



*Honoring the Past and  
Rebuilding the Future*

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

*Published by Nan Zastrow*

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# Grieving People Scare Me

*By Bob Baugher, Ph.D.*

As I got up from my desk to head downstairs from my office, from the balcony above I saw him walking into the mail room below. He looked as he always did, a fifty-something professor, the same colleague I had known for 20 some years. I reached the last stair step and glanced at him as he spoke with the building secretary. There was absolutely nothing in his demeanor that would indicate his 50-year-old wife had died the day before. My first thought was, "Oh no, he's going to be finishing up with his conversation and then it'll be my turn." I caught myself, "Oh no? Is that what I said? Really, Bob?" If there was anyone in my building of 20 social science faculty who should know what to say to a recently bereaved person it should be me. For the past 30+ years I'd been teaching a course titled *Death & Life*. In addition, I've given hundreds of workshops to thousands of people deep in the throes of grief. They have been my teachers. Human beings who've experienced the deaths of children, siblings, spouses, grandchildren, parents, and friends to chronic illness,

accident, suicide, homicide—you name it—I've heard their story. Wouldn't you think, therefore, that after years of hearing thousands of stories that I would be the last person to say, "Oh no, I'm going to speak with a bereaved person"?

I guess I'm saying that, if I'm afraid of grieving people, think about the average person. I'm certainly not saying that everyone is fearful. There are those few angels out there who have no problem listening to story after story of dying, death, and grief. However, let's look at why the average person may be nervous around a person in grief:

**1. I don't know what to say.** Have you ever been in a situation where stupid things came pouring out of your mouth? Perhaps you knew it the moment the words jumped out or perhaps the recipient of your blathering had to inform you or you saw the look on their face and said to yourself, "Did I really just say that?" It may have been one of the hundreds of clichés that well-meaning (aka, mindless)

*Continued on page 4*



## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

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NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,  
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

## THE AWAKENING OF THE BUTTERFLY

Recently I completed major surgery. I couldn't help but think about those days that follow pain and rehab when I could finally return to my passion (Wings™) again. Today 15 days post op, I'm looking forward to some energy and the prospects of a great year we already have planned.

I thought, "What am I going to write? ...to get my Eletter on track). I recalled an article from my archives that I wanted to share again. It's an analogy of grief and a personal experience. The awakening of a butterfly.

My husband, Gary, was working in his unheated workshop and turned on a propane heater to warm the room slightly. A butterfly—half frozen—responded to the warmth and crawled out from under something where it sought shelter. Gary brought the butterfly into the house and in moments, much to my surprise, it began to spread its wings in an attempt to move about. I picked it up and put it in a container, anxious to see what would happen. I placed it in a sunny window. It did very little, and I began to think that movement and life were hopeless. Later, I put a few drops of water in the dish and saw the butterfly move towards it, gently lapping at the liquid. Then later yet, he began to climb up the side of the jar, obviously longing to be free.

I remember thinking how the butterfly reminds me of the initial stages of grief when we behave similarly. We are immobile, unresponsive, and lacking the nourishment that could set us free from the bondage of sadness and grief. We are disabled and helpless in a world we don't control.

Every year, I look for the signs of spring—even though I've passed those crucial painful years after the death of my son, Chad. I am eager to see the awakening of nature that is a renewal of hope. Chad's hibiscus plant, over twenty-five years



old now is one of the earliest signs for me. With the right nourishment and attention, it begins to blossom long before I am able to set it outdoors. Today, it bloomed as though saying, "Hello, Mom!"

Spring is a reminder of the metamorphosis of plants, animals, and human creatures, after loss. What once seemed cold, bitter, and lifeless responds. We are encouraged that even after the harshness of winter, the drabness of dark and cloudy days, and the uncertainty and ambivalence of life—some things always prove true. The buds will open. The sun will shine. The rivers will run, and the butterfly will fly. This is the miracle of hope fulfilled during your journey with grief.

Writing this today, I realize how so many events in life offer new opportunities to thrive, rejoice, and look forward to new possibilities. I had an amazing surgeon, (one who truly listened to me concerns and did something about them). One who was skilled and blessed with the ability to not only mend parts, but souls. This year 2020 has to be a great one ahead filled with hope...and like that fog of grief. I've got this!

May 2020 be filled with healing, hope, and possibilities!

– Nan

# HOSPICE IS...

*By Amy Kitsebel*

There may be different thoughts and images that play out for folks about the rest of the sentence. As Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services look at what the last forty years has taught, I would like to offer some insights on what hospice care is.



It is a community of friends and colleagues gathered in a dining room as a lifelong teacher hosts a tea party which includes chocolate covered strawberries to share laughter and some of her finest insights and wisdom the week of her death.

It is honoring the life of a man who chose to serve his country then after six years choose to return to his family that in 60 years grew to over 100 members who gathering to celebrate his birthday on an afternoon and surprise him with a veteran appreciation ceremony. It is a quiet afternoon watching the deer feed out of the window of the home he and his wife built next to the river, while he and his wife share stories and memoirs of their lives together- hours before his last breath.

It is about tradition as a family hangs one of their brass Tree of Love medallions engraved by a volunteer business in the community contributing to the everlasting memorial.

It is the deafening silence as each breath is watched in vigil as you watch you mom slowly leave her physical body, and you recall in story of how you have her same hands or learned how to make her bread at her side. In the tenderness of touch you exchange with her this loving intent- and instinctively know as she taught you how to love and find gratitude in being present to share with her.

It is being in the sunshine- wrapped in an afghan made by the hands of a community member you never met- however the warmth you feel keeps you protected as your loved one takes you outside to experience the wind your hair.

It is sharing a beer with your buddies on the porch, or getting out to the dock to throw a line and hope to catch one last pan fish.

It is listening to the young woman who want to be assured her family will be alright, and listening to the family who shares they are alright as they express and story how they experience her every day long after her death.

It is witnessing a reconciliation with experiences which have been so dark in life with a spiritual awakening- that fills them with light and healing in their last moment on earth.

It is care provided by a team of folks who are committed to honoring life. It is about giving safe space to words we may otherwise fear saying out loud. It is about honoring our human spirit and character to our last breath in memories.

## *How to Connect with Wings:*

- Email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com) • Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54401 • Ph: 715.845.4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at [www.centeringcorp.com](http://www.centeringcorp.com)
- Visit Wings on Facebook



persons utter in a vain attempt to “make things better” “Oh, I understand just how feel. My cat died last year.” “It was God’s will.” “Well, everything happens for a reason.” And on and on. Perhaps it was a judgment statement, “You shouldn’t have done that.” Or, perhaps these wonderful words of wisdom emanated from your lips, “It’ll be okay.” or “Life goes on—tomorrow’s another day.” Or how about, “If that happened to me, I just don’t know how I could go on.”

**2. What should I not say?** In addition to fearing that you’ll say the wrong things, you may fall into the belief that there are certain things that should not be said to a bereaved person. One of the biggest mistakes is believing, “I don’t want to bring up the deceased’s name because it will remind her of what she lost.” So, what happens? You talk about everything but the most important thing—their loved one.

**3. What should I do if tears, or anger, or expressions of guilt emerge?** This is a big reason people in grief are so scary. Here you are standing in the grocery store with this person and suddenly they are in tears or their voice rises as they get in touch with how unfair all this is. Or the discussion moves to 37 types of guilt they are experiencing. And, all you can think about it is, “How can I change the subject to something like, “Wow, aren’t you glad hamburger is on sale this week?”

**4. What if I start crying more than them?** This is a common concern. Here you are trying to be of comfort and suddenly there you are, immersed in their pain of loss and you begin boo-hooing so much the person now needs to comfort you.

**5. If it happened to him, it could happen to me.** It is frightening to look into the eyes of a parent whose child has died, a spouse whose partner will never walk through the door, an individual who will always be a bereaved sibling, a grandparent who will never again hold that precious child, a child (of any age) who is now motherless or fatherless, a human being who has to live without the friend they always thought would be there; and, in the presence of such a person, you realize that it could happen to you—frightening.

**6. It’s such a downer.** An interaction with a bereaved individual is never easy. We consider keeping our distance because we know that, by approaching this person, we are opening ourselves up to a glimpse into their world—a confusing, crazy world called grief. And, we know that looking into their world is never easy. Never.

**7. How should I end our conversation?** Once you are in the presence of a bereaved person and you realize once again that no words can touch their grief, no sad facial expression of yours or no “Uh-huhs” or “I sees” can make their pain go away, you begin to wonder, “How do I leave this fragile person in this condition?” You wish for something that can make it better. And, now you hurt because you realize that you can’t make it better.

Back to the story. Despite my fear, did I speak with this man? Of course. I approached him, asked, “Would you like a hug?” Despite the fact that this man is not a hugger, he quickly said, “Yes!” We walked back to his office, sat and talked. Talked about her time in the hospital, about her final moments, about how it all doesn’t seem real, about crying and then laughing at stupid little things, about how her family is reacting. We chatted for 15-20 minutes and, once again I realized the truth in all this grief stuff: Of course we’re scared of bereaved people. Who doesn’t feel inept in the face of unremitting despair? But, they need us. They do. And, despite the fact that we’ll trip over ourselves, they need us to walk up to them and say, “I’m here.” “Tell me about your loved one.” “Tell me how you’re feeling. I’ll listen.” “I may not know what to say, but I’ll listen.” And, then they need us to do what every good listener does: Allow the person in grief to be in pain, let them take the lead, and then shut up. Now, that doesn’t sound too scary, does it?

### About the Author

Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychologist and certified death educator who teaches at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. He is a twenty-year member of the advisory committee of the South King County Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Bob has given more than 400 workshops, is a trainer for the Washington State Youth Suicide Prevention Program, and is co-author of *A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor*, *A Guide to Understanding Guilt during Bereavement*, *Understanding Anger during Bereavement*, *Death Turns Allie’s Family Upside Down* (a child’s book on death), *Coping with Traumatic Death: Homicide*, *After Suicide: Coping with Traumatic Death*.

# On the Lighter Side...

## Super Bowl Ticket

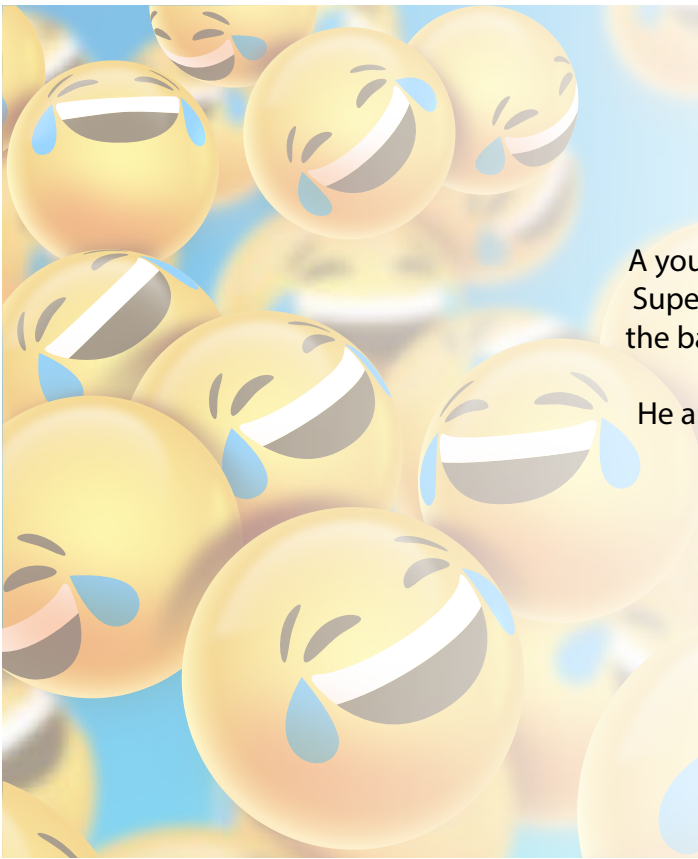
A young man was very excited because he just won a ticket to the Super Bowl. His excitement lessened as he realized his seat was in the back of the stadium. As he searched the rows ahead of him for a better seat, he found an empty one right next to the field. He approached the man sitting next to the empty seat and asked if it was taken.

The man replied, "No." Amazed the young man asked, "How could someone pass up a seat like this one?"

The older gentleman responded. "That's my wife's seat. We've been to every Super Bowl together since the day we were married, but she passed away."

"Oh, how sad," the young man said. "I'm sorry to hear that, but couldn't you find a friend or relative to come with you?"

"Not really," the man said. "They're all at the funeral."



## Good News Bad News

An artist asked the gallery owner if there was any interest in his paintings on display at that time.

"I have good news and bad news," the owner of the gallery replied. "The good news is that a gentleman inquired about your work and wondered if it would appreciate in value after your death. When I told him, it would, he bought all 15 of your paintings."

"That's wonderful!" the artist exclaimed. "What's the bad news?"

"The buyer was your doctor."



## Wings-a Grief Education Ministry has a presence on Facebook.

Here is a place to find Hope and Inspiration! Become a Friend.

What you will find posted on our Facebook page:

- Inspirational quotes
- News about Events such as Support Groups, Community Seminars, Holiday programs, Grief Tips, and other educational experiences
- Shared posts that make the heart feel good
- <https://www.facebook.com/zastrownan/>



# Broken Hearts, Broken Wings

by Nan Zastrow

In blue skies, I once soared with eagles  
When sweet ballads my soul could sing,  
Life's painful and humbling experiences  
Broke my heart, and then broke my wings.

My heart shattered in hundreds of pieces  
From the burden I was asked to bear.  
Each scar forms a constant reminder  
That life's tests pay our journey's fare.

My spirit was crushed oh so swiftly  
'Neath the burden of crippling grief.  
I longed for the freedom of flying,  
Visions of wings lay still at my feet.

O where's the comfort of God's promise?  
For the mourner who seeks him in prayer.  
Oh how will I overcome sorrow  
When my heart and my wings need repair?

I searched for the magic to mend them,  
My broken heart and my broken wings,  
When my Lord whispered ever so softly,  
"You must first heal your spirit within."

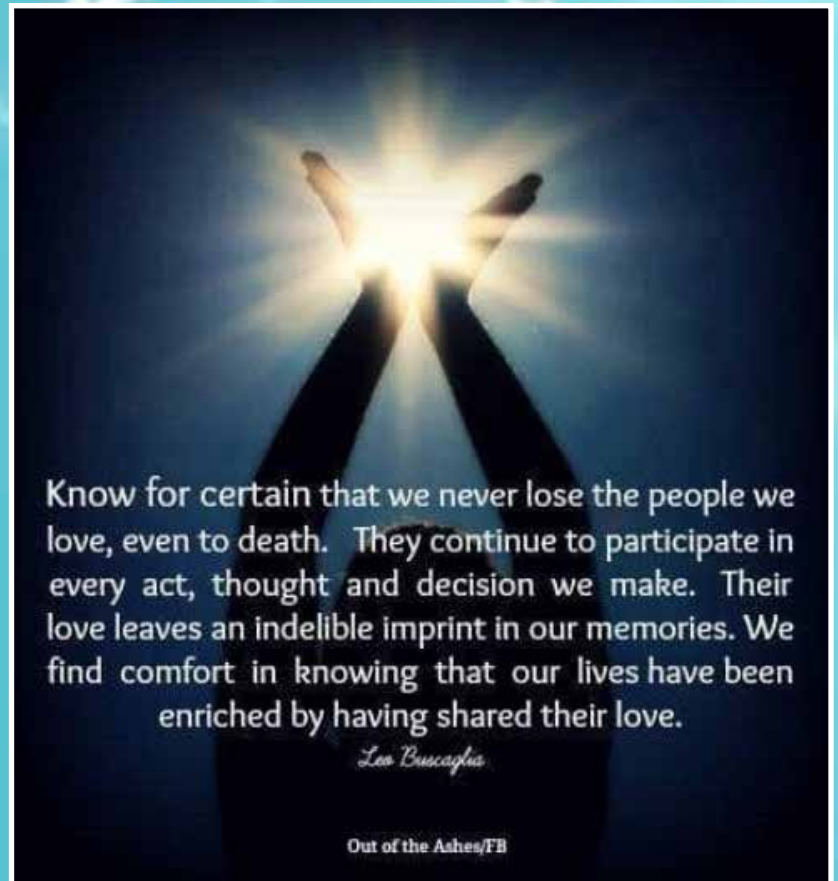
"Listen to the beat of your heart vibes,  
Hear the message of experiences past,  
See the worth of your honored values  
Gather strength from these lessons that last."

I shared memories and healing embraces  
To help others their burdens to bear.  
Found, life once again offered new purpose,  
My Anger and sorrow soon disappeared.

Healing thoughts energized the spirit,  
Gave flight to my grief and my fear.  
And slowly I rose from my grieving  
As God's message became crystal clear.

I'll rely on God's sacrifice and promise  
In eternal life, my loved one I'll meet,  
The clouds will part for the sunshine,  
The 'sting of death' I'll surely defeat.

Found my spirit and wings are one Lord,  
This battle over grief I will win!  
Because the wings I desire for soaring  
Are empowered by Thy spirit within.



Know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love.

*Leo Buscaglia*

Out of the Ashes/TB

# “The Optimist”

Beryl in Keizer, Oregon – Written at age 91

“Why live to one hundred?” asked my friend.

“Isn’t ninety enough to make a good end?”

“I think of the things I would miss,”

I replied,

“If, at ninety, I stopped and simply died.”

Thousands of mornings to see the sun rise

In a glorious blaze in the eastern skies.

Moons to wax and wane anew,

Trillions of stars in the midnight blue.

Ten springs to see the lilacs bloom

As their fragrance drifts across my room.

To see new leaves on the maple tree

As the birds return and sing to me.

Ten summers to feel the ocean breeze

As whales cavort in blue-green seas,

To watch the hawks on the thermals rise

Into the blue of summer skies.

Ten more harvests to celebrate

Of apple and peach and pear and date.

To anticipate the vintner’s wines

From fresh new grapes on ancient vines.

Ten more autumns in which to see

The change of color on every tree,

Russets and golds and reds ablaze

To brighten the ever-shortening days.

Ten winters of freshly fallen snow

On mountains above and valleys below.

Of cherry-cheeked children on skis and sleds,

Of blazing hearths and soft warm beds.

Ten Christmas seasons of church bells rung,

Of mince pies eaten and carols sung.

Of families gathered to celebrate

The wonder of that age-old date.

Ten more New Years to welcome in,

To wonder what the year will bring.

Will there be a new baby for me to see?

A great-grandchild on my family tree?

I strive for another decade of living,

Of hoping and praying and loving and giving.

And, if I reach one hundred, what then?

Why, I’d plan to live to one hundred and ten!

# Good Grief, Bad Grief: How Grief Changes Your Life

*A Community Education and Support Group Series*

Grief is not an event that begins and ends. It becomes a part of your life. It is an active, ongoing process of turning your sadness into a meaningful life again. Both good grief and bad grief can make an impact on your life, sometimes without you realizing it. Sometimes family and friends “just don’t get it” when it comes to the emotional turmoil you might be going through. This is a journey you do not need to face alone. Join us for this six-week series to understand grief and learn coping skills as you move forward.



This group is open to anyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one regardless of the circumstances of death or how long it has been since the death occurred.

*Providing grief education since 1997, Nan & Gary Zastrow do not advise or counsel. They offer support by listening, teaching and sharing grief experiences. This group focuses on finding hope and understanding the grieving process. Healing your grief not about forgetting, but rather about finding a way to go on without your loved one who died.*

Winter 2020

Meets six consecutive Tuesdays:  
March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 & April 7

6:00-7:30 at Aspirus Wausau  
Hospital, Medallion Room A

No fee. Everyone is welcome.

Preregistration is recommended.  
Call Nan Zastrow 715-845-4159  
or email [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)

*Reader  
Feedback*

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

FROM THE EDITOR: DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS, WE WERE NOT ABLE TO ASK FOR FEEDBACK FOR THIS POPULAR COLUMN OF OUR ELETTER FOR THIS JANUARY EDITION. THE COLUMN WILL RETURN IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

*Wings*  
*A Grief Education Ministry*

## *Be Good to Yourself*

### SELF CARE TIP



***When a parent dies, forgive yourself for being human.*** In your relationship, you may have spoken harsh words, experienced indifferences, or missed the chance to express your love or thanks. Be confident that your parent understood, forgives, still loved you, and recognizes that both of you reacted to the circumstances at the moment.





Honoring the Past, Rebuilding the Future

Nan & Gary Zastrow, Founders



# Friends of Wings—Donation Request Form

## 23RD ANNUAL SPRING SEMINAR

Guest Speaker: JANET MCCORD

Thursday Evening, April 16, 2020 7-9 p.m. | Friday Morning, April 17, 2020 9-Noon

.....  
**YOUR INFORMATION:**

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
**Friends of Wings--Information about your Donation**

NON-PROFIT STATEMENT: Since 1993, Wings operates as a registered non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization. Wings™ appreciates all donations that support its events and grief ministry. Donation receipts will be mailed.

Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law. Wings™ is an all-volunteer organization without paid staff or administration fees. Wings™ is supported by individuals and businesses that care. Funds remain in the Wausau area for Wings events.

SELECT HOW YOU WANT TO MAKE YOUR DONATION: \_\_\_ general donation \_\_\_ non-specific \_\_\_ charitable  
AMOUNT: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Traditional General Charitable Donations in any amount may be given In Memoriam:

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR DONATION: In appreciation for your support, Wings-a Grief Education Ministry will acknowledge your donation in these ways.

- Post your name or Memorial Gift at the seminar with other proud sponsors.
- If your donation is \$100 or more, you will receive 1 complimentary voucher for the Morning program which you may use or give to someone else. (\$50 value)
- Acknowledge your donation or Memorial gift in the program.
- Acknowledge your gift on Wings website [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org) after the seminar.

**Please respond by March 10, 2020**

Wings-a Grief Education Ministry, P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54402-1051

Phone: 715-845-4159 email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com) website: [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual

# Understanding Grief Spring Seminar 2020

## Janet McCord, PhD, FT

Janet McCord is Professor of Thanatology and Chair of the Edwin S. Shneidman Department of Thanatology at Marian University where she designed and now implements a fully online Master of Science in Thanatology. She is an author and a Certified Psychological Autopsy Investigator and involved in suicide prevention initiatives on the state and local level.



### SEMINAR ONE

## Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda: Confronting Guilt and Shame – and Regret – in Bereavement

*A community seminar for the bereaved and caregivers.*

**Thursday, April 16, 2020** | 7:00 – 9:00 pm  
Open to the Public - Free admission  
Registration not required. Offers 2 CEUs - DSPS.

Following some anticipated deaths, especially cancer, or traumatic deaths such as heart attack, an aneurysm, suicide or drug overdose, the bereaved frequently experience profound guilt and shame. Intrusive questions sometimes experienced by grievers include “would she still be alive if I had only. . .?” Grievers sometimes fall into a “grief trap” of blaming themselves for the death of another, even when there is no causal connection. This presentation will examine concepts of feelings of guilt, shame and regret during bereavement, as well as strategies for helping others and ourselves heal, cope and persevere with empathy and connection.

### Both seminars will be held at:

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

### For more information or a program brochure contact:

Wings™ - A Grief Education Ministry  
Nan or Gary Zastrow 715.845.4159 or wings1@charter.net

Or Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services  
Amy Kitsemel 715.847.2703

**Professional CEU's approved by WI DSPS for both programs.**

### SEMINAR TWO

## Devastating Losses: Understanding the Family Response to Suicide and Addiction

*A seminar that explores grief and compassionate bereavement support.*

**Friday, April 17, 2020** | 9:00 am – Noon | Fee: \$50  
Open to the Public. Pre-registration is recommended.  
Offers 3 CEUs - DSPS.

After a suicide or death due to addiction or overdose, family and friends are often shocked, confused and overwhelmed by a wide variety of emotional reactions. Survivors of these kinds of sudden and tragic deaths are frequently focused on discerning the answer to a single question: Why? Both deaths are stigmatized, and grievers are impacted by stigma as well. The bereaved in both cases are reluctant to speak openly about these deaths.

A review of research literature on grief after suicide or drug overdose death will be provided along with information about help-seeking behaviors and resources survivors use immediately after the death, in the first years and the later years after a loss. Best practices and strategies for supporting families after drug overdose or suicide deaths will also be discussed.

Presented by:



Partner sponsor:



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