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## **What About the Children?**

*by Joy Johnson*

It breaks our hearts, it troubles our minds, it rattles our souls; seeing children we love devastated, weeping, sorrow-filled. We want to fix it and we can't. "I can't just go out and buy a new daddy. I could always do that with broken Barbies. I can't put a BAND-AID on it. I can't kiss it and make it stop hurting. I can't even tell her it will be all right. All I can do is hold her and help her cry." (Mom in Seattle)

Everyone who devotes their lives to grieving children agrees there are least four tasks of grieving children. In a way, they apply to all of us, for when we grieve we are indeed like children.

### **1. Recognize the reality of the death**

Probably the single most important thing you can do to help the children in your family is to be honest. When her mother shot herself when Margo was four, the children were told their mother went on vacation. Her clothes and belongings were gone; she had just disappeared. The next year when their father told the children they were going on vacation, he couldn't figure out why they were terrified. Children deserve to know the truth. Use the real words: "dead" and "died." Explain what happened. If the death was violent, the children will find out what happened sooner or later and it's best if they find out from you or some other loving family member. Secrets can hurt. Welcome their questions. Getting honest answers helps them grieve in healthy ways.

### **2. Grieve the death**

Children, especially younger ones, tend to grieve/play, grieve/play, ask questions, grieve again. Jon was eleven years old when we sat on the floor together. "What's the single most important thing adults need to know about grieving children?" I asked him. "Tell them every day is not a bad day for us," he said. The British talk about "puddle jumping" where children jump into puddles of water then out again. They often grieve that way, too—jumping into it, then out again; while we adults tend to sit in the puddle and wallow in our grief.

### **3. Commemorate the person who died**

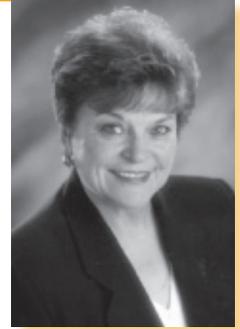
When someone dies, we all need to DO something. Talking about their person who died and making something that helps us to remember that person can be tremendously healing. Children have made comfort pillows out of a piece of clothing worn by their loved one, kids have worn their grandfather's shirts, made angel bookmarks and done scores of other activities that let them know their person lives on in their hearts. Families can do significant things together such as picnicking at the gravesite, releasing balloons, planting a tree or garden or even a potted plant. Remembering and celebrating the life lived is important.

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# EDITOR'S JOURNAL

## People Who Care

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



There is nothing more comforting than the many friends one makes over their lifetime who truly are connected and care.

While we were on vacation, our email account was accessed by Internet hackers. This particular email account happens to be the email address that I use for most of my ELetters and general emails to Wings acquaintances and personal friends, as well. Day 2 into our trip, Gary's cell phone began ringing continuously for about the next 48 hours from friends. Most were calls and messages from people who knew we were on vacation and had received the mysterious Email message from us requesting money...that we were in Scotland, had been robbed and needed money to pay our expenses.

At that point, we were helpless to do anything about the scam. We stopped at a McDonalds and used their wireless connection to get into our email, but everything was gone including the address book with hundreds of email addresses. We couldn't have sent a message if we wanted to let people know about the hoax. On returning home, our home phone message box was also filled with messages. Some people were truly unaware of such a scam and genuinely concerned about our safety...actually offering to send money, if we needed it.

The important purpose of mentioning this event in my article is to acknowledge all the wonderful friends we've met through our personal adverse life event of grief. One expects and honors support and acknowledgement from family and friends, but how often would that same kind of support comes from many who are strangers. There is a community of spirit and camaraderie that cannot be compared to any other event that I can think of. Many of these acquaintances have

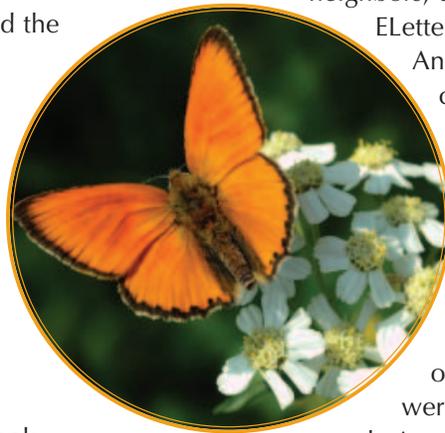
chased their own demons as a result of life altering loss and can identify with any other kind of threat that one of their own might have to submit to through life's journey. And they respond!

I am awestruck as I write this. Honored and grateful, for all the people who checked in on us from personal friends, funeral directors, chaplains, clergy, relatives, counselors, past neighbors, and subscribers to the Wings ELetter that I never met personally.

And also surprised for all those who contacted us from all corners of the United States. You are the angels who make my day. You are awesome! Thank you!

Another angel(s) made my day on Memorial Day weekend. We went out to visit the gravesite of our beloved son, Chad, and were welcomed by someone else's remembrance first. There were silk flowers in both urns and a large golden, garden butterfly decorating his sacred spot. They glistened against the backdrop of an 18 year-old, gray stone marker and the Matchbox cars that include a fire truck and ambulance that symbolized Chad's career path in life before his death. This mysterious gift brought us great joy. We don't know who this someone is, but again, it's so nice that someone cares and remembers for this number of years.

Grief and the journey one must take can be amazing. Sometime it allows one to look back and assess the journey for what it has taught you about life and the people you meet in life. It's not a journey I would ever choose to take, but we have been richly blessed by those we have met along the way.



# The Cost of Miracles

## *An Inspirational Story*

A little girl went to her bedroom and pulled a glass jelly jar containing coins from its hiding place in the closet..

She poured the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times, even. The total had to be exactly perfect. No chance here for mistakes.

Carefully placing the coins back in the jar and twisting on the cap, she slipped out the back door and made her way 6 blocks to Rexall's Drug Store with the big red Indian Chief sign above the door.

She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her some attention, but he was too busy at this moment.

Tess twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. Nothing.

She cleared her throat with the most disgusting sound she could muster. Still No good.

Finally she took a quarter from her jar and banged it on the glass counter. That did it!

'What do you want?' the pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. 'I'm talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven't seen in ages,' he said without waiting for a reply to his question.

'Well, I want to talk to you about my brother,' Tess answered back in the same annoyed tone. 'He's really, really sick....and I want to buy a miracle.'

'I beg your pardon?' said the pharmacist.

'His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my Daddy says only a miracle can save him now.

So, how much does a miracle cost?'

'We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I'm sorry but I can't help you,' the pharmacist said, softening a little.

'Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs.'

The pharmacist's brother, a well dressed man, was in the store.

He stooped down and asked the little girl, 'Just what kind of a miracle does your brother need?'

'I don't know,' Tess replied with her eyes welling up. 'I just know he's really sick and Mommy says he needs an operation. But my Daddy can't pay for it, so I want to use my money.'

'How much do you have?' asked the man from Chicago .

'One dollar and eleven cents,' Tess answered barely audible.

'It's all the money I have, but I can get some more, if I need to.'

'Well, what a coincidence,' smiled the man. 'A dollar and eleven cents---the exact price of a miracle for little brothers.'

He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said 'Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents. Let's see if I have the miracle you need.'

That well-dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specializing in neuro-surgery.

The operation was completed free of charge and it wasn't long until Andrew was home again and doing well.

Mom and Dad were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place..

'That surgery,' her Mom whispered. 'was a real miracle.. I wonder how much it would have cost?'

Tess smiled. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost...one dollar and eleven cents...plus the faith of a little child.



## WINGS EVENTS

*...coming soon!*

FALL 2011 SERIES - *Education and Support for Grief, Loss, and Trauma*

### HEALING GRIEF FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Tuesdays, September 13, 20, 27 and October 4, 11, 18. Meets in Wausau, WI.

This six week series is designed to help those who grieve. It is not about escaping the sorrow of grief, but rather about understanding the experience and finding meaning in it. Learn how grief affects you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Understand the surprises and why you may grieve differently. Pre-registration recommended.

### WHEN THE HOLIDAYS HURT

Each year a new theme based program is presented to offer insight about coping with grief during the holidays. Theme title to be announced soon. Watch our website.

Presented by Nan & Gary Zastrow

Tuesday, December 6, 2011 • 7–9 pm  
The Rose Garden, Wausau

#### How To Connect With Wings:

- Email: [wings1@charter.net](mailto: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](http://www.wingsgrief.org)
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at [www.centeringcorp.com](http://www.centeringcorp.com)
- Visit Wings on Facebook



## Men Do Cry

I heard quite often "men don't cry"  
Though no one every told me why.  
So when I fell and skinned a knee  
No one came to comfort me.

And when some bully boy at school  
Would pull a prank so mean and cruel  
I'd quickly learn to turn and quip  
"It doesn't hurt" and bit my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years  
I learned to stifle any tears  
Though "Be a big boy" it began  
Quite soon I learned to "be a man."

And I could play the stoic role  
While storm and tempest wracked my soul.  
No pain nor setback could there be  
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby  
And helplessly watched my son die.  
And quickly found to my surprise  
That all the tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame  
I cannot play the "big boy" game.  
And openly without remorse  
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can't abide  
A man you've seen who's often cried.  
Reach out to him with all your heart  
As one whose life's been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see  
Their loss of immortality.  
And tears will come in endless streams  
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Ken Falk, Northwest Connecticut

## Our Readers Write



*Submitted by: Nancy Turner, Dixon, IL*

We spent the afternoon at a Memorial Service for a dear friend of Dicky's who died last week of cancer, after suffering for four years. It was a beautiful service and a poem on the back of the program was especially meaningful. It was written by H. S. Holland, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

"Death is nothing at all;  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
I am I, and you are you;  
Whatever we were to each other,  
That we still are.

Call me by my old familiar name,  
Speak to me in the easy way which you  
always used to.  
Put no difference into your tone,  
Wear no Forced air of solemnity or sorrow,  
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes  
we enjoyed.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Life means all that it ever meant,  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,  
just around the corner.  
All is well."

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.

# Be Good to Yourself A Care Tip

## **Summer Holidays and Grief**

Summer holidays can be just as difficult as those that get more attention such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Summer is a time for family reunions, vacations, picnics and many gatherings that may not feel complete without the presence of your loved one who died. Patriotic holidays raise many emotions for those serving in the military as well as the remembrance services for our heroes who died in active duty. You may be grieving for the events that are forever altered because they are painful reminders of what you have lost.

*Bring a little sunshine into your life by remembering in unique special ways.*

- Bike your way over hills and roads and consider the path you've been on. Find a new destination some distance from where you have been—and set the goal of where you want to be.
- Take a walk at sunrise or sunset and reminisce in the peace and quiet of nature
- Fly the American flag as a tribute to those who serve
- Take part in a sun-run for a cause or cure
- Dig in the dirt and bury anger, resentment, and guilt. Plant flowers instead.
- Plant a tree and watch how it (and you) grow through grief
- Swim in a pool or lake and exercise your right to mourn
- Attend a summer concert outdoors and sing a song of joy
- Build a sand castle on the beach—and with it build new dreams

Summer is a great time to warm up to all the possibilities of your life that is yet to be.



## What About the Children?

*Continued from page 1*

### 4. Moving on to new relationships including one with the person who died.

I don't remember the name of the movie, but I will never forget a young Barbara Streisand sitting by a tree, leaning against a stone talking heart-to-heart with her grandfather. After awhile she said, "Well, Gramps, gotta go." As she stood up we could see a funeral procession entering a cemetery and realized the stone was a grave marker. She had been sitting on Gramp's grave having a chat and a new relationship with her grandfather. New relationships don't just occur with the person who died. When Ben's brother was murdered, Ben became the eldest sibling; everything in the family order shifted. Christina's father died and at age fifteen, she became one of the family breadwinners. Going to Grandmother's for the holidays is different without Grandpa there. All relationships will be new in a way. Like grief, building new relationships takes time.

There are many things you can do to help grieving children in your family. Find out if there is a center for grieving children near you and make an appointment. Your funeral director, pastor or social worker should know or can find one through the internet. These centers are wonderful and seeing children helping children is awesome.

### Gather resources.

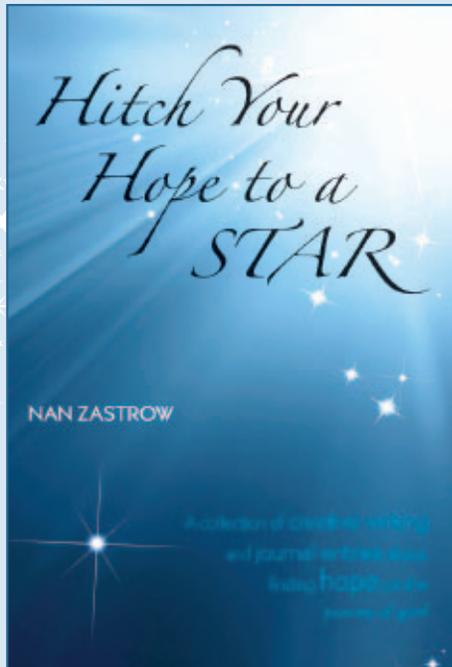
There are dozens of extremely helpful books and videos available, both for children and for you and your family. Whoever gave you this article will know how to get them.

### Tend your own grief.

Let the children know you will be sad for a long time. Let them know that every single person in the world hurts like this at some time. Let them know you can all cry together and that they don't have to take care of you. Let them know their job right now is to be kids and that sad or happy, crying or laughing, you'll be there for them, as will a lot of other people who love them and want to help.

Remember, you don't have to do it all alone. "Even though I was a girl, right after we came from the funeral, my grandmother let me go with the boys in the family and pick through our grandfather's tools. Last year I used the old hammer I picked out to hang the first picture in our new baby's nursery." (Karyn)





Available from:

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

Web: [Wingsgrief.org](http://Wingsgrief.org)

Email: [wings1@charter.net](mailto:wings1@charter.net)

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Here in one book is a collection of original stories and poems that offer hope and have inspired Nan's readers for almost two decades. Each story shares its message through analogies and lessons learned during the journey through grief.

Find energy and renewed spirit in the power of Nan's words. She creates vivid pictures that allow the reader to be present to the moments she describes. She writes about rebuilding identity after loss; transformed relationships; letting go; and the small victories that lead to hope. Read this book in doses so you can absorb the "hope."

This book makes a great gift for someone who is hurting, someone who has lost a special loved one, or to someone who could use reassurance that we are resilient individuals who survive the roller coaster experiences of life and death and grow from telling our stories.

Everyone can find something in these stories that will help them believe in the possibilities of a future not yet written. Here is a sample of stories you will find:

- *What is the color blue?*
- *In Grief and In Joy...telling your story*
- *Can a horse really fly?-a lesson in hope*
- *Love is Stronger than Death*
- *Victory Over a 30' Pole-learning to let go.*
- *Discover Something Greater Than the Answer to Why?*

***You will believe that Hope is possible even when it appears elusive!***

**\$7.95**

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A Grief Education Ministry™