignoring the memories. I am not afraid to go there. I just don't stay long if I am summoned by a particular painful memory. ~ Harold Ivan Smith, in *Grieving the Death of a Mother**

We've barely made it through the holidays of December and January, and now the stores are filled with hearts and flowers and candy, all of it in celebration of the gift of love.

But February 14 can be a difficult day for those of us who are grieving, and for some it will be the first Valentine's Day since our precious Valentine died. For us there is no celebration; there is only grief.

Sometimes, for fear of "letting go," we may find ourselves "holding on" to our pain as a way of remembering those we love. Letting go of what used to be is not an act of disloyalty, and it does not mean forgetting our loved ones who have died. Letting go means leaving behind the sorrow and pain of grief and choosing to go on, taking with us only those memories and experiences that enhance our ability to grow and expand our capacity for happiness.

If our memories are painful and unpleasant, they can be hurtful and destructive. If they create longing and hold us to the past, they can interfere with our willingness to move forward in our grief journey. But it doesn't have to be that way. We can choose which parts of life we shared that we wish to keep and which parts we wish to leave behind. We can soothe our pain by thinking of happy as well as sad memories. The happiness we experienced with our loved ones belongs to us forever.



GRIEF RITUALS...CONTINUED

If we decide to do so, we can choose to embrace Valentine's Day as a special day on which to commemorate our loved ones and to celebrate our love for them. Death ends a life, but it does not end the relationship we have with our loved ones who have died. The bonds of love are never severed by death, and the love we shared will never die either. For Valentine's Day this year, we can find a way to honor our loved ones, to remember them and to show them that our love is eternal.



We can build a piece of “memory time” into that particular day, or we can pack the entire day with meaning. Think of it this way: It's much easier to cope with memories we've chosen than to have them take us by surprise. Whether we are facing Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, an anniversary or birthday, or any other special day of our own choosing, we can immerse ourselves in the healing power of remembrance. We can go to a special place, read aloud, or listen to a favorite song. We can celebrate what once was and is no more.

Personal grief rituals are those loving activities that help us remember our loved ones, and give us a sense of connectedness, healing and peace. Creating and practicing personal grief rituals can also help us release painful situations and unpleasant memories, freeing us to make our memories a positive influence in our lives.

What follows are just a few examples of personal grief rituals. The ideas are as unique and as varied as the people who invented them. Think of ways that you can adapt them and make them your own. You are limited only by your own imagination.

- If you're a writer, write – it could be an article, an anecdote, a story, a poem, a song, a letter, an obituary or a eulogy. If you don't want to write for someone else, keep a private journal and write

about your feelings as you journey through your grief.

- Buy a very special candle, decorate it and light it in honor of your loved one. Purchase a book — perhaps a children's book — on coping with the loss of a loved one, and donate it to your local library or school. Place a label inside the front cover inscribed “In memory of [your loved one's name].”
- Plant a tree, bush, shrub, garden or flower bed as a permanent growing memorial to your beloved. Mark the site with a memorial plaque, marker, bench or statue.
- Memorialize your beloved in cyberspace by lighting a virtual candle at [Light a Candle Online](#).
- Write a special note, letter, poem, wish or prayer to your beloved, go outside, attach the paper to a balloon and let it go – or place it in a vessel and burn it, and watch the smoke rise heavenward. If you are harboring bad feelings or regrets, gather symbols to represent those hurtful or painful situations, events, or feelings from your past, place them in a container and hold a private burial or burning ceremony, saying goodbye and releasing them as you do so.
- Ask relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbors to gather their contributions, and put together a scrapbook or box of memories containing mementos, letters and photographs of your loved one.
- Celebrate the life of your loved one by continuing favorite traditions or eating favorite foods.
- Select a Valentine card that you wish your beloved would have picked for you, and mail it to yourself.
- Give yourself a gift from your loved one that you always wished he or she would have given you, and think of your beloved whenever you use it or wear it.

Ways to Remember a Spouse or Partner Who Died on Valentine's Day

*Write a love letter
Give a toast
Leave flowers on their grave
Light a candle
Bury the past*



WALKING BACKWARDS THROUGH GRIEF

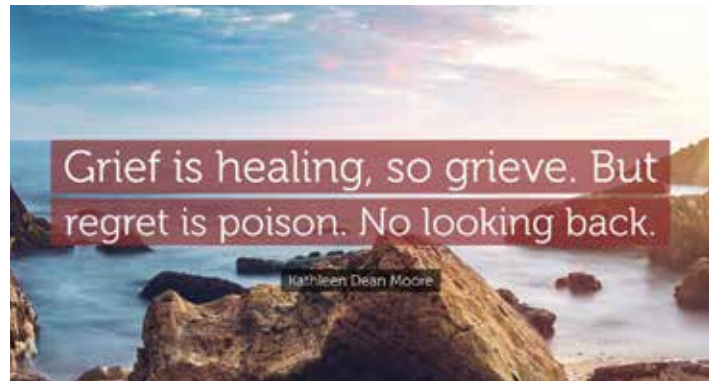
By Nan Zastrow

Our entertainment as kids often was challenging each other to walk backwards and chuckle at our inability to maintain that position for a period of time. Even if the path was familiar and smooth, it just wasn't a normal thing to do. Speed was not an option. We would giggle when we tripped and sometimes that even brought us to our knees, superficially wounded.

I was reminded of this childhood act recently when moving some outdoor furniture into the garage and having to walk backwards with it in order to navigate getting it through the back door of the garage. I chuckled at myself for being so clumsy. But then I thought, "Isn't walking backwards a lot like grief?"

This past year I've been walking backwards since my husband's death. I began experiencing every memory, emotion, blunder, inadequacy, feeling of abandonment...and the list continues because it was profoundly familiar. What I was experiencing was not new or unusual. They were normal reactions to another journey through grief. I recognized the feelings because they monopolized my life after the death of my son in 1993. I couldn't count the number of times my grief tripped me up and I fell to my knees in total despair.

When significant loss hits a second or third time, the memories of earlier death experiences can vividly be recalled. Even though each loss differs in its complexity. The emotions not only multiply but become individually unique and even more personal. Past experience has



little impact in calming the emotional turmoil that once again surfaces. Walking backwards in grief after a new loss can raise some of the same unanswered questions that you thought you left behind years after moving forward with your previous loss.

Another situation caused me to backwards slide again. Rummaging through pictures stirred up memories of my son's suicide death this time. Just when I thought I had put those concerns to rest, they manifested themselves alongside my newest grief, the sudden death of my husband in 2023. For me, it awakened my need to analyze my traumatic loss once again. Gratefully, I can say, that time, maturity, and knowing helped. Rehashing the events couldn't change a thing but I instinctively knew I could let it go quicker. But that doesn't mean to say, I didn't have moments of backwards emotions and memories so vivid and real as though his death happened only yesterday.



While I was walking backwards trying to distance myself from my old loss while finding excuses for my sorrow in my new one, I observed people expected me to find it easier this time. They erroneously assumed that since I had coped with significant loss decades ago, this time recovery should be quicker, easier, and more tolerable. But they failed to take in account, the difference in relationship and bonds. I had my precious son for only 21 years, but my husband and I had a strong marriage that forged through many ups and downs of “life” for 55 years, until death do us part.

As I was once told, there is no expiration date on grief. It will always be there mentally in the background of my life experiences. Previous losses set up your internal expectation of how you will grieve a new loss. I accept that successive loss may bring up old memories of the despair, once before felt. I also accept that it's quite normal to remember how I coped then and count on my experience to respond proactively and positively this time. However, that doesn't reverse the reality that each loss is different and the grieving process will be different.

I admit that my reaction surprised me. However, as I worked through those feelings this time, I recognized their familiarity. I was just walking backwards, caught up in an emotional memory that triggered a time when significant loss could bring me to my knees. Grief hurts. It hangs on. It's clumsy. It's hard to navigate whether or not you understand the sensitivities that make up the

experience of grief. We don't have to like it; but we need to accept that we can't change it.

I also reminded myself about another important lesson learned. Grief does lose its intensity and bitterness in time. That is the lifeline I could hang onto with this successive loss. You see the light at the end of the tunnel clearer and quicker and know that on the other side of the darkness the sun will shine again. Today as I reflect

on the obstacles and grief thoughts, I'm able to say, it's okay to feel the familiar old reactions because they are no longer as threatening or defeating as they were back then. They are all recoverable with appropriate griefwork, patience, and time.

If you feel on some days that you are walking backwards through grief, maybe it's because you've had a previous significant loss that reminds you of those humbling emotions from before. Or maybe it's just one of those days when the emotions seem more demanding as though you are taking two steps back rather than forward. This is normal too. Or maybe it's reminding you of your childhood feat of walking backwards only to realize that sometimes things in life are uncomfortable. They can bring us to our knees, and take the breath out of us. But we survived and we learned from them.

The one thing that wasn't left unfinished, unsaid, or unappreciated was LOVE. Never a day went by that we didn't say loving words to each other. Walking backwards in grief isn't always a “negative experience” because it also is a reminder to count my blessings for all the wonderful memories. It's a reflection back of how far I've come and grown through grief. For this I am grateful. Because of these flashbacks, I'm learning to walk forward in my grief with courage towards the ultimate Gift of Peace.

Reader Feedback



In February our hearts all turn to “love”. For those who are grieving, precious moments or thoughts will surface and become the anchor that helps us through Valentines’ Day. A time of remembering something very special that brought the two of you together. Wings would like to honor your relationship by sharing a glimpse of how you met or how you knew this person was the one for you. For some, it was love at first sight. For others, it was a “work in progress.” But that story of choosing each other is forever in your heart. And that is why we grieve so hard because we loved so deeply.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY??

For example: I met my husband Gary fresh out of high school, I felt a connection immediately (can’t say the same for him), but it took 3 years before we were ready to say “I do.” He was working as a chef at a Pizzeria that I often went to with friends. We were introduced. It took 3 years before we were ready to say “I do”, but the day I walked down the aisle and took his hand, I knew it was a match made in heaven. Our relationship was beautiful and strong through many life challenges (55 years) but even up to the moments before he died, he was able to tell me one more time, “ I will always love you.”

Kurt and I met at our church’s 4th of July picnic and then got to know each other while we both worked in the church’s sound booth on Sunday nights. When he didn’t arrive at the appointed time for our first date, I wondered if he stood me up. In fact, he had been in a car accident on his way to pick me up! I give him credit, though, he went through with the date. He was not one for small talk and we had the first of many serious discussions over dinner that very evening. I treasure our 10 years of marriage and dearly miss his unique outlook on life. We often said to each other, “This is even better than I imagined it would be.”

Deanna, Schofield

I’d like to include my living husbands in your feedback for this eLetter. My first husband is the father of my two boys, Bradley and Bill—both now deceased. We were together for 18 years. He still lives in Arizona. My second husband, Ron, and I met at Parents Without Partners in Tucson, Arizona. We danced around the floor, and I felt so great. When the band played “Can I have this dance for the rest of my life”, I felt like it was written just for me as we waltzed around the floor. It was the beginning of a lot of interesting years for sure. We will be celebrating our 42nd anniversary on June 5th.

Betty, Rib Mountain

Was it love at first sight or did it take time and work? For me and my darling husband, Jay, it was both. He often told

me that he loved me from the beginning, but for me it was a work in progress. It was more like “I want to get to know this guy better but there’s a lot standing in my way.” Jay was my boss (yes one can marry the boss) and I was divorced when we met. I was sour on relationships and wanted to raise my two girls on my own and had absolutely zero intention of every becoming involved with anyone again. In the office, we talked, we passed each other and looked at each other but it took over two years before he actually approached me and we quickly became involved. He was the smartest man I had ever met and, for me, that was a must. He made me laugh and was always interested in having me live up to who I was and treated me like an equal and a respected person rather than an object. In those days it was far more usual for a woman to be treated as

READER FEEDBACK...CONTINUED

a somewhat lesser being and his treatment of me was wonderful. We were both coming off of bad relationships and the love, admiration and respect we felt for one another was magical. We were married for 46 years before he died almost 3 years ago. We had both been married before for a total of over 35 years between us. We laughed as we said no-one stays married for a total of all those years. We shared enough love to definitely stay married that long and longer and I so wish it could be so. However, he is always alive in my heart, and I am deeply grateful for all the wonderful years we had together.

Bunny, Boynton Beach

The minute I walked into my home and saw Jim Garrity visiting my dad, I told myself “that is the man I am going to marry”. We met in November 1957, got engaged in April 1958 and married in August 1958. My love for him just kept growing. He was the love of my life, my best friend, and the father of our four incredible children. I have family pictures on the hallway walls (and going up the stairs), and in the midst of them is a sign that says “All because two people fell in love”. As the song says “Love is a many splendored thing”. I had that kind of love for 64 years, and I can still feel it.

Carole, Wausau

Yogi & I met on Friday the 13th 1981 at a local bar. I was visiting my friend who was dating my cousin who grew

up with Yogi. She asked me if I knew Yogi because he had just gotten out of the marines. She showed Yogi my senior class picture and he said he would love to meet me. They took me to the local bar when he was bartending on Friday, Feb. 13th. It took Yogi about a half hour of looking at each other across the bar before he finally got the liquid courage to talk to me. We talked about our lives, families, etc. Then he asked me out on a date on Valentines Day. He said, “If you are interested in seeing me again, can I come pick you up tomorrow night (on Valentines’ Day), and we can learn more about each other. I said, “Sure”. There definitely was an immediate connection for the both of us.

The next night he came to my home in his brother’s truck. It was a farm truck and smelled like manure when I got in. The rest is history! We were engaged exactly 1 month later Friday March 13th. He told me that he knew I was the right one when I didn’t complain that the truck smelled like manure. He even bought me a Valentines card for our first date. We married the following year on May 1, 1982. We always joked about our first date and that we gave each other shit for the next 40 years!! Yogi was so funny! Everyone remembers him for his funny sense of humor. He would do anything for anyone anytime always making it fun. After we got married, we had 4 sons within 10 years. I really enjoyed our life. We LOVED kids. He came from a family of 11 and my family was 9. Our LOVE story was very special. I had a stroke in 2014 which left me left-side-paralyzed. Yogi became my

full-time caregiver. He told the nurses that his vows to me were “in sickness and in health” and that is what he planned on doing. Seven years after my stroke, Yogi was diagnosed with lung cancer and passed away in our home. I lost my soulmate on September 7, 2022.

Karen, Antigo

I guess I should really use the term “Love at first Sight” but the first time we laid eyes on each other was when we went sucker fishing one April night in 1974. A mutual friend invited myself and my good best friend to go along. We didn’t catch any fish that night but what I caught was the best husband, father, and friend I could ever have had. I was dating another guy at the time but Paul was very persistent and I realized that he was more compatible than the other guy. I think we grew to love each other more and more as the years went by but it was the hand of God that put us together...not the fishing hook. So many circumstances pointed us to not be together from being 5 1/2 years difference in age to being in a different Lutheran synod which in those days was like marrying a Catholic. (Some of you might relate to this!) We allowed God to lead us to grow in that love because we made Him a partner in our marriage. It was until “death do we part” that our time together came to an end. But our parting words as he was in the valley of the shadow of death were that we promised to never forget each other and that we would always love each other.

Pauline, Wausau

Magic That Stirs the Soul

by Nan Zastrow

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!

On the Lighter Side...



LAST WILL & TESTAMENT OF A FARMER

I LEAVE:

To my wife: My overdraft at the bank. Maybe she can explain it.

To my son: Equity on my car. Now he will have to go to work to meet the payments.

To my banker: My soul. He has the mortgage on it anyway.

To my neighbor: My clown suit. He will need it if he continues to farm as he has in the past.

To the farm credit corporation: My unpaid bills. They took some real chances on me. I want to do something for them.

To the junk man: All my machinery. He's had his eyes on it for years.

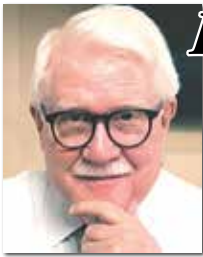
To my undertaker: A special request. I want six implement dealers and six fertilizer dealers for pallbearers. They are used to carrying me.

To the weatherman: Rain, hail and snow for the funeral please. No sense in having good weather now.

To the grave digger: Don't bother. The hole I'm in now should be big enough.

And lastly

To the monument maker: Set up a jig for the epitaph. "Here lies a farmer who has now properly assumed all of his obligations."



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

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

the thirty-fourth President of the United States of America

President Dwight D. Eisenhower was born in 1890 in Denison, Texas, but grew up in Abilene, Kansas. During World War II, he was supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe. He was supreme commander of NATO forces from 1950 to 1952 until he was elected president. During his term in office, he brought the Korean Conflict to a close, and the United States experienced a period of prosperity. He retired to private life in 1961.

Eisenhower had been a heavy smoker all of his adult life and had suffered several heart attacks. By the beginning of 1969, it was clear that he was suffering from terminal heart disease.

On March 28, 1969, Eisenhower died at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, DC. Upon his death, his body was transferred to **Joseph Gawler's Sons Funeral Home** for embalming and burial preparation. **Mr. Joseph E. Hagan**, longtime manager of Gawler's, was the lead funeral director serving the Eisenhower family. Mr. Hagan died in 2000.

Eisenhower was buried in his World War II uniform. It consisted of "pink" trousers and the olive green "Ike" jacket that he made famous. Although he was one of

the most decorated military men in history, his uniform had only the following medals: Army Distinguished Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Navy Distinguished Service Medal, and the Legion of Merit.

At 11:00 AM on March 29th, the body arrived at Bethlehem Chapel, Washington National Cathedral, with an honor escort of generals and admirals. After a brief ceremony for family, honor guard, and honorary civilian pallbearers, the body laid in repose for 28 hours.

The next day, the casket was carried from the chapel to Gawler's funeral coach. The funeral cortege moved to 16th and Constitution Avenue, where the President's casket was placed on a caisson.

The funeral procession moved down Constitution Avenue to the Capitol for the ceremony, musical honors, and a 21-gun salute. Inside the Capitol rotunda, a presidential wreath was placed by the casket, and the body was to lie in state until the following morning. The public was admitted to the Capitol rotunda to file past the casket.

At 4:00 PM on March 31st, the casket was carried to Gawler's funeral coach to be returned to the Washington National Cathedral, where an Episcopal funeral service was attended by 2,107 persons who were admitted by ticket only.

President Nixon declared March 31st as a day of national mourning and ordered flags on all Federal buildings to be flown at half-mast for thirty days. Tributes were received from ex-Presidents Harry S. Truman and Lyndon B. Johnson, from British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, as well as from Queen Elizabeth II, French President Charles de Gaulle, and Pope Paul VI.

Following the funeral, the casket was placed in Gawler's funeral



coach for the trip to the Union Railroad Station in Washington where it would travel to Abilene.

On April 2, 1969, the funeral train arrived in Abilene, Kansas. The funeral coach of local Abilene funeral director **Paul J. Martin** was waiting to transfer the President's remains to his final burial site.

At 10:30 AM, the final funeral interment took place on the grounds of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum. The service began on the steps of the library and concluded inside the Place of Meditation, the chapel where Eisenhower is buried.

At the time of Eisenhower's death, the press paid much attention to the fact that his casket was an \$80.00, 20-gauge, gun-gray, government-issue which had been personally requested by Eisenhower. The only difference between his casket and those furnished for any soldier buried by the Army is an inner glass seal that cost an extra \$115. It was lined with tailored eggshell crepe.

The press failed to mention that the entire funeral service between Washington, DC and Abilene, Kansas cost over \$5 million dollars.

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

FUNERAL HOME & CEMETERY NEWS
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COMING SOON-NEW PROGRAMS:
**APRIL-MAY, INPERSON, 5 SESSIONS, ALL NEW:
 LIVE FIRST. GRIEVE SECOND**
**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER
 GIVE SORROW WORDS**
**SEPTEMBER
 ANNUAL UNDERSTANDING GRIEF
 SEMINAR, INVITED GUEST SPEAKER**
**FOLLOW ON OUR WEBSITE OR FACEBOOK TO KNOW WHEN REGISTRATION
 IS OPEN AND SEE THE DETAILS INCLUDING THE SCHEDULED DATES.**



NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

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 small 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.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS---DISCARDING THE REGRETS: AND FEELING GOOD ABOUT IT.

“Memories are our keepsakes.

No one can take them away from us.”

– Nan Zastrow

My list of Unfinished Business is getting smaller. I admit to an urgency of completing tasks and projects we just never got around to. Even though it's only a year since my husband, Gary's death, I've been obsessed with things from our “Honey Do” list.

On my journey through grief this time around, I'm okay with what I'm doing. When my son died in 1993, I hung on to everything of his that I could possibly store and take with me as we moved from house to house. Today, 30 years later I still have 2 tubs of things, a dresser, and various other items belonging to my son, Chad, because I'm still not ready to let go of those.

My personal story of unfinished business differs from the kind I talk about in my grief education groups. Unfinished business in grief is strongly associated with regrets, defined as something that is incomplete after loss and deprives the griever of a sense of peace. It's often full of anxiety and conflict. It may include, for example, unresolved feelings in a relationship or shoulda-woulda-coulda regrets. These can be a major obstacle interfering with your desire to move forward or let go of some things you just have no control over. However you look at it, unfinished business weighs on your mind and complicates your ability to see the future through rose colored glasses.

Don't grieve 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.

Source: Article by Nan Zastrow “For Sale: Madness, Memories, and Maybes”

Nothing can be more disruptive, sleep depriving, and haunting.

This time, I didn't want to put myself through that same turmoil again. I decided to write a list of all the unfinished business my husband and I had discussed—a “Honey Do” list of sorts. I was determined to cross each item off the list and finish it. This wasn't just “getting rid” of personal items. It included tasks/jobs and plans to do things that just never got done. These were jobs/tasks we typically tackled together. So, I felt justified and gave myself the green light to challenge myself to complete the jobs. Little by little, I've been crossing off items on the list and feeling really good about completing them.

This is not the solution I would recommend for everyone grieving, but for me, this time, it was therapeutic. I felt Gary might be smiling down at me and applauding me for taking on the monumental tasks by myself. I value my emotional response. If I feel I'm not ready, I quit. For you, do only what feels comfortable for you. You definitely don't want to rush something that will cause regrets later. Here's the thing about regrets. We all have them. We all could make a list of things we wish we had said or done differently, and we fantasize over what the outcome might have been. Those kinds of regrets require reflection and planning. But discarding clutter, updating legal documents, finishing household projects etc. are pretty well defined and don't require major decisions.



These are the kind of tasks I tacked and are all just baggage that I was procrastinating over. I wanted to prove to myself that in spite of grief, I could "Give in and get it done!" Procrastination becomes an easy way to avoid things you really don't want to do. My accomplishments amazed me. I'm not sure where I got the energy or

spirit in times of sorrow to forge forward and take on tasks seriously beyond my physical capabilities. But I did, and I feel good about it.

One major project was having a dreaded garage sale. I've written about these before. This is a continued chronical resulting in positive vibes that can come from letting go of personal items.

- When a man picked up two bundles of Hot Wheels, some classic, I smiled as I remembered how Chad ran the sporty cars across the floor for hours. And then I wondered if his son or grandson would give him the same memories someday. Or maybe there were other stories attached to each.
- When another man picked up military items, I wondered if he had a connection to them in about the same time period as my son (Iraq conflict) or my husbands (Viet Nam era). If so, perhaps they would soothe his memory or bring back fond memories about others who served.
- When someone purchased many well-used tools that Gary used to build over a dozen homes, I wondered "Why those?" Today there are more efficient power tools than these hand-me-downs from his dad.

I don't miss the things I let go of, the changes I've made to our home, or any other thing we once talked about doing. My list has one or two things left on it to handle in the coming year but I have the confidence and courage to go ahead with my husband's blessing. Many of the things that hold us back are physical possessions. Letting them go is more about the memories that go with those items, not the items themselves. I have no regrets...and I'm feeling really good about it.

3 KEYS TO MAKING THE NEW YEAR A BRIGHT ONE

There are basically 3 Keys to making each New Year a bright one. The essentials don't change, although how you carry them out may change. If you use these to get you going and keep you on track in the New Year, I'm sure you will be satisfied with the outcome. The 3 Keys are mentioned in this quote:

“Three grand essentials to happiness in life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.” – Joseph Addison



1. Have a Purpose: For some people, “purpose” exists within their careers; but if that is not the “passion in your life”, seek and find something that gives your life meaning. This equates to something to do. Evaluate what your strong skills are (God-given or acquired through experiences), your interests, and what tugs at your heart. What is it outside of your job that gets you up in the morning; encourages you to go the extra mile; or gives you pride and a sense of “belonging”? Find something in your community to do where you can apply at least one of your skills to help someone else. It's likely that your interests and your passions will lead to purpose—a reason for living.

2. Everyone needs someone or something to love. What or who gives you that warm sense of joy? Perhaps it is a person or persons such as grandchildren or a child. Maybe it's someone disadvantaged that depends upon your support. It could be a parent or friend. Maybe it's a lasting or renewed relationship with your spouse. And, then maybe that something to love is nature, a pet, an appreciation of art

or craftsmanship, music, or reading. Take your pick of one of many and find joy in the happiness it gives you. When we have someone or something to love, we feel satisfied, content, and ready for each day to begin.

3. Everyone needs something to hope for. Hope is a promise that tomorrow will be better. It's an idea or anticipation of something you can look forward to. What is it you hope for? And what can you do to make it happen? Maybe you hope for a day without pain, correspondence with a friend, a better job, a healed relationship, freedom from grief, a healthier self, a happier home, and the list goes on. What is it you can do to make the things you hope for happen? Sometimes a little bit of action on your part begins the process and makes the possibility a reality. Each day is a new beginning; and it's yours!

As essential as these 3 things are to a bright and happy New Year, they are only possible through a positive attitude. The calendar has turned to January and the New Year has begun.

A New Year's Resolution for the Bereaved:

In the New Year,
I have a chance to forgive,
To do better,
To do more,
To give more,
To love more.

I'll stop worrying about “what if” and start embracing what could be.

Be Good to Yourself

SELF CARE TIP

Meeting the Challenge of the New Year

For the bereaved the thought of a New Year and 12 challenging months ahead can be daunting. It often causes greater sadness and loneliness knowing we are leaving our loved one behind in the past.

Give yourself a mental rest from all the activities and emotions you experienced over the holidays. Your senses may still be reeling from the fact that life has changed so drastically. The New Year presents the opportunity for living in the present, one day at a time. It can be the catalyst to acknowledge that you need to find something practical, new, or adventurous to occupy your time as you adjust to differences in your daily schedule. Seek support from groups and other learning experiences that teach you how to move forward after loss. Open the door to the New Year with caution, but also with optimism that your path can help you discover renewed purpose, meaning and joy without forgetting the rich blessings and gifts your loved one gave to you in his or her life.

LOVE CAME FIRST

You don't move on after loss, but you must move *with*. You must shake hands with grief, welcome her in, for she lives with you now. Pull her a chair at the table and offer her comfort. She is not the monster you first thought her to be. She is *love*. And she will walk with you now, *stay with you now*, peacefully. If you let her. And on the days when your anger is high, remember why she came, remember who she represents. *Remember*. Grief came to you, my friend, because love came first. *Love came first.*

Donna Ashworth
Wild Hope?

SAVE THE DATE

Living River Quartet – In Concert



Friday, May 31, 2024

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn & Suites at Cedar Creek,
1000 Imperial Dr., Rothschild

Free Concert – All are welcome.

Free will donation greatly appreciated.

Hosted by Wings-a Grief Education Ministry

For more information, call Nan Zastrow 715.845.4159

A Dozen Roses

By Alan Pedersen

If I had a dozen roses
I know just what I'd do
I'd give each one a name
That reminded me of you
The first rose I'd call sunshine
Cause you brighten everyday
The second would be beauty
The kind that never goes away
The third rose would be priceless
Like those hugs you gave to me
I'd name the fourth rose silly
Oh how funny you could be
Rose five of course is patience
Something you have helped me find
The sixth rose would be memories
Those gifts you left behind
The seventh and the eighth rose
Would for sure be faith and grace
Nine would be unique
Because no one can take your place
The tenth rose well that's easy
I'd simply name it love
Eleven would be angel
I know you're watching from above
I'd think about that twelfth rose
And really take my time
After all these roses
Are for you my Valentine
I'm sending them to heaven
In every color that I know
So twelve I'll name forever
That's how long I'll love you so



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



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

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

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

MINI MUFFIN SIZE QUICHES *(Makes 24)*

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 12 slices white sandwich bread
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup diced cooked ham
- ¼ cup shredded white cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- Coarse salt and ground pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush a 24-cup mini muffin pan with 1 tablespoon butter; set aside.
2. Stack two slices of bread on a work surface; using a rolling pin, flatten to an 1/8-inch thickness. With a 2-inch round cutter, cut two rounds from stack; separate to yield 4 bread rounds. Repeat with remaining bread to make 24.
3. Fit rounds into prepared muffin cups, gently pushing down in the center and being careful not to tear. Brush bread with remaining tablespoon butter. Bake until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool in pan to room temperature. Leave oven on.
4. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together egg, ham, cheddar, cream, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Carefully spoon 1 teaspoon of egg mixture into each bread cup. Bake until filling is set, 13 to 15 minutes.



INDIVIDUAL BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE CUPS

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon melted butter, plus more for baking dishes
- 1 pound grated white cheddar cheese (4 cups)
- 8 ounces elbow macaroni
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ¼ cup store-bought or ¾ cup homemade breadcrumbs
- Salt and pepper
- 1 ¼ cups whole milk

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Butter four 14-ounce ovenproof dishes. In a small bowl, toss 1 tablespoon melted butter with breadcrumbs and 1/4 cup cheddar.
2. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook macaroni until al dente, according to package instructions; drain.
3. In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring milk to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; add cream cheese, cut into cubes, stir until melted, 2 minutes. Gradually stir in remaining cheddar until melted, 5 minutes. Add cooked pasta, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon pepper; toss to combine.
4. Divide the mixture among prepared dishes. Bake until bubbling, 10 minutes. Remove from the oven; sprinkle with the breadcrumb mixture. Bake until golden, 10 minutes more.

PECAN TASSIES *(Makes 18 mini muffin size)*

Ingredients for the dough:

- ½ cup pecans
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, softened
- Pinch of salt
- ½ cup (4 ounces) mascarpone or cream cheese
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour

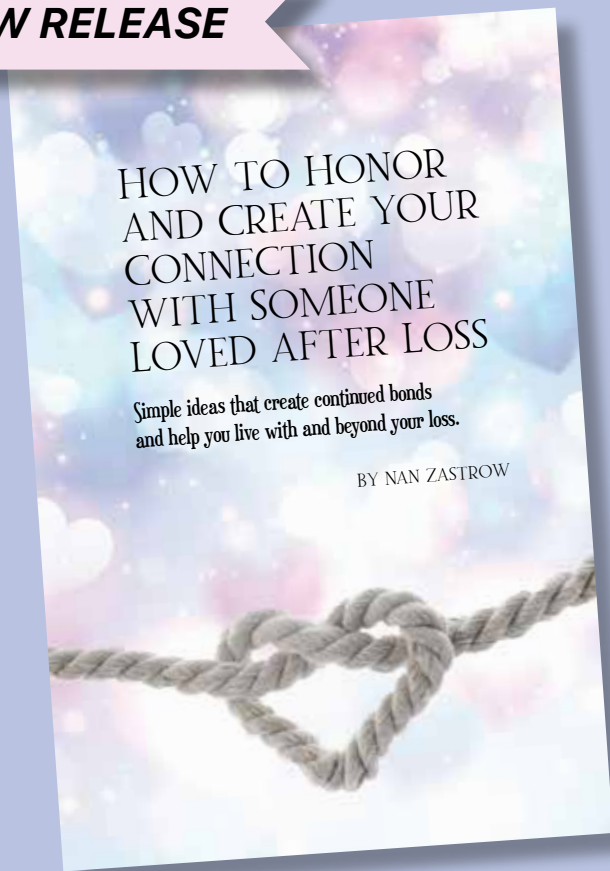
Ingredients for the filling:

- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup packed light-brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Make the dough: Process pecans in a food processor until finely ground (you should have about 1/2 cup); set aside. Put mascarpone or cream cheese and butter into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on medium-high speed until well blended. Add flour, ground pecans, and salt; mix just until dough comes together. Alternatively, stir together ingredients with a wooden spoon in a large bowl.
2. Roll dough into eighteen 1-inch balls, and press into bottoms and up sides of cups of mini-muffin tins.
3. Make the filling: Whisk the egg, sugar, maple syrup, vanilla, butter, and salt in a small bowl. Stir in pecans. Spoon about 1-1/2 teaspoons filling into each muffin cup.
4. Bake pecan tassies until crust begins to turn golden, about 20-22 minutes. Let cool completely in tins on wire rack. Unmold. Pecan tassies can be stored in single layers in airtight containers up to 3 days.

NEW RELEASE



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

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

By Nan Zastrow



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

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

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

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

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



FEBRUARY – MARCH 2024

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.



HOW GRIEF CHANGES YOUR LIFE 5 Major Changes You Weren't Expecting

VIRTUAL SESSIONS:

**Tues., Feb. 27, Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26 (5 weeks)
6:00-7:00 p.m. CST**

ZOOMGRIEF - Register online for a link www.wingsgrief.com

Grief is not an event that begins and ends. It becomes a part of your life. It can change your life on a temporary or more permanent basis. It's an active, ongoing process of turning your sadness into a meaningful life again. Grief can affect your body, mind, and spirit. Bad grief can leave you in a state of confusion and despair. Good grief can give you permission to live again. Learn how to understand why you may feel that no one else understands your loss. In this 5-week series, we'll explore the 5 Major Changes you weren't expecting and share ways to cope. You can't change unless you choose to and then you must be ready. We are here to help you get ready, know what to expect and put your griefwork into motion. Death has a way of changing you but healing your grief has a way of finding the bright spot to living with purpose again.



LOVE NEVER DIES

Creating a healthy and normal connection with someone loved after loss

**Thurs., March 21, 2024 – 3:00-4:00 p.m.
INPERSON: The Landing, YMCA, Wausau**

Registration is required. No Charge for Members or Non-Members

VIRTUAL webinar: Wed. Mar. 27, 6:00–7:00
ZOOMGRIEF - Register online for a link www.wingsgrief.com

Research indicates that it's normal and healthy to stay connected with your loved one who died. The theory states that your relationship with them doesn't end but it slowly changes over time. It confirms that we don't need to completely detach from our relationship with the deceased. Instead of getting over it or letting go completely, we nurture our bond. Such a bond appears to benefit the bereaved by providing comfort, and by affirming a spiritual connection. Everyone does this in their own way. To you, it may mean continuing a favorite hobby you enjoyed together. Or carry on a legacy through charity, a fundraiser, or other memorial gift/act. You don't need to forget about your loved one to grieve in a healthy, normal way. Nan will share ideas from her newest book that demonstrates how it works for her. Join us. Learn and Share!

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



Certified Grief
Educator | Facilitator:
Nan Zastrow
wingsgrief.org
715.845.4159



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