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Fifteen Things Not to Say to a Bereaved Man

By Bob Baugher, Ph.D.

This is one of those articles that you may want to copy and give to someone you know. When your loved one died, the people around you probably tried in a number of ways to help you. Words can help or they can hurt. We assume that most people want to help us when we're down; but don't you sometimes find that they say the strangest things? Let's look at not-so-helpful statements that well-meaning friends and relatives have been known to say to a man (and often, to a woman) in grief. Are you ready for the famous list of statements that has made the blood of many bereaved men boil? May we have the envelope please? And the "winners" are:

1. "I know just how you feel, my cat/third cousin/neighbor/friend's uncle/parakeet died."

This is at the top of most people's "worst statement" list. Think about it: even if the father of identical twin brothers died, one twin could not assume he knew "just" how his brother felt. We each have our own personalities and our unique relationship with the person who died. As tempting as it may be to try to identify with a man in grief, stop yourself from uttering these words.

2. "How is your wife/mother/other children/sister coping with the death?" There's nothing wrong with the statement, except the questioner never gets around to "How are you coping?" It is

based on the assumption that the man is holding it together. Or it may be the case that the person asking the question is fearful of finding out how the man really feels. So it is easier to ask about other (more often female) family members. It's a good question if it is asked in the spirit of concern about all who have been affected by the death—including the man.

3. "You must be strong/be a man/hang in there/keep your chin up."

Men get this all the time in subtle and sometimes very overt ways. It often means, "Don't show me how much you're hurting because I couldn't take watching you in pain." Such statements make it difficult for a man to show how he really feels.

4. "It's time to move on."

Here comes the judgment. When a death occurs, it's been my experience that the public can put up with the pain of grief for only so long—typically a few months for a chronic

illness and several months for a sudden death. However, once the one-year point has passed, the majority of people (except for those who've been through a similar death) begin to tire observing a bereaved person "dwell" in their grief. Men may be especially pressured to put their grief behind them.

5. "That's the way life goes/it was his

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time/it's better this way.”

What a way to minimize someone's pain. Better for whom? Sure, your loved one may have been in a great deal of pain and you and your family may be relieved that it's over. But, it is up to you if it's “better” this way—not anyone else.

6. “You've got to accept/snap out of/resolve it.”

Similar to #4, but the difference is in the focus on the death as a problem that must be fixed, solved, reconciled. Men are sometimes sucked into the belief that everything can be fixed and even try to hang on to this belief for a time after a death occurs. The word “accept” was first made popular in the bereavement genre 30 years ago by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her book that explained people's final reaction to their terminal illness as “acceptance”—something even she took back years later. However, the term has stuck in the mind of the public. To see a man is a great deal of pain over the death of a loved one tempts those around him to encourage him to reach that final stage, get over it, and accept.

7. “At least”

When interacting with a person who's experienced a loss, never begin a sentence with these words. As soon as you do, you have positioned yourself as someone who is trying to find or make something positive out of a tragedy. As difficult as it may be for you to watch a man you know experience excruciating, unremitting pain, you need to bite your lip and not fall into the

trap called “Despite all this tragedy in your life, aren't you at least happy that...?” It never helps. On the other hand if the man comes up with his own “at least,” then it's a different story. Make sense?

8. “Now she's at peace/out of pain/in God's hands/in a better place/better off/an angel in heaven.”

The clergy have gotten in a lot of trouble over this one. As in #7, let the bereaved man decide on his own that his loved one is now better off. It's not your call.

9. “You can have more children/marry again.”

Yes, well-meaning, intelligent people who look just like you and me have said this. Resign from this club.

10. “If there's anything I can do....” (and then they do nothing)
The best way to offer help is to be specific: “Would you like me to fix you dinner tonight, drive you (or your family member) anywhere this month, mow your lawn, watch the kids, visit your mother's grave with you, go to the movies with you this Friday, call you on Saturday mornings, pick up fresh vegetables for you this week, walk your dog on Thursdays?”

11. “Isn't it about time you packed up the clothes?”
This is another timetable judg-

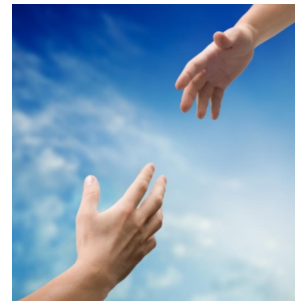
ment problem. There exists no rule, law, protocol, or dictum for a proper length of time to keep belongings of a deceased loved one. You can keep your loved one's belongings as long as you wish. You can. You really can.

12. “Don't cry/it'll be OK.”

For many people it is tough to watch the man in their life cry. To observe a big guy with tears streaming down his face, to hear his sobs, to watch his face contort in pain is a difficult experience for many people. The job of people around you, however, is to let you “cry 'til you're dry.”

13. “You mean you haven't cried about it?”

This is the opposite of #12. It implies that there is something wrong with a man not crying. Do not measure a person's depth of grief by the number of tears he sheds. Research is clear that men tend to cry less frequently than women and that there are more men than women who have not cried in years.



14. “There's a lesson in all this....”
Maybe there is—maybe there isn't. But, as before, leave it up to him to arrive, if ever, at this conclusion.

15. “You mustn't feel that way.”
To tell anyone how to feel is a mis-

“Do not measure a person's depth of grief by the number of tears he sheds.”

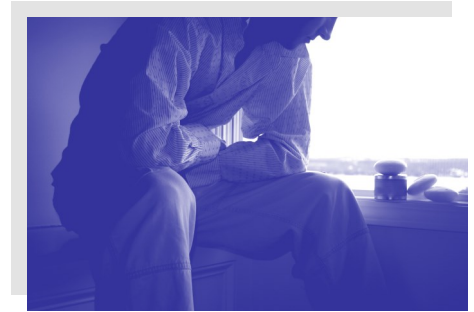
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take. Even if he says he doesn't feel anything, let him be OK with that. If he reports that he feels guilty, let him. If he says he's angry, support him. If he's fearful, empathize with him. If he feels depressed, sit with him. But above all else, let him feel or not feel. That is the best support of all.



Fifteen Things Not to Say to a Bereaved Man originally published in Grief Magazine, Jan-Feb 2001, Vol 2, Issue 1, p. 20-22.



How can we help a grieving man? First, of course, by wiping the 15 statements from our vocabulary. Until next time, remember: "I know just how you feel," "keep your chin up," and "hang in there."

Be Good to Yourself-Grief 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 also 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.

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Editor's Journal

Do you Believe in Messages from Beyond?



Is it a myth or truth that we can receive messages from someone who has died? Are you crazy to believe that such an experience happened to you? In our education and support series, we are often asked if these experiences really happen to people. Some believe that it is just a fantasy the bereaved person has in a desperate attempt to keep a connection with their loved one who died. However, ask those who have had such a mysterious experience, and they will likely admit there is no doubt that a connection has been made.

It's also very true that there is some hesitation to share your experience because skeptical friends may wonder if you have indeed lost your good sense because of your grief. However, there are many who are not afraid to admit that they have had an experience which they believe was a message from their loved one. I am one of those who believe that it is possible to have such an experience.

In most circumstances, there is not verbal communication between the deceased and the living. It is also important to note that not everyone will have an experience or message from beyond. This does not mean that the bereaved person is a failure because he or she didn't receive such a message. There is no evidence that concludes why some people do and others do not have these special experiences. (Maybe that is why they are referred to as "extraordinary experiences".) Whether you believe or not, if your experience makes you feel better or gives you peace, there is no harm in accepting it as a message from your loved one.

I happen to be one of those persons who was fortunate enough to have many experiences which I believe were truly "gifts". I want to share two experiences: one was a vision and in another I believe I was being drawn to remember something very special, just this fall, in honor of the 20 years since Chad's death. It's easy to forget those treasured moments...so keeping a journal is a good idea.

***"It was a
"good" feeling,
welcoming and
pleasant, as
though to say,
"I'll always be
near."***

On the day Chad died, there was a freak blizzard and freezing ice storm in Wisconsin. This was April! The next morning, my husband said the front door was open....did I open it by mistake? (We seldom used that door and hadn't in many days.) I said, "no." Subject dropped. We went by his parents later and his mother said when she awoke the front door was open. (They had just built a new home and there weren't any front steps yet, so no one could use the door and it was locked.) Gary and I both looked at each

other with a warm grin and felt confirmation that Chad had left us a message that he was there.

I recorded this story in my journal. It happened on our daughter's birthday after Chad's death. We were having a birthday celebration dinner for our family and were seated around the dining room table. I saw a "vision" of someone walk behind my daughter wearing a red, white and blue shirt (Chad was very patriotic); and I was momentarily caught up in the vision I saw. Though I couldn't clearly see if it was Chad, I knew instinctively that it was. Someone in the room asked me if I was okay. (They must have thought I saw a ghost!) Puzzled as I was by the apparition, I tried to cover up my con-

fusion and said: "I thought the dog got in the house and was in the dining room." It happened so quickly; but to me, it was real. For a long period of time after that event, I sensed this same apparition moving from the dining room to the living room on multiple occasions. Each time I caught it in my peripheral vision. I could follow it until I tried to focus on it. Once I tried to focus on it, it was gone. It was a "good" feeling, welcoming and pleasant, as though to say, "I'll always be near."

This fall, I was reminded of an event I forgot that, to me, confirmed that our love for our deceased loved one never dies. For some reason I was drawn to clean out a drawer (that didn't need cleaning) and found another journal of thoughts/memories I kept after Chad's death. The writing in it was from 1993, and the stories in it were about "real" dreams I had about Chad after his death. Some of the dreams weren't the normal dreams one has, but dreams that you knew were messages or signs from beyond. Several of the stories recorded were things I had forgotten...and twenty years later I was reliving the emotions and feeling the tears I must have cried then.

A very dear friend of mine contacted me about 6 months after Chad died and personally asked me if I would attend her son's wedding that was coming up shortly. For many, many years we worked together and shared the stories of our children growing up—and she really wanted me to be there even knowing how painful it would be. Gary and I did attend the wedding. In the ceremony, the bride and groom gave her (their mom) a red rose. She gifted that rose to me at the reception that evening in remembrance of Chad (She later told me that she knew I would never have the experience of seeing my son marry.) It was such a touching tribute. I dreamed

Do you Believe in Messages from Beyond?

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I carried that rose to the cemetery to put at Chad's grave and Chad came to me and took the rose from me. It was a

beautiful dream and an awesome message! There's a beauty in those kinds of glimpses from the past and from beyond. And the emotions I expressed in my writing were certainly reminiscent of strong feelings of love.

Over the years, in our groups and through our Wings magazine, we've heard countless stories from persons who believe that they have had mes-

sages from their loved ones. Some of them are so extraordinary, one can only wish for a similar experience. I am sharing some of them (with permission) so you can feel the love that continues after death.

To learn more about these experiences, I recommend that you mark your calendar for our SPRING SEMINAR 2014 on April 24-25th in the Wausau area. Our speaker is Louis LaGrand—author and educator who speaks with authority about extraordinary experiences. This is one seminar you do not want to miss. If you were or are skeptical, I believe he will give you reason to believe that such phenomenon do

occur.

For seminar information as it is distributed, subscribe to our ELetter and view updates at our website: www.wingsgrief.org. You can pre-register to attend. The Thursday evening seminar is a FREE community event with expenses covered by our sponsors. The Friday morning seminar continues LaGrand's subject but requires a \$40 Registration fee. Seating is limited, Continued educations CEUs are awarded for professionals. For more information, visit our website frequently as we post Seminar information or contact Wings at wingsl@charter.net or call 715-845-4159. Or follow Wings on Facebook!

MEN AND THEIR GRIEF ~ Then

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Men and Grief Introduction | 6. Crying |
| 2. Society's Response | 7. Sexuality |
| 3. Anger | 8. Crisis and Crazy's |
| 4. Avoidance vs. Dealing with Grief | 9. Similarities and Differences |
| 5. Denial and Triggers | 10. Credits |

MEN AND THEIR GRIEF ~ Now

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The men then and now | 12. Were you considered a death expert? |
| 2. Introductions | 13. Searching for your loved one |
| 3. What has helped you? | 14. Guilt-If only...I should've |
| 4. What have people done that was helpful? | 15. Getting better |
| 5. Men who think they are doing ok. | 16. What advice would you offer? |
| 6. What did people do that was not helpful? | 17. Who do you tell and not tell? |
| 7. Clichés that did not help | 18. Stories about your loved one |
| 8. What did not help? | 19. Final thoughts |
| 9. How could you have avoided this? | 20. One word |
| 10. What would you have done differently? | 21. Thanks to six remarkable men |
| 11. Other losses during the past 20 years | 22. Credits |



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MEN AND THEIR GRIEF THEN AND NOW ~ TWO DVD Set

~ Two DVD Set ~ MEN AND THEIR GRIEF:

Then



and Now



Welcome to this two-DVD set in which we combine the original *Men and Their Grief* DVD with the update of six of the eight men 20 years later. In DVD #1 follow Bruce, Stan, John, Don, Ralph, Dick, Vern, and Frank as they share their stories of coping with the deaths of wives, children, siblings, and parents. Then, move to DVD #2 and watch six of these men share their experiences in coping with grief during the past 20 years since the original taping. As Andrea Gambill, Editor of *Grief Digest Magazine* said after watching the videos: "Give yourself the gift of inspiration as you watch and follow these never-give-up examples of hope and healing."

— Bob Baugher, Ph.D.
Moderator, *Men and Their Grief*

The Labyrinth of Grief

By Mary Friedel-Hunt EMAIL: mfriedelhunt@charter.net

It is a labyrinth.

Those who grieve, walk its path

as it winds back and forth,
in and out, day after day,
winding back upon itself
and out around its edge
then back to where the
path began.

How long does it take to
get to the heart of it?

How many times do we turn
and feel as

if we are back where we began
or that we walked through these feelings once
before?

And what is it that is in the center?
Just where am I on this long circuitous path?
So difficult to know.

This labyrinth so often feels like a maze
with dead ends that entrap me,
seemingly leaving only one recourse
to go back, retrace my steps.



But there is no turning
back.

I must draw on my wis-
dom,
that inner voice remind-
ing me that
what seems familiar is
just an illusion.

I must honor the wis-
dom that says...

you can keep going, that is not a wall,
this is not a dead end.

How much pain can one soul handle?
What am I to learn from this teacher (grief)
that has invaded my life?

Where am I going? Who am I?
How broken I am! How lost. How empty. How
sad.

As I walk this labyrinth of grief.

Would you like to share your story or poem?

If you would like to submit a short story, poem, or article, we welcome it. The material does not need to be original, but if it isn't, please include the author or credits that can be printed along with the material.

We are looking for articles that inspire the bereaved, teach, and offer hope which is the focus of our ministry of Wings—a Grief Education Ministry. Poems or material may be submitted *In Memory* of your special loved one.



What Do You Think?

Our Readers Share Their Thoughts



Messages and Experiences after the Death of a Loved One- After death communications or extraordinary experiences refer to communications that are spontaneous from a loved one, family member or friend they have known in their life that died. These experiences are common world-wide and may occur through a variety of ways including: dreams, sounds, smells, touch, hearing a voice and often through media devices.

Not everyone will have such an experience and it in no way suggests that their bond with the loved one is less or that they are a failure because they have not received such a message. There is no evidence that concludes why some people do and others do not have these special experiences. (Maybe that is why they are referred to as “extraordinary experiences”) In most circumstances, there is not verbal communication between the deceased and the living. For those that have had these extraordinary experiences, they are truly a “gift” and a reminder that life and love are eternal. Whether you believe or not, if they make you feel better and give you peace, there is no harm in accepting them as a message from your loved one.

My only child, Chris, died at age 21 suddenly in his sleep of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy on September 6, 2009. When I returned home from the hospital I walked around my house in a foggy daze, as family gathered around me. I was walking from my dining room to my living room and something caught my eye, as I looked out my picture window on my front porch railing, there sat a red tail hawk, with its wings spread wide open. As I approached the window I just stared in awe, the hawk moved its head up then down in a nod as if to say, “I am here,” and then it flew away. I have lived in my house for over 20 years and have never seen hawks in our subdivision. The next day as my brother-in-law, who was very close to my son, sat on my front porch, the hawk returned and landed on the railing by him. Each time my brother-in-law tried to take a picture the bird would jump up so he couldn't. Finally when the bird took flight again, he was able to snap pictures of the bird.

When I am having a really hard time with my grief or missing Chris it seems that is when my hawk comes to visit. It no longer lands on the porch, it flies over and around my house. Last Christmas morning as I was driving to a friend's, I was sad and crying remembering Christmas's past. A hawk flew right in front of my car. I stopped in the middle of the road and just watched it circle my car several times and then take flight. Nature has been an area of how I have experienced extraordinary experiences with my son. I may not be able to reach out and touch him but I know he is still close by when I really need him.

Nancy V.
Cincinnati, Ohio

My son, Darren Russell, was murdered while teaching English in China on April 14, 2005. My son's Chinese name was

"White Rabbit." His favorite song was, "I Hope You Dance" by Lee Ann Womack. There have been so many signs from my son. The day before the funeral, there was a white and brown rabbit on my lawn. I had never seen that before. I said, "Wait, I am getting my camera to take your picture." The rabbit waited and didn't move. I took the photo and it was part of the collage of photos at the funeral. When I had to have my son's body exhumed for an autopsy, a dear friend accompanied me. He asked if we could stop afterwards for some coffee. I didn't want anything and waited at a table. He called me over to the register. The person ringing up his coffee had a T-shirt with a white rabbit. Then as my friend sat down the song "I Hope You Dance" started to play. I keep a journal of all the signs I believe my son Darren has sent to me.

Another time I went back to China to investigate my son's murder. I went with one of his students to Guillin, the city my son actually wanted to teach in, not Guangzhou. As we were departing there by plane, his student started to cry. I told him that he should think of all the fun times that he had with Darren in the classroom. All of a sudden the most beautiful rainbow appeared out of the window.

Maxine R.
North Hollywood, California

In October of 2012, I lost my wife and sweetheart of 53 years to cancer. One of her greatest passions was her love for her many grandkids, the youngest of whom had turned 3, just prior to her death. The two of them had an insatiable love for each other and an inseparable bond. He regularly talked about his “gama”, not understanding where she had gone and why I could not bring her back. About two months after her death, and while he was staying with me, we were sitting together on my recliner in our family room,

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and he was playing video games on our iPad. Nature called and it was time for a bathroom break, so we placed the iPad down on the arm of the recliner. When we returned and sat down on the recliner, I picked up the iPad and placed it on his lap. The iPad had gone into "sleep" mode, so the screen was totally black. When he touched the screen to reactivate, the entire screen remained black, with the exception of a wallet-sized picture of his grandpa appearing in the center of the screen. Both of us looked at each other in amazement and he said, "There's gama!" I had never seen that picture before and no such picture could subsequently be found within the iPad's memory. If he had not been there to experience that very special moment with me, I doubt that I would have shared it with anyone, even my kids. Earlier, people asked me if I had such an experience, but I quickly dismissed that notion as not being possible. I am now very much a believer and know that God is present in our times of struggle.

David P.

Wausau, WI

My dad was in ICU for 3 weeks. Three weeks filled with pain, both for him and filled with painful decisions for us. After one final day of sudden changes and his passing we headed home for a few days, before services. As we finally sat down to do something quiet we turned on the TV to watch our favorite show, the Gaither's. That show featured only the Isaac's, a group we had never seen before or since. Being too tired to even change channels, it played in the background of our thoughts. All of a sudden the female lead singer began a song so beautiful and haunting it got through to my numbed mind. It was "It is Well With My Soul! I truly felt it to be a message from my dad who always worried about his daughter's so he was letting us know he was happy and okay. It gave me great peace and became a featured song at his funeral. I have only heard it a few times since and always on a significant or especially sad day.

Nanci T.

Dixon, IL

In the six years since my young adult son's death, I've had many experiences where I would be talking about him or thinking specifically about him, and I'd look down and there would be a feather. I told myself that it was just coincidence. There are a lot of feathers outside on the ground. I always remained more than skeptical. But then, the night before the 5 year anniversary of his death, a feather appeared in a place and in a way that totally changed my mind about this phenomenon. Our family was in a mini-crisis that felt huge

to me. My youngest son, a senior in high school, was facing a possible athletic code violation that could potentially remove him from the football team. His Dad had died that year and his position as captain had become some kind of symbol that our family was going to be okay. We were all extremely distraught. The night before his fate was to be decided by the school (which was also the eve of the anniversary, greatly adding to the level of stress we were all feeling), he came home and dumped the contents of his practice bag out on the table. Thereon the table, with a pair of shorts and a t-shirt was a large perfect feather. The bag had not been outside. He did not put it in there. It was completely emptied every single night. I wouldn't claim to know how it got in there or to know exactly what it means, but I do know that my late son was letting us know that he was there with us. I was reminded that there are things happening all around us that are beyond our grasp of understanding and that the veil between this world and the next is much thinner than I had ever imagined before.

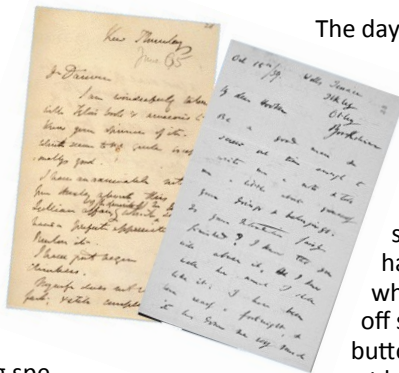
Stephanie

Wausau, WI

The morning after my husband, Ted, passed, as I was getting ready to go to the funeral home to finalize arrangements, my smoke detector warbled a little bit, which I found unusual. Then a few minutes later it went off loudly for a long time. I instantly knew that Ted was telling me that he wasn't weak and sick anymore, but that he was okay; strong and well. My sister, who helped me care for Ted, had a similar experience at her home with her smoke alarm and immediately stopped what she was doing and talked to him.

The day of the visitation - my patio door bottom rollers broke and the patio door wouldn't roll. My son-in-laws lifted the door up, slid it shut and managed to get it locked until I could get it repaired. We came back to the house after visitation, and not knowing about the door issues, someone opened it. It slid with ease and has ever since. (I have a pretty good idea who fixed it. :) Then my vacuum cleaner on/off switch wouldn't work. I had to hold the button down while vacuuming. I complained out loud about it and went on-line to find the replacement part. The next time I went to use the vacuum, it worked.

About two weeks after Ted passed, our daughter Heidi and I did a 5k run for the National Kidney Foundation. As Heidi crossed the finish line, the father/daughter song from her wedding began playing on her Ipod - "My Girl". Several



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weeks after that, as Heidi was watching a movie while the rest of her family was in bed, she saw a shimmer from the corner of her eye - when she turned her head for a better look, that shimmer disappeared right into her little memory urn containing Ted's remains.

Another thing I think Ted had a hand in was my new dog. I found him on Craig's list in November and have no idea why I was drawn to this particular dog. I asked a lot of questions of the past owner; and the last question I asked was the dog's name. It was Teddy. Like my husband, Teddy has some health issues, so I find myself back in the role of caregiver to a certain extent. I think Ted knew I needed something to take care of.

Shelby G.

Wausau, WI

We had a few unexplained experiences within the first week after our son's death. I was alone in my home and heard a bell type sound. We didn't have cell phones and I couldn't find anything such as an alarm or toy that would have made that sound. Also within a few days of our son's death, my husband's light inside his truck was on. He looked his truck over and could not figure out why the light would be on. Additionally, we have a china hutch in which the light started to go on by itself the day after our son died. It still goes on to this day by itself, but it is strange that it would start doing that the day after our son passed away. We truly saw these as signs from our son telling us he was okay.

Patty P.

Wausau, WI

I have found that a little "exchange" between my dad and myself a few weeks after his sudden death has given me a great sense of his presence and his on-going humor for the past many years.

In an attempt to give my life a bit of order following the sudden death of my father, I took to cleaning my house. It seemed that as I vacuumed, dusted, straightened, and scrubbed I was continually finding pennies. I had heard the poem called "Pennies from Heaven" which acts as a reminder that our deceased loved ones are not very far from us and keep a watch over us. However, I was finding pennies everywhere! In a comedic manner, upon finding yet one more penny, I stopped what I was doing, paused, looked up in the air and said to my dad out loud, "Really Dad? Are pennies all you can send me?!?" As I turned my body to resume vacuuming, I spotted at the end of my foot on the carpet...not a penny, but a NICKEL!!! From that moment on (it's been 10 years since his death), when I find

a random nickel, I give my dad credit and know that he is here! I still have never figured out why he placed a nickel at my feet that day—why not a quarter, or a dollar, or a \$20?!? Actually, that would be just like my dad's humor to send a nickel. It's more than a penny!

Sue R.,

DeKalb, IL



I consistently put my soap bottles to the left side of the dryer. I left the room to switch out the laundry; and when I returned, the green spray bottle was in the middle of the dryer. I put it back (thinking I forgot to move it to the left) and went down again. When I returned a second time, the green spray bottle was back in the middle of the dryer and the laundry soap behind it, again. This happened to me several times and I felt "someone" was toying with me as I was certain where I placed the bottles.

Julie M.

Hatley, WI

I have had a few dreams about my son Jon and other loved ones who have died. But, my favorite gift that I seem to receive are the clouds shaped like a "J" and when I find myself driving in the car talking to him. And then an eagle may fly nearby. At those times I say, "Thank you for the gift." During times of struggle or loneliness, I am comforted by goose bumps and a sense of Jon.

Tara

Antigo, WI

Dad was in the hospital nearing the end of his life on Christmas Eve 2013. I was home alone while my husband was gone to the candlelight service at church. I was too exhausted to go to church since I had been at the hospital every day with Dad since Dec. 16. I was in bed and trying to get some much needed sleep, but was interrupted by a noise as if someone was knocking on a door 3 times. This happened 3 different times during the night, each time the knocking seemed louder. The next morning my husband told me he also heard some knocking during the night. On Christmas Day Dad began hospice care. That night while I was home sleeping I woke up to the sound of a door opening and closing. The next night all was quiet and still until the morning of the 27th when the phone call came telling me of Dad's passing. I don't know what all those sounds were about, but it is comforting to know that Jesus turned one of Dad's saddest days into the best day of his life.

Sherri M.

2014 Healing Grief Educational Programs

HOW GRIEF CHANGES YOUR LIFE—Learning to Live with your Loss

A Six-Week Series: Education and Support for Grief, Loss and Transition

WAUSAU- at Aspirus Wausau Hospital

2014 SPRING SERIES DATES:

Tuesdays: Feb. 18, 25, and March 4, 11, 18, 25

2014 FALL SERIES:

Tuesdays: Sept. 16, 23, 30, and Oct. 7, 14, 21

Facilitators: Nan & Gary Zastrow since 1997

Time: 6:30-8:00 p.m. No charge.

Place: Conference Room A-1-Quality Services, Aspirus Wausau Hospital



Watch for more information in Oct./Nov. 2014.

Presented by Nan & Gary Zastrow

Sunday, December 7, 2014, Holiday Inn & Suites at Cedar Creek

For more information on any of these programs, contact Nan or Gary Zastrow at 715-845-4159, Wings—a Grief Education Ministry or visit our website www.wingsgrief.org or email wings1@charter.net.

Groups facilitated by: Nan & Gary Zastrow, Certified Grief Educators.

Pre-registration recommended.

17th ANNUAL UNDERSTANDING GRIEF SPRING CONFERENCE

LOU LAGRAN known world-wide for his research on Extraordinary Experiences of the Bereaved Phenomena (after death communication). Author of 9 books and numerous articles.

Location: Holiday Inn & Suites—at Cedar Creek, Mosinee, WI. Professional CEUs available for both seminars.

Title: Messages and Miracles—the Healing Power of Signs from the Deceased

Thursday, April 24, 2014 | 7:00—9:00 p.m.

and

Title: Understanding the Differences Between Mourners Who Adapt and those Who have Long-Term Difficulties in Coping with the Death of a Loved One

Friday, April 25, 2014 | 9:00—Noon

FINDING THE OTHER SIDE OF SADNESS-MOVING FROM GRIEF TO MOURNING

Many of us grieve, but not all of us mourn. What is the difference? How do we get unstuck from our feelings of intense grief and move towards a state of “new normal”? It begins with grief work. Family and friends may have considered your grief as “finished”, but you may feel uncertain about facing life without your loved one. This four-week series is designed for those who feel they are ready to move forward in their grief. It offers strategies for transforming your grief by participating in activities that encourage grief work, building a new identity, and making positive choices for healing.

Meets Tuesdays: May 20, 27, and June 3, 10, 2014

Facilitators: Nan & Gary Zastrow Call: 715-845-4159

Time: 6:30-8:30 p.m. No Charge. Group size is limited. Pre-registration recommended.

Place: Conference Room A-1, Quality Services, Aspirus Wausau Hospital

18th ANNUAL HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

When the Holidays Hurt- for the Bereaved

Each year, a theme-based program is presented with fresh ideas and personal insight about coping with grief during the holidays. When someone loved dies, the holidays can be a source of anxiety and added grief. Join us for this inspirational program that helps families cope by giving them options and suggestions for managing their traditions and emotions. Discover ideas for ritual, celebration, and remembrance.

To Honor You



To honor you, I get up every day and take a breath...and then start another day without you.

To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile and the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.

To honor you, I take time to appreciate everyone I love, knowing there is no guarantee of days or hours in their presence.

To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked, and sing at the top of my lungs with the windows rolled down.

To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back, risk making a fool of myself, and dance very dance.

You were my light, my heart, my love, from the very highest source. So every day I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh, and love. Now I live for both of us, so all I do, I do to honor you.

This verse was sent to me from a long-time friend Vincent MacDonald, Nova Scotia. It's a great template for writing your own personal verse or mantra that you post and repeat through the New Year in 2014. Write the things you do to "honor"