

Wings

A Grief Education Ministry

Summer 2019

Honoring the Past and
Rebuilding the Future

www.wingsgrief.org

Published by Nan Zastrow

Contents of this ELetter

- Editor's Journal:
A New Song
- Resiliency and Healing
After the Murder of Son
- Power of Music
- Should I or Shouldn't I
Join a Support Group?
- Grief Tip - Accepting
What You Can't Control
- Poem & Jokes
- Fall Support Group
Announcement
- Reader Feedback:
When Grief Hurts...
How to Survive
- New Book: Ask Me

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,
Wings - A Grief Education Ministry

A NEW SONG

Sometimes life gets challenging, not necessarily related to death. But, like the death of a loved one, it forces us to think about things differently and often changes how we live day-by-day. In the past couple years, our lives have reacted and rebounded from many things including the death of friends, family relationship changes, health issues, and fleeting thoughts of has our purpose in life changed?

Even though one recovers from a traumatic life event, that doesn't mean life gets easier. It doesn't mean you are immune from another event that changes your thoughts, priorities, direction, or future. It just means you've gained experience at adjusting/adapting to something unexpected. You still need to go through (not around) whatever the new situation is. You still need to accept the change. And you once again need to figure out "what now"?

A lightbulb moment recently occurred, when I realized that I was trying to "control" too many things that were totally

out of my "job description" or ability to change. My anxiety was only hurting me; but, not solving the situation. I started browsing through some past issues of the Wings magazines and found a journal article I wrote in 2003. (Ten years after Chad's death) I thought how appropriate and what a reminder once again. I decided to print these thoughts in this issue.

In my article, I recited this story:

A young, new preacher was walking in the garden with a more seasoned preacher. He was feeling a bit insecure about what God's plan was for him. He asked the older preacher what he thought. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and carefully plucked a rose and handed it to the young preacher. He asked him to open it without tearing any of the petals.

The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and for his

Continued on page 2

A NEW SONG

Continued from page 1

ministry. But due to his high respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact. It wasn't long before he realized how impossible a task this was.

Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud while keeping it intact, the older preacher began to recite the following poem.

*It's only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of God's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.*

*The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
God opens this flower so sweetly
When in my hands they die.*

*If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of God's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?*

*So I'll trust in Him for leading
Each moment of my day.
I will look for Him for His guidance
Each step of the pilgrim way.*

*The pathway that lies before me,
Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments
Just as He unfolds the rose.*



No matter what yesterday was like, birds always start the new day with a song.

Become a WINGS™ friend on Facebook for inspirational messages like this one. <https://www.facebook.com/zastrownan>

Life is just that...a journey. There are no roadmaps for your destination. There are no guarantees that you will be immune from other difficult or challenging experiences. You walk the path and trust that God leads the way. You trust that you are exactly where God wants you to be.

I looked back at this past year (2018), and realized I wasn't allowing the rose to unfold. I was pushing my luck that I could control so many things that were truly out of my control.

Continued on page 3

How to Connect with Wings:

- Email: 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
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at www.centeringcorp.com
- Visit Wings on Facebook



A NEW SONG

Continued from page 2

I was worrying about things that may or may not happen. Therefore, I recently decided to “let go” and let life unfold without trying to direct the flow. I only have control over my own feelings and actions. I can control who I want to be

and what I can give to others by what I have learned on my grief journey.

We have been blessed with a ministry born out of tragedy and loss. It has been and continues to be the force in Gary’s and my life that gives purpose

and meaning. I don’t control that. God does. And that is where my energy and focus comes from. I remind myself that: Everything in life changes...even the good things! Every day brings a new opportunity and a new song.

On the Lighter Side

Posted on FB by Vicki Yohe

As a singer I sing at many funerals & I was recently asked by a funeral director to play & sing at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper’s cemetery out in the country. As I was not familiar with the area, I got lost. I finally arrived an hour late and saw that the funeral guy had evidently left and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late.

I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn’t know what else to do, so I started to play. The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. I sang like I’ve never played before for this homeless man. As I sang & played “Amazing Grace”, the workers began to weep. They wept. I wept. We all wept together. When I finished, I packed up my keyboard and started for my car. Though my head hung low, my heart was full.

As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, “I’ve never seen nothin’ like that before; and I’ve been putting in septic tanks for twenty years.”

Apparently, I’m still lost....



Prayer of Faith

We trust that beyond absence
there is presence.

That beyond pain
there can be healing.

That beyond the brokenness
there can be wholeness.

That beyond the anger
There may be peace.

That beyond the hurting
there may be forgiveness.

That beyond the silence
there may be The Word.

That beyond The Word
there may be understanding.

That through
understanding
There is love.

(author unknown)

RESILIENCY AND HEALING AFTER A SON'S MURDER

Editor's Note: The following article is a combination of several articles written about Judi Baglier and her grief and recovery after the murder of her son, John on November 9, 1996. Judi resides in Pennsylvania. Gary and I met Judi in 1997, and have occasionally kept in touch. With her permission, we are sharing her amazing story of perseverance and resiliency.



In the weeks after her son, John, disappeared, Judi Baglier sat in a therapist's office trying to come to terms with her sorrow and the knowledge that he was presumed dead. The therapist had an idea: Take down John's pictures. Pack away his medals and trophies. Get rid of his belongings.

"If I could get my hands around her neck today," Baglier said, her voice trailing off. "She didn't understand. I didn't have a grave to go to at first. My son was missing. Thank God I didn't listen to her."

It's been decades since Judi Baglier flipped on the television and saw her only son being carried from a culvert in a body bag. Her world didn't just stop. It came to a screeching, traumatic halt.

Judi is quick to tell you, she's a survivor not a victim. Baglier regained her strength through counseling, the passage of time and a dedication to help others. She also began her mission to make sure that parents who lose a child to violence or sudden death are not left alone.

Johnny Baglier, was an 18-year-old All-American kid with an easy smile, a college-bound future and loads of friends as captain of Shady Side Academy's cross country team.

He was on a mission to buy his girlfriend a birthday gift at the mall on Nov. 9, 1996, when he disappeared.

In the days to come, the community pitched in to the effort to find Johnny and pray for his safe return. But investigators believe that even before his parents started searching local roads for his vehicle, Johnny was most likely already dead. His credit cards, vehicle, and killer were found in that order, all weeks before his body was found Dec. 30.

Investigators later determined that Richard Gamble, 23, stole John's clothes, his jeep and, for a short time, his identity. When hunted down by authorities three days later at an Arizona motel, Gamble committed suicide without revealing what had happened. On Dec. 30 -- seven weeks and two days after he had disappeared -- John Baglier's body was found in a culvert in Armstrong County, near where Gamble had lived.

Judi admitted that her son's death caused her life to spiral downward. She lost control and found solace in a bottle of Vodka. Antidepressants kept her going, but nothing made her happy. She was consumed by her hatred and anger, unable to help herself, let alone her husband of 25 years. Their marriage ended in divorce.

What she recalls vividly are the mornings that she got up, got dressed, put on her makeup, and then, crawled back in bed unable to face the world.

"I finally realized, 'I can't do this for the rest of my life.' I had to let go of some of the pain. I needed to find out how to be a productive person.

Continued on page 5

“I just thought, ‘There has to be more to life than this.’ I knew nobody was going to do it for me. I knew I had to do it myself, put the pieces back together.”

As a volunteer, she’s counseled a variety of people ranging from other families who lost a child to inmates who committed violent crimes. She trained her pet Pomeranian, Bandit, to sooth traumatized children, and she’s served green beans and mashed potatoes to the homeless.



“I did not understand that grieving is a journey. You have to go through it. You can’t avoid it. But it is survivable.”

Baglier’s charity efforts didn’t begin with the death of her son Johnny. But, certainly everything she did after that tragic experience was impacted by it.

Baglier’s efforts to heal the world that once hurt her so badly are so voluminous that she’s was recognized as one of six “Steel Magnolia” award winners in 2016. The awards honor women who have overcome obstacles to positively impact the community. It is administered by the Middletown Community Foundation and funded by the AK Steel Foundation.

A friend of Judi described her work in this way: “Judi’s genuineness, authenticity, and compassionate nature gave her the inner strength to transcend the depths of her grief. She embarked on an amazingly beautiful and heart-wrenching journey in her quest to comfort others during the darkest hours of their lives.”

Additionally, here are a few other ways Judi has made an impact to help others who grieve.

- Judi met with crime victims in the courtroom and she met with inmates in the prison through the state penitentiary in Mercer.
- Judi traveled to Columbine High School and spoke to a large group of students about the catastrophic shooting there.
- Baglier provided support and guidance to the residents of Somerset County following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.
- She’s volunteered her services as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Allegheny County, which requires extensive training and dedication.
- She also is an active participant in the Community Re-Entry Program at the Butler County Prison, which provides vital resources for inmates who are transitioning into the community.

Do you have a Story to tell about your loss? We’d love to share your journey from sadness to hope and beyond. Send your short story to nanwings1@gmail.com

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Many years ago, as I was about to embark on a long car ride, I asked my passenger what kind of music she'd like to listen to. She told me, "I don't really like music." I'd never heard anyone say that before and didn't know how to respond. All I knew was this was going to be one dandy car ride. The power of music is undeniable. It affects all of us in powerful ways and is an instantaneous link to memories.

The phrase "soundtrack of our life" is cliché, but it does de-

Good music doesn't have an expiration date. It's been said that music is what our feelings sound like." In further describing the power of song, Soffe said music functions as the channel between the head and the heart, allowing people to connect with their true feelings. "Each memory we have has a sound track," he said.

"The music of funeral service is often tied to a specific memory – the loved one," Soffe continued. "In a time of grieving, music allows us to reflect on the details of a loved one's life, bridging the gap between the past and the present."



scribe the bond we have to music. A certain song can put an extra spring in our step or bring a tear to our eye because of the memories and emotions it evokes.

Kurt Soffe of Jenkins-Soffe Funeral Chapels & Cremation Center in Salt Lake City, one of two speakers at the service, tried to put the power of music into words: "Many times, I cannot explain how I feel, but I can find a song that can.

Music also serves to connect people and strengthen others who are grieving a mutual loss. "Sometimes it's not the song that makes you emotional," Soffe said, "it's the people and places that come to mind as you hear the song. Sometimes it feels as if the lyrics of a song you're listening to were written just for you." Soffe said his hope was that every funeral and celebration of life, every memorial service and every healing moment people experience be conducted under the influence of music. Looking back, aside from my passenger's comment, I remember nothing of that journey, where I was going or why. When I retell the story to friends, they ask whether my passenger and I chatted along the way. I tell them no – I already knew more about that person than I cared to.

(Memorial Business Journal, NFDA, November 8, 2018.)

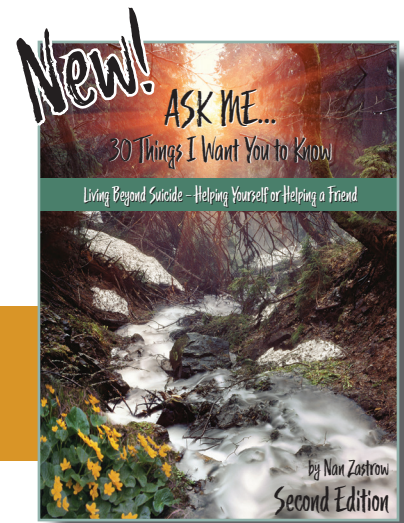
MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Wings-a Grief Education Ministry will be hosting a Living River Quartet Concert on Saturday, December 7, 2019 at the Plaza Hotel & Suites, 201 N. 17th Avenue, Wausau. The theme is "You've Got a Friend." The concert will feature a mixture of Christmas, spiritual, and feel good music. No charge. Everyone is welcome. Like this article states: The purpose of the concert is to connect people and strengthen those who are grieving or hurting. Music often explains the feelings we can't say."

ASK ME...

30 Things I Want You to Know

Living Beyond Suicide - Helping Yourself or Helping a Friend
By: Nan Zastrow



Suicide is often silent. It stalks its victim until it seems the only solution is to give in. Suicide involves two prominent factors, fear and the absence of hope. Nothing seems possible to change the course of the victim's path or future. Survivors are left wondering what went wrong and often the reason for the death is a mystery. Learning to live in our society as a survivor requires breaking the silence to live beyond its taboo. Every victim has a unique story that should be honored.

In 1993, Nan and Gary's son, Chad, suicided and ten weeks later his fiancé took her life, too. Nan admits she spent years hiding from their grief, absorbing every bit of damaging pain, swallowing hard-earned pride, admitting feelings of defeat, and finding excuses for what seemed "hard-to-believe." In time, Nan and Gary learned the silence had to stop, and they had the power to "teach" society how to respond to disabling loss.

All grievors want to be heard. The information in this book speaks not only to survivors of suicide, but to anyone who grieves, about the elements of grief and the depth of sadness. If you allow a griever to teach you about the uniqueness of his or her grief, you may learn so much more about the sanctity of life.

In this captivating book, Nan clearly describes the progression of survival and tells you 30 Things that every griever is likely to feel. With these revealing thoughts, you will be able to plan your response in positive ways to support them. As a griever, you will find comfort in knowing what to expect and be assured that peace and hope are the ultimate gifts of triumphing over burdensome grief.

\$6.95



Available at:

Wings
A Grief Education Ministry

P.O. Box 1051
Wausau, WI 54402-1051

Web: Wingsgrief.org
Email: nanwings1@gmail.com
www.centering.org

ANNOUNCING 2019 FALL EDUCATION/SUPPORT GROUP

Give Sorrow Words—Finding Hope For Your Journey

(Education/Support Group)

This group is NEW. Grief is something we consider private and personal, as though only we can own it. However, understanding grief and the impact it has on your life allows you to process your grief, accept the loss, express your feelings, and integrate this experience into your changed life. Understand the five ways we grieve and the shoulda, woulda, and coulda responses. This is a journey you need not walk alone.

Tuesdays (six sessions) 6:00—7:30 p.m.

Dates: Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Meets at: Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Conference room A-1, Lower Level

Pre-registration recommended:

Call Nan at 715-845-4159 or email nanwings1@gmail.com



Accepting What You Can't Control After Loss.

When the loss of a loved one occurs, your life may be altered because your world has changed. Feeling helpless comes with grief. It's normal to feel as though you could have done something to prevent this from happening at this time. Life is not fair!

It's important to honor your emotions but they can become a barrier to accepting things you cannot change. Allow your emotions of crying, anger, frustration and fear to surface. They are real and need expression. You aren't a horrible person. It hurts. You can only gain control once you've let your feelings out.

Be okay at not controlling your "life" for awhile following your loss. Allow your family and friends (support system) to come to your aid. Allow them to take over your life, even for a short time: cook a meal, do the wash, shop for groceries, take you to an appointment. Be mindful that they are there because they want to be. They aren't waiting for you to call them, just because at the funeral, they said, "Call me if I can do anything."

"What you resist, persists." Trust that you will be "in control again". Difficult situations create a path for hard work and powerful lessons in perseverance. Focus on gratitude, looking for new possibilities, and rebuilding your life. This puts you in control and heals your grief.



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



I Heard an Angel Say

By Bobbie Davis

I thought I saw your face today
In the sparkle of the morning sun,
And then I heard an angel say,
“Their work on earth is done.”

I thought I heard your voice today,
Then laugh your hearty laugh,
And then I heard the angel say,
“There’s peace, dear one, at last.”

I thought I felt your touch today,
In the breeze that rustled by,
And then I heard the angel say,
“The Spirit never dies.”

I thought I saw my broken heart
In the crescent of the moon.
And then I heard the angel say,
“The Lord is coming soon.”

I thought that you had left me
For the stars so far above.
And then I heard the angel say,
“They left you with their love.”

I thought that I would miss you so,
And never find my way.
And then I heard the angel say,
“They are with you everyday.”

The sun, the wind,
The moon, the stars,
Will forever be around,
Reminding you of the love you shared,
And the peace they finally found.”

Reader Feedback



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GRIEF HURTS! IT'S A COMPLEX EMOTIONAL REACTION TO A LIFE-CHANGING EVENT. IT CHANGES WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE ARE MEANT TO BE. FOR THOSE OF YOU NEW TO GRIEF, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SURVIVE DAY-BY-DAY? FOR THOSE WHOSE GRIEF IS STILL EVOLVING, WHAT DID YOU DO TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE CHALLENGING TIMES AS YOU HEAL?

I have found the reality of grief in losing old friends. But the beauty of this is to sit and look at the awesomeness of God in giving new friends. I met Karen and Tom in the kitchen at the church washing communion trays. They were not close friends they were just someone that was very nice to me. Then Joe died. There was no reason for them to reach out to me because I wasn't that nice to them. There was no reason for a married couple to be interested so much in now a single woman. But Karen and Tom became number one on my list of people that I love, people that I count on, people that bring joy to me. They truly are God's hands in my life. I can't even describe the happiness I feel when I look at them. They bring me hope for my future, they bring me comfort in knowing they are right here for me even when they're not in town, they bring God's arms around me. I cry when I talk about them. So what have I learned through this? You just wait and watch how God brings new friends that are closer... warmer ...richer ...loving so much more than you have ever had in your entire life. Walking through grief is like a black world where you hardly see anything around you. But the touch of special friends will cause the blackness to turn to Gray and eventually the Sun comes out and you see the faces of these dear friends who have not only been there but have spent hours reaching for me. This kind of friend only comes from God above. I can't live without Karen and Tom. They are my heart and soul....

They didn't call to see if it was OK, they just came with a boat load of food. They didn't call the 2nd time either when they brought more breakfast treats. They didn't ask if they could send flowers, but they sent a planter to the ceremony which I still have and I dearly cherish. They didn't call except one time to invite me to dinner during a very busy time in them preparing to go North. But they wanted me for dinner, and not just a dinner, but one of the nicest places in town that happens to be my favorite which they didn't know. There's just something about these 2 that have been a huge part of this grief journey. I didn't know it at the time but in looking back it was God's plan to give this precious relationship to me.

Kathleen, Venice, FL

I began each morning finding something to be grateful for although it hurt me to breath. (It fueled my hope that I would live & gave me something to live for.)

Charisma, Chicago IL

It will be three years on August 2nd that we lost our mother, friend, grandmother and wife. Our family has been forever changed. My dad resides in our family home where she raised her children. Both of us put fresh flowers out in her memory--she loved flowers and birds.

I continue to reach out to friends for support on those dark ugly times when I can't seem to pull myself together. Other times I try to remind myself that God granted her 68 years on this earth. Although this is far too young, I also remind myself that many others were had less time than she did. I also hold closely the thought and belief that I will one day be reunited with my mom; and it's ok to be sad, to fall apart, to just feel the pain and sorrow.

Just this 4th of July I ran into a lady at a celebration. We couldn't remember how we knew one another. After she explained that she lost her husband in a motorcycle accident 6 years ago, I recalled that I met her in one of the Wings grief groups. We talked about what a wonderful blessing both Nan and Gary have been for so many people in our community.

Paula, Wausau, WI

The way I deal with grief is looking at pictures at family gatherings. Going to the grave sites on their birthdays. I am also working on family history and remembering stories that have been passed down and me telling my children about these stories!!

Peggy, Wausau, WI

Continued on page 11

WHAT DO YOU THINK...

Continued from page 10

Crying.

R J, Wausau WI

I am starting my 9th year without my son Jon. Honestly, for me it didn't start until 2012 when I first attended the Wings grief workshops. I did both sessions. Your program helped me work through the grief and start to live.

In 2013, I made plans and faced fears. And then when I received an envelope addressed in my own hand; confused at first and then surprised upon opening that I had achieved goals that I had set out to do.

I will be forever grateful to Nan & Gary, Wings and will always recommend your organization. Thank you for the work you all do.

Tara, Antigo, WI

After several years, I still have days now and then that are more difficult than others. My strategy is to acknowledge my feelings and take care of myself. Basically, I treat myself with compassion and allow myself to be human. Also, I remind myself that who I am is bigger than the story I can tell myself about my heartbreak. My life isn't just the sad stuff. There is much to be grateful for, too. Those things don't "make up" for losing my son and his father, but they are nonetheless real and valid.

Stephanie, Seattle WA

I have discovered that having a plan for those challenging days is what helps me get through them. I make sure I have a plan for the birthdays and anniversary dates of the loved ones I am missing. I think about special things I want to do to remember them and put it on my calendar to do that day. I find I don't get as anxious about the day if I know in advance what I am going to do when it arrives.

Sherri, Wausau, WI

How to Survive Grief (suggestions from Nan)

- 1. EXPECT GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS.** The nature of grief creates a roller coaster of emotions that sometimes seems as though it will never end. Trust that they will. Eventually, the balance of good days will far outweigh the sadness.
- 2. DON'T ALLOW THIS GRIEF TO DEFINE WHO YOU ARE:** Defining who you are means allowing grief to control your thoughts, your actions and your future disrupting any personal growth you may learn from this loss. Recognize, instead, that you will be defined (to others) by your response to this loss and many other experiences in life. Victim or Survivor? Many of us find our strength and power as a result of our darkest moment.
- 3. HONOR THE LEGACY OF YOUR LOVED ONE.** Remember who he/she was, their special personality and their characteristics. Be what you loved most about him/her in the new "you". Your love for him/her will never die.
- 4. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THOSE WHO CARE.** Stay close to those who are truly there to support you. They do not judge. They do not push you through your grief. They are protective, encouraging, and always ready to provide a listening ear.
- 5. KEEP LEARNING.** Grief is a complex subject with much to learn. Be open to the experience of discovery as a healing resource.
- 6. FORGIVE AND LET GO.** The past belongs in the past. Don't allow anger and guilt to destroy your inner spirit. Peace is found in letting go.
- 7. LAUGH LOUDLY.** You were meant to experience joy in life and laughter is the fuel for finding happiness again. Give yourself permission to laugh.
- 8. KEEP LOVE GOING.** Tell those in your life who are important to you that they are special and loved.
- 9. BUILD NEW DREAMS.** Everyday can find a new beginning. Everyday can be a new song. Don't give up on life because of hurt. Instead challenge it to bring you peace and purpose.
- 10. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** Everyone in life is fighting some kind of a battle either right now or in the future. Seek out those who are willing to help you through yours and then pass it on.

Should I or Shouldn't I Join a Grief Support Group?

By Nan Zastrow



15 Things You Need to Know

Donna stood outside in the parking lot, in the dark, trying to talk herself into entering the building. Once in the door, the next step would be to take the stairway to the conference room. The thought of it caused her palms to sweat and her heart pound. Then what? She would need to enter the room to meet a roomfull of strangers who were likely grieving just like her. “What did I get myself into?” she questioned.

“Will I have to speak? What will people think about me? What if I cry?” Her fears were beginning to overcome her reasons for joining a grief group. This raised her anxiety level even more. She tried to visualize someone else contemplating the same decision and wondered, “Is it possible someone else might bound out of their car and enter the room eager for the same experience? Why am I afraid?”

The truth is, over the twenty plus years that we’ve been facilitating education/support groups, participants have expressed these feelings both ways. The idea of attending a support group to some people is intimidating. Let me suggest that sharing the experience with someone else going through the loss of a loved one far outweighs the burden of thinking

grief is something I should be able to handle on my own.

Here are some basic points to consider as you weigh the choice of attending a group. Knowing what to expect might be the comfort you need to join.

1. Grief groups aren’t just for wailing women. Our earlier culture depicted women as the wailers and grievers in the family, while men were meant to be stoic and hold the family together. Today’s groups are a mixture of men and women, young and old, relationships of every kind, and death situations that vary from sudden to anticipated to traumatic. Grief has no boundaries.

2. Grief groups dynamics may differ. We are all individuals with unique expectations. Like most encounters in life, something needs to “click” for you to feel comfortable with someone you are meeting and sharing personal information with. How many times have you changed doctors, teachers at school, neighbors, or friendships just because they didn’t click? Give your group a try, and if it doesn’t work, look for another option.

3. Not all grief groups are alike. Be aware of the kind of group you join. Some are educational, some are faith-based, some are sharing groups. There are also drop-in groups where you go when you feel like it. Or there are open-end groups that typically meet about once a month and participants change frequently. Closed groups typically run for a set number of weeks and participants attend consecutive weeks.
4. Grief groups are not formal therapy or professional counseling sessions. They are an assembly of individuals facing a similar experience. It's a place to find comfort when another person's experience feels similar to yours. Groups are a place to share and support, but not to get professional advice on how to deal with the specifics of your loss or other problems that result from loss.
5. You may not be "ready" to attend a grief support group. If it's too early in your grief, the thought of sharing feelings might be overwhelming. You may also be looking for instant validation that grief gets easier, and the truth is it takes time. There are no quick fixes. You know yourself best. Some people are ready in weeks, for others it may take months or years before they are ready to accept the loss and moving forward.
6. Grief groups are not just a place to vent about your sadness, your uncertainty, your fears, and your shoulda, woulda, and coulda thoughts. It's a place to learn how to replace these insecurities with action plans to help you move past your hardest moments.
7. Grief groups allow you to voice your regrets and acknowledge outbursts of anger and guilt. After all, these are the real. You are protesting how loss has changed your life. These often-hidden emotions of grief can be uncovered and neutralized with positive grief work.
8. Grief groups will not take away all of your pain or grief. They are meant to help you through the difficult days and give you coping skills to manage your loss until you learn to live with it. You can live with it when you understand it; and it doesn't consume every waking moment.
9. Grief groups are a place for stories and memories. After all, it's the positive memories that remain long after the pain of grief. They are the keepsakes that honor the lives of our loved ones. Though some memories may fade, others will continue to bring you peace and joy!
10. Grief groups can help you discover choices that may enrich your life in the future. Healing your grief sometimes involves difficult choices, forward planning, and perseverance. No one can "grieve" for you or determine your future path. You will be challenged by changing values and priorities. A grief group can help you recognize your options.
11. Grief groups avoid judgment. As the cliché goes "You can't understand someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes." Grief groups provide a safe place and avoid comparison. No one can determine that his or her loss is more significant than another's.
12. Grief groups help you understand that familial and social relationships are often misunderstood following a death. You may even find fighting within the family and your support system may seem to crumble. Understand the combination of factors that might be the trigger. While the group can't resolve your problems, it may help you get a new perspective on how to rebuild the peace.
13. Grief groups respect the role of all religions and spirituality in grief. Some groups build their support around Biblical verse, teachings, and consolation. Others recognize that sometimes grief challenges one's faith for a period of time. Groups may offer practical everyday ways to heal one's wounded faith. Any group should welcome participants to share their beliefs as part of their healing process.
14. Grief groups offer Hope. Grief groups help rebuild self-esteem, establish resiliency, and create stability. After significant loss, you are forever changed. Discovering your new normal and the "new you" reveals so many possibilities for future growth and empathy.
15. Ultimately, grief groups serve a purpose other than admitting that loss hurts. It's a place to recognize that you are not alone. It's a place to surrender your hurt and allow others to absorb your pain along with their own. It's a place to heal.

Don't pass up this opportunity on your grief journey. We make a lot of choices in life and when loss has complicated our day-to-day existence, choose to allow others to understand you, nurture you, and offer you their friendship. Grief groups don't need to be scary. They can be the best choice you make in living after loss.