

The ministry of Wings is: *Honoring the Past and Rebuilding the Future.*

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Please read our ELetter and pass it on!

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Harold Ivan Smith is our guest speaker at the 2012 Spring Seminar. Be sure to mark your calendar to attend. April 12-13, 2012, Wausau, WI.

Grief Rituals Can Help on Valentine's Day

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

~ Harold Ivan Smith, in *Grieving the Death of a Mother*

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

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

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

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

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

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NAN ZASTROW
Co-Founder, Wings--A
Grief Education
Ministry

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Grief is a continuous act of healing...

New Year's resolutions... are an accepted model of change. There's something about beginning the new year with a clean slate and a fresh start that makes us feel good. We feel exonerated for our mistakes, inadequacies, hesitations and failures to achieve from the year just ended. So, each new year we vow to make a resolution or two that is reasonable, acceptable, and maybe even difficult in an effort to change something about ourselves. Why do we do it? Because we accept that life is not perfect; we are not perfect. We graciously accept that we *could manage* something better than we are right now. We consider it an act of self improvement or personal growth when we assume the ability to change.

The word "change" doesn't seem so fearful when we control it. But when life hands us circumstances and chaos that causes irreversible change, we aren't quite so accepting and welcoming to begin the effort. When we can control the change, we go along with it. If we choose to quit our exercise program and strict diet because we decided to lose weight; we do so without any reluctance. If we choose to take a different job because it's a new opportunity, we have little fear of letting go of the old job. If we choose to color our hair or change the style, we welcome it because it's not a permanent change.

The death of a loved one is one of those circumstances that demands and relentlessly requires personal acceptance and change—whether we like it or not. In this case, we don't control the change that will occur. It's tougher to accept. When death changes our lives, our daily habits, our conscious thoughts, and our future, we protest in ways that are quite obvious. We've lost control. We can't change what has happened in our lives. Suddenly, we are incapacitated; often unable to function; and lost in a world of sadness and grief.

So how does one move forward when the world around them continues to exist as it always did—but you are no longer present to the way it was? How do you get back to life after loss? How do you prevent grief from becoming a new "way of life"? How do you begin to accept and move on with an altered view of the world and a world that may never feel quite as friendly again?

In our new series: Getting Back to Life After Loss we take on this task. First, we learn the 3 N's of Grief. Grief is NORMAL. Grief is NATURAL. And Grief is NECESSARY. We learn from grief. It's a path for growth and accepting other life challenges. I'm sure some of you want to "protest" against the word "necessary". I didn't like the idea either so many years ago after the death of our son, Chad. And, it's taken me all these years to really understand that this is true. Grief is a continuous act of healing.

Second, we talk about the things that happen during grief physically, emotionally, and mentally. Third, we'll discuss the bigger questions that haunt us, worry us, and control us. It is only then, when we've laid it all out on the table that we can begin to heal the pain and get back to a new normal in life.

While many of you are not located geographically to attend our new group beginning February 21, I plan to keep you up to date on our group experiences, observations, and thoughts.

- Follow us in this newsletter through articles;
- Read my Grief Digest articles at my website in 2012 such as: *Faith is Like Insurance and Chasing the Shadow of Grief*. Great insights to what I'm talking about;
- Follow Wings on **Facebook** where I'll share some thoughts (Become a friend)

It's a new year of change and healing. And, I'm committed to my task of rediscovery. Where have I been on this journey of grief? How far have I come? And what can I share that I've learned? My journey continues.

Maintaining a Healthy, Healing Relationship with a Loved One after Death

(From Love Never Dies: Embracing Grief with Hope and Promise)

by Larry M. Barber, LPC-S, CT

Ken sat on the couch across from me, smiled and exclaimed, "I stopped it! The uncontrollable crying. I stopped it!"

Just the week prior I had been at a loss as the 59 year old self-avowed "Momma's boy" cried with an overpowering despair. He had been completely inconsolable over the death of his 82 year old mother.

As a fledgling bereavement counselor, I had walked away from his initial session wondering if I could ever be able to help Ken. His inability to see any reason for joy and hope had silenced me for almost the entire hour

For all of Ken's life prior to his mother's death, each had been all the other had. A successful businessman, Ken had never married and neither had his mother. Failing health had forced her to move in with her son, and he had been her primary caregiver for the last five years before her death. Ken's despondency had been unlike many of the other hospice family members I had counseled. Most mourning adult children had been accepting of their elderly parent's death. Ken refused to accept the new reality.

In the first session Ken had expressed absolute despair and anger that every time he thought he was making progress in his grief, the memories of his mother would intrude. With those memories came a bleak sadness that caused him to surrender to sadness and "cry like a baby."

Today Ken was a different man. Instead of despair, a sense of joy surrounded him. He excitedly shared that after several unpleasant crying spells, he had come to a surprising conclusion. "I always enjoyed visiting with mother because I love her," he explained. With tears streaming down his smiling face Ken said he realized his grief caused by his love for his mother was now the only connection that he still had with her. "The tears...the grief are my love for my mother," he beamed. "So now

when the memories and gloom come, I say, 'Hello, Mother. It's good to see you again.' Then we have a good visit."

Ken was ecstatic and I was stunned. This was a turning point in his early grief. Ken's insight that grief is love was a monumental jump for him toward healing from the emotional trauma of loss. The realization did not stop Ken from mourning or missing his mother. The new insight powerfully changed how he viewed his grief, how he processed it and how he expressed it. Now he saw his grief outbursts as positive, healthy events and not something to be feared and avoided.

Knowing that his grief was a connection to his mother produced by his love caused Ken's grief to be changed in two significant ways. First, the realization stopped Ken's struggle against experiencing his grief in a meaningful and healing way. Now he could embrace his mother's once intrusive visits into his thoughts. Second, Ken maintained his love for his mother and their relationship despite her death. Although Ken had lost the physical presence of his mother in the relationship, he was still connected to her emotionally and spiritually.

Ken's insight that grief is love and that relationships do not end with death was also an eye opening moment for me as a bereavement specialist. I had learned that grief is simply another expression of the love or emotional investment toward the one who has died. Grief is not just the result of love and loss. Grief is the continued love for the person who died combined with the mourner's yearning to be in the loved one's presence just one more time.

Death does not kill relationships. However Death does change relationships. Death removes the physical presence of our loved one from the relationship bond, but the spiritual and emotional attachments to the loved one remain and can be nurtured.

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Maintaining ...

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The real struggle of grief comes from a natural human response to protest the new reality after death. The thought that one moment a loved one is there and the next minute gone is a harsh, painful concept. Mourners know the consequences of death, but they do not want to feel forced to live with this distressing truth.

Death and “giving up” our loved one is not our wish and this is not the way that we feel life should be. Therefore, we as protesting mourners create a longer, harder struggle for ourselves. We do not wish to stop loving the one who has died, and we do not wish to leave the person in our past. So we rail against reality and moving toward healing.

Knowing grief is the continued expression of love lets us understand that we do not have to “give up” or “let go” from the one who died. We can realize that we are not forced to forget or leave the person in our past. We live with the comforting thought that we carry loved ones into our future. Knowing grief is love is an empowering insight which does not eliminate the struggle of grief, but it can make the intense battle against the loss shorter and less difficult.

(Love Never Dies by Larry M. Barber is available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Family Christian Stores and Xulon Press.)

Grief Tip

Healing a Broken Heart



Valentine’s Day reminds us of matters of the heart. Physicians now accept and suggest that someone can really die of a broken heart. A bereaved person’s risk factors increase and their tolerance for illness and disease spike. Don’t just pretend that you are okay. It’s important to socialize and talk about your loss. Grief can be a frightening and unfamiliar experience. You do not need to grieve alone. If you are suffering the loss of a loved one, you need to find a way to let go of the pain. Support groups provide a safe place with others who have had a mutual experience. Be good to yourself. Explore the experience of grief and grow from your discoveries.

The Power of One

One song can spark a moment
One flower can wake the dream
One tree can start a forest
One bird can herald spring.
One smile begins a friendship
One handclasp lifts the soul
One star can guide a ship at sea
One word can frame the goal.
One vote can change a nation
One sunbeam lights a room.
One candle wipes out darkness
One laugh will conquer gloom
One step must start each journey
One word must start a prayer
One hope will raise our spirits
One touch can show you care
One voice can speak with wisdom
One heart can know what is true
One life can make a difference.

author unknown

Grief Rituals ...

Continued from page 1

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

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

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

- ☺ If you’re a writer, write – it could be an article, an anecdote, a story, a poem, a song, a letter, an obituary or a eulogy. If you don’t want to write for someone else, keep a private journal and write about your feelings as you journey through your grief.
- ☺ Buy a very special candle, decorate it and light it in honor of your loved one. Purchase a book — perhaps a children’s book — on coping with the loss of a loved one, and donate it to your local library or school. Place a label inside the front cover inscribed “In memory of [your loved one’s name].”

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

From [griefhealingblog.com](#) posted by
Marty Tousley, CNS-BC, FT, DCC

From the Archives

Stories worth repeating...



Wings

Nan Zastrow ~ 1993

When I was just a spirit
In God's presence long ago
He offered me two borrow gifts
Wings, and then my earthly soul.

"These gifts prepare you for a task,
My child," he gently smiled.
"If you want help, you need but ask,
Your journey's just a while."

And did you stop to tell me Lord
Before I came to earth
The trials I would have to bear?
And did I have a choice?

God patiently smiled down on me
And His love came shining through.
"Trust", He said, "and you will see
I'll be there each hour for you."

"Your task will teach you how to seek,
From your memory I have hidden,
The ways to serve both God and man
With the wings that you are given.

Your soul is yours to educate
And return you to God's ways.
Your wings to freely make a choice
Of right and wrong each day.

Wings help carry laughter's ring,
Wings help you soar above your fears,
And those protective Guardian wings
Of angels are always near.

Wings help make your heart sing songs
Of sweet love and family there.
Wings help mend your troubled mind,
Send answers to your prayers.

Wings give flight to buoyant souls.
Wings enfold you in God's care.
Wings help shield you from life's storms,
Tear and burdens help you bear.

You'll falter now and then, my child,
But I'll forgive your earthly flaws.
I'll overlook your weaknesses;
And reward adherence to My laws.

And if you prove your love for me,
And believe in Me with faith,
The wings I give you then will be
Eternally, so great.

And when your earthly time is done,
Borrowed wings can bring you home
By the strength of eagles and angels...some,
You'll humble near My throne.

God's mercy and enduring love,
Redeem the sins and errors I've made.
Through the body of God's only son,
My debts are fully paid.

On the "wings of angels" life me high
Propel my soul through golden gates.
Leave my borrowed wings as memories
For those who grieve and wait.

This poem was written in 1993 after the death of my son, Chad E. Zastrow. I believe that God gave us "wings." Wings represent our spiritual connection and the gifts (abilities) God gave us to use in our lives here on earth. These gifts are the personal traits that others will remember about us when we are called home. God gave us the potential; it is our choice to seek the spiritual growth. This verse appeared in the Premier issue of Wings and represents the ministry of Hope that we've continued through all these years.

Crazy Test

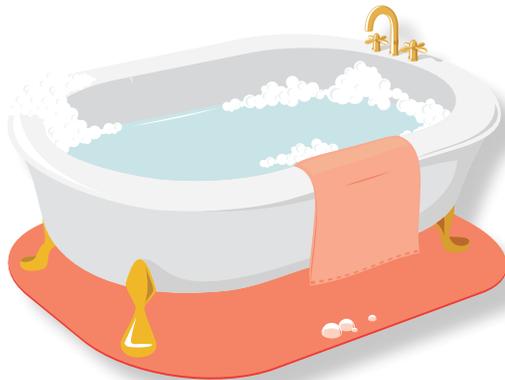
Sometimes when we grieve, we think we are going crazy. Here's a test to see how close you are to going over the edge.

Visiting the psych ward, a man asked how doctors decide when a patient requires psychiatric care.

"Well," the doctor said, "We fill a bathtub, then offer the person a teaspoon, a teacup, and a bucket. Then we ask him to empty the tub."

"I get it," the visitor said. "A normal person would use the bucket because it's the biggest and he could empty the tub faster."

"No," the doctor said. "A normal person would pull the plug."



How To Connect With Wings:

- Email: wings1@charter.net
- Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54401
- Phone: 715-845-4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Visit our website: www.wingsgrief.org
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at www.centeringcorp.com
- Visit Wings on **Facebook**



Wings is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to grief awareness through education. We welcome your donations, in any amount, to support the ministry of Wings.

Understanding Grief Spring 2012 Seminar

Presented by Wings - a Grief Education Ministry



Harold Ivan Smith

Harold Ivan Smith, is a grief specialist at Saint Luke's Hospital, Kansas City, Missouri, and the Carondelet Medical Institute in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He is recognized as a Fellow in Thanatology by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. He has also received the Distinguished Service Award from ADEC. Harold earned the doctorate from Asbury Theological Seminary and the EdS from Vanderbilt. He speaks internationally to grievers, grief counselors and educators.

A community seminar for grieving families

Juggling your Losses in a "Get Over It and Move On" World

Thursday, April 12, 2012  7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Free of charge and open to the public

In today's society, the bereaved are pressured to "get over it" and "move on". Loss challenges our assumptions about life. Add to the death of a loved one, other losses such as job, health, self-esteem, relationships, roles, etc, the bereaved person begins to feel overwhelmed. Multiple pressures at one time threaten your ability to cope and to mourn. Learn how to live with co-losses and find strategies to face the troubling world around you.

A Seminar for Clergy, Hospice, and Others Who Care for the Bereaved

How to Heal Grief in a "Jerry Springer" Family

Friday, April 13, 2012  9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Cost: \$40

Today's families are unique and non-traditional in a number of ways. Death may be especially challenging if the family is dysfunctional or traditional familial grief support is absent or impaired. Individuals may grieve for what was, and for what never was, or never will be. Stress may be intensified by inadequate resources. Grief rituals that were once relied on may fall short in helping families torn apart by their differences. In this seminar, practical information will be shared to help survive or assist when healing grief is negotiable.

NEW LOCATION

★★ in 2012 ★★

Both seminars will be held at

Holiday Inn & Suites Cedar Creek

1000 Imperial Avenue
Rothschild, WI



For information or a
program brochure contact:

Nan Zastrow 715.845.4159

or

Amy Kitsembel 715.847.2703

CEU's applied for both programs:

- WI Department of Regulation and Licensing
- IACET (International Association for Continued Education)

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