



Good Mourning
...a journey through grief

concepts contemporary

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The Funeral Service

Name of Loved One

Funeral Services Provided by

Date

Time

Location of Memorial Service

Officiating/Speakers

Date

Time

Cemetery

Date

Time

City

State

Province

In Loving Memory Of

Place a photo or photos of your
loved one here



Evening with Clouds
by Caspar David Friedrich

Precious Memories



On the Volga
by Abram Efimovich Arkhipov



Marriages

and

were married on

Date

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Marriages

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Date of Discharge

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Name

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Honors

On Grieving, Gratitude and Guilt

Grieving is a natural, desirable, even

necessary experience for one to be mentally healthy during times of severe personal loss.

Grieving is a process, not a fleeting emotion to be experienced and quickly subverted. The process of grief takes time. And each grieving person has his or her own timetable. No two people, however close, grieve in the same way. It is a process as unique as an individual's personality.

While specialists have defined steps in the process, each phase will be longer or shorter for one person than another. No length of time

Let grief do its work. Tromp every inch of the sorrowful way. Drink every drop of the bitter cup. Draw from memory and hope all that they can offer. To see the things our loved ones have left behind will give us daily pain~the clothes they wore, the letters they wrote, the books they read, the chairs in which they sat, the music they loved, the walks they took, the games they played, and much beside ... But what would we be without those reminders? Would we like quickly to break with the past in order to ease our grief? Those who truly love will say that they have found in sorrow a new joy, a joy which only the broken-hearted can know.

~W. Graham Scroggie

in grieving is right or wrong. Grieving becomes a problem needing help only when one becomes trapped in one stage and does not progress through the process to the place where the loss is accepted and the bereaved person is able to return to a degree of normalcy.

One rarely "gets over" the death of a father or mother or spouse or child. The loss is too deep, too permanent. Rather, through a healthy grieving process, one gains the ability to cope with the loss. The day comes when memories no longer focus on the loss, but on the joy of remembering the

good times. A void is still there, but gratitude replaces grief as the dominant emotion.

Grieving as a process involves distinct stages. Each requires special understanding and effort to deal with.

First, is shock and denial. How can it be? How can it happen to my family? Even when death is expected as in an elderly parent, the reality that we will never see our loved one again in this life breeds a powerful inner resistance. Eventually, reality prevails. We realize that no amount of denial will ever bring our loved one back. We find ourselves engulfed in an overwhelming sense of isolation.

People grieve in their own unique ways. To some, even friends who with the best of motives seek to console us, become uninvited guests. We want to be left alone, to try to “think things through.” This is a healthy process unless we allow it to

become an energy-draining swamp of self pity and despair.

For others, grieving is the time they come in touch with the inner resource of

faith and the comfort of a “higher power” who understands, cares and comforts. Some who grieve react to the growing sense of isolation with a fear of being alone. They want someone with them at all times. Remember, people grieve in ways unique to themselves. And the way some face denial and isolation is to surround themselves with caring friends and other grieving family members.

The next phase has been referred to as a time of anger and questioning. During this time, the grieving

person tends to turn inward, to go through a “what if” process. “What if I hadn’t?” or “What if I had....?” “Why was this allowed to happen?” It is during this time that hope begins to

We are constantly encouraged to believe that life can be pain free, but to live without pain is a myth ... to live without pain ... is to live half-alive, without fullness of life ... Many of us do not realize that pain and joy run together. When we cut ourselves off from pain, we have unwillingly cut ourselves off from joy as well.

**~Clyde Reid in
Tim Hansel's book
*You Gotta Keep Dancin'***

work its way into the grieving person's inner thoughts.

A serious danger during this anger phase is the development of guilt on the part of the grieving person.

We human beings are born with a "blame syndrome." And when we can't blame someone else, and sometimes even when we can, we blame ourselves. It's an extension of the "what if" game. First, we run through every possible scenario as to how we could have prevented the death of our loved one.

When we exhaust this avenue, we think of all those moments we could have been with them, done something for them, or other action we didn't take while our loved one was with us.

When grief turns into guilt, the healing process of grieving is short circuited. We turn in on ourselves. Reality continues to be rejected. "What ifs" become an

energy-draining obsession. No amount of consolation is enough to stop the deterioration. Guilt can become a major problem when death comes in an untimely way from a preventable

disease, an avoidable accident, or suicide. "If only I had ..." keeps the grieving person locked in an inner spiral that often needs help to overcome.

An antidote to guilt is to find rest in forgiveness and peace. Remove the sense of guilt and replace it with gratitude for the time spent with your loved one.

Even when the grieving process isn't sidetracked by excessive guilt, the grieving person often

experiences the phase of depression. The sense of loss becomes all pervasive. We can no longer deny its reality. We can do nothing to reverse the situation. We are left with a harsh void no one can fill.

Suffering itself does not do us in or sabotage the will to live. Usually we sabotage ourselves by foolishly trying to live our lives in isolation. Without the comfort and love of other human beings, none of us is very strong. Aligned with others who accept us and support us, we can survive most anything.

~Anne Kaiser Stearns

Depression is normal when one faces serious loss. We need to recognize it as part of the grieving process, but refuse to give into it as a way to escape reality and postpone return to the real world in which loss must be accepted and dealt with.

Grieving is a process, a normal progression from a valid sense of shock and denial to questioning to a depressive sense of irreversible loss.

No need to deny our loss. It is real. And we have honest emotions of anger, the right to questions. But healthy grieving must move beyond all this to an embracement of our grief.

Grieving is an act of love. We don't grieve the loss of those for whom we have no feeling. To grieve the loss of a loved one is the highest honor we can give that loved one. When we begin to accept the normalcy of death as that which comes to all, and embrace our grief as gratitude for those relationships that will forever be a part

of us. We are on the road to the last phase of the grieving process, a healthy acceptance of reality.

There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.

~Washington Irving

When deep personal loss is dealt with in a healthy manner, our grieving becomes a bridge of love to the future. It is a future with a huge missing part of our lives. But it is the only future we have. And to move forward in faith in our strength, hope in the future and continuing reverence for the memories of our loved

one is the greatest memorial we can erect. It is a living memorial based in love and built on hope.

We need not fear talking about our deceased loved ones. We need not hide from our feelings. Grieving takes time. It is energy draining. We must allow it to do its work. Not by wallowing in self pity, but by honoring the one we love by embracing grief with loving determination to be a living memorial through a life that counts for others.

May this volume of *Good Mourning* be a comfort to you today and in the days to come.



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I have sometimes been
wildly, despairingly, acutely
miserable, but through it all
I still know quite certainly
that just to be alive is a
grand thing.

~Agatha Christie



Introduction

Nicolo Paganini (1782-1840), the Italian composer and musician, is considered by many to be the greatest violinist of all time. Here's an incident out of his life which offers one reason why he is so highly regarded. During a concert before a distinguished audience a string on his violin suddenly snapped. The audience gasped but the master musician played on the three remaining strings as if nothing had happened.

Abruptly, a second string broke! Without missing a note, Paganini played on. Unbelievably, a third string gave way with a sharp crack! For a brief moment, the violinist stopped. The audience was certain he could not continue. Calmly and confidently, Paganini raised his famous Stradivarius violin high with one hand and announced: "One string . . . and Paganini."



The Violinist Nicolo Paganini
By Georg Freidrich Kersting

Thoughts

& Feelings



Then, with a tremendous, energetic skill and the matchless discipline of a gifted artist, Paganini finished the selection on a single string. His performance was done with such matchless perfection, the audience rose in unison giving Paganini a standing ovation.

Like Paganini, there are times in all of our lives when a “string” snaps. One of those occasions is a time of grief. When a loved one has died we are left feeling incomplete, damaged, even broken. Yet, like Paganini those who are grieving must simply do the best they can with what they have to work with. Rather than give in or give up, anyone who grieves must find ways to meet life’s challenge with wisdom, courage, dignity and optimism. Only then, will the pain of bereavement recede and the happiness of living return.



Chapter 1

When You are Grieving...

*Frequently Asked
Questions About Grief*





Dismasted Brig
By John Sell Cotman



Wherever you find people,
there will be those who are
tragic and there will be those
who are triumphant.

~Victor Parachin

How long does grief last?

This is probably the most common question asked by the bereaved. Because every griever is a unique personality there is no single answer to this question. In most cases, the pain associated with grieving begins to subside considerably in the second and third years following loss. This means that there are more good days than bad ones; that the heavy depressive feelings in earlier months begin to break up with more hopeful, optimistic feelings replacing them. Many bereavement authorities believe that most grief adjustments take between two and four years to be completed. Of course, some adjustments are shorter and some are longer, depending upon personality factors and the nature of the relationship with the deceased.

What are the signs of grief?

On the emotional level, the bereaved experience some of the following: disbelief, shock, numbness, denial, sadness, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, loneliness,



To weep is to make less the depth of grief.

~William Shakespeare



Emilie Menzel Standing at the Piano
By Adolph von Menzel



frustration. The physical symptoms of grief can include tightness of the chest or throat, pain in the heart area, panic attacks, dizziness, trembling. Grievors also report sleep disturbance, either too much or not enough sleeping. All of these emotional and physical symptoms fall within the normal range of response to the loss of a loved one.

I feel like I'm going crazy— is this normal?

This is perfectly normal. Indeed, grief can be accurately described as a “crazy” time in one’s life. In her book, *Nobody’s Child Anymore*, Barbara Bartocci writes: “The important thing to realize about mourning is that it’s normal to feel slightly crazy. You will forget things. You will drive your car as if on auto pilot. You will stare at the papers on your desk and feel paralyzed to get any work done,” she notes. Bartocci offers this simple and practical advice: “This might be a good time to carry a small notebook with you. Write down things you need to remember. Don’t rely on your memory. Let your boss know why you’re not functioning at your usual one hundred percent. Be patient with yourself. Be as understanding of yourself during this time as you would like others to be.”



Eugene Manet on the Isle of Wight
By Berthe Morisot

Vase with Flowers in a Window
By Ambrosius Bosschaert



Will I ever stop crying?

Even though it may be difficult to believe, the tears will come to an end. This will not happen abruptly but gradually. And even after intense crying ceases, there may be times when hearing a favorite song or seeing a favorite place will bring a moment of sadness along with a tear. Keep in mind that crying is healthy because it is an emotional and physical release. Writing centuries earlier, Shakespeare had it right: “To weep is to make less the depth of grief.”

Do all people grieve in the same way?

While many aspects of grieving are universal—feelings of sadness, numbness, confusion, depression—there is no one prescribed way to grieve. Grieving is an individual endeavor. Some want to have many people around with whom they can share and explore their feelings. Others prefer to deal with loss more privately. Most people report that grieving is much like being on an emotional roller coaster. It’s worth noting that the “ride” down is usually the prelude to the “ride” up.



The Goldfinch
By Carel
Fabritius

Birds sing after a storm;
why shouldn't people feel as free
to delight in whatever sunlight
remains to them?

~Rose Kennedy

The Way
By Camille Pissarro



How about men and women? Do they grieve differently?

The cultural stereotypes of women and men in grief are inaccurate. Generally, they portray women as being expressive with their grief while men are the strong and silent type. The reality is that some men need and want to express and share their feelings while some women prefer to do their grief work in a more low key way. Bereavement styles have less to do with gender and more to do with basic personality traits. Grieve in ways that are most helpful and healing for you.

The holidays are coming. How can I cope with them?

It's not only holidays which are difficult because there is an "empty chair" but also anniversaries, birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day and so on. Here are some effective ways to manage these special days:

- **Plan ahead.** How will you spend the day? With whom?
- **Talk about your deceased loved one.** This will let others know you want to hear his/her name and to talk about that person.
- **Establish personal priorities.** Decide what you want to do, how you wish to



Portrait of Carl Gustaf Tessin
Swedish politician
By Jacques Aved



Portrait of Anna Elisabeth Agnes,
Wife of the Artist
By Carl Albrecht

celebrate and whom you wish to be with. Follow your instincts.

- **Express your feelings.** If the holidays make you more weepy, then cry. If you feel the need to talk about the loss, then find a good friend who will listen.
- **Value your memories.** You have love and the price of losing a loved one is pain. Cherish the time you had together and value precious memories which can never be taken away from you.
- **Reach out to others.** Take the focus off yourself and your pain by volunteering to help others.
- **Avoid isolating yourself in grief.** Just because you are in pain, don't cut yourself off from others. Stay in touch. Keep communication open with family, friends and colleagues. Accept invitations for social events even if you don't feel like it.
- **Be patient with yourself.** A loss to death inflicts a deep wound but the wound will heal.

I feel very angry. Why is this and what can I do with the anger?

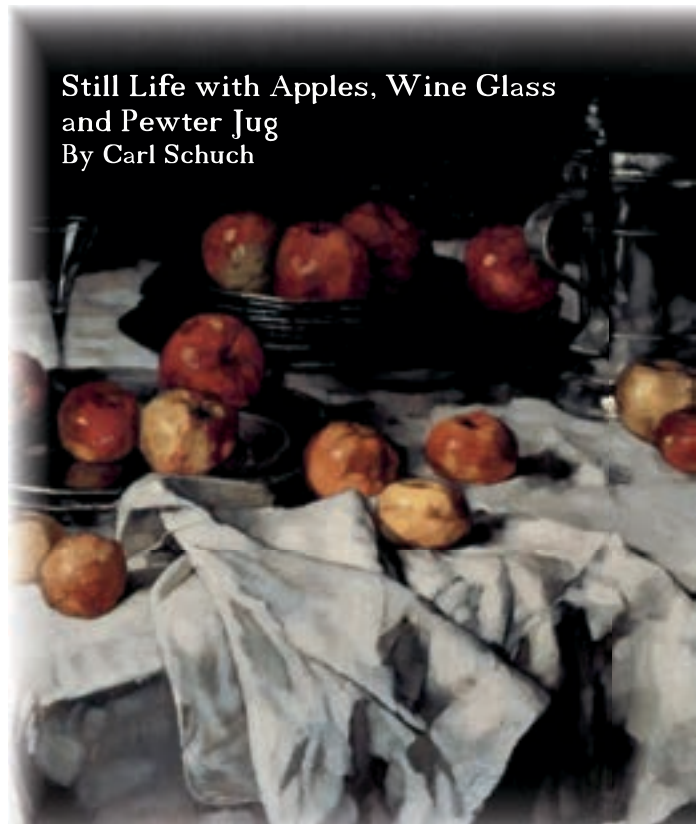
It is not unusual to feel angry. Sometimes the anger is directed at the deceased loved one, sometimes toward other family



Farmers at a Meal
By Diego Velazquez

We inherit from our ancestors gifts so often taken for granted... Each of us contains within... this inheritance of soul. We are links between the ages, containing past and present expectations, sacred memories and future promise.

~Edward Sellner



Still Life with Apples, Wine Glass and Pewter Jug
By Carl Schuch



members, sometimes at medical staff, or others. The anger will subside but you can take the edge off it through exercise, physical activity such as housework or gardening, and by talking about the angry feelings.

In the Home Garden
By Carl Spitzweg



What helps the grieving process?

Even though grievors often feel helpless, there are important steps and actions they can take to make the grieving process flow more smoothly and toward a more rapid resolution. Here are some ways to cope with the pain of loss:

- **Seek out supportive people.** Find a relative, friend, neighbor, or spiritual leader who will listen non-judgmentally and provide you support as you sort your way through grief.
- **Join a support group.** Being with others who have had a similar loss is therapeutic.
- **Express your feelings.** Do this by confiding in a trusted friend or by writing in a journal. Feelings expressed are often feelings diminished.
- **Take care of your health.** Eat balanced nutritious meals. Rest properly. Find an exercise you enjoy and do it regularly. If you

have physical problems consult with your physician promptly.

- Find outside help when necessary. If your bereavement feels too heavy for you to bear, find a counselor or therapist trained in grief issues to offer you some guidance.

I have an opportunity to relocate. Would this be good for me?

After a death, the temptation to make changes can be acute. Such changes can include selling off one's home, taking a new position, making a career change. Unless there is some pressing reason for the change, a good rule is to postpone any major change for at least one year following the loss. Grief authority Earl Grollman advises: "You may be tempted to make a radical change in your life—to sell your house, to move someplace different, to make a fresh start, away from your familiar home and all the painful memories. Wait awhile. The time is not right for major decisions. Your judgment is still uncertain. You are still in horrible pain. Getting used to a new life takes time, thought, and patience."



Learn the art of patience. Apply discipline to your thoughts when they become anxious over the outcome of a goal. Impatience breeds anxiety, fear, discouragement and failure. Patience creates confidence, decisiveness, and a rational outlook, which eventually leads to success.

~Brian Adams



The House of Dr. Gachet
By Paul Cezanne

A photograph of a violin resting on a music stand. The violin is the central focus, with its body and neck clearly visible. The music stand holds several sheets of aged, yellowed sheet music. The background is dark, possibly black or dark blue, with some metallic elements of the stand visible. In the lower-left corner, there is a blue envelope with some markings and a small ring. The overall mood is artistic and nostalgic.

The Old Violin
By William Michael Harnett

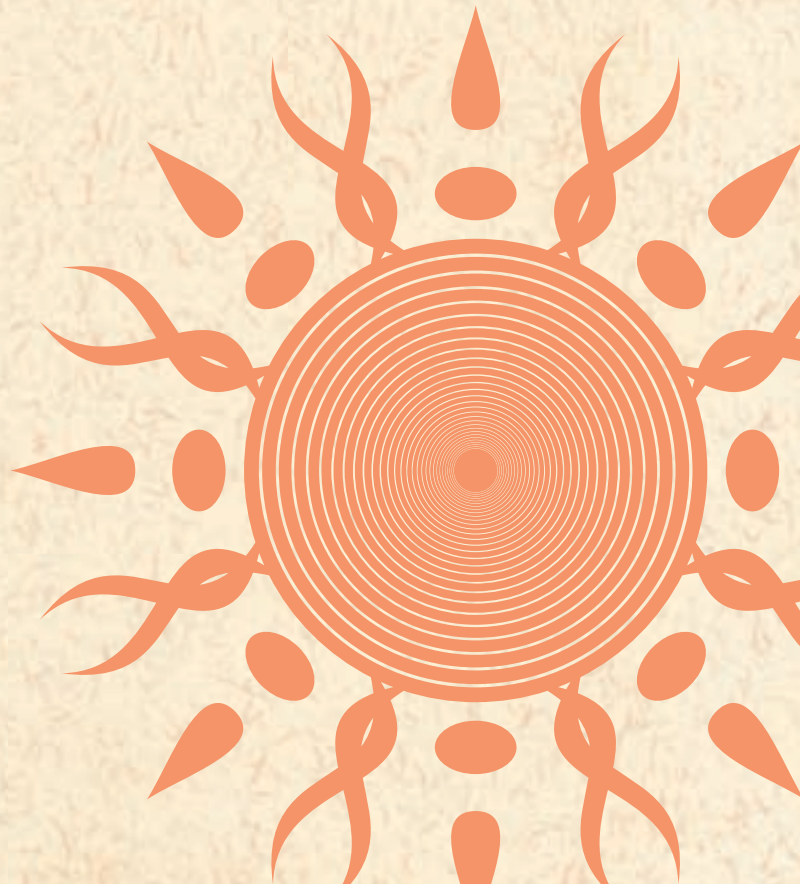
And the day
came when
the risk to
remain tight
in a bud was
more painful
than the risk
it took to
blossom.

~Anais Nin



Chapter 2

When Your Partner Has Died





The Oaks of Apremont
By Théodore Rousseau

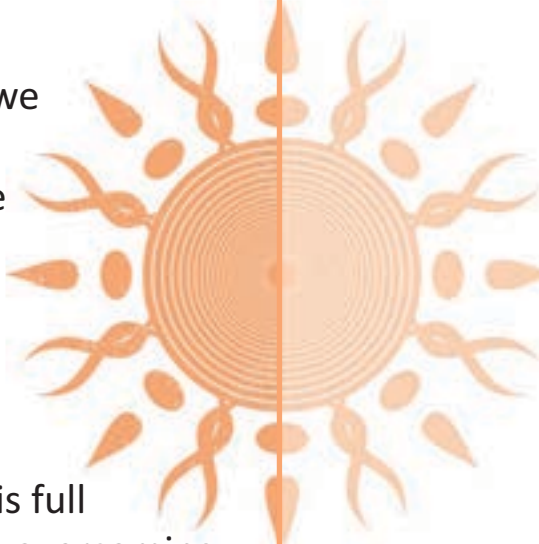


Suffering itself does not do us in or sabotage the will to live. Usually we sabotage ourselves by foolishly trying to live our lives in isolation. Without the comfort and love of other human beings, none of us is very strong. Aligned with others who accept us and support us, we can survive most anything.

~Anne Kaiser Stearns

A death of someone we love is one of life's harshest blows. The bereavement which emerges can generate loneliness, fear, guilt, regret, rage, depression and even despair. Yet, people can and do heal from those wounds. "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it," observed Helen Keller. Many people have experienced the deep wound of grief but emerged from it to live satisfying, fulfilling lives. They are beacons of light for those experiencing a dark night of the soul. Here are the seven habits of highly effective grievers which can be utilized when a partner has died.

Habit 1): *They let friends help.* Friendship can lift you out of the grip of dark grief into places where sunshine can find you. Kyndi Kindle of Oklahoma was a high school junior when her father, Don, was killed in an automobile accident. "I tried my best to get through my senior year," Kyndi recalled. "The start of that school year was difficult. It was hard knowing my dad wouldn't see my senior year, see me graduate." Yet, she continued with her classes and after school activities, graduating and enrolling in college. Kyndi says the support of her



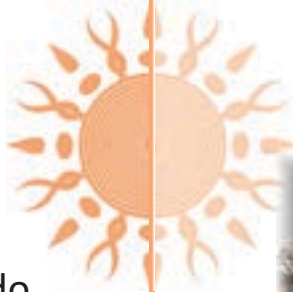
Helen Keller with her teacher Anne Sullivan
c. 1909

Bacchus, Detail
By Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio



friends made all the difference in the world. “They’ll do little things for me, buying me flowers, making me a cake. They have been the biggest support. I don’t know what I would do without my friends.” The lesson from Kyndi Kindle: those who overcome loss never go it alone because they know that going it alone is going nowhere. Nor do they keep a stiff upper lip pretending they’re doing fine and not in need of support. Those who heal allow friends to reach out and help.

Habit 2): *They allow themselves to grieve and do grief work.* Effective grievers disregard completely the erroneous advice to “keep a stiff upper lip...be brave... don’t cry... get over it...move on, etc.” They refuse to be stoic. They allow themselves to grieve even though it means experiencing unpleasant and unfamiliar emotions such as shock, disbelief, depression, anger, guilt, fear, loneliness, regret, anxiety, frustration, confusion. Effective grievers understand the importance of doing “grief work.” In his book, *Grievers Ask: Answers To Questions About Death and Loss*, minister and counselor Dr. Harold Ivan Smith writes: “Grief work means paying close attention to grief. Grief work is the necessary

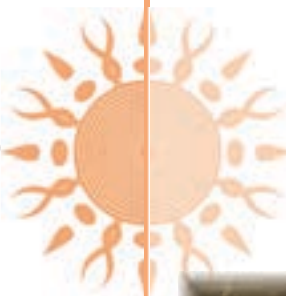


Meditation at Sea Shore
By Unknown artist



Resting Travellers
By Adriaen van Ostade





psychological and spiritual energy you must expend to integrate the loss into the story of your life . . . Grief work focuses on a simple question, “now what?” Or to restate, “What do I do with the life I have left to live? Or How do I live meaningfully without ...?”

The Bookworm
By Carl Spitzweg

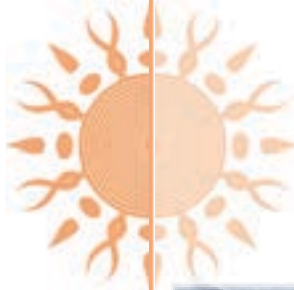
Habit 3): *They seek information.* For most people, the death of a loved one throws them into completely new territory. Very few individuals know much, if anything, about the grief process before they experience a loss. Those who have a healthy bereavement seek out information from books and magazine articles. “After my fifteen year old son died from cancer, I had to know more about grief because it had completely taken over my life,” says the father. “All of these new and upsetting emotions seemed to overwhelm me at times. So, I spent a lot of time in our local library searching out books on bereavement and grief recovery. I learned so much. The information I gleaned made my grief far less frightening. Today, my advice to others who are grieving is: Read all about it—information is empowering.”

Habit 4): *They avoid hasty decisions.* In 1989, Dr. Joyce Brothers’ husband of more than 30 years, Dr. Milton Brothers, died.



After his death, she wrote the book *Widowed*. There Dr. Joyce Brothers advises griever: “If you can possibly avoid it—do not sell your house, do not move, do not make a major purchase, do not make a major change in your way of life. Put everything on hold for a year.” The reason that professionals advise the bereaved to avoid making major changes is because grief clouds the mind. After one year, many emotions begin to settle down freeing the mind to think more clearly and make wiser decisions. Of course, there are times when financial considerations can force the bereaved to make decisions shortly after a loss. In that case, Dr. Brothers strongly advises seeking out the best advice possible. “On a major decision like selling your house, buying a condo, investing the life insurance money, selling stocks, and so on, I strongly advise that you get advice from professionals as well as from your family,” she writes.

Habit 5): *They join a grief support group.* Earl Grollman, an author and counselor on death and grief issues explains the power of grief support groups in his book *What Helped Me When My Loved One Died*: “At some point you may be disappointed in the reactions of your acquaintances, maybe even your close friends. You just don’t hear



Thatched Cottages at Cordeville
By Vincent van Gogh



My parents taught me how to listen to everybody before I made up my own mind. When you listen, you learn. You absorb like a sponge-and your life becomes so much better than when you are just trying to be listened to all the time.

~Steven Spielberg

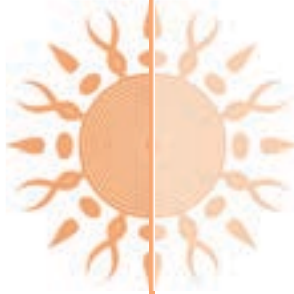
from them so often anymore. They seem awkward and uneasy in your presence. They may avoid your company. That's why self-help groups have been successful in providing necessary emotional intervention through the crisis of death. People in these groups understand your fears and frustrations; they have been there before. Allow them to help you out of your isolation with a meaningful support network. They share with you the time of your grief and help you to walk on your sorrowing paths. You are no longer alone."

Habit 6): *They take care of themselves physically.* Effective grievors seem to understand instinctively that a grieving body's immune system is suppressed by the stress of bereavement and therefore susceptible to illness.

For that reason, they work to take care of themselves physically by:

Exercising. This reduces stress, strengthens the body, and improves an overall sense of well being.

Eating balanced meals. They fight the tendency to consume junk foods and are careful to eat healthy, balanced meals which will provide the body with the nourishment and energy it needs.

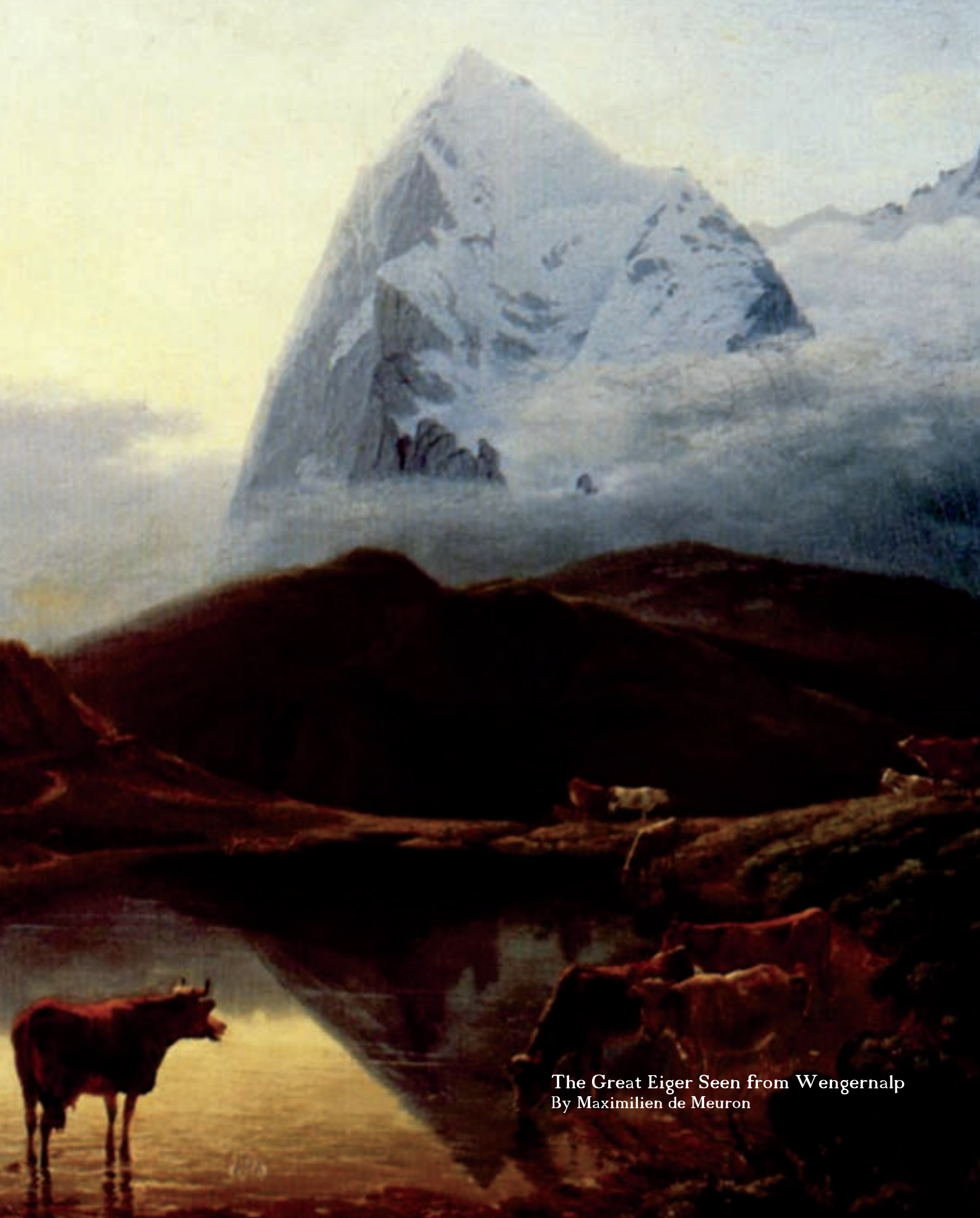


Still Life with Peaches and Grapes
By Anne Vallayer-Coster



Iphigenia II
By Anselm Feuerbach



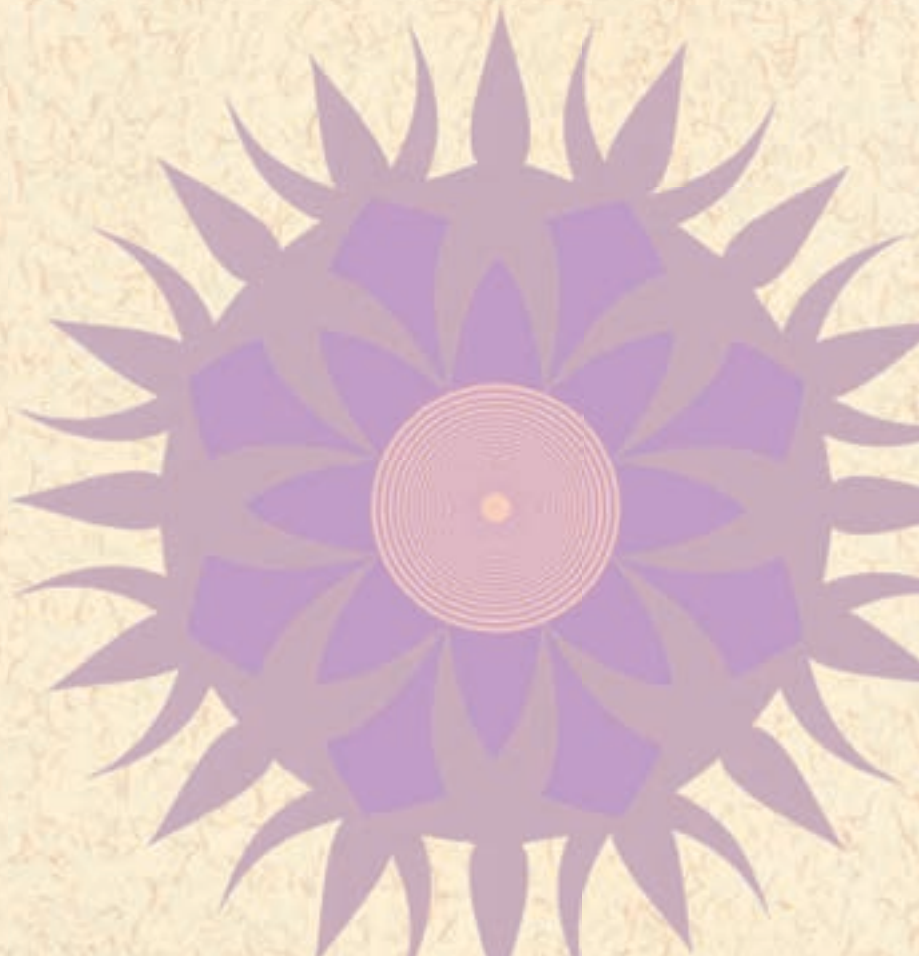


The Great Eiger Seen from Wengernalp
By Maximilien de Meuron



Chapter 3

When Your Child Has Died





The Rhone Glacier
By Johann Heinrich Wüest



Perhaps they are not stars, but rather
openings in heaven where the love of our
lost ones pours through and shines down
upon us to let us know they are happy.

~ Eskimo saying

“My son, Steven died. One day he was a healthy, gorgeous, bright, and loving twenty-five-year-old man at the gateway of his life. The next, he had a strange lump in his neck. Sixteen months later my husband and two daughters and I walked in a file to throw the ritual shovelful of earth into his grave. No one could have prepared us for such a cataclysm.”

Those words are written by Judith R. Bernstein, PhD., author of *When The Bough Breaks—Forever After The Death of a Son or Daughter*. Even though she and her husband are both psychologists who were surrounded by loving families and knowledgeable friends, Dr. Bernstein says they were “lost” after the death. “How are we to live with this for the rest of our lives? Will the crushing ache in my chest ever lessen? Can we ever return to our old selves, involved in the lives of our daughters, caring about our work, hobbies, friends, or the changing of the seasons?”

Her expressions clearly demonstrate that the loss of a child is unnerving, shattering and unique. Unlike the term *widow* describing a woman whose husband has

At the Piano
By James Abbot McNeill Whistler



Garden in Shoreham
By Samuel Palmer



died, there is no comparable word in the English language for a parent whose child has died. While every death is difficult and challenging to those left behind, the death of a child is often referred to as the “worst” loss. In spite of the magnitude of the loss, the depth of the pain, and the severity of the agony child death brings, parents do regroup and regain the joy of living. Here are some vital steps to take in order to recover from the death of a child.

1) *Begin with the belief that you will not always feel this way.* Try to remember that other parents have been in the place where you are just now. They have felt the intensity of the hurt you feel just now. Other bereaved parents offer you the sure hope and positive witness that you will survive and surmount the pain of grief. One mother recalls: “For the first three years it would not have mattered to me if I lived or died. The pain was so intense. I felt I was in an emotional prison with no end in sight. Then, one day, I woke up and realized that a part of the burden was gone. Some pain was still there but the heaviness was lifted. Now things that once made me depressed and teary bring me joy - things like photographs and family festivities.”

To me, every hour of the day and night is an unspeakably perfect miracle.

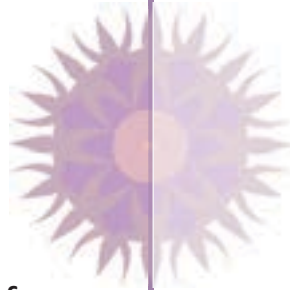
~Walt Whitman

Zanobi altar, the Adoration of the Magi,
Detail: Peacock
By Sandro Botticelli



2) *Become informed.* Knowledge is power and information is liberating. Pick up some books on grief recovery and educate yourself. “Mourning is one of the developmental tasks in life for which we are singularly unprepared,” Dr. Bernstein notes. “We are unlikely to apply for a job for which we are totally untrained. Schooling and apprenticeships are required preparation for skilled work . . . But where do you find role models for mourning? Who rehearses for this drama?” she further observes. For her book, Dr. Bernstein interviewed fifty-five bereaved parents. “A high percentage of parents we interviewed said they searched feverishly through books to try to find some instructions in how to go about this work of mourning. Books did help.”

3) *Assume you may have to educate other people.* Many people are at a loss for words when they learn a child has died. They want to be helpful but don’t know what to say and do. Consequently, some will avoid bringing up the “subject” while others may avoid you. Don’t hesitate to make the first move. Tell them you want to talk about your loss. Tell them it’s okay to mention your child’s name. Tell them you want to hear their memories of your child. If you want to have your child’s friends come by your



Encounter
By Ludwig Richter



What children take from us, they give... We become people who feel more deeply, question more deeply, hurt more deeply, and love more deeply.

~Sonia Taitz

home, tell them. Let your family and friends know what you need and want. Of course, it may not seem fair that you have to deal with your own pain and coach other people as well. But for your benefit as well as the benefit of your family and friends, reach out to them. By your words and gestures let them know what you need and how they can play an important role in your life just now.

4) *Let your child's friends bring you hope and joy.* James Angell's daughter, Susan, was a 21 year-old college senior when she was killed in an automobile accident. In his book, *O Susan*, he says that an important source of comfort when death invades the special world of the young are young people themselves. "It is their presence, more than anything they say, that lifts the burden of loss - their bright look, smart clothes, loving gestures, ability to be tender. Occasionally their laughter or comedy ignites the air and death is put to flight by life." After Susan's death, her friends came to the Angell home frequently. The parents welcomed them warmly and were blessed by their presence. "Susan's friends came to our home on many of the evenings afterwards. Singly, and in groups. We knew of their adoration of her. Rarely would they, when they came to comfort us, ever try to philosophize or fool

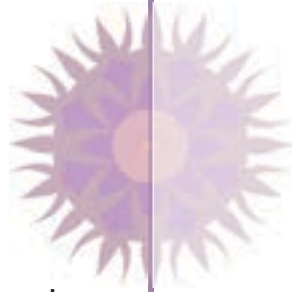


In the Corpus Christi Morning
By Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller



Paintings for the Hieronymite in
Guadalupe, Sacristy, Scene:
Mercy of Fra Martin de Vizcaya, detail
By Francisco de Zurbarán





around with wordy assurances. They simply came. They sat with us looking into the fire. They talked about the richness of life - things at the college, fun things they remembered doing with Susan, where they thought they would be after graduation. They hugged us and left.”

5) *Stay close to good listeners.* Mary Louise Williams was living in Germany where her husband was a chaplain in the US Army. While stationed there, their daughter, Margaret, was murdered. Later she wrote: “This is the loneliest of all the experiences I have had. Dear ones and friends have helped me and continue to help . . . Sometimes I note in my friends a too-careful screening of conversation. They seem to think, ‘Will she cry? I mustn’t open the wound again. I must help her to forget.’ They need not worry. I may or may not cry, but the wound is still open, and I shall probably never forget. I do not want to forget my loved one. If they would only think, they would realize this. I need and want to talk about my loved one. This is all I can do now. I need to express my grief in words to someone who will listen.”

Let tears flow of
their own accord:
their flowing is not
inconsistent with
inward peace and
harmony.

~Seneca

Portrait of Veterinarian
Dr. Reindl in the Arbor
By Wilhelm Leibl



Like Mary Louise Williams, you will need to share your grief with others who will just listen, listen, listen. Find people who are good listeners. Stay close to them. They will allow you to pour out your fears, frustrations and flashes of anger without judging or scolding you. People who offer the space for you to talk while they listen are your healers. Each time you talk about the loss, you will peel away one layer of pain and feel better for having done so.



**Walking is man's
best medicine.**

~Hippocrates

In the Sunshine
By Hans Thoma

6) *Take care of your physical self.* Bereavement taxes the entire body. Take extra precaution to nurture your physical self by eating balanced meals, consuming plenty of water and exercising. The exercise doesn't mean you need to train for a grueling athletic competition. If you've played a sport in the past, return to it. Or, walk, jog, bike, skate, dance, swim - anything which will get your body moving. In their book, *Giving Sorrow Words*, Candy Lightner and Nancy Hathaway offer this advice: "If the very thought of running around the lake or taking an aerobics class sounds vaguely akin to climbing Mt. Everest, at least do some light exercise, such as taking short walks. Keep in mind that not only is exercise good for your body, it also improves your mood through the release of endorphins, a



chemical compound in the brain that acts as a painkiller and relaxant.”

7) Tap into the power of a support group. Bereavement support groups can make a powerful, positive impact in your life as a grieving parent. Unless someone has experienced the death of a child themselves, it is hard for them to fully understand and appreciate the complexities of such a loss. Locate a support group made up of bereaved parents. There you will find people who truly care and understand. One couple said this after attending their first meeting: “It was like finding water in the desert. Finally, we were in the company of people who really knew what we were going through. It was so heartening and encouraging to be with them.”

8) Choose life. In spite of the enormous loss and the pain it brings, choose to overcome, to heal, to recover. Choose life. In his book, *Living With Loss, Healing With Hope*, Earl Grollman reminds grievers: “Feeling better is not an indication that you loved less. Rather it is a sign of your determination to let go and get on with life despite its bitterness and tribulations. It means taking each day as it comes, making the most of it, resolving that you will survive and celebrate your loved one’s life.”



The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

~Robert Frost



Jetty on the Island in the Chiemsee Mr.
By Wilhelm Trübner



On the Sea

By Albert Gustav Aristides Edelfelt



Chapter 4

When Your Parent Has Died





Seashore in the Moonlight
By Albert Pinkham Ryder



All sunshine makes
the desert.

~ Arabian Saying

Upon learning that his 68 year-old mother died after struggling with cancer for two years, her son boarded a plane in New York City to attend the funeral in Seattle, Washington. He describes the service and his thoughts this way: “I participated in the funeral service and delivered a eulogy for Mom. In the course of my eulogy, a thought forced itself into my mind: I am an orphan. An orphan? I was thirty-eight years old at the time. I had a wife and three children of my own. Being a self-sufficient adult seemed to exclude the possibility of considering myself to be an orphan. But the thought persisted. And persists.”

The man writing those words is Dr. Marc D. Angel. Although he is a mature adult with a family of his own, the loss of a parent impacted him greatly. The fact is that when a parent dies, life changes permanently. Here are some reactions to expect and steps to take in order to heal from the loss of a parent.

Anticipate a change in your status. The loss of a parent creates changes, both subtle and not so subtle. These are some issues which emerge:



The art of mothering is to teach the art of living to children.

~Elain Heffner

Forest in
Late Autumn
By
Caspar David
Friedrich



The Mother and
Sister of the Artist
By Berthe Morisot



- You are the grown up now; you are nobody's child.
- The family may turn to you for direction, like it or not.
- Pieces of your past are now silent.
- There is no one who really cares that you constantly carried a small flannel blanket around as a child.
- Parents are not there to share in future joys - awards, achievements, grandchildren's activities.
- Old rivalries and jealousies among siblings can emerge especially if there are quarrels over inheritance matters.
- If you had a close relationship, an important source of friendship, wisdom and counsel is gone.

And, those issues can be intensified by family and friends who may be initially sympathetic but who expect you to get over your grief quickly and move on. While they would be more patient had you lost a spouse or a child, the loss of a parent is often viewed as simply a fact of life. Such responses from family and friends can leave you feeling like a midlife orphan suddenly left alone to deal with the dilemmas and dangers of life.

Be prepared for emotional impact.
Responses to the death of a parent will vary

Most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do.

~James Harvey Robinson

Family Portrait
By Francesco Hayez





from person to person but there will be an impact. The depth and severity of the loss will depend upon the type of relationship experienced between parent and child. "Where the parent was a dominant force in the child's life, "orphanhood" may be painful and disorienting," notes Angel. "Where the bonds between parents and children had been tenuous, "orphanhood" may be less of a crisis. Where there had been a very bad relationship between parents and children, the new adult orphans may find themselves somewhat relieved that their parents are dead. And they may also feel guilt. No one can be completely untouched by the death of a parent, even if the parent died in advanced old age after a period of incapacitation."

Memorialize your parent(s). Precious memories of parents can be preserved and heightened by memorializing parents. People have done this in various ways: creating a scholarship in a parent's name; donating money to a favored charity; planting a tree utilizing a personally written ritual; volunteering time at a charity which was supported by the parents. Vincent, whose father died suddenly from a heart attack, chose to coach a soccer team in honor of his father. "Although I don't have children of my own at this time, I wanted to

In the end, I decide that the mark we've left on each other is the color and shape of love. That's the unfinished business between us. Because love, love is never finished. It circles and circles, the memories out of order and not always complete.

~Sara Zarr



Children at the Window
By Georg Friedrich Kersting

do something to honor my dad. Some of my fondest memories came from times I played soccer and dad was the coach. So, now I do this for other kids in honor of my father.”

Shed tears but exercise caution. Grief is a perfectly natural response to loss and the feelings of loss include crying. Do let the tears flow as this is a healthy release. However, try to control your tears when at work because others who see you crying may not understand nor be sympathetic. Be guided by this insight from Katherine Fair Donnelly in her book, *Recovering From The Loss Of A Parent*: “If you find yourself crying at the office, excuse yourself and take a break for a few minutes. Therapists and counselors have suggested—in order to prevent crying in inappropriate places—to give yourself a prescribed time and place to cry. Call a friend or relative at, say 7 p.m. in the evenings, or find a quiet place to cry at home. Tears occur because thoughts and feelings have to be expressed, say psychologists. The more these can be expressed verbally, the less you will need to express them in tears.”

Let others help you. Don't buy into the myth that sharing your burden with others is a sign that you are weak and needy.



Detail: Candle and Books
By Georges de La Tour



What though the radiance
which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring
back the hour
Of splendour in the grass,
of glory in the flower;
Grieve not, rather find,
Strength in what remains behind,
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be,
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,
In the faith that looks through death
In years that bring philosophic mind.

~William Wordsworth



Bereavement is a tremendous load which is better managed when friends are allowed to help. Identify people who truly comfort you. Share your feelings with them. Let them be sources of help and healing for you. After Connie M. Pratt's father died, she shares this learning experience: "While on the receiving end of all those condolence calls, I learned that the real key to giving comfort to another is a willingness to unlock the door to yourself . . . to open up your eyes, your ears, your arms, and above all, your heart!"

Create a memory book. Many children find it helpful and greatly comforting to document a parent's life. One woman, who was very close to her father, found herself devastated by his death. "I was able to cut down my grief by creating a pictorial biography of my dad. I bought an inexpensive scrap book and arranged various materials to tell the story of my father's life. Included in that scrap book are photographs, diplomas, newspaper clippings, awards, accomplishments and other reminders of significant events in my dad's life. That memory book is not only a comfort to me but his grandchildren are also drawn to it."

Join a grief support group. Many find it extremely helpful to be with others who



Garden in the Snow
By Meister des al-Mubashshir-Manuskripts



Still-Life with Ham
By Carlo Magini



Morning Hours
By Moritz von Schwind

have experienced a loss to death because they truly can empathize. Unlike others who have not had such an experience, those whose lives have been touched by grief understand the depth and complexity of bereavement. One woman who joined a bereavement support group says: "If you've had a parent for 40 years you don't get over it in 40 days like many of my friends seemed to think. The pressure to "get over it" was unbearable. It was only at a grief support group where I found patience and understanding."

Forgive yourself for being human. "Few of us have had trouble-free relationships with our parents," says Judy Ball whose mother died after a 14 month illness. "We may look back with pain at harsh words that were spoken, deep rifts that were left untended, missed opportunities to express love." These feelings can quickly become fertile ground for immobilizing guilt after a parent dies. "But we can be confident that our deceased parent forgives us and, indeed, recognizes his or her role in the situation as well. We must also forgive ourselves for our imperfect efforts," Ball adds.

Let the loss result in greater personal growth and awareness. Allow your grief to





become your teacher, instructing you and helping you become more insightful, introspective, and aware. “The death of our last parent then becomes a catalyst for growth and self-acceptance,” says Jane Brooks author of *Midlife Orphan*. “As we recover from our loss, we begin to integrate who our parents were into who we are, psychologically picking and choosing those traits we admire and discarding those we don’t. The reflection that we do when our parents die helps us to finally accept limitations—those of our parents as well as our own.”

Finally, take comfort in the reality that you will heal and recover from the loss of a parent. However, that healing takes time and the path is neither smooth nor predictable says Fay Ferguson Bechtel whose father died after a lengthy illness. “Grief doesn’t proceed in a linear fashion,” she explains. “It circles. You feel better. You feel yourself heal. And then, wham!—you’re back on your emotional knees. Still, as the days pass, the circles widen. When grief returns again, it finds you stronger.”

It is the mind which
creates the world about us,
and even though we stand
side by side in the same
meadow, my eyes will
never see what is beheld
by yours, my heart will
never stir to the emotions
with which yours is
touched.

~George Gissing

Posada
By Nicolae Grigorescu





Olive Tree
By Alexander Andrejewitsch Iwanow



Chapter 5

When Your Baby Has Died





View of the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris
By Alfred Sisley



Life's difficulties force us to break
through the superficiality to the
deeper life within.

~Tim Hansel

When a woman experiences a miscarriage loss a great pain emerges. The days and weeks following can be extremely difficult and filled with confusing, conflicting emotions. Consider these words from Marie, age 27: “When I discovered I was pregnant it was a terrific shock. We’d only been married five months and the pregnancy was unplanned. Once it had sunk in, however, we realized we were both delighted and eager to be parents. I remember being surprised by just how much it changed my perspective to know I was pregnant. Suddenly, my thoughts and plans were now revolved around the coming baby. The thought that this baby might never arrive didn’t cross my mind. Then, during the 11th week, I miscarried. I can’t recall a sadder day in my entire life.”

A woman can recover physically from the miscarriage and return to her normal routines but the ache for the lost baby remains lodged in her mind and emotions. In order to adjust, adapt and ultimately heal from the loss, a woman needs to be proactive in her recovery. Here are 10 ways that you, as a woman can help yourself heal after a miscarriage.

THE BABY-SERMON

The lightning and
thunder
They go and they
come:
But the stars and the
stillness
Are always at home.

~George MacDonald

Venus Rising from the Sea -
A Deception (After the Bath)
By Raffaella Peale



1) Take comfort in the statistics.

Most women are surprised to learn that miscarriage is more common than often assumed. Miscarriage reportedly occurs in 20 to 25 percent of all pregnancies. That number, however, may be inaccurately low. Many women miscarry before realizing they are pregnant. Some experts believe the miscarriage rate is closer to 40 or 50 percent. Your loss, though unfortunate and saddening, is not uncommon. One woman, after miscarrying recalls: "I work in a large publishing firm. When I returned to work after a week off, the word of my loss had spread. I was amazed at the number of women colleagues who let me know they had also miscarried. Somehow this was a revelation to me which I found oddly comforting. I didn't feel quite so alone with this loss."

2) Expect emotional turmoil. Miscarriage loss produces various intense and uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, depression, fear. A common emotional reaction to miscarriage loss is shock and grief. Upon discovering they have miscarried, many women go into shock. This is because a miscarriage is sudden and unexpected. This numbness is the body's way of allowing the mind and emotions to better cope with the loss. Following shock,

Hare and Jay
By Ts'ui Po



Sunflowers
By Vincent Van Gogh



women experience grief over the loss. Two other common emotional responses experienced by many women are anger and guilt. They may feel frustrated, angry upon learning a friend has become pregnant or has given birth. Or, they can fault themselves for somehow causing the miscarriage to happen. For a healthy grief recovery to occur it is important to acknowledge such emotions openly and honestly, reminding yourself these are normal and will eventually fade away.

3) Avoid blaming yourself. Don't second guess what happened and don't succumb to the temptation to blame yourself. The miscarriage was not your fault. Deanna Roy who experienced a miscarriage and now researches and educates others about miscarriage loss writes: "I can't tell you how many women have explained to me what they did to cause their miscarriage, or to ask if their stressful job or glasses of wine were what did it. For a long time, I blamed myself too. Then I learned I had a malformed womb. All that guilt was for nothing. Let me be the one to tell you: You did not cause this miscarriage. I don't care if you were smoking crack--those babies are born all the time. Stand up on the job all day? Doesn't matter. On bed rest but got up a couple of times to



Sleeping Boy
Arden Savoy,
detail
By Wilhelm Leibl

Lady in the rocking chair
By Wiktor Elpidiforowitsch
Borissow-Mussatow



raid the refrigerator or use the bathroom (or even to go out to dinner)? Insignificant. Nature is not perfect. Our genetic code sometimes doesn't work just right. It's terrible; it's sad. I hate it. But it has nothing to do with your sins, your stress, your mistakes, your nutrition, or your relationship. There was nothing you could have done. I know. Some of you still feel a nagging guilt. But try to put it out of your mind. It really, truly was not your fault. And most likely, it will not happen again."

4) Turn to one another. Partners should maintain a high level of sensitivity to each other following a miscarriage loss. Although it is usually the woman who feels the heaviest emotional and physical impact of miscarriage, men also grieve such losses. Expectant fathers, like expectant mothers, begin generating hopes, plans, dreams about an unborn child. Fathers, like mothers, can experience a deep sense of grief when learning about miscarriage. Be there for each other. Express and explore your feelings together. When one speaks, the other should listen carefully and compassionately. Clear communication is vital if couples are to remain close, connected and comforting of each other. After his wife miscarried, her husband,



Still Life with Cabinet for
Bottles and Books
By Unknown

A COUNTRY PATHWAY

I come upon it suddenly, alone -
A little pathway winding
in the weeds
That fringe the roadside; and with
dreams my own,
I wander as it leads.

Full wistfully along the
slender way,
Through summer tan of freckled
shade and shine,
I take the path that leads
me as it may -
Its every choice is mine.

~James Whitcomb Riley

Justin, recalled: “Talking was probably the most important thing that we did. It helped both of us come to terms with what happened and helped us make some sense out of this. We both tried to really listen and share our feelings with one another. That allowed us to understand what the other was feeling and going through at any given time.”

5) Surround yourself with supportive companions. Many will not understand your loss and its meaning to you but some will. Put yourself in the company of those who know how to be there for you. “After I miscarried, I quickly learned who was going to be most helpful to me,” recalls Jennifer. “The people I wanted to be with and share my feelings with had no need to ‘fix my problem.’ Rather they were good listeners. They allowed me to repeat and recount, repeat and recount, every detail of my loss. It seemed that each time I talked about it, I was able to peel away another layer of pain. Those good friends knew that and allowed me to talk, talk, talk without interruption or judgment. My advice to other women who have miscarried: surround yourself with people who know how to comfort, accept and love you.”

Argenteuil
By Édouard Manet



At the Grain Harvest
By Ford Madox Brown



6) Distance yourself from those who just don't get it. You have lost your baby. There will always be individuals who can't or won't understand that fact. Keep a healthy distance between yourself and them. They will only make you feel worse about the loss. Their comments and responses to your loss will range from the insensitive and unkind to the rude and uncalled for. Rather than simply be offended by such comments, you can always try to educate the person speaking to you. Some appropriate responses to others' comments include:

Comment: *This is a blessing in disguise.*

Response: It doesn't feel that way to me.

Comment: *Better now than later.*

Response: I was carrying a baby. It doesn't matter how far along I was.

Comment: *Well, there is now another angel in heaven.*

Response: I'd rather have my baby here with me.

Comment: *At least you weren't attached to it.*

Response: Actually, I was very attached and looking forward to giving birth.

Comment: *You can always try again.*

Response: That's true but it doesn't take away the hurt of losing this one.

Comment: *If you stop thinking about it, you'll feel better.*

A thorn defends the rose,
harming only those who
would steal the blossom.

~Chinese Proverb



Oh, the Dear Little Lamb
By Ford Madox Brown

Response: There is no way for me to stop thinking about the loss of my child and thinking about it is important to me just now.

Comment: *You need to put this behind you.*

Response: That's easier said than done; there is no quick fix for my loss.

Comment: *It was God's will.*

Response: I have trouble believing God willed my baby's death.

7) Don't rush to be yourself. You have lost a baby. It is completely unreasonable for anyone—yourself included—to expect you'll be “back to normal” in a few hours or a few days. Grief educator Earl Grollman advises: “Allow sufficient time for the grieving period to run its course. The process is never the same for any two people. Heal in your own way and in your own time. Insist that others give you this freedom as well. Be yourself.”

8) Write in a journal. Journaling is a technique some women find therapeutic for several reasons. First, it is a way to express and explore feelings about the loss with complete privacy. Secondly, unlike speaking with a companion where there may be concern about being judged or censored, a journal offers no opinions. Therefore, thoughts can be written without fear of

Resolve to edge in a little reading every day, if it is but a single sentence. If you gain fifteen minutes a day, it will make itself felt at the end of the year.

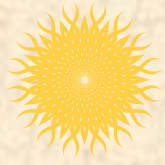
~Horace Mann

A Young Woman with a Book
By Pietro Rotari



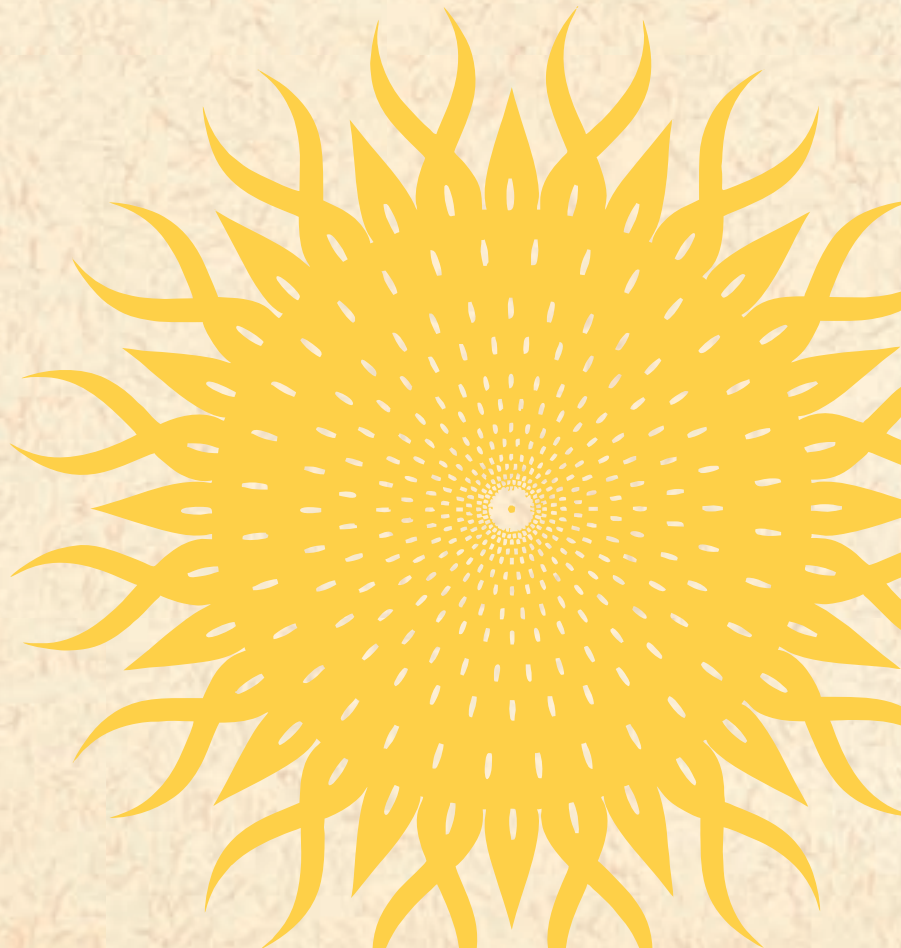
Westphalian Watermill
By Andreas Achenbach





Chapter 6

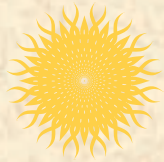
When Your Sibling Has Died



Guardhouse of Soldiers Playing Cards

By Jacob Duck





When your brother dies, your
childhood fades, there being one less
person to remember it with you.

~Garrison Keiller

Those words on the previous page were written by Garrison Keillor, American humorist and radio program host, shortly after the death of his 71 year-old brother. When a sister or brother dies, the pain is real and the wound is deep. Yet, sibling grief is often treated tritely or left unacknowledged. In her book, *Surviving the Death of A Sibling*, Dr. T. J. Wray says: “The sad fact is this: When an adult loses a brother or a sister, society often fails to recognize the depth of such a loss....They make our loss seem trivial, and they also make the surviving sibling feel as if his or her grief is somehow unwarranted.”

The reality is that the death of a brother or sister can produce profound sadness and intensive grieving. Here are 10 ways to heal after the death of a sister or a brother.

1. Acknowledge your loss. This means speaking to people you believe would be supportive in clear ways. Example: “This is a very hard loss for me. My sister and I were close” or, “my brother and I were the best of friends to each other.” Those kinds of expressions enable those around you to know how you feel and will cue them to provide appropriate support. An ancient

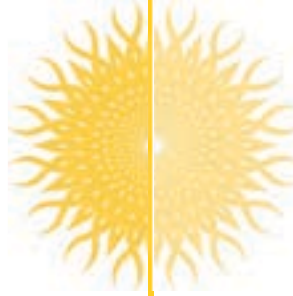
No matter where you live,
brothers are brothers and
sisters are sisters. The
bonds that keep family
close are the same no
matter where you are.

~Takayuki Ikkaku, Arisa
Hosaka and Toshihiro Kawabata

Drummers and Pipers
By Albrecht Dürer



Eastern proverb offers this wisdom: “You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying overhead, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair.” Prevent sorrow from building a permanent nest in your life by acknowledging your loss and surrounding yourself with compassionate supporters.



Autumn Sun and Trees
By Egon Schiele

2. Brace yourself for dismissive condolences. A brother whose sister died was told by his best friend: “Cheer up. Your sister wouldn’t want you to feel so sad.” Later, that brother expressed frustration over that comment to his wife saying, “If I’m not supposed to feel sad when my sister has died, when am I supposed to feel sad?” Unfortunately, that man’s experience is not an isolated one. Far too often grieving siblings hear dismissive condolences such as:

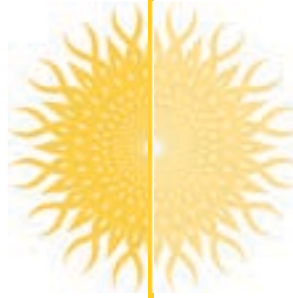
- *Well, she’s in a better place.*
- *At least he didn’t suffer much.*
- *Thank goodness you have a family of your own.*
- *Oh well, your life will go on.*
- *You’ll get over this in no time.*
- *Don’t cry. Your brother would want you to get on with your life.*

If you hear these dismissive comments, try to think and respond compassionately.



Portrait of
Paulette
Jourdain
By Amedeo
Modigliani

Those making such comments don't mean to be insensitive or unkind. They simply have no experience with grief and don't know how to respond more appropriately.



3. Search out appropriate friends. Find a few people who will listen to you with compassion and a complete lack of judgment over your grief. Those who can be most supportive are often individuals who have grieved a loss themselves. After her brother died, one 39 year-old woman discovered it was a co-worker who was most helpful. “My work colleague lost a brother a decade earlier. As a result I can talk to her and feel that she truly understands what I’m going through. It is a tremendous help to be with someone like that.”

4. Minimize contact with non-supportive people. Dr. Wray tells of “Debbie” aged 37 who lost a sibling and who then overheard her mother-in-law say to her husband: “Well, it’s been two months. What’s wrong? Debbie should be over this by now.” That comment made Debbie “very angry because I knew that there was no way that she could understand what I was going through.” Commenting on that unfortunate incident, Dr. Wray writes: “My advice to Debbie is

Friendship makes prosperity more shining and lessens adversity by dividing and sharing it.

~Cicero

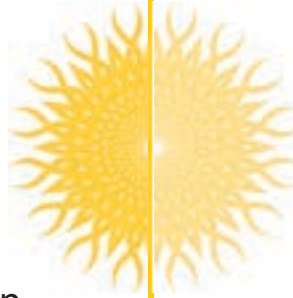


De Materia Medica (The Herb Book) of Dioscorides, Arabic manuscript copy of the Greek text, scene: The Vine By Arab painters of the herb book of Dioscorides

this: Stay away from your mother-in-law right now....Don't expect such individuals to understand, much less affirm your loss. Surround yourself with people who care and want to help you during this difficult time."

5. Expect some complications. It is very painful when a spouse dies, yet that loss is often "neater" than when a sibling dies. One area of difference lies in the fact that the surviving spouse continues to have access and control over the deceased personal items, mementos, photographs, family keepsakes. However, when a sibling dies, it may be more complicated to retrieve some family remembrances. Here's an example from a woman who wrote an advice columnist explaining her husband's brother "Jim" recently died. Jim was the family historian and was the agreed-upon keeper of all family historical records and photos. The dilemma: Her husband wants to ask Jim's wife to "allow the rest of the siblings to go through their family pictures and split them up so that each family has pictures for their children and grandchildren."

Thus, the surviving siblings' issue is how to approach their brother's grieving wife about this matter. Fortunately, the advice



A BROOK IN THE CITY

The firm house lingers,
though averse to square
With the new city street
it has to wear
a number in.

But what about the brook
That held the house as in
an elbow-crook?

I ask as one who knew the brook,
its strength
And impulse, having dipped
a finger length
And made it leap my knuckle,
having tossed
A flower to try its currents
where they crossed.
The meadow grass could be
cemented down

~Robert Lee Frost



Gilles, Detail
By Antoine Watteau

columnist made this practical suggestion. She advised Jim to ask his brother's wife for permission to copy photos and historical records sharing those among family members rather than asking to take the collection from the widow and splitting it up among the family. If in your circumstances, there are complexities following a sibling's death, then bring to the issue your best self: listen well, explain yourself clearly without an accusatory tone, and approach the matter with kindness and compassion.

6. Prepare for unique challenges. Though all who lose a loved one to death face grief challenges, there are some uniquely connected with sibling loss. These include:

- *Role change.* "When my brother and my only sibling died at 47, I became the only surviving sibling. I felt both lonely and alone in my responsibility for my parents," recalls Tom.
- *Guilt.* Siblings can have complicated relationships. There can be guilt over hurtful actions and harsh words.
- *Mortality awareness.* Sibling death can provoke self-examination over awareness of life's shortness and mortality.
- *Delayed grieving.* One woman, after the death of her younger sister, discovered her own grieving was on hold. "I needed to be strong for my mother," she said.

The Reaper
By Albin Egger-Lienz



Frescoes in the Camera degli Sposi
Palazzo Ducale in Mantua
Scene: Waiting grooms
Detail: Landscape
By Andrea Mantegna





7. Join a support group. Within driving distance of almost every community, there are bereavement support groups. Participate in one because that's where you will be able to pour out your feelings and be completely understood because the other members have suffered loss as well. Also, in a grief support group you will learn from those who are a little further ahead in the journey through grief. Dr. Harold Ivan Smith, author of *Grievers Ask*, writes: "A support group is a healthy, safe place for you who are grieving to bring yourselves, your stories, your anger, and your bewilderment, and to know it's just likely that others will have been there and recognize in your story parts of their story. And it is possible that something in your story will encourage another griever in the group."

8. Manage depression. When someone we love dies, sadness and depression are to be expected. However, it's important to manage the depression rather than have it cast a constant shadow over life. When Vincent's twin brother died suddenly from a heart attack at the age of 51, Vincent remembers being "almost overwhelmed" with depression. "When that began to happen, I quickly discovered some simple but effective ways of downsizing the

AT SEA

'Farewell and adieu' was the
burden prevailing
Long since in the chant of a
home-faring crew;
And the heart in us echoes,
with laughing or wailing,
Farewell and adieu.

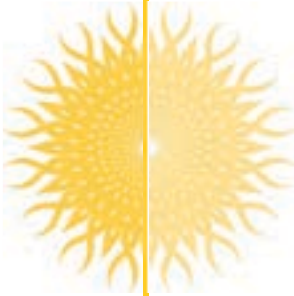
Each year that we live shall we
sing it anew,
With a water untravelled before
us for sailing
And a water behind us that wrecks
may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the
beacons are paling,
The heavens and the waters are
hoarier of hue:
But the heart in us chants not an
all unavailing
Farewell and adieu.

~Algernon Charles Swinburne

L'Estaque, with Red Roofs
By Paul Cézanne





depression. What I'd advise anyone who has lost a sibling is this: to move out of depression reassess your thought patterns and move from negative thinking to positive, hopeful thinking. Instead of withdrawing from people, reach out and rely on a sympathetic friend. Also, get some exercise. Physical activity strengthens body, mind and spirit."

9. Forgive yourself. Don't live with continuing regret and guilt. The fact is that siblings argue, compete, and disagree. They can be incredibly close and painfully distant. Sibling rivalry can be intense at times. Forgive yourself for things you said or didn't say; for actions taken or not taken. If you and your sibling were not close for whatever reason, forgive yourself and do not permit guilt to magnify the issues. "Forgiveness does not change the past but it does enlarge the future," noted Dutch botanist and writer Paul Boese.

10. Remind yourself, "I will heal." In the days and weeks following the death it may be difficult to believe that you will heal. Yet, many before you have had the happy experience of grief relief and recovery. Many months after her brother died, Elsa Larson wrote: "It seems strange, but now I sense that life may hold some promise. My



Portrait
of Alfred Sisley
By
Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Gypsy Dance
By Anselm Feuerbach



The Autumn
Harvest and
Overlooking Sorrento
and the Gulf Islands.
By Jacob Philipp Hackert





Chapter 7

When Your Loss Is From Suicide



Autumn Forest
By George Frederic Watts





Realize that you are under assault
and healing takes time.

~ Joan Guntzelman

A few weeks ago, my 33-year-old son died by suicide. I am so angry with my son for not giving himself a chance to find a reason to live. I am furious with him for not caring how much his suicide would hurt his wife and children, not to mention his grief-stricken parents. Please help me get past my anger so I can forgive my son and move forward.

Those words, written to an advice columnist, convey the searing pain delivered when a loved one dies by suicide. While any death of a family member or friend is painful, a suicide death is even more so and a life changing event. Suicide leaves a ripple effect of pain and confusion impacting family, friends, colleagues, children, neighbors. Yet, people do recover from suicide loss. Here are some suggestions for living with loss and healing with hope after experiencing a suicide death.

- **Begin by making the choice to recover.**

Any tragedy has the power to make us better or bitter, triumphant or tragic. The choice is ours alone. Upon learning of a suicide death, immediately choose to recover and overcome. Recording artist Judy Collins was devastated when her son died from suicide.



Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

~King Whitney, Jr.

Self-Portrait as a Young Man
By George Frederic Watts





In her book, *The Seven T's: Finding Hope and Healing in the Wake of Tragedy*, she reminds others who have had the sad experience of a suicide death: "None of us welcomes this journey, but if we want to live fully and blessedly and joyfully, and be of service to others, we have only two choices - take the ride, or live in landscapes where your dreams will not have the courage to bloom and your ideas and life force will dwindle from lack of sun and soil...In order to help your soul bloom through loss, you must be willing to dig, deep and far. Being present for the journey is your only hope of getting to your destination."

- **Understand that you are not alone.**

Some of the cultural issues of shame and embarrassment over a suicide death can be downsized simply by understanding that suicide death and suicide attempts impact the lives of many people. Suicide can strike virtually anyone – young, old, white, black, male, female. Every 18 minutes someone in the United States dies by suicide. This means slightly more than 30,000 deaths every year. Men die from suicide four times as often as women do. In fact, of the 30,000 yearly American deaths from suicide, 25,000 of those are men. According to the web site, suicide.org, there are approximately

Boy Sitting on a Lawn
By Georges Seurat



Woman with the Flea,
Detail: candle
By Georges de La Tour





750,000 suicide attempts each year. An estimated 5 million living Americans have attempted suicide. More females attempt suicide than males. (3 female attempts for each male attempt.) Suicide is not just an American problem. The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the annual number of suicides worldwide is about one million, more deaths than by war and homicide combined. Take some refuge in the reality that you and your family are not the only ones in your community impacted by suicide death.

This was something learned by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada who recalls: “The year was 1972, and I had just spent a memorable afternoon with the legendary Muhammad Ali. When I returned to my Las Vegas law office, I was given an urgent message to call my mother at our home in Searchlight, Nevada. That is when I learned my father had shot himself. Prior to this moment, I had never thought of suicide as something that would affect my life. Suicide was something that only happened in other people’s families....I now understand that my father was not alone, and neither was I as a survivor.”

Frescoes in the Villa Vallmarana,
Vicenza scene:
Landscape with
Sedentary Farmer
By Anselm Feuerbach





- **Gather information about suicide grief.** Knowledge is power.

Information is liberating. Visit a library to research material - books and magazine articles - about suicide grief. Read what authorities have to say about the grief recovery. Also be sure to read personal stories by others who have experienced a suicide loss. Reading on this topic will not be depressing but encouraging as you will gain invaluable information which will deepen your motivation to overcome your tragedy.

- **Know the phases of suicide grief.**

Generally, bereavement which follows a suicide loss has three phases: avoidance, confrontation, accommodation. In the first phase, avoidance, the key feelings are shock, denial and numbness. In the second, confrontation, the fact of suicide death becomes real and painful. It can generate conflicting feelings of sadness on one hand and, on the other hand, anger toward the person who died. The first two phases come in the early hours, days and weeks following the loss. The third phase, accommodation, comes months later and is a gradual acceptance or coming to terms with the suicide. Sadness and hurting recede slowly and the pain is lessened because you are learning to live without the person who died.

The Tower von Marzocco
By Giovanni Fattori



Garden with Chickens in St. Agatha
By Gustav Klimt





• **Stay connected.** Though you may feel completely alone with your grief try to remember there are many who want to be supportive and helpful. Identify a small circle of compassionate family and friends. Speak frequently with them. Share with them your story, your feelings, your hurt, your pain, your frustration. They will be your lifeline to hope and recovery. In her book, *After A Parent's Suicide*, Margo Requarth advises: "Maintaining contact with others in the days and months after your loved one's suicide is important, though it may be difficult. You may have times when you feel unable to get out of bed, much less talk to anyone. Try to stay connected with others who care about you. Communicating by telephone or email can sometimes help on those days when leaving the house feels unbearable. Rely on your answering machine to screen telephone calls, but consider talking to those family members or friends whom you can count on for support."

• **Anticipate some relationship shifts.** One teenage boy recalls: "It's weird to lose a friend because your father killed himself. After the funeral, my friend never called anymore. We just went our separate ways. I don't think he knew what to say to me. The whole thing just freaked him out." The

Portrait of
Astronomers
Nikolaus
Kratzer, Detail
By Hans Holbein
the Younger



Don't walk in front of me; I
may not follow.
Don't walk behind me;
I may not lead.
Walk beside me and
just be my friend.

~Albert Camus



The Meeting
By Gustave Courbet



reality is that many people are very uncomfortable dealing with death and loss. This discomfort becomes more acute when the death is from suicide. There may be friends and even family members who are emotionally paralyzed by suicide death. They are unable to be appropriately responsive. Anticipate this. Though disappointing, try not to take it personally. Spend time in the presence of individuals who are supportive, understanding, compassionate.

- **Participate in a suicide support group.**

Though you may feel as if the last place you want to be is in the company of others who have experienced a suicide loss, override those concerns. Most people find grief support groups immensely helpful and critical to their successful adjustment. In a suicide support group you will learn from others who have healed themselves. Adina Wrobleski was crushed when she learned her 21-year-old stepdaughter, Lynn, shot herself to death. In response to her grief, Wrobleski devoted her life to the study of suicide and to helping other grievers. In her book, *Suicide Survivors: A Guide for Those Left Behind*, she writes: "One of the most helpful things you can do for yourself is to attend a grief group for suicide survivors....Attend a group meeting as soon

A friend is
someone who
gives you total
freedom to be
yourself.

~James Douglas Morrison

The Night Owls
By Honoré Daumier





after the suicide as you can. The longer you flounder around trying to figure out what happened and what hit you, the more confused, helpless and hurt you will be. You may feel you just can't talk to a bunch of strangers, but take a deep breath and go." She outlines these benefits of participating in such a support group: "You will meet role models. You will meet survivors who are further away from their loved one's suicide. You will see, for example, that they have gotten through the first six or nine months. You will also see and hear other recently bereaved survivors who are still reeling from shock and bewilderment as you are... Other survivors can provide you with a measurement stick, a source of encouragement, a haven for times of discouragement."

- **Tap Into Your Spiritual Side**

Activate whatever the spiritual means to you. Some have done this by practicing yoga, joining a meditation group or spending time in nature. One woman, after losing her beloved husband of nearly 30 years, says: "Two things really helped me push through the darkness. One was my daily nature walk. The other was a series of affirmations I recited as I walked—I am still surrounded by loving, caring people in my life.... I am capable of handling this



Inn Located on
a Frozen River
By Isaac van Ostade



The Expected
By Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller

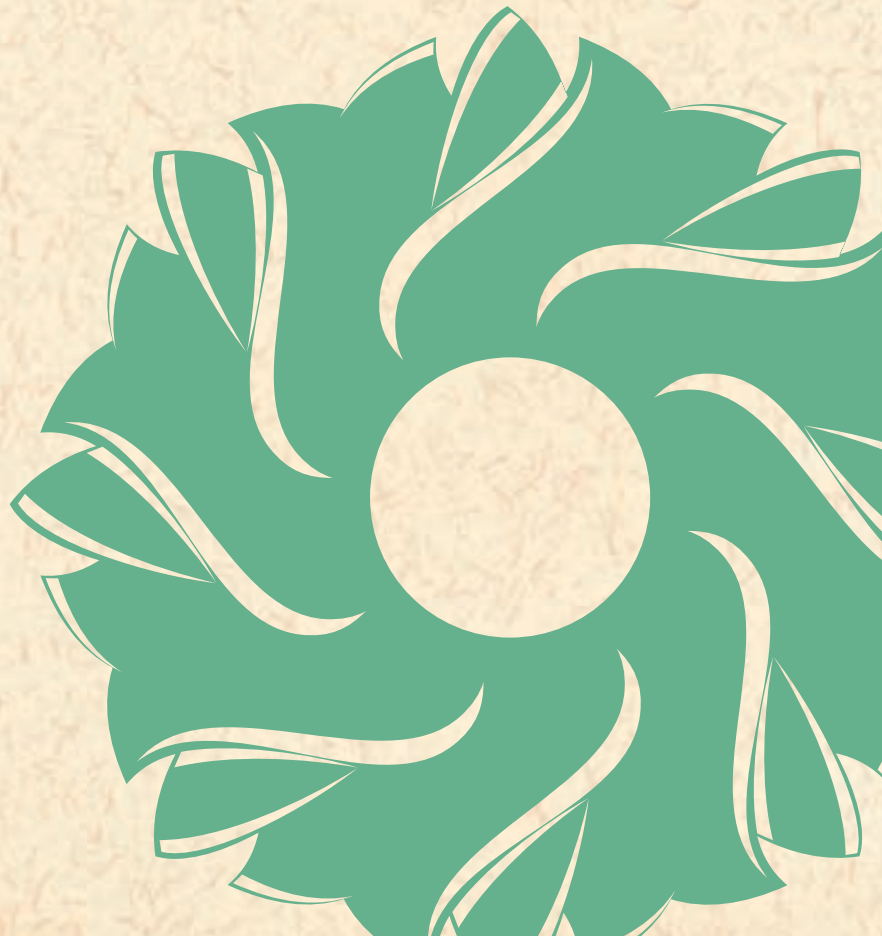


Concert Study
By Wilhelm Maria Hubertus Leibl



Chapter 8

When The Holidays Arrive





Late Snack
By Willem Claesz. Heda



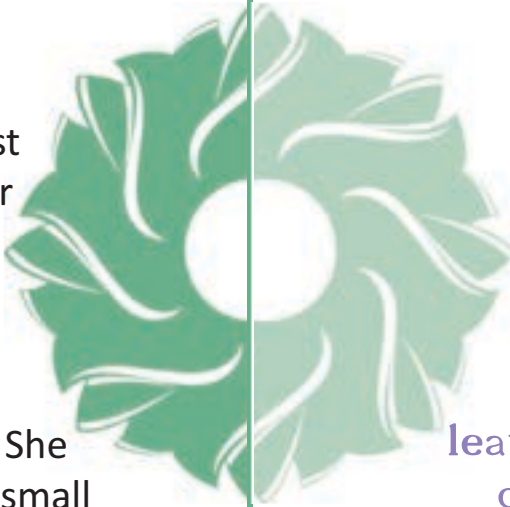
But you can get through the holidays.
In fact, even if your grief is very
fresh, you can create a space to
celebrate in your own way.

~ Susan Apollon

A mother tells of being worried about her first Christmas without her daughter, 33, who had died a few months earlier. “I knew we should still celebrate, but how would I bear the grief?” The mother came up with this plan. She asked all the relatives to bring a small stuffed animal to their annual Christmas gathering. “Then I hung up Katie’s stocking and we all stuffed it full with little animals. I called them Katie’s Critters.”

In January, she took all of the “critters” to a local organization which worked with low income single mothers. “They were overjoyed to receive them!” the mother says. “I plan to continue this project every Christmas so we can remember our darling Katie and how much she loved the season of giving.”

That is just one creative approach to managing the holidays while grieving. Traditionally, the holidays are supposed to be the happiest time of the year. Homes are festively decorated, lights twinkle, stores play holiday music, and families celebrate. For those who have had a loss to death, however, the holidays can heighten feelings of sadness, depression and loneliness.



Death leaves a
heartache no one
can heal, love
leaves a memory no
one can steal.

~From a
headstone in Ireland

Good Friends
By Richard Ansdell





While there is no right or wrong way of dealing with holidays when a loved one has died, some approaches are better than others. Here are some do's and don'ts for coping with holidays.

DO take time to plan ahead asking family members: "Will we celebrate the same way or will we make some changes?" As the first holiday approaches following the loss of your loved one, "don't try and hold on to the way things were done in the past," is the advice of Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair in their book *I Wasn't Ready To Say Goodbye*. "Your family has changed. It's okay to change the way you celebrate the holidays as well. Think of a new tradition. If you always celebrated Christmas at home, consider renting a cabin for a couple of days. If you always put up your tree early in the year, consider putting it up later. If a large dinner was always cooked, go out for dinner instead," they suggest.

DON'T do things you are uncomfortable with just because you feel it is expected. If writing out greeting cards is too much then pass on it for this year.

DO give yourself permission to scale back on activities if you're just not up for them. Avoid overwhelming yourself trying to get

Happy Christmas
By Viggo Johansen



Still Life with Flowers and Fruit
By Henri Fantin-Latour



into the holiday spirit. You are grieving and emotionally taxed so pace yourself accordingly.



DON'T forget you have the right to redefine how the holidays will be celebrated. Exercise your power of choice by choosing whom you will be with and how you will celebrate. Consider the example of one man who says “I was really being pressured by my sister-in-law to join her and her family for Christmas Eve. My wife died three months earlier and I just wasn't comfortable going there for Christmas Eve.” He declined and opted to accept another invitation. “One of the men in our grief support group announced he was going to host a Christmas eve dinner at his home and that all of us in the group were invited. That was a better place for me to be.”

DO cry when and if you need to. The holidays are highly emotional times and more so when there has been a loss.

DON'T forget that other family members are hurting as well, especially children. Try to be sensitive to their needs as well as your own. In his book, *Living With Loss, Healing With Hope*, Earl Grollman writes: “One person's death touches the lives of many. Your children may have lost a parent, a

The Farm Boy, Clad in Sandals
By Alexey Venetsianov



Corner of a Table
By Henri Fantin-Latour





sibling, a grandparent, or a treasured friend. In the midst of your grief it is important that you reach out to them, make time for them, talk with them, listen to them . . . Stay close to your children in this time of grief. Hug them. Comfort them. Show them that your love for them is constant and strong, and not lessened by the overwhelming sorrow you all feel.”

DO mention your loved one by name. Others may hesitate to talk about “David” or “Sandy” but if you take the initiative it will let other family members know it’s alright to talk about the deceased loved one.

DON’T hesitate to let your needs be known. When you are visiting family or friends, Noel and Blair suggest informing them about your needs ahead of time. For example:

- I may need to leave your home earlier than you expect me to. I get tired easily because I’m under a lot of stress.
- I may need to take a walk by myself after dinner. It’s hard to be around happy families for too long a time.
- I may cry unexpectedly when I hear certain music. I have memories of good times and it’s hard to hold back the tears.
- I may not eat all the food and goodies

HOPE IS A THING WITH FEATHERS

“Hope” is the thing with
feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the
words
And never stops at all

And sweetest in the Gale is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm

I’ve heard it in the chillest land
And on the strangest Sea
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb of Me.

~Emily Dickinson

Ice Skating
By Frederik Marianus Kruseman



you offer me. My appetite hasn't been what it used to be - maybe I'm finding this all "hard to swallow."



DO take things one day at a time. You can't anticipate how much energy or lack of it you will have from day to day. Again, pace yourself accordingly. If you're tired, then rest. If you're energetic, then get that shopping or decorating done.

DON'T expect the holiday will be the same because it won't be. Your loved one's absence will, at some point, be a source of sadness and pain. This is to be expected.

DO anticipate the holidays will be "bittersweet." You will feel the bitter pain of your loved one's absence. You will also feel the sweetness of the holidays.

DON'T judge your feelings. If you're not feeling joyful or festive, accept those emotions. Tell yourself, "It's just the way I am today." Passing judgment on feelings blocks energy and creates a burden.

DO watch your diet. Be sure you are treating your body well by not overeating, over indulging in sweets, or consuming excessive amounts of food and alcohol. Treat your body gently. A healthy, well

The House of Cards
By Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin



Harmony in Blue and Silver: Trouville
By James Abbot McNeill Whistler



nourished, well rested body will help you better deal with holiday and grief stress.



DON'T exclude yourself during the holiday. Buy yourself something special. Remember, you've experienced a great loss so be good to yourself.

DO make wise use of your time commitments. Most people feel they over schedule themselves during the holidays. Grieving is stressful enough without making yourself over-committed. Many grieverers find it wiser to under-schedule themselves.

DON'T be afraid to change your mind. Remember that nothing about the holidays is cast in concrete. You are in a grieving process which means your moods and needs can change. If something which previously felt right but no longer does, go with the flow.

DO set aside time for reflection, meditation, prayer. Spiritual practices such as these will help you become more centered, more calm, more hopeful.

DON'T feel guilty when you find yourself enjoying parts of the holiday festivities. Your loved one would certainly not want you to be

Experience is
not what
happens to a
man.
It is what a
man does with
what happens
to him.

~Aldous Huxley



Forest Entrance at Ville d'Avray
By Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

continually sad, depressed, unhappy.



DO talk about your grief. Express and explore your feelings with trusted friends who are good listeners. Remind yourself that ignoring pain doesn't make it go away. It only deepens it.

DON'T resist reaching out for help if you need it. From time to time all of us need someone to talk to or a shoulder to cry on. This is especially true for those grieving the loss of a loved one. Harold Ivan Smith, a minister and author of *A Decembered Grief*, makes this suggestion: "Spend some time listing things that people could help you do to make it through this season. Then when they ask, simply respond, 'Could you help me decorate?' or 'Could you go shopping with me Tuesday evening?' Do yourself and your family a favor: Let someone in on your grief."

DO be open to attending a seminar in your community on how to get through the holidays. Keep an eye out for such an event as it will provide you with helpful information and inspiration.

DON'T be afraid to enjoy aspects of the holiday. Pleasure and laughter don't mean

Pegwell Bay in Kent
By William Dyce



The Water Tank
By Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin





Mending Old Woman
By Nicolae Grigorescu

Grigorescu

1887



Chapter 9

When You Are A Man Who Is Grieving



Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe
By Pietro Longhi





Grief drives men into habits of
serious reflection, sharpens the
understanding, and softens the heart.

~ John Adams

Even though my wife, Cindy, was being treated for an aggressive cancer and even though the odds of her beating it were very low, when she died I found myself in immense pain. The first few months after her death I was in shock, confused, even smiling at friends when inside I was crushed. The weight of grief was devastating. I felt an important part of me was ripped away leaving me desolate, empty and, some days, without hope.

Those words, expressed by a 53 year-old widower, reveal that men feel deeply the impact of loss and struggle with grief recovery. In spite of the fact that losing a life partner leaves a deep wound, it is possible to heal, recover and move forward. Here are ten ways for men to manage grief.

#1) Understand the grief process. Don't let the unfamiliar emotional terrain intimidate you. Read about grief, talk with others who have experienced grief. Do all you can to become informed about grief. Gathering knowledge will help you understand that grief is a discernable process with phases which are common to



If you're going through hell, keep going.

~Winston Churchill



Painting Lovers
By Nicolae Grigorescu



the majority of grievors. These phases include:

- *Disbelief.* The initial reaction to learning about the death of your partner is disbelief. This is a normal defense mechanism designed to help absorb the shock and process the reality.
- *Frustration and confusion.* Grievors experience frustration over the loss, over the response of family, friends, colleagues, even over their own handling of issues. Sometimes that frustration flows over into anger at the person who died, at health professionals such as doctors or nurses, at people who respond in inappropriate and insensitive ways.
- *Regret.* Looking back grievors often experience a desire to have handled some matter differently. Some common thoughts include: If only I had sought better medical attention for her. If only I'd asked for a second opinion. If only I could have been with her at the time of death, etc.
- *Depression.* There will be sadness which will dominate thoughts and feelings. It may result in sleep and eating disorders. Nights and weekends will be more difficult than days during the week.
- *Adjustment.* The time will come when the major issues of the loss are resolved, freeing energies to be reinvested in new relationships and new ways of living.

The Victory
Over Bernardino
della Ciarda, detail
By Paolo Uccello



In the Working-Class Family
By Nikolaj Alexejewitsch Kassatkin



These phases do not always progress in a linear, orderly fashion. A grieving man can move back and forth in these patterns. Knowing what to expect will help normalize your experience and free you from the worry that you are functioning in an unhealthy way.

#2) Face grief honestly and directly.

“Oddly, experiencing the pain of grief head-on is extremely helpful in moving along the grieving process,” say Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge, Ed. D., and Robert C. De Vries, Ph.D, authors of *Getting To The Other Side of Grief*. They recommend the following as gentle ways of facing grief: Rereading sympathy cards; recalling other expressions of sympathy such as flowers, meals, and visitors; listening to the funeral tape or viewing a video of the funeral at least monthly; allowing yourself time alone to cry, reflect and be in touch with other feelings; listening again to the funeral meditation; recalling and writing down significant comforting statements made at the time of your partner’s death and funeral; writing out your thoughts and feelings as you do the above.

#3) Disregard social handicaps placed on men. After his wife of 27 years died, Kyle

When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown-up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability... To be alive is to be vulnerable.

~Madeleine L'Engle



The Battle of Borodino, detail
By Peter von Hess

discovered there were numerous cultural pressures placed on his grieving. “As a male it seemed that I was expected to always be in control emotionally, to always be rational and intellectual, to never cry publicly, and never to ask for support or affection. In short, as a man I was expected to be self-sufficient and go it alone. As one who tried to fit those societal expectations after my wife died, I’m now ready to offer this advice for all grieving men: reach out for support; cry when you need to; hug others rather than simply shaking hands; share your feelings with trusted family and friends; don’t go it alone because going it alone amounts to going nowhere at all!”

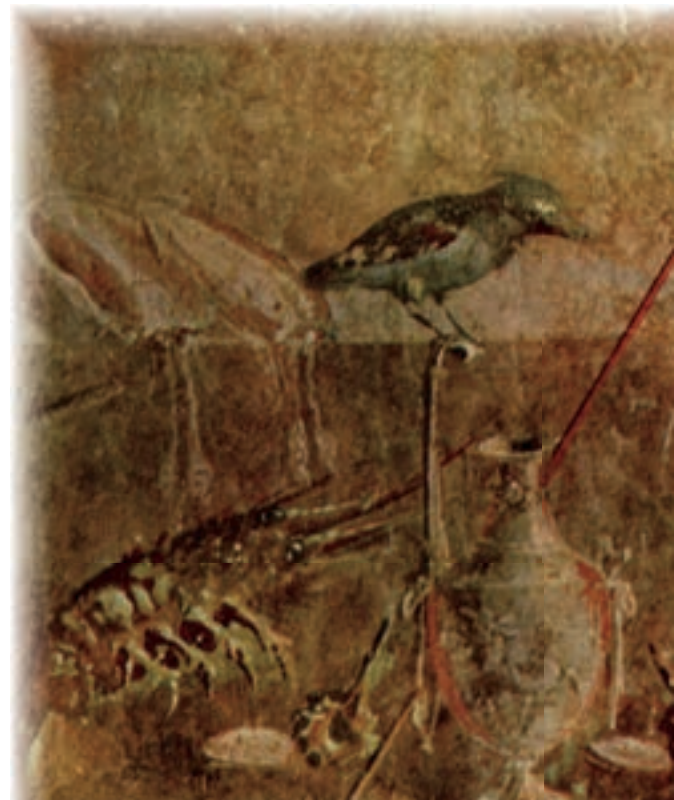


The Flute Player
By Adriaen van Ostade



#4) Don’t deepen your wound. Sadly, some grievors add to their pain by engaging in self-blame. In her book, *Getting Back To Life When Grief Won’t Heal*, author Phyllis Kosminsky, PhD., observes: “There seems to be no end to the reasons people can find to berate themselves after the loss of someone they loved. It may be the fact they aren’t healing on a self-imposed timeline: ‘I’m weak. I’m refusing to get better.’ Or they berate themselves for what they believe are defects in their emotional makeup: ‘I’ve always been overly emotional.’ Or they feel guilty about something having to do with

Pompeian Fresco
By Pompejanischer Maler



the death: 'I should have been by her side at the end;' or about things they may have said or done to the person who died: 'I was selfish;' " Such thinking is counter productive and simply creates a self-inflicted wound you don't need. Be gentle and kind with yourself.



Series of paintings "The Hunt" in the Valley, scene: The Shooter in the Barrel By Pietro Longhi

#5) Make a list of positive things you can do to help yourself. Commit yourself to doing something every day which will make you feel as though you've accomplished something positive for yourself. Recording artist Judy Collins was devastated by the suicide death of her beloved son, Clark, aged 33. In her recent book, *The Seven T's: Finding Hope and Healing In The Wake of Tragedy*, Collins says that during the darkest time of her grief she had to remind herself every day that there are things she could do to "make me feel better, and that doing the right things enhances my mood, and makes life better for those around me!" Collins compiled a list of such activities, reading it each morning and then at the end of the day to see what she had accomplished. "Why not put your own list down on paper?" she asks readers. In the hopes of inspiring others, Collins shares her list of activities which led her to healing one day at a time:

- *Exercise*—a routine that keeps me fit.

Landscape with Grotto By Philipp Peter Roos



- *Eat Right*—avoiding certain foods.
- *Talk*—to my friends.
- *Write*—in my journal.
- *Practice*—an instrument, a skill.
- *Take Action*—make a list, even just a little action.
- *Work*—that is satisfying, productive.
- *Learn*—something new, a game, a song.
- *Play*—see a movie, dance, walk.
- *Meditate*—and practice relaxation techniques.

#6) Share your experience with others.

Identify good people in your life with whom you can share the various experiences connected with loss. When you share pains, you cut them in half. Remember also, when you share joys, you double them. The lesson: don't hesitate to express your hurts but also be on the lookout for joys which can come into your life in unexpected ways. Share the totality of your life experience with others. You should not go through this time of transition in your life alone. Connect with others by expressing and exploring your pains and your joys.

#7) Reach out and help others. Even though you are grieving the loss of your life partner, be mindful of the powers you still



Have confidence that if you have done a little thing well, you can do a bigger thing well, too.

~David Malcolm Story

Dance at Bougival
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir



have for bringing joy into the lives of others. Remind yourself that each day you are offered ample opportunities of moving through your circle of family, friends, neighbors, colleagues - even strangers - creating joy for them and for yourself. Each morning upon arising remind yourself:



- *Today is the day* to smile at everyone I meet.
- *Today is the day* to express appreciation for services rendered.
- *Today is the day* to comfort someone in pain.
- *Today is the day* to say “I love you” to a person outside your family.
- *Today is the day* to express support to someone in crisis.
- *Today is the day* to invite a hurting person for coffee or tea.
- *Today is the day* to write that note of encouragement.

#8) Try a grief support group. “Many mourners find it helpful to seek the company of others who have experienced similar loss and sorrow,” writes Earl Grollman in his book *Living With Loss, Healing With Hope*. “A bereavement group can become a second family during your journey of grief. They understand when you

There is nothing better than the encouragement of a good friend.

~Katharine Butler Hathaway

Philemon and Baucis
By Adam Elsheimer



The Black Marble
By Paul Cézanne



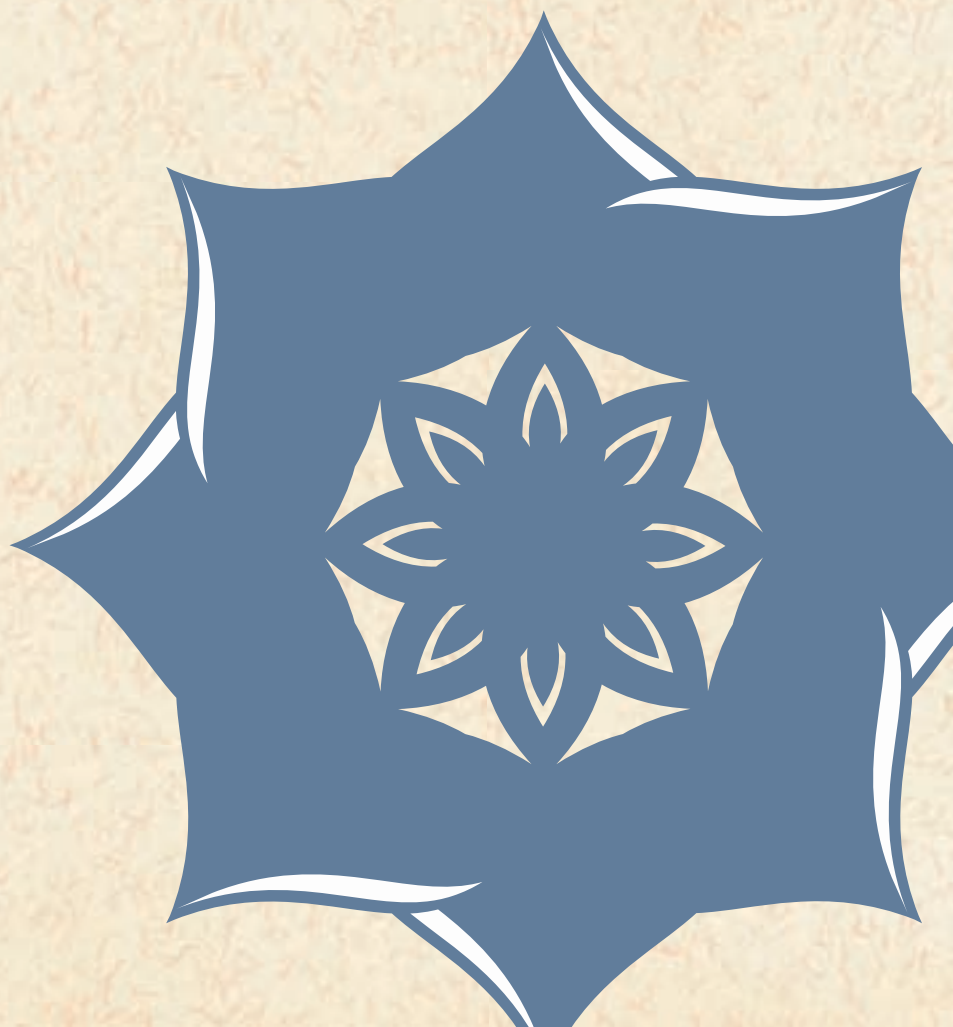


The Prisoner
By Nikolaj Alexandrowitsch Jaroschenko



Chapter 10

When Your Friend Is Grieving





Walchensee
By Lovis Corinth

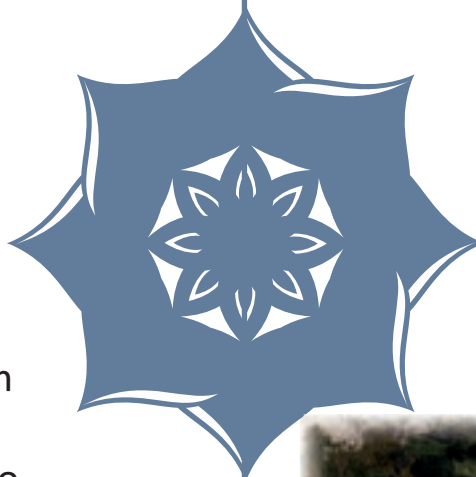


Even hundredfold grief is
divisible by love.

~ Jareb Teague

A phone call one day in January turned Tony DeMarco's world upside down. *The Denver Post* sportswriter received word that his wife, Maureen, 37, had died in a plane crash. A chaplain from Detroit's Metropolitan Airport made the call informing DeMarco there were no survivors. Suddenly DeMarco had to deal not only with his grief but with the reality of abruptly becoming the single parent of his then 8-year-old daughter. As soon as word of Maureen's death spread, an informal network of support for the DeMarcos began to emerge and take shape. Brownie troop mothers brought food, and people from all walks of life came to offer condolences.

Upon learning of a death, the broader community of family and friends must mobilize to form a circle of love and support for grievers. To surviving families, funerals are painful, tragic happenings. But the pain and tragedy can be softened and eased as people rally around providing support for the present and hope for the future. When there is a death, extended family and friends must set aside their own discomfort with death and be present administering emotional first-aid for survivors. Here are



The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson



Meadow with
Houses in Background
By Richard Gerstl

eight “be-attitudes” for helping those who mourn.

#1) Be there. Amazingly, there are people, who upon learning that a friend has experienced a loss to death, choose not to visit the funeral home. Such persons may send a note or make a quick phone call, but they avoid the personal touch of going to the funeral home. It must be stressed that the death of a loved family member is one of life’s most severe blows and one which the bereaved can recover from only with the comfort and consolation extended by others through their caring presence. As soon as you hear of a death, plan to be there at the funeral home. Whether the death was sudden or expected, that of a younger person or one advanced in age, be there. The greatest gift one can offer during such a difficult time is the gift of presence. By visiting the funeral home you become a strong reminder that although mourners are experiencing a very difficult loss they are not left without love and support. Your presence is vital for their immediate support and ongoing adjustment.

Consider the experience of Mary Anne who was home preparing dinner for her three children the evening she received a phone call from a police dispatcher alerting her that

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave
and weep

I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the
morning’s hush

I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that
shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;

I am not there.

I did not die.

~Mary E. Frye

Grandmother’s Garden

By Wassilij Dimitriewitsch Polenow



Kenneth, her husband, had been in an automobile accident on the freeway. Rushing from home to the hospital, Mary Anne was greeted by a nurse who gently told her that Kenneth had died in the ambulance. “Although I was in shock and quite numb during those first few days I distinctly remember marveling at all the people who came to the funeral home. Not only family and friends but acquaintances, Kenneth’s work colleagues, the children’s school mates, so many people came to show support and share our grief. Even though some of them found it hard to be there, they were generous in letting me share my feelings. The funeral visitation left me feeling hopeful. Somehow the presence of so many people made the unbearable bearable.” Mary Anne recalls.

#2) Be there to listen. Listening is a powerful therapeutic tool that facilitates healing and recovery for hurting people. Those who listen carefully and from the heart become instruments whereby light penetrates darkness, hope punctures despair, and clarity replaces confusion. Here is some listening advice from Alan Wolfelt, PhD., director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition: “When a friend is grieving, listen with your heart. Helping begins with your

Pond in the
Sudeten Mountains
By Adrian Ludwig Richter



Before the Inn
By George Morland



ability to be an active listener. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judging are critical helping tools. Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on listening to the words that are being shared with you. Avoid clichés and the temptation to say things such as 'I know just how you feel,' because you don't. Allow your friend to have his or her own feelings."

#3) Be there to express sympathy. Use words and sentences which convey tenderness and compassion. Mourners identify the following as especially helpful to hear at a time of loss:

I'm so sorry.

Words fail me at a time like this.

I want to share your grief any way I can.

This must be very painful for you.

I'm here because I care and want to help.

I am concerned about you and your family.

You will all be in my thoughts daily.

I hurt for you.

In order to express your sympathy as effectively as possible, do not resort to empty clichés or trite expressions such as these:

You've got to hold up.

Don't cry.

Friends are those people who know the words to the song in your heart and sing them back to you when you have forgotten the words.

~Anonymous



Princess Parizade Bringing
Home the Singing Tree
By Maxfield Parrish



*Everything will be all right.
It was for the best.
He's better off now.
You'll get over it.
Be brave and strong.
At least she's not suffering any more.
Time will take care of everything.*

#4) Be there to embrace or touch the mourner. Many grievors report feeling “touch deprived” when a loved one has died. A hug or gentle touch conveys your love, support and compassion in a nonverbal way. It is also healing and comforting to the bereaved. Candy Lightner, founded MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) after her daughter, Cari, was killed. In her book, *Giving Sorrow Words*, she recalls the importance of touch while she was at Cari’s funeral: “I was a divorced, single mother when Cari died, and I remember how very much I wanted to be held.”

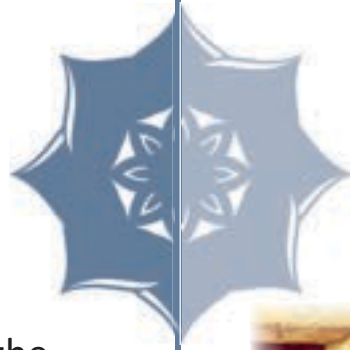
#5) Be there to let grievors know you are available anytime. “Remember this: all suffering comes to an end,” noted the medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart. While his statement is true, those caught in the vise grip of grief may feel that their pain will never ease up. Be there at the funeral home to let them know they can call on you at anytime. Simply offer: “Please call me



The Duck Pond
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir



Girl with Cat in
the Birch Forest
By Paula Modersohn-Becker



anytime you need to. If you feel like talking, I'd like to listen." Your availability during their darkest and most difficult times will be a source of strong encouragement and motivation for grievors to continue the journey through the darkness and into the light of a new day. "After my wife died, I needed to call a close friend just a few times," recalls one widower. "All I needed to do was share some memories and feelings. My friend's willingness to let me call him when I was most despondent was a healing gift for me. I always felt better after talking with him."

#6) Be there to comfort and acknowledge "forgotten" mourners. After consoling the person most impacted by the loss, circulate around and deliver condolences to other extended family members who may also be grieving. "Forgotten" or neglected mourners can include: grandparents, children, stepchildren, in-laws, cousins, aunts, uncles, best friends, even ex-spouses. All of these individuals need your tender attention.

#7) Be there to offer your skills. The death of a loved one not only triggers a variety of emotions but it also unleashes all sorts of legal, medical and financial issues.

Knifegrinder
By Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps



White Lady of Auahouret
By Afrikanischer Maler



There are matters of probate, taxes, life insurance, medical payments, etc. All of that can be overwhelming to the recently bereaved. If you are a lawyer, accountant, insurance agent, or office manager, offer to share your experience and knowledge to help the bereaved deal with the voluminous paperwork connected to a death.

#8) Be there in the weeks and months following the funeral. During the first days when there has been a death, the impacted family receives a great deal of attention via phone calls, visits, letters. However, shortly after the funeral is over, most people drift away leaving mourners alone with their grief struggle. Often it is two or three weeks after a funeral when the bereaved most appreciate the company and support of a friend. Be there in the weeks and months following the funeral. Consider this inspiring example. Writing to advice columnist, *Dear Abby*, Rosalinda Sahli tells how she and her husband were “adopted” by a college fraternity when their son, Joel, was killed in an automobile accident. Joel’s fraternity brothers surrounded the parents with love and support.



Tree in the Corn Field
By August Macke



Canal Grande, detail
By Canaletto



Landscape on the Unstrut
By Max Klinger



~Epilogue~

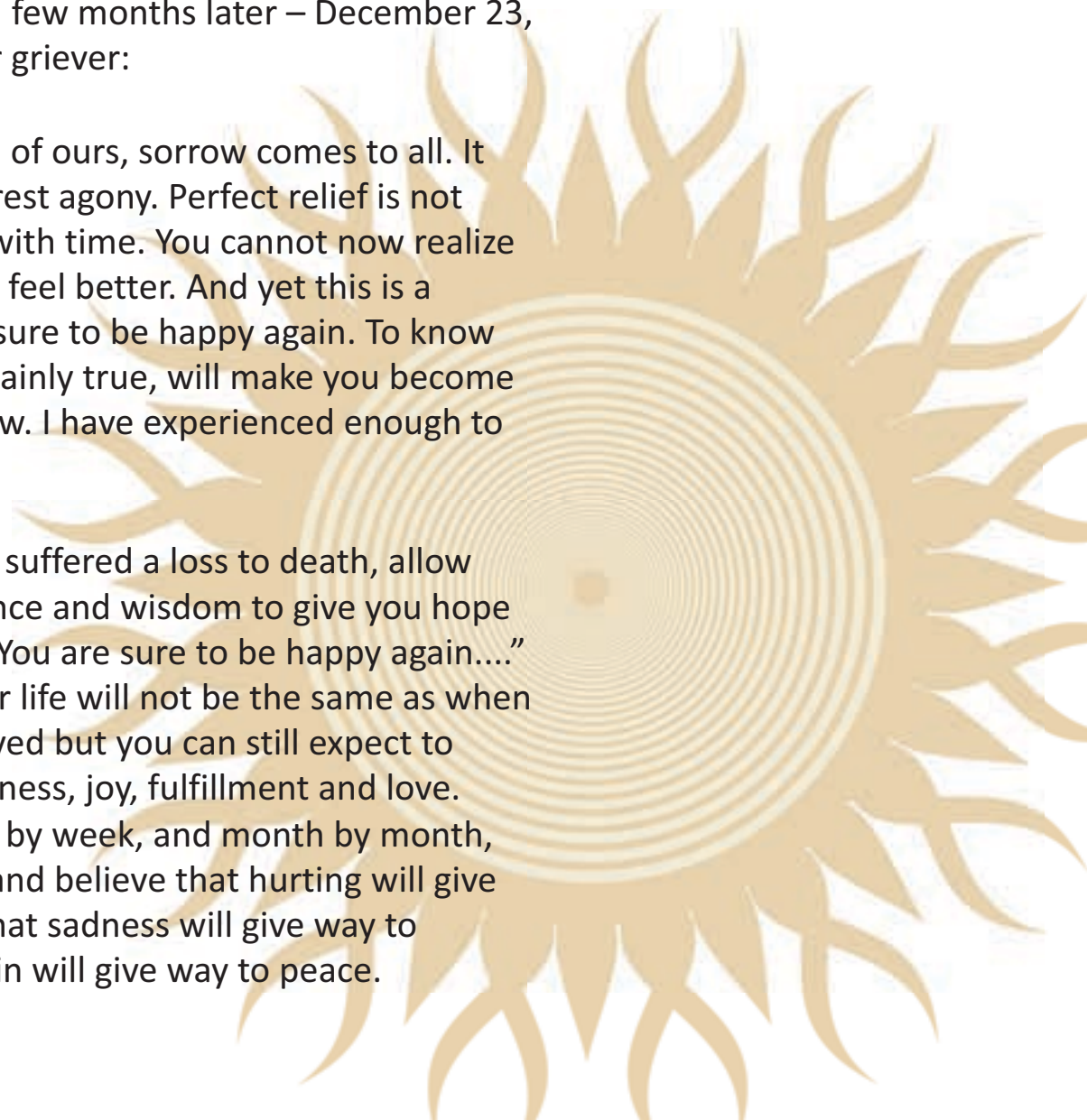
The words at right were written by Abraham Lincoln to a young woman grieving the death of her father. Lincoln's words were not impersonal, empty condolences but came from his own experience with bereavement.

On February 20, 1862, his beloved son, Willie, died at the age of 4 from typhoid fever. Reflecting on his own grief journey, he wrote these words of encouragement a few months later – December 23, 1862 - to another griever:

“In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all. It comes with bitterest agony. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better. And yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you become less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say.”

Though you have suffered a loss to death, allow Lincoln's experience and wisdom to give you hope for your future: “You are sure to be happy again...” It is true that your life will not be the same as when your loved one lived but you can still expect to experience happiness, joy, fulfillment and love. Day by day, week by week, and month by month, hold on to hope and believe that hurting will give way to healing, that sadness will give way to gladness, that pain will give way to peace.

**You are
sure to
be happy
again...**



~Additional Book Resources for Grievers~

- *The Other Side of Sadness: What The New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss*

by George Bonnano

- *Silent Grief: Living in The Wake of Suicide*

by Christopher Lukas and Henry Seiden

- *Don't Take Away My Grief: What To Do When You Lose A Loved One*

by Doug W. Manning

- *How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*

by Therese A. Rando

- *ABCs of Healthy Grieving: A Companion For Everyday Coping*

by Harold Ivan Smith

- *Grievers Ask: Answers to Questions About Death and Loss*

by Harold Ivan Smith

- *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones For Finding Hope and Healing For Your Heart*

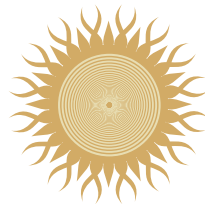
by Alan Wolfelt

- *What Helped Me When My Loved One Died*

by Earl Grollman

- *Grief Relief*

by Victor M. Parachin



~About the Author~

Victor M. Parachin, M.Div. is a writer and minister whose work focuses on experiences of grief and loss. He writes a monthly column for *The Director*, the journal of the National Funeral Directors Association. He is the author of *Grief Relief* from Chalice Press, as well as several other books.

~Book Design & Layout~

