

Wings

A Grief Education Ministry

31ST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Honoring the Past and
Rebuilding the Future

www.wingsgrief.org

Published by Nan Zastrow

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Caregiving: Family and Professional Care Comparisons

by Ted Bowman

In July 2022, I stepped back from fourteen consecutive years of leadership and facilitation of a neighborhood caregiver support group. In 2009, my mother, age 94, died, after eight or more years of living with dementia and, in her last year, a left-side stroke. My two brothers and I were her family caregivers. For the past four decades, I have been a grief and family educator whose work has been primarily with volunteers and professionals who provide supportive care for citizens, patients, clients, and their peers.

The intersections and overlaps of my various caregiver roles prompted me to consider similarities and differences between various forms of caregiving. Upon reflection, I concluded that a symmetry of caregiver roles was more common than expected. As you read further, consider caregiving in your family, neighborhood, and professional/volunteer settings.

Caregiving—Framing the Discussion

“I like to say that there are only four kinds of people in the world—those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.” ~ Rosalynn Carter

“There are only two kinds of grief and bereavement ‘counselors’: You ARE a caregiver...currently and in the future. You deserve and will continue to need a caregiver(s).

~ Ted Bowman

The Multiple Layers of Caregiving: It Takes a Team

It takes a team; do you know who is on your team was the question asked by an elder care lawyer when speaking to the caregiver support group. If you don't know who is on your team, you are facing trouble was her continuing focus. Financial or legal stresses; home maintenance requirements; scheduling appointments for the care received; asking or receiving supportive help—all those and more, the lawyer asserted, were aspects of caregiving.

Mark your Calendar:

Ted Bowman -Seminar

Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024

Holiday Inn & Suites,
1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild, WI.

Watch the Wings website
and Facebook for information, soon.

Psychiatrist and grief scholar Arthur Kleinman described it this way, as he cared for his wife: “Caregiving is about skilled nursing, competent social work, rehabilitation efforts of physical and occupational therapists, and the hard physical work of home healthcare aides.

Yet, for all the efforts of the helping professions, caregiving is for the most part the preserve of families and intimate friends, and of the afflicted person herself or himself. They struggle to undertake the material acts that sustain, find practical assistance with activities of daily living, financial aid, legal and religious advice, emotional support, meaning making and remaking, and moral solidarity.” (Harvard Magazine)

Kleinman reminds his readers of palliative care, whole-person care. Caregivers of all kinds and in whatever the setting will directly or indirectly face: 1) mundane, practical, simple and complex tasks and situations; 2) decisions about tender transitions (from health to less health, from stability to ambiguity, from living to dying to death, grief to mourning; and care of self and others); stress and distress about family, household, and care norms and procedures; and repeated evaluative reflections about one’s, the family’s or the team’s competence and choices. Multi-layered caregiving requires, at a minimum, a team awareness; better if in an active milieu that supports self and other caring.

While working at a children’s hospice in England, I was exposed to and experienced this assertion: one and all attend staff support sessions because today may be the day one of our colleagues will need/want support. The staff support sessions were voluntary, not required meetings. Yet for almost fifteen of their first years, there was virtual perfect attendance by all staff. A culture of—it takes a team—was not only said; it was practiced.

Just as family carers need a team, we who are grief and bereavement carers also need a team. Who is on your team? Are they colleagues in your setting (organization) or do they work in another setting?

Layers of Care: Self and Other Care

Compare care reflections from staff of an adult hospice in England with reflections from family caregivers in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Which list contains care practices you do or can utilize?

Reflections About Doing Adult Hospice Work—Gathered at the Rowans Hospice, England

- Take care of yourself. Their grief is not your grief.
- Stay curious. Listen, be mindful.



- Take yourself seriously, but also lightly.
- Humor, value laughter. You can’t get it right every time.
- Be prepared to say no, as well as yes.
- Build in reflexion time. You can’t FIX anyone, that’s okay.
- Don’t tell people at a party where you work.
- Be compassionate to yourself and your colleagues.

Wisdom From Caregivers—March 2022: What do you know now, you wish you had known?

- Get information about caregiving from various sources.
- Few things will stay the same, be prepared for changes. Don’t be too hard on yourself.
- Support for caregivers is crucial. Form a team.
- When attending a group or reading, make note of “take-aways.”
- Ask for help. Accept help. Know the difference.
- Create a list of “help” you can pass on to friends, family, neighbors.

Group members often share what seems mundane, but which may be amazingly helpful to another caregiver. While working in England, I discovered that they use the word carer not helper. Helper implies a hierarchy; carer is more lateral...was their explanation. From their perspective, there are family carers and there are volunteer and professional carers. Neither group routinely used the word—caregiver.

The Differences Between Caregivers

Some family caregivers are reluctant; others are drafted because they are women, the oldest, or the one nearby; others don't understand the word caregiver—they are simply honoring their marital vows or giving back to their parent care that mimics in some small way what their parents did for them in childhood and beyond. On the other hand, most grief and bereavement carers chose their vocation. Here is an example from a professional: Bereaved parents have asked me why I continued to stay in the painful environment of the group. They did not choose to be there, but I did. (Dennis Klass in *When Professional Weep*)

Caregiver groups are a mixture of people who need to simply off-load (where else can they scream and wail?), some who seek understanding for their ambivalent feelings, and others hoping for resources, insights, or fixes for situations. Many caregivers become what one writer has called “the invisible second patients.” Could the same be said about you?

Summary

So, yes, there are differences, but there are many similarities. Perhaps these musings were already obvious to you. For me, I am now more appreciative for the work of palliative care educator, Betty Davies. She wrote about creating a milieu of mattering, a place where patients, family carers, and the team of professionals/volunteers acknowledge and support

one another in their mutual work of caring. I support that perspective and want to be part of such milieus. We are all caregivers.

Editor's Note: Ted Bowman is an educator, and consultant. He specializes in change and transition. For over 40 years, he has been a frequent trainer, consultant, and speaker with many groups throughout Minnesota, the United States, and other countries. Ted was an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota (Family Education) 1981-2012; at the University of Saint Thomas (Social Work) 2006 until 2019; and 1989 to 1996 at United Theolo

What's Really Yours?

A man died...

When he realized it, he saw God coming closer with a suitcase in his hand.

Dialog between God and Dead Man:

God: Alright son, it's time to go

Man: So soon? I had a lot of plans...

God: I am sorry but, it's time to go

Man: What do you have in that suitcase?

God: Your belongings

Man: My belongings? You mean my things...
Clothes... money...

God: Those things were never yours, they belong to the Earth

Man: Is it my memories?

God: No. They belong to Time

Man: Is it my talent?

God: No. They belong to Circumstance

Man: Is it my friends and family?

God: No son. They belong to the Path you travelled

Man: Is it my wife and children?

God: No. they belong to your Heart

Man: Then it must be my body

God: No No... It belongs to Dust

Man: Then surely it must be my Soul!

God: You are sadly mistaken son. Your Soul belongs to me.

Man with tears in his eyes and full of fear took the suitcase from the God's hand and opened it...
Empty...

With heartbroken and tears down his cheek he asks
God...

Man: I never owned anything?

God: That's Right. You never owned anything.

Man: Then? What was mine?

**God: your MOMENTS.
Every moment you lived was yours.**



CELEBRATING 31 YEARS OF GRIEF EDUCATION THIS IS THE SHORT VERSION OF OUR STORY

By Nan Zastrow

Our world changed on April 16, 1993, in ways we never imagined. My husband, Gary, and I lived in a world where bad things happened to other people. Not that we didn't have our share of adversity. But it was tolerable until we became the "other people". Today 31 years later I can still vividly recall, my Memory of the Darkest Moment. (<https://www.wingsgrief.org/nans-published-articles>.) The loss of our son, Chad Zastrow, at the age of 21, as a result of suicide was unfathomable. And ten weeks later, his fiancé took her life also. This began our journey.

In In 1993, the Internet was new. Grief education was scarce, and we struggled. Suicide was taboo in those days. People avoided us, and we avoided people. Only a day later, as we were walking down the road near our home, my husband said to me, "We are not going to let this destroy us." That became our vow.

On April 11, 1993, we were sharing Easter with Chad in our country home. He forged his way through roads that were snow-covered and unplowed. Family gatherings were canceled, and Chad was barely able to navigate our quarter of a mile driveway. Later, we were so thankful that he did! Just five days later he died. On April 19, the morning of his funeral, another blizzard made its fury known but it didn't stop what had to happen. Colored plastic eggs swung wildly in the breeze on a tree outside our window. Grandpa hung them there. The mockery of that vision now.



The flag-draped coffin immediately brought a lump to my throat as we entered the church. Undeterred by the blizzard, hundreds of mourners came to pay their respects. They included Chad's high-school friends, co-volunteers on a community fire department, students from his EMT class at a local college, members of the Army National Guard where Chad was enlisted, neighbors, church members, and countless people we didn't even know. I started writing personal stories and memories to his friends that I mailed after the funeral. That was the beginning of the Wings™ publication. People responded back to me wanting to know more and some wanting to share their stories.

Idea and Goal: Our main focus was to share what we learned and help other people after a very fragile, confusing, and horrible event in their lives. Our Premier issue of the Wings magazine was launched in 1993 and shared real life stories, inspiration, articles about grief

from professionals, poetry/verse, and tips for dealing with loss. People craved this kind of resource which led us to start holiday grief programs, seminars with professional speakers, presentations, and education/ support groups.

It didn't take long for the word to get out that Nan and Gary would "talk" about grief. In fact, they would even talk about "suicide." We learned we needed to share these thoughts and feelings with others. This was the inspiration of my first book, (<https://www.wingsgrief.org/shop/p/blessed-are-those-that-mourn>) Blessed Are They That Mourn. And then we began attending and speaking at national grief conferences as well as regional events.

We called it our quest as we sought anything that would help us understand the relentless pain we felt. At the time, we never dreamed that our quest would last this long. We were two deeply bereaved parents that didn't know how to live in the world when our dreams were lost, and our hope was fading. But we also knew we were not alone. This is the short story that became my husband, Gary's, and my legacy that continues today. You can read more about our story at our website on this honorary page. (<https://www.wingsgrief.org/about>).

When COVID descended upon our world, the in-person events that Wings facilitated were discontinued. But, once again reinventing who we were, we went to a Zoom format that continued to provide education to those who desired accessibility. The format became so popular that it continues today.

Current Personal Story: My personal story only continued to evolve. Just short of our 30th anniversary, another painful and unexpected event occurred when my husband, Gary, died from sepsis after a routine heart procedure. I questioned my motives for continuing grief education with the Wings grief ministry while coping with my own reawakened sorrow and pain. The death of my soulmate was indescribably different than the loss of my son three decades earlier. How does one live their life alone after 55 years of companionship doing anything and everything together? I quickly discovered I had a whole new set of competencies and perspectives to learn

and share. I decided that God wasn't finished with me yet.

This year created a bookmark in reality that grief really never ends. The intense feelings of loss and the need to continue the bond with my husband coincided with a new book (How to Honor and Create a Connection with Someone Loved After Loss) that exposed those feelings and how I honored our relationship and connection. (<https://www.wingsgrief.org/shop/p/honor-and-create>). It became the solace that is helping me heal every day.

Finally, and briefly as there is so much more I could share, I want to thank the many, many people that have supported Wings over the past 31 years, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. We are a small non-profit. I am a professional volunteer, and I don't receive compensation for the work I do. My service is truly a legacy of grief, love, and advocacy for understanding grief and giving to those searching for hope and healing.

Legacy of the Wings organization: It is my hope that Wings lives on and my writings still float around the Internet. I hope someone reading them will say, "Wow, I like her perspective." I hope people who were part of our lives (through our grief organization, our support groups, and our presentations) know how much they taught both Gary and me by sharing their story with us. I hope that in some small ways we inspired people to "live again" after their loss. Someday Wings and the passion I have for it, will sunset. When it does, I hope that God knows we did the best that we could do with one of the greatest gifts He gave us—each other, and our passion to share hope and healing.

Acknowledging current volunteers. Most of the Wings volunteers have served for a large part of the 31 years that Wings has operated as a non-profit organization. A special thanks to Sally and Clarence Johnson, Gene and Zofia Leszczynski, Kathy and John Glynn, Mark and Judi Brost, and Diane Nowak.

My Wings Poem *by Nan Zastrow*

When I was just a spirit
In God's presence long ago
He offered me two borrowed 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 likely 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.
Insightful wings to freely make a choice
Of right and wrong each day.

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

Wings' vibes shall make your heart
sing songs
Of sweet love and precious family here.
Wings' grace will mend your troubled
mind,
Send answers to your prayers.

Wings lends flight to buoyant souls.
Wings enfolds you in God's care.
Wings can shield you from life's storms,
Tears 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 shall bring you home,
With the strength of eagles and angels...
some,
You'll humble near My throne.

With this time on earth that I've
been given
I'll walk my uncertain path,
And share my gifts to prove my worth
With few regrets that, too, shall pass.

"Show me the way", I whisper still,
Somedays I'm not quite sure.
But trust in you my Heavenly Lord.
It's your promises I revere.

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

When my time has come, my task is
done,
I'll be greeted by Loved Ones dear.
And all the tears and time that's passed,
Will wondrously disappear.

On the "Wings of Angels" lift me high,
Welcome my soul through golden gates.
Leave my borrowed wings as memories
For those who grieve and wait.



**In Loving Memory of
Chad Eric Zastrow
12.4.1971 to 4.16.1993
In Loving Memory of
Gary Lee Zastrow
6.15.1946 to 1.15.2023**

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 1993 Premier issue of Wings and even today, represents the ministry of Hope that we've continued through all these years. Three added verses in 2024 updated my mission. Note: Who would ever have guessed that Gary's and my organization, named Wings, would ever remain strong this long! It has been an honor and a privilege. Though death of my loved ones gave me the strength, I could not have continued without the unconditional love and inspiration that both of these men continue to give me. I am forever blessed!

Reader Feedback



What helps you live with your loneliness in grief? How do you deal with being alone? Being lonely after loss is one of the hardest changes to accept. There is a void that nothing else can fill and others, outside of your circle of support, may not understand. Some activities previously enjoyed may not be as appealing and places you frequented together may not be as desirable because memories create heartache.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY??

Personally, here is what I've learned from others as well as myself: Mainly missing all the things we did together. I don't have that now. ...the day trips, eating at a real restaurant, vacations, going to church together, conversations, planning the "next", working in yard side-by-side, taking walks, holidays, entertaining, shopping....I'm sure you get the idea. Doing any of these isn't the same as when you had someone to share it with. It's easy to lose your desire to do them. Unfortunately, it's not something someone else can fix. – Nan

I start by accepting reality. This is where I am. The past is gone and can't be undone.

I listen to inspirational CD's music in my vehicles. It's more comforting than hearing all the violence, bombings, and political arguments in the news. People just don't seem to want to get along with others. I avoid being a couch potato. I use a stationary bike indoors for an hour and do a crossword puzzle daily. This is keeping my mind and body healthy.

I keep up with Shirley's favorite landscaping projects with all the flowers gardens and vegetable gardens. I continue to give away lots of extra flower plants and most of the garden produce. I keep going to family and grandkid's events to show that people really still care, even if grandma isn't there. I avoid going out to eat alone. Seeing families happy while

enjoying a meal still triggers too many emotions.

Sometimes talking on a sensitive situation the first time, gets me choked up. The subsequent times go much calmer. I put Shirley's funeral candle in my van cup holder. Now, I tell people that she always rides shotgun wherever I go. This adds a chuckle, when I make that comment.

I participate in the GriefShare and WingsGrief programs. This helps me understand the process of grief. Participants are in similar situations which helps me relate to how they feel and accept that everyone handles things differently. Some stories are harder than mine and that can make me sad. I try to find or say something positive in every situation, it has a way of overcoming

negativity and sadness.

Roger, Wausau, WI

The loneliness I experienced after my wife of thirty years died was soul crushing. At times I could hardly breathe and didn't feel like going on. I heard about a line dance class and forced myself to go. I've always liked to dance and my wife was the one that got me back into dancing. This class provided me with a vehicle to meet other people and an outlet to silence my pain for a brief period each week. Eventually I started taking ballroom dance as well. This activity introduced me to wonderful people that helped fill the huge hole left by the death of my wife.

David, Bryant, WI

I have been a widow for 2 years and 4 months. As you taught, my life has turned inside out-but I had to be proactive. I moved out of the house for a fresh start. It helped. I got a puppy. I joined online groups, etc. met a lot of widows. I decided I needed even more change and a new life, so I moved to The Villages in Florida. Houses start at \$250,000, so it is affordable. I love it! I am happier than I thought I could be! There are so many activities to do here- it's like summer camp. Crafting, sewing, dancing, painting, Zumba, yoga, line dancing, cha cha, ballet, pickleball. Tennis, swimming, cooking, golf, etc. Every hour there are like 25 activities to choose from.

There are many villages. Shopping or visiting in all. There are five live bands every night. I have met so many wonderfully, supportive women here. Everyone is transient. You can date if you want. My point is , I needed more socialization than what Wausau area offered. Wausau is a great place to be a couple and raise a family. For me, it was too limiting as a widow.

Allie, The Villages, FL

Anyway, I didn't know anyone here. It was another huge change, but I am healthy, active, and happy.

The way I cope with any stress, anxiety or grief is to get outside and exercise! A walk, a hike in the woods, or a bike ride is my way of coping! It makes me feel better by breathing in the fresh air and listening to all the sounds of nature around me! Don't use excuses like it's too cold or I don't have time, make it a

priority! I promise, you won't regret it! It's the best thing you can do for your body and your health!

Sue, Wausau

Right after I lost my first son, I pretty much kept all my feelings to myself---at work and at home. I just imagined that no one else cared. In fact, who would understand that I thought about him at least 1000 times a day. In the numbness of the unexpected tragedy, I found some solace in watching "John Edward" the medium, which kept alive my belief that I could still communicate with my son's spirit. As time went on, I started venturing out and doing more social things, and they evolved into volunteering and helping others. Believe it or not, helping others filled empty holes in my heart that I didn't even know were there. I also joined our local Compassionate Friends and learned I wasn't the only one who had suffered an incredible loss, and I learned of more ways to heal the hurting heart.

Betty, Rib Mountain, WI

Lonely...even in the company of co-pilots I've felt alone. Wearing a mask in public to avoid the wave of loneliness is like breaking in a new pair of boots. It's uncomfortable, pinches the toes, arches ache and you can't wait to kick them off. After a while, the boots are creased, widened, covered in earth stains and the pair you choose first. You can never see yourself getting rid of them...breaking in a new pair is haunting.

So, for me, fighting loneliness is knowing that it's uncomfortable until it's not.

Living by a mantra helps.

Living to help others helps.

Living to honor my beloved son Jon helps.

Knowing that his spirit surrounds me is insulation from the elements and reminds me to continue the traditions, try new things and embrace life.

Tara, Antigo, WI

What has helped me most is memories. Being lonely and alone are two different things. I don't mind being alone (not constantly, of course) but being lonely due to remembering and realizing I can no longer share so much with my husband is definitely lonely. I have learned to treasure the memories of so many past wonderful times and find reliving them in my mind does help. As well, I've surrounded myself with other widows and we share dinners, movies, visits and other activities as we combat the loneliness of being without our spouses. I don't find visiting places that I shared with my husband to be painful. Rather, I savor the lovely memories and do my best to make new memories with friends. It's different in so many ways, but memories of love and sharing always remain in my heart.

Bunny, Boynton Beach, FL

Knowing that my loved one has passed from this life to his eternal home has brought me much comfort. I know that I will see my loved ones again in our heavenly home. So, I continue to love this life until I am called.

Having faith and friends gives me purpose to continue here.

Karen, Venice FL

April 19th, 2024, will be the 19th anniversary of my son Darren's murder in China, while he was teaching English there. I am a retired inner-city teacher and have kept in touch with many of my former students. That has been a blessing. However, after my son's murder I got a second master's degree in counseling and psychology. I have taken many extra units in trauma and PTS. For the past 16 years, I have donated my services to the military, veterans, and other homicide survivors. I have also sent over 9,000 Care packages to our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. That has given me purpose and I have met the most incredible people.

Maxine, Burbank, CA

I think this is a great topic. The struggle is real. I know when my brother in law passed at 42, it was a struggle. He was such a good friend and support in many ways. We used to have a tradition of going to a Badger hockey game annually with our families. We tried it for a couple of years without him, but it was not the same.

Bob, Wausau, WI

LISTENING TO THE SILENCE

It is the silence that seems to be all around me. Silence in the loneliness and emptiness since my husband's death. The silence began when he took his last breath. Yet when I listened, I felt peace, knowing that he was healed and in his heavenly home. Then the silence after my family left. The first night alone in my home, with no noise in my bedroom. I didn't like that silence so the next night I turned on a fan and brought my dog into the house. I needed to fix that silence.

I missed being together while sharing our morning coffee and watched the agricultural news. I replaced that silence with devotional time, listening to music, remembering, and grieving his absence. I listened to those that advised me to cry, to reflect, and to grieve in my loneliness. My family brought me to church, so I did not need to be alone. The silence followed me there too.

His beautiful bass voice was absent, but I listened for the comfort that came through music and the messages shared. It is easier now, but sometimes hard. So conflicting.

Family and friends encouraged me to join in maple syrup cooking, attending grandkids concerts, volunteering, hosting a bridal shower for a special niece, and sharing in a lunch. I struggled to step outside of the home. I needed to feel "safe" with my emotions and grief and those that I was present with. I only shared with those that might understand this grief journey. When I returned to my home, I once again found the silence there. I listened to that silence, and I knew that my husband would want me to participate in life. He had shared that with me before he passed. And of course, I came back to that silent home and couldn't wait to tell him what I had done because he always wanted to know.

Recently the new and familiar sounds of spring have been there for me to experience. I only need to listen to them. I put a new APP on my phone that identifies birds' songs. So I step outside and I listen for new bird songs and am learning to identify them. The days can be lonely but when I am able, I look for the joys in creation, in my friends, and family.

The silence of loneliness is present. I am learning to listen as I discover this new life journey. I am grateful for the many resources and people that God has put in my life. I don't always succeed but I try to remember and learn how to listen to the silence.

Karen, Wausau, WI

I think that in grief, the loss of a spouse is a tough one to get a handle on. When I think of losing my husband, I think loneliness is the thing that hangs on the longest....it doesn't disappear like some of the other grief symptoms we have initially. There is still no one at the dinner table or on the other side of the bed. You sit in church all by yourself when at one time you held hands listening to the sermon. And when that wedding invite comes you mark only one person & then, hold back the tears when they play that special wedding song you always danced to. I can't imagine if that loneliness will ever change because the love I shared with my husband was one that I can't compare to anything else. Nobody can hug or give that kiss or look into your eyes like he did. Nothing replaces that togetherness but time heals and trusting in God's grace & care for me helps.

Pauline, Wausau, WI

"I still haven't figured out yet exactly how to deal with the void left by my wife. I have leaned heavily on my wife's family -- who say they have "adopted" me -- for support and understanding. I visit my mother-in-law at least twice a week and hang out with Linda's sisters as often as I can. We have a very strong bond. Unfortunately, they can't be around 24/7 like Linda was. I am also staying connected with my own family, including a brother who was previously estranged from us. I look forward to building a closer relationship with him and others in my social circle so I have

plenty of support."

-Kevin, Colby, WI

Loneliness and How I function in it: Grandpa once said to me, "Betty never stop learning." There is always something to learn. Now - the death of my grandson by suicide and his sister disowned me. How can any of this bring life in balance again?

For years I have journaled my heart stories. And this becomes as a life-line to reality - perception.

Faith is being tried is my story now. I feel numb to God's presence like the body is so beaten that it is not sensing God's awareness; the heart is broken in a thousand pieces. I am wanting to find homeostasis and all it knows to do right now is see the pain of occurrences. I write of this through feelings - of not finding words to express these moments, as if the body needs a new alphabet to speak, to express life - as in the present I am called into all "I was doing" in helping others. And the system, the body, the heart and mind feel numb. Like stepping ahead but rather stuck in the mess of things.

It's all two faces this reality and perception. I acknowledge others sympathies and thank God for moments of joy - and also in illness headaches from layered stress can say, "O God where are you? What am I to see? Am I really thrown away discarded? Like a flower thrown up on a shelf forgotten. Bit by bit each moment of the day I yearn to see where hope is leading. Right now I am not

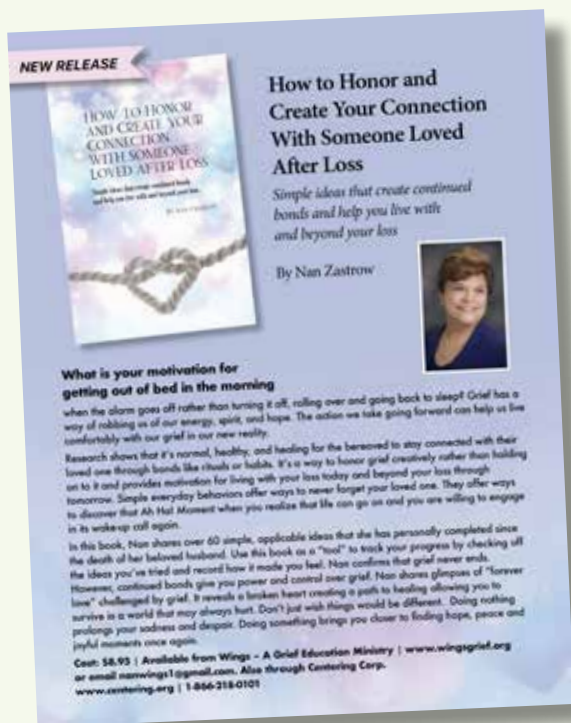
seeing good coming from the suicide of my grandson and my granddaughter disowning me. And my thinking that I have lost both my son and daughter's families.

Betty, Birnamwood, WI

Coming from a Japanese/American family, I have always been told that the spirits of those we love never leave us. I still talk to my grandpa, and it makes me feel close to him. We still hold birthday parties for him and share stories of the things we miss as a family. We believe he is still with us. We know his physical body isn't here, but he sends us messages all the time to remind us he is here looking out for us. When I miss him or want his advice, I speak out loud to him and ask for his help. On his birthday a cardinal came to the deck as we all were eating and sat there with us for quite some time. I believe these are signs he is here for us. I think the more we keep them in our hearts and are aware of the subtle things around us, we will be more receptive to the messages they are sending us. Working at Restlawn, I always hear families share stories of unique things happening that they know are signs from loved one's past. Don't overlook those things, I believe they are angels or loved ones telling us they are here for us still.

Teanna, Restlawn Memorial Park

A Thoughtful Mother's or Father's Day Gift



Are you a mother or father who has lost a child? Or perhaps your parent, grandparent, spouse, or sibling died, and you had a loving connection with them.

Now there is a way to continue those bonds in a healthy and healing way. Grieving people don't have to hide in the closet any longer. We've found ways to share love and connection.

This book is about 3 things:

- (1) forever love that never dies;
- (2) ways to honor your loved one through continued bonds—more than 60 Simple ideas for connecting and healing;
- (3) Hope. The critical factor for accepting the new reality. I share dozens of ways to express and honor your grief creatively rather than holding on to it.

This book makes a thoughtful gift for yourself or someone else bereaved. Keep a spare copy in a drawer available when you want to soothe the heart of someone who lost their loved one and wants their memory to live on!

On the Lighter Side...



Chocolate Chip Cookies

As the elderly man lay dying in his bed, death's agony was suddenly pushed aside as he smelled the aroma of his favorite homemade chocolate chip cookies wafting up the stairs.

Gathering his remaining strength, he lifted himself from the bed. Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with intense concentration, supported himself down the stairs, gripping the railing with both hands. In labored breath, he leaned against the doorframe, gazing wide-eyed into the kitchen. There, spread upon the newspapers on the kitchen table, were literally HUNDREDS of his favorite chocolate chip cookies! Was I heaven? Or was it one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself toward the table, landing on his knees in a rumped posture, one hand on the edge of the table. The aged and withering hand quivering, made its way to a cookie near the edge of the table; feeling the warm soft dough actually made the pain of his bones subside for a moment. His parched lips parted; the wondrous taste of cookies was already in his mouth; seemingly bringing him back to life. He reached for another cookie. What then, was this sudden stinging that caused his hand to recoil? He looked to see his wife, still holding a spatula she has just used to smack his hand.

"Stay out of those cookies!" she said, "They're for your funeral!"

"Do you believe in life after death?" the boss asked his newest associate.

"I certainly do, sir," the young man replied proudly.

"That explains everything quite clearly then. Because shortly after you left work early yesterday to attend your grandmother's funeral, she stopped in to see you."



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

DID YOU MISS ME? IN MY JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF...

“Whenever I am missing you, I also remember how fortunate I was that you were in my life. I wouldn’t trade those moments for the world.”

– Nan Zastrow

It never failed. Whenever my husband, Gary, walked in the door, he would find me and his first words were, “Did you miss me?” There was always that twinkle in his eye and his charming grin that won me over so reminiscent of our “dating days” together. Most times I chuckled because he might only have been absent for an hour or so... a quick trip to Menards or the grocery store. When the trips were longer, like down to work or after an early morning of golf, the absence was quite noticeable and “yes, I truly did miss him.” This favorite phrase was one of Gary’s many nuances that defined him and made me feel unconditionally appreciated and loved.

Since my husband’s death, that phrase echoes in my ears more than ever before. I was reminiscing about this recently and how that one daily occurrence always made me smile. Now when I come home to an empty house, as I close the back door, I long for the sound of the television, seeing him doing something in the yard, or the tapping of his fingers upon the tablet (often playing solitaire). I find myself talking to myself more than ever because even the sound of my voice is more welcoming than the empty silence.

Every night when I crawl into bed and turn the light off, I miss him because he was always the last one down and always turned off the light on his side of the bed. Now, I

throw the covers over myself and can only imagine that hug, kiss, or final words before, hopefully, falling into a deep sleep.

When I went somewhere alone and returned home, I couldn’t wait to push the button to open the garage door and feel the welcome comfort of his car parked inside. Teasingly someday, I had the opportunity to say, “Did you miss me?” He owned the phrase, and I admit it was a lot more meaningful when he said it.

The warm days of summers are creeping up and the realization this year is even more obvious than the first year after his death. Year number two is definitely the lonely year. I think of all the vacations, travels, day trips, daily rides, trips up north, and events that filled our time and know that this year all will be absent. Last year, I had little desire for those reminders and preoccupied myself just trying to keep up with his ambitious standards for yard and home. Putting that aside this year, the days will be endlessly long. In the winter, I didn’t mind staying at home and didn’t long for those excursions because the weather didn’t invite me out. But summer will be noticeably different.

This is the reality of losing your soulmate and life partner. Perhaps not everyone feels this way, but of all the adjustments one must make when adapting to change after loss, this one becomes my top contender.

Never did I dream about that simple phrase becoming a staple of our relationship. I assumed that we would be

There are ways to fill that void of missing someone. Such ways will never replace having your loved one near you. However, they do give comfort to the sting of absence. Think back about all that gave you joy together and then find comfort in a particular lonely moment at the present time. Things I've tried, some with success and others not so successful include:

- Be grateful. Journal a specific thought that I am grateful for at that very moment from our lives together.
- Intentionally, marvel at something quite beautiful like a sunrise, a favorite bird, or a bouquet of flowers that takes me by surprise. Something he would have acknowledged.
- Drive to a place we frequently went. Turn off the car. Meditate. And cherish the memories and deep conversations of those moments.
- Compliment someone on something he or she did that was giving, loving, or spontaneous, and I had the opportunity to witness it. (Reminds me of Gary's genuine character.)
- Watch a romantic movie (Hallmark Channel) to rekindle the feelings we expressed for each other that will never die. (I still tell him I love him, every day.)
- Bake his favorite cookies and eat too many of them myself!
- Energize myself by doing some unfavorable task that I've postponed for too long. Then feeling the victory that gives me joy in saying "Done!"
- Snuggle up in his velour robe, turn on the fireplace, and consider it a familiar hug on a cloudy cool evening.
- Take something out of his Memory Box and relive that special time.
- Call a friend of mine or a friend of his and plan breakfast or lunch together. (Why? Because I know they don't mind if I mention his name.)
- Write. Express my feelings in articles like this.

there for each other for many years to come. And beyond that, it's normal to think when I die, who would really miss me?

There are all kinds of opinions on what that phrase "Did you miss me?" really means. I choose to believe in our case that it was a way to confirm the importance in our partner's life that validated our wedded bond. At least that's my interpretation and preference. Although Gary said it in a teasing way, there was affection for the intimate relationship we shared for over five decades. How can one not miss someone that significant?

Dealing with Gary's absence in my own way has become my quest as I move forward in my grief. Someone one told me you aren't "alone." You are "with yourself." I guess that's good advice. Who could be more compatible than me, myself and I? No arguments there! What I am adjusting to is being okay and content while being alone. I accept that it is not a penalty of loss or a societal charade. It is my new reality. Somedays it hurts beyond words and on other days I work to find ways to break the silence.

"Did you miss me?" Will always be the phrase that lingers in my head and confirms beyond a doubt that we were "one". I will miss Gary with all my heart until we meet again. And I know when he greets me on the other side, the first words he will say to me are, "Did you miss me?" This is the beauty of love that never dies!



Rest In Peace, Mr. President

By Todd Van Beck

Rest in Peace, Mr. President. That was the hope...that our presidents would rest in peace, but that has not always happened. For example, between 1865 and 1901 Lincoln's remains were moved 18 times.

Funerals are a reflection of how people live their lives, and this remains true for the funerals of our U.S. presidents. This series offers a glimpse into the deaths and funerals of our presidents, while offering overdue recognition to the scores of funeral professionals who labored ceaselessly to carry out the wishes of the presidents, their families, and in some cases, the wishes of the United States government. Each account tells an interesting story. —TVB

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

the twenty-sixth President of the United States of America

Roosevelt was President McKinley's Vice-President. He was lunching with the Vermont Fish and Game League at Lake Champlain on September 6, 1901 when he received word that President McKinley had been shot in Buffalo, New York.

He rushed to the president's bedside, but he was assured that McKinley was recovering, so he joined his family for a vacation in the Adirondacks. He received news that McKinley was dying during lunch near a mountain lake on September 13th. By the time Roosevelt returned to Buffalo, the president was dead.

On September 14, 1901, Roosevelt was sworn in as the 26th President. He was 42 years old.

Upon his retirement from the presidency, he returned to his home, known as "Sagamore Hill," located at Oyster Bay, New York on Long Island. Here Roosevelt continued to live what he called the strenuous life.

Unwisely, Roosevelt took a dangerous trip mapping out the River of Doubt in Africa, and this trip almost killed him and certainly destroyed his health permanently.

Then his youngest son, Quentin, was killed in action during the First World War, and from then on, Roosevelt's health chronically deteriorated.

It was Sunday, January 5, 1919 at 11:00 PM when his physician was summoned because Roosevelt was experiencing shortness of breath. The breathing crisis ended, the physician left, and Roosevelt went to bed. Roosevelt's last words were, "Please put out the light" which he said to his valet.

At 4:00 AM on Monday, January 6th, the valet noticed a change in Roosevelt's breathing, and he immediately called the nurse. However, when the nurse arrived, Roosevelt was already dead. For his lifelong devotion to living the strenuous life, Roosevelt lived only 60 years and 71 days. His cause of death was listed as a pulmonary embolism.

At 5:00 AM, Wilbur F. Johnson, who was an undertaker and furniture dealer from East Norwich, New York, arrived at the residence to embalm the body and prepare it for the funeral.

On Tuesday, Wilbur F. Johnson arrived back at the residence to dress and casket Roosevelt. Roosevelt was laid to rest in a solid quartered oak casket with three silver handles on each side. There were no active or honorary pallbearers at Roosevelt's funeral. The casket was carried by Johnson's undertaking assistants.

Also on this day the funeral invitations were completed and sent.

The funeral for Roosevelt would be simple. There was no military display and the utmost simplicity in religious services was upheld. Roosevelt had been a member of the Dutch Reformed Church his entire life, but the funeral would take place in the Christ Church Episcopal sanctuary in Oyster Bay. There would be no eulogy and no music.

Wednesday was the funeral day. A little before noon, a private funeral was held in the trophy room at Sagamore Hill. About 75 people were present. When this service was over Mrs. Roosevelt retired to her private bedroom. She would not accompany the family to the church or attend the formal public funeral.

Inside the church, the clergy began the Ancient Order of Burial of the Episcopal Church. The casket was carried down the aisle draped with the American flag. In the procession were members of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, who fought with him in the Spanish-American War.

In New York City, the New York Stock Exchange closed at 1:00 PM. The New York City school system suspended classes in the afternoon, as did the courts. The United States Post Office held one minute of silence at 2:15 PM. The bells of historic Trinity Church tolled in mourning.

There were five hundred people at the funeral of Theodore Roosevelt.

When the funeral had completed, Roosevelt's remains were placed in Johnson's hearse for the trip to Young's Memorial Cemetery. It was estimated that 4000 people lined the funeral procession route.

The cemetery is on a steep hill, and Roosevelt's grave, which he himself selected, is at the very top. Roosevelt particularly liked the birdlife that made its home in this cemetery.

The casket was lowered into the grave, and the clergy read the committal service. That evening and for the next week, men in uniform watched over the grave as an honor guard.

One of Roosevelt's sons was unable to attend the funeral, and that evening, another of Roosevelt's sons sent a short telegram which read: "We buried the old lion today, it is over."



Theodore Roosevelt

Todd W. Van Beck is associated with John A. Gupton College in Nashville, and has been an author, teacher, practitioner, and speaker for over 40 years. On May 30, 2018 Van Beck celebrated 50 years in funeral service. You can reach Todd at 615-327-3927.

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Be Good to Yourself

SELF CARE TIP

Friends in Grief...

“Your companions are like buttons on an elevator. They will either take you up or they will take you down.” Relationships and connections with family and friends often change when you have experienced the death of a loved one. People you expected to be supportive of you may not measure up to your expectations. And, surprisingly, someone else may rise far above your expectations and become your pillar of strength during troubling times. You may want to assess what each person brings to your grief experience. It may be necessary to disconnect with certain individuals as you heal your grief. Not everyone can be empathetic, especially if they have never had a life experience that challenged them the way your grief affects you. They may not be able to walk that journey with you. In time as you heal, renewing your friendship again may be possible.

Clichés of Grief

By Rachel Kodanaz
 Permission to reprint granted by Rachel Kodanaz

Day #16 – Clichés of grief

Some of us experience hurtful comments from friends and family as they search for ways to help ease the pain. The remarks are usually said with the best of intentions but are misunderstood by the griever as insensitive.

Cliché	Initial Reaction	What they meant
Time will heal	Do we really ever heal or does time soften the pain?	You must feel as though the pain will never end.
You are young, you can have more children	Even if I do, a new child will not replace the one I lost.	You must really be sad, let me hug you again.
Call me if I can help	Most likely I won't.	I would like to come by tomorrow and....
He is in a better place	No, he isn't. The better place is sitting next to me.	It isn't fair, is it?
You are holding up so well	Right? Maybe on the outside.	I am available to visit with you, can I call you tomorrow?
It is time to move on!	Move on from what?	Take the time you need, I just miss your smile.

People are not mean-spirited; they just don't know what to say. As a griever, please try to filter out the “hurtful” gestures and interpret them as love and caring.

An excerpt from *Living with Loss One Day at a Time*, a collection of 365 thought provoking reflections of grief, loss and recovery.

“No matter how you look at it, we all chase the shadow of grief, sometimes for a short time, sometimes for a much longer period of time. We chase it for as long as it is necessary; we chase it to understand. We may never catch up to it. It can fascinate us or consume us. And, ultimately, it can challenge our lives temporarily or change our lives forever.”

– (Nan Zastrow)

Cook It... Freeze it... Or Eat it!



Meals for One...
Or Two if you
like leftovers.

For the next issue, please submit your recipe to nanwings1@gmail.com

BROCCOLI SALAD-SMALL BATCH

Ingredients:

- 1 cup broccoli florets
- ¼ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese (If possible, use thick shredded cheese)
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 1 strip bacon , cooked and chopped in ¼-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons chopped red onions
- 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds

For the dressing:

- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8teaspoon black pepper

Directions

- Combine the broccoli florets, cheese, dried cranberries, cooked and crumbled bacon, onions, and sunflower seeds in a large bowl.
- In a separate smaller bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, white wine vinegar, olive oil, sugar, salt, and pepper.
- Pour the dressing over the salad and stir well. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavors to meld together.
- Enjoy chilled!



BROCCOLI CHEESE SOUP-SMALL BATCH

Ingredients:

- ½ tablespoon olive oil
- 1 clove garlic , minced
- ¾ cup low sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup chopped onions
- 1 tablespoon all purpose flour
- ½ cup whole milk
- ½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/8 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 cup broccoli florets

Instructions:

- Heat the oil in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook for 1 minute, stirring frequently until the onions soften. Add the garlic and cook for an additional 30 seconds.
- Add the flour to the pot and cook, stirring frequently for 1 minute.
- Pour in the broth and stir until smooth.
- Stir in the milk and cream.
- Bring the soup to a gentle boil, stirring frequently, and then reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes.
- Add the cheese, cumin, chili powder, and salt and stir until smooth.
- Add the broccoli and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pro Tip: Be sure to chop your broccoli into fine, bite-sized pieces. This will ensure they cook evenly.

BROCCOLI CASSEROLE-SMALL BATCH

Ingredients:

- 1 cup broccoli florets
- ¼ cup chopped onions
- 1/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons sour cream
- 3 tablespoons Panko breadcrumbs
- 1 ½ tablespoons salted butter , divided
- 1 clove garlic , minced
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1/3 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/3 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
- Place the broccoli florets in a medium-sized pot of boiling water and cook for 2 minutes or just until tender-crisp. Drain well and set aside.
- Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, about 2 minutes.
- Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently for 30 seconds.
- Pour in the chicken broth, increase the heat to medium-high, stir, and bring to a simmer.
- Add the heavy cream and bring the mixture back up to a simmer, stirring frequently. Continue to simmer and stir for an additional 2 to 3 minutes to thicken the sauce slightly.
- Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the sour cream. Next, stir in the Monterey Jack cheese and gently fold in the broccoli.
- Transfer the broccoli and sauce to a lightly buttered 5x5 inch baking dish and place the dish on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any possible spills.
- Melt the remaining ½ tablespoon of butter and pour into a medium-sized bowl. Stir in the breadcrumbs and shredded Cheddar cheese.
- Sprinkle the breadcrumb topping evenly over the casserole and bake uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes or until the casserole is bubbly and the topping is golden.
- Remove the casserole from the oven and let it rest for 5 to 10 minutes. As the casserole rests, the sauce thickens even more.



JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2024

There is no charge for these groups. Registration is required for virtual groups to receive the link and for in-person groups to save a spot.



An open session for sharing your grief experiences

Tuesdays: JUNE 11, 18, 25
(3 Weekly Sessions) IN-PERSON
THE LANDING -YMCA Wausau
3:00 to 4:00 p.m. 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Registration is required. Class size is limited. Facilitator: Nan Zastrow

INPERSON—INTERACTIVE—Closed after the first session.

Join us for a guided sharing session to talk about your grief experiences with others also dealing with loss. Discuss your thoughts, ask questions, share your challenges, and know that you are not alone. Participants will be asked to honor confidentiality, be non-judgmental, and respect each other's feelings. This is not a counseling session—and I won't be giving advice. It's a time to authentically share your feelings in a safe space. The facilitator may provide some guided ways to share your story. The goal is to leave the session with a positive feeling to rely on in difficult times and begin to restore balance and hope in your life again.



Single session:
Thursday, June 20
6:00—7:00 p.m. CST
Register for a link

Have you ever thought that your loved one who died is supporting you, reassuring you and even cheering you on from beyond? Do you believe in the possibilities of messages and signs that your loved one can connect with you? Do you continue to "talk" to your loved one to relieve the stress of grief and give you a sense of comfort and peace? If these questions intrigue you, you may want to attend this program where your curiosity and inner spirit beckon you to believe in things you cannot see or confirm. Learn about the behaviors that may prevent you from receiving this life after life affirming gift. And learn what gifts are out there just waiting for your acknowledgement.



In-Person Group
@ The Landing-YMCA
Tuesdays: August 13, 20, 27
and Sept. 3, 10
5:30—7:00 p.m.
ZOOMGRIEF-VIRTUAL
Thursdays Aug 15, 22, 29
and Sept 5, 12
6:00—7:00 p.m. CST

Grief is something you may consider private and personal, as though only you can own it. We live in a culture that avoids talking about loss and one that wants us to move quickly through mourning to become our former selves. But grief is a process that takes time and work. Silence is not golden. When you give sorrow words, you express how you are feeling and begin to release your personal anguish. You teach others about your grief. Grief that goes unnamed and unspoken, remains unresolved. Grief is an emotion that can rule your life if you don't give it the attention it demands. In this series, you will learn what's normal and what's necessary to heal your grief. This is a perfect group for those new to grief or for those who feel grief still is hanging on. Learn how grief challenges your common sense. Giving sorrow words after loss helps you find peace and meaning in your life going forward.

Register online at wingsgrief.org or email: nanwings1@gmail.com



Certified Grief Educator | Facilitator:
Nan Zastrow
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