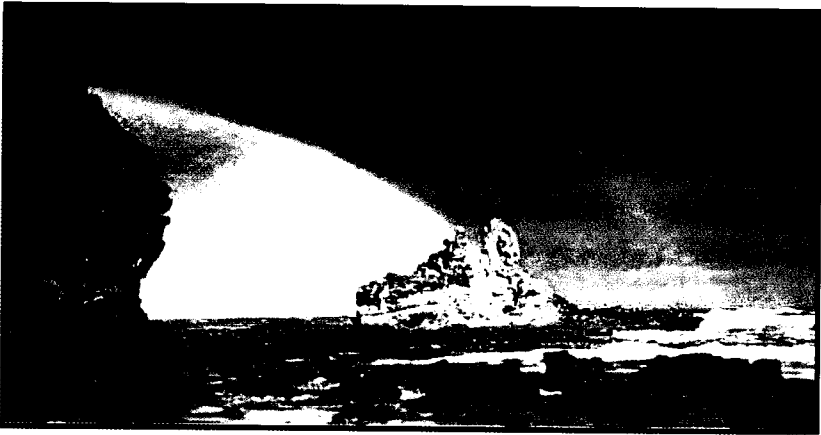


GRIEF: NEW CHANNELS



By Cheryl McQueen

FOLLOW UP SERIES
BOOK FOUR

GRIEF: NEW CHANNELS

Cheryl McQueen
Book Four

IN MEMORY OF

LOU

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Cheryl McQueen



Born Again to Love Getting Old

Written by Ghislaine Salvail

My last child left a year ago.
A year ago already!
Still I cannot make up my mind to rearrange the room,
To get rid of the trophies, the posters, the school pictures
Even the old teddy bear he told me to throw away.
It keeps warm all rolled up in the eiderdown.
A hundred times I've entered this sanctuary;
A hundred times I've postponed the great cleanup.
The other children have left us also.
They were going to live their own lives,
But not for all eternity!
With my husband I'm no longer the same.
I can only give him a shadow of myself.
I drag my feet and my sorrow in this big house.
Our son has gone, never to come back.
He carried away what my heart cherished most.
And yet, my partner suffers just as much as I do.
I had promised love and fidelity to him too.
I guess I must learn to love over.
I must get over this departure
To be once again able to be present.
But what if today's sorrow, instead of being an end,
Was the beginning of something new, good and better?
It, like the grain of wheat that dies,
My suffering, my loneliness became buds in my heart,
Promises of plentiful fruit, giving food to many?
That would be for me a first resurrection in hope!
This rebirth from death would become
The great encounter with him, the lost son.
Yes, I want to go on living and wishing to live eternally.
I want to revisit all my loves.
I want my memories to become reality.
My serenity will be my way of proclaiming my faith.
That is the most glorious heritage to hand down.

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Grief: New Channels

It is hard to believe that a year or so has already passed since your loved one has died. During this time, well-meaning friends and relatives have gone on with their lives, assuring you that you would do the same.

But here it is a year later, and for some of you, although the pain is somewhat numbed, the total anguish and heartache are still there. Instead of diminishing, the absolute and utter loneliness seems to be compounding, magnifying in its intensity.

And yet by the same token, for others, you have made it through this first year, something that a year ago, you thought you could never do.

You've even had a few good times, now that you think about it. You have even managed to laugh, now and then.

"Have you not got over it yet? After all, it's been over a year, hasn't it?" Statements like that leave you wanting to scream. Although we may be feeling a little better, often we are not nearly as healed as we would like to be.

Hopefully, the following pages may be instrumental in understanding that this next period may not be as painfilled as the first year was.

Please

PLEASE, Don't ask me if I'm over it yet
I'll never be over it.

PLEASE, don't tell me she's in a better place
She isn't here with me.

PLEASE, don't say at least she isn't suffering
I haven't come to terms with why she had to suffer at all.

PLEASE, don't tell me you know how I feel
Even if you have lost a loved one.

PLEASE, don't ask me if I feel better.
Bereavement isn't a condition that clears up.

PLEASE don't tell me at least you had her for so many
years.

What year would you choose for your loved one to die?

PLEASE, don't tell me God never gives us more than we
can bear.

PLEASE, just say you are sorry.

PLEASE, just say you remember my loved one, if in fact,
you do.

PLEASE, mention her name.

PLEASE, just let me cry.

So What Have You Been Doing This Last Year?

Unknowingly, you have probably invested much time and energy into trying to reintegrate your life. If you don't think so, read on. Do any of these sound familiar to you?

You may not cry as often as you did at first, but when you do, you realize and admit that it is therapeutic. You cry when you have to - laugh when you can.

Physical symptoms may be not as acute, i.e. stomach disorders, headaches, sleeplessness. If they do present a problem, a checkup with your physician might be in order.

You may find that you actually have some sort of balance in your life - work, recreation, music, exercise, hobbies, reading, rest and prayer.

You may notice that you are not as critical of yourself, or of others. Unrealistic expectations have waned.

A different level of reality may have hit. You may no longer deny the death of your loved one, but you may now be able to face the reality and the implications that the reality brings.

Yet, some of you may find that your grief is intensified by increasingly troubled relationships with your spouse, children, work, other family members or friends. Realize that this does happen and may complicate your grief.

This last year may have been a time to struggle with new life patterns. Some of you may have become overactive, some of you, underactive. If your new coping strategies have been helpful, then all is well and good. If they have not, try

new approaches such as:

- becoming more active in a support group
- telephoning friends
- reading about grief
- developing coping skills by talking to others who have experienced grief similar to yours.

Find a friend with whom you are able to talk. Many claim that finding a friend prevents them from sliding into a depression.

Depression is normal and its recurrence is also normal. However, for verification, please seek professional help from your family physician, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Perhaps after a year, it may seem as if we are still “going crazy.” Remember, it takes time to work through grief, much more time than we think it should. Be patient with yourself.

Self-esteem may be lowered. Many bereaved tell me that “I don’t like the person that I have become.” Often this is due to our unrealistic expectation of ourselves.

Time heals all. Yes and no. The truth of the matter is, that although time has softened the hurt and pain a little, what really helped was what you have done with that time:

- returning to work
- talking to friends and relatives
- struggling through each day
- hoping the pain will be less severe with each new day
- allowing friendship and help when we have been stuck in our feelings
- lowering our expectations

- praying
- reaching out to others who are mourning
- being gentle with ourselves.

Remember that grief is a journey through loss and pain. There is no competition and no time limit.

Some have found comfort in contemplation. Others have sought spiritual direction.

Others find it comforting to think about their dead loved one surrounded in the arms of Everlasting Love, a Higher Being, a God, a Creator.

Whatever you have done, you know by now that grief hurts and takes a long time to heal because it affects every part of our lives. It affects our whole entire being.

Perhaps throughout the last year, you may have been plagued with feelings of anger directed toward yourself, toward God, and toward others. Realizing and acknowledging this anger, is the first step in trying to release its power over us.

Maybe you have managed throughout this last year by being totally independent. A word of caution - this can also lead to isolation, bitterness and sometimes, indescribable loneliness.

For others, they have depended totally on relatives and close friends. They are of the school of thought that grief is a family matter, not meant to be shared outside of the confines of the family.

Whatever you have done during the last year, you no doubt have been determined to work through your grief. This is essential for healing to occur and for grief recovery.

Like explorers, we, the bereaved have been in uncharted waters, never quite sure of where we are, where we are going or how we will get there.

We have been lost at sea, frightened by menacing waves enormous and threatening. We have been paralyzed with fear, afraid to let go.

Eventually, the storm emotions ran out of energy, leaving us breathless and in search of rediscovering our self again.

In our quest of hope, we basked in the calm and delighted in the ebb tide. We grew through our grief, and understood that with the clouds and darkness, come courage, strength and fortitude.

For many, the journey of life and the path of pain have helped us grow in wisdom, in faith and in love.

And now, during this last year and in the years to come, we seek new channels. Curiosity piqued, we embark on yet another journey, exploring these multiple straits and passages, ever wondering where they will take us.

We are once again immersed in life, floating on the buoy of hope. In search of new channels, our life becomes a reflection of the past, a mirror of the present and a vision of the future.

Widows & Widowers - Dating Again

As the anniversary approaches most find they have a sense of foreboding. It seems to be a milestone or a landmark that signals the finality to the grief process. Nothing can be further away from the truth.

Questions constantly plague us:

- What am I going to do?
- When am I going to feel better?
- When will I ever stop crying?
- When will the memories stop flooding at the most inopportune times?
- Why am I embarrassed when I cry?
- When will I laugh again?
- When will I be normal?
- How am I supposed to act now?
- Am I doing it right?
- Is it O.K. to.....?

One of the most common occurrences that happens is the option of widows and widowers to date again. This topic comes up time and time again...should we date? Should we not date?

The average age at which a woman is widowed is fifty-six; the average life expectancy of a girl child born today is seventy-nine years. But if a woman is sixty-five today, she has a life expectancy of another eighteen years. Among widows in their twenties who have two children, 76.6 percent remarry, while only 44.8 percent of those in their thirties also with two children remarry. Anyway you look at it, women have a long time to go on alone. Well-meaning friends have told you (haven't they?) that you will get married again in a few years as if that were the solution to all of your problems.

You know it isn't. Married people have problems too. But you have to realize that widows are a glut on the market. Everyone else may tell you that you'll remarry, but don't assume that. As with your insurance policies you have to consider your options. Marriage is merely one of them.

If marriage is an option, proceed with caution. Work your way through it and come to a decision so that you are whole and secure within yourself. Think about whether you want to risk your emotions and your life on another marital venture. One widow said to me, "I have not yet met a man with whom I want to spend more than three or four hours - the length of time it takes to eat a good dinner."

Widows for the most part, and widowers also, are highly vulnerable and they can sometimes be taken once or even twice because of that vulnerability, but they can get gun-shy pretty quickly. When one has been married for a long time, one retains a married psyche for a long time. It takes a while to become a single woman or man again.

Most bereaved are terrified of what another loss could do to them. To enter into another relationship with fear is called a "phobic response to marriage" and is experienced by those who lost their mate without warning. It affects the nature of eventual recovery.

On the opposite end of the scale, there are others who hop into bed with just about anyone shortly after the death of their spouse. They may be experiencing a "phobic response to being alone."

Either response, you still need companionship.

Most widows and widowers that I have seen in the last 20 years of counselling have mixed feelings about remarriage. I think caution is wise. I hear too many horror stories about second and third marriages.

The one fact that emerges time and time again from all of the stories that I hear is that you can't be too careful. It wouldn't be a bad idea for the widow or widower to run a credit rating on every person they go out with. I am talking about character credit, not money - though it would not be so dumb to check out the finances as well. I have heard of widows who signed over their businesses, their houses, their housekeeping services, and their bodies to fast, sweet talking lovers who were going to "look after them." The stories that I have heard are first hand from both widows and widowers alike. Men get "taken" just as much as women. Be careful.

Let me give you two prime examples. One young widow with two school age children lost her husband and their father when he was in his late thirties. The house, the pool, the education, etc. were all paid for. Their life insurance guaranteed that she would never have to work again. Then, in her mixed grief support group entered a young "widower" claiming to have lost his darling wife to cancer.

The two soon bonded and within six months were engaged. When I heard of this, all I saw were red flags. I called her and asked her to consider getting a lawyer to draw up a marriage contract. She thought I was paranoid and was adamant that he truly loved her, so a marriage contract would not hinder their relationship. However, she did take my advice.

The appointment with the lawyer was arranged. She waited in the lawyer's office patiently for over two hours. He did not show up. She telephoned him only to find out that his

number was out of service. She went to his apartment, but he had already packed and left. She has never heard from him again. She was heartbroken and felt betrayed. Our only conclusion was that he was one of these people who married the vulnerable, only to divorce six months later to claim fifty percent of the belongings.

Ladies and gentlemen: if they truly love you, your lover will sign a contract that enables your children from your previous marriage to acquire their deceased parents belongings and inheritance.

Another story happened to a widower. After his wife died, a divorced woman attached herself to him. Relatives were not amused, and warned him against her. They knew that she had married in the past, had divorced and had acquired sizable assets using this method of marriage and divorce.

He ignored their advice, sold all his assets and married the woman. Ten months later, at Christmas time, he telephoned me.

He was living in the basement of his son's house; the new wife had withdrawn most of his money from his account and absconded with it. He was hiring a lawyer to help find her and bring her to justice.

The moral to my stories is that it pays to ask questions. Find out. Do a little sleuthing. Make sure you know something about the person before you get hurt or taken or both. Don't go out with a perfect stranger, and don't go to bed with someone you met on line. Remember, no one is perfect.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

These truths may seem self-evident, but not to a spouse long sheltered and newly thrust into the world of singles. Do I have to say more? Yes.

You'd think singles bars would be less popular than they used to be because of STDS (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), but they're still one of the most popular meet (meat??) markets available. There's no such thing as a one-night stand anymore. As the AIDS warnings point out, if you sleep with someone you don't know very well, you are also going to bed with the last eight or ten people he knew, over the last five to eight years (whichever comes first). That's enough to cool anyone's hot blood.

Conversation. Pillow Talk. It isn't merely sex that is missing from the lives of women alone. It is friendship, affection, spiritual intimacy - all much more difficult to replace than mere physical contact. Widows or widowers who have nursed their spouses through a long illness and who were denied any physical release because of the illness - anywhere from three months to six years - tell me they didn't feel the sexual hunger during that period that they did after their spouses were gone.

Another point that I want to make very clear to the bereaved. You should give a thought to how dating affects your children because it will, in turn, affect you. Little children often feel threatened by their mother's dating. They are afraid she will be taken away from them or, if the man in question attempts to come on too strong as an authority figure, they may resent the father "replacement."

Teenage children feel threatened too. I know of one lovely, intelligent, young 13 year old, whose mother died from a long term illness.

Within two months of her mother's death, her father had found another partner. He told me that he had desires too and had to have them fulfilled. The daughter was devastated and begged him not to see her. She felt he had betrayed her mother's memory and life.

He denied her request. She threatened to run away. He thought she was joking.

Two weeks later, I was getting off the subway in Toronto to attend early morning classes at the University of Toronto. There, on one of the corners on Yonge Street was the young girl, prostituting herself. I went up to her; and hugged her. She cried and I cried; and then she ran away. I never saw or heard from her again. What a waste of a young life. Was it worth abdicating his role as a father? What do you think?

Whether it is death from a long-term illness or a sudden death, it is a painful and difficult process. Grief is a stress on the body, mind and spirit and left unattended, can lead to mental, emotional and physical illness. After a year, you may want to begin to rebuild your life and start to invest energy into new activities. But if you are still having difficulty getting through your grief, seek out a group in your community that is waiting to help you.

Local funeral homes, hospitals (chaplaincy or pastoral care departments) or Canadian Mental Health can direct you to a group for the bereaved. There, you will receive understanding and support from others, who have survived this distressing time. Churches in many cities have formed groups and programs to help the bereaved.

There may be nothing more healing to you than to sit down at a support group to listen and share with others who understand.

Getting Through The First Year

My family has always been close. We have celebrated as many occasions as possible together, traveled together and have driven up and down Highway 401 to have lunch together.

When my father died at the age of 79 of congestive heart failure, my world was turned upside down. I couldn't concentrate, sleep or be productive at work or home. I found myself crying all the time. I was fortunate to find Cheryl. She and I spent many hours together - I would talk about my feelings of guilt for not being with my parents when my father died and the sadness I felt. She always knew what to say to help me see how I was there for my parents in many ways.

With Cheryl's encouragement, I started writing down my feelings and memories of my father and my family. This was not easy to do. Through my crying I remembered the good times and started to cry less often. I was able to concentrate better and I felt better.

She guided me into putting all my memories into book form. This was not easy, but again, it was very therapeutic. This is a story of my family's history and it will be cherished by my mother, her children and grandchildren. My family will not forget who we are.

After I stopped going for private counselling with Cheryl, I started attending her group every week. I don't believe I would be able to let go of my guilt and anger if it had not been for this group. Everyone is so supportive and understanding. I can say things here that I wouldn't feel comfortable saying to my family. I am learning how to heal and move on without my father.

Naomi Levy

Joan & Ray Kizell
and family

Raymond Mara



Diocese of Detroit

Joan and Raymond Kizell



25



Memories Copyright by Naomi Fox

Family celebrates 50 years in business here



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Violent Deaths

My husband was killed in a violent motor vehicle collision and the other driver was charged with *criminal negligence causing death*. I was drawn to Cheryl McQueen's bereavement group, *Coping with Grief and Loss*, by the variety of discussion topics offered in the program's calendar.

I stayed in the group because of the compassion and camaraderie that Cheryl and the other group members showed to me. I have had a wondrous experience sharing my grief with such caring people.

I experienced Cheryl as an effective, attentive and empathetic leader. She shared her knowledge and experience of grief in assisting me to resolve my own grief issues.

The weekly discussion topics are pertinent and absorbing.

My grief has been transformed to a manageable experience. Attending the bereavement group has contributed to my progress on the healing path.

Paula Smith

Multiple Deaths

During the last six months, I have lost my father to cancer, my mother to a heart attack, my girlfriend to an aneurysm, and my 13 year old and 15 year old adopted sons have left home. These events broke my trust in my belief system and my purpose in life. I lost my ability to make decisions because I was filled with self-doubt, regret and guilt.

Moving forward was hard. I tried to take control of my life by losing weight, taking anti-depressants and sleeping pills. After two years, I finally agreed to join this bereavement group.

I now realize that moving forward is a process that needs to pay attention to the mind, body, emotion and spirit. Friends were willing to help in the beginning, but “soul pain” can only be understood by people who have experienced it. When I was down, I needed someone to listen without judgment and to share their pain with me. I needed to belong and I needed to matter.

The group allowed me to begin with small steps, to explore my pain and to rediscover what was meaningful to me. By being allowed to listen to the pain of others, I was able to discover or recognize my own.

The group helped me to accept my children’s choices and to be able to share their journey without needing to feel guilty or responsible. The group helped me to realize my own strength and to begin to rediscover my purpose in life.

Anita Reansbury

Infant Death

On September 2, 2004, our precious daughter, Mikayla Mary was born still. Over the next couple of days we made arrangements for her funeral. We are so very thankful for the support of family and friends; they are always there for us to lean on.

I knew that I was going to need support. I began calling bereavement groups within days of our loss. I was put on a waiting list for a support group for parents who have

lost infants, until they got enough families to participate.

Unfortunately, I am still waiting.

A friend gave me a flyer from a local funeral home entitled "Coping with Grief and Loss." It was a weekly discussion series for anyone who had experienced a death of a family member or friend. I called the phone number. I was really unsure if they would want me to attend, as the first session was to begin, not even two weeks after the death of my daughter.

I remember asking Cheryl, "Can I come or am I too new in my grief?" She reassured me that everyone, including me, is welcome to join whenever they feel they are ready.

I have been attending for five months now and I look forward to going. This group is helping me with my grief. The people at the group are a tremendous support to me; it is so nice to have people to talk to about Mikayla, to share our story, to laugh and to cry with. The group is a safe place for me to share my feelings, my fears and my concerns, without judgment.

The group reminds me that you are not alone. I have bonded with the people at the group. I know they share my pain, as I do theirs.

The thing that helps me deal with my grief the most is talking. My biggest fear is if I stop talking about Mikayla, they will forget about my daughter, they will forget that I am a Mother. This group makes sure that doesn't happen, and for that I am forever grateful. Thank you for all of your love, concern and support.

Lori Fraser

Memories of Mikayla from Lori



A Social Workers Perspective

I came to Cheryl's bereavement group on the advice of a couple at my church. My husband died September 2003. Today, my energy, coping skills and strength after such a sad loss, are thankfully present because of the sharing, grieving and listening in the once a week grief support group.

The group is open, trust is established, confidentiality is maintained and the sharing is phenomenal. The handouts inspire us to share.

I can get through the week, play my cello, sing in the church choir, exercise or help the five elderly people I assist, just because of this group.

I know that after five days of "being on my own", I usually need a good cry and support from the other bereaved. The group provides this.

The group is so cohesive that we also meet once a month for supper and call each other. I would be a "basket case", if it were not for Cheryl's group.

As a retired social worker, I have seen groups poorly run. Her groups are well run and very necessary to all who attend.

I would strongly urge the bereaved in the Hagersville, Fisherville and Ohsweken area to attend these grief support groups. The cost of the program is fully sponsored by R.H.B. Anderson Funeral Homes Ltd.

Ann Pratt

Diagnosis: Emotionally Unstable

I was with my Dad for seven and one half weeks in the hospital in Scotland. He eventually died. I withdrew into myself for I didn't know how I was going to cope with my father's death. I wanted to die to be with him.

I came back to Canada and felt as if I was going crazy. I ended up in the Liaison Unit of St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton and was administered medication to calm me down. I wondered, "Is this how I will be spending the rest of my life?"

My own family doctor came to see me and we talked. He assured me that I was not going crazy and that I did not need medication. He then wrote me a prescription "See Cheryl McQueen."

Cheryl took me under her wing to Hagersville where I joined my first support group. I heard from people who had similar circumstances to mine, and I felt a sense of belonging. I learned to trust them and opened up with my deepest feelings. The group listened without judgement, for they too were enduring their own painful journey. Together our group obtained a wealth of knowledge as we explored different aspects of grief. I treasured this group. We became each other's lifelines. We became each other's friends. Through the various handouts, the talking, the sharing, the laughter and the tears, we helped each other on our journey of grief.

I bonded with my group and that bond still exists today. My group became my family. Learning to live without a loved one is hard, but with perseverance and loving support, I have learned how to live with my loss. Thank you to Richard Anderson for providing this service.

Grief: Reason for Being

"Grief and death are not enemies to be conquered nor prisons from which to escape. They are an integral part of our lives that give meaning to human existence. They set a limit on our time in this life, urging us to do something productive with that time as long as it is ours to use. When you fully understand that each day you awaken could be the last you have, you take time that day to grow, to become more of who you really are, to reach out to other human beings."

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

The spirit, the soul or the spiritual components of an individual is greatly challenged after the death of a loved one. It involves more than religious or faith issues. It involves people searching for the meaning from the death experience. In this search, one third of the population will move toward people, one third will move away from people and one third of the population will move against people. Some manage to do all three at the same time.

Searching for this meaning is somewhat like the layers of an onion. You may come to explore the many layers of your heart and mind as you pursue deeper meanings to the challenges of grief and the devastation that it brings. You know by now that you need to tell your story again and again. In doing so, you will slowly and progressively peel off one layer of grief at a time, searching out deeper levels of meaning and understanding to the death events. As you near the centre of the core, you may come in touch with the essence of your very being. It's there that you may explore the layer of your soul - your spirituality.

In talking about spiritual changes, you may want to share how your beliefs and faith are challenged. Beliefs about everything and anything you believed in prior to the death come into question. Some state that they feel like they "lose"

their faith for awhile after the death. Others share how they find their beliefs and faith strengthened and how they are able to finally be at peace with the world.

For some it is “painful” to let others “nurture” them due to their past roles as a caregiver. “It hurts too much to have others helping and caring for me. “Death changes them forever. It’s an emotional roller coaster, only this time they don’t choose the roller coaster - the roller coaster chooses them.

Many tend to challenge their thoughts about the meaning of life in general, as well as the meaning of their lives, in the past, the present, and the future. Finding purpose seems to be a common search among grieving individuals.

People experiencing grief have written many books and articles, trying to find their reason for being. They become examples of hope for the grieving. They have made a spiritual and conscious choice to take the devastating death of a loved one and have allowed it to become an opportunity for growth - for themselves, their family, and others. It takes great courage to do this. It is imperative to “make sense” of the things in life... and in making sense, individuals find “meaning for their living.”

Expectant parents have hopes and dreams for their unborn child. Through miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death, those dreams were shattered. For most, to speak of the death causes unbearable pain. What was their reason for being?

Children and teens, after the death of a parent, or family member, need a safe environment to help them come to some sort of understanding of themselves and the death events. What was their reason for being?

Widows and widowers know that tears, laughter and sharing help them cope with their grief. They will never get over the death of their spouse; they will never forget their spouse, but they will learn to live without them. But what was their reason for being?

Those who died by violent death, murders, suicides, earthquakes, floods, snow storms, tidal waves, motor vehicle accidents, drowning, boating accidents, plane crashes, wars, terrorist attacks. What was their purpose of being?

Is this part of evolution? If so, is this evolution at its worst? Is it evolution at its best? Is the purpose of death and misfortune so that we can make choices between right and wrong? Is the purpose to care for each other... to love and to be loved, to be companions on the journey of life? Just what is our purpose?

Grief can take us to a deeper understanding of what is important in life; can put us in touch with earlier losses that have impacted our lives today; can strengthen our relationships with people remaining in our lives; and can help us formulate beliefs on the meaning of life. The end of life gives meaning to the beginning.

Grief is a spiritual journey. Suffering and entering the suffering of others, moves us toward perfection. True compassion is manifested out of love for self and love for others. It stems from that innate desire to love and to be loved. It's through human suffering where the bereaved find meaning and choose to go on living to create a new life. Some philosophers maintain that happiness and enjoyment are not the aim of life... that spiritual growth is... or metaphorically... a new butterfly unfolding as it should. Some agree with this; others do not. What do you think?

The Butterfly

There is a story of a man who noticed a cocoon on a bush in his yard. As he started to remove it from the bush and throw it away, he noticed the end was opening and a butterfly was struggling to escape. In an effort to help the emerging butterfly, he took it inside and carefully cut the cocoon away with a razor blade. The butterfly feebly crawled away from the open cocoon and, within a few hours died. For you see, it needed the strength it would have gained from the struggle to free itself, in order to survive in the outside world.



Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me
I shouldn't feel that way...
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do
Something to solve my problem,
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen,
Not talk or do - just hear me.
Advice is cheap: two dollars will get you both
Dear Abbey and Ann Landers in the same newspaper.
And I can do that for myself; I'm not helpless,
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me
That I can and need to do for myself,
You contribute to my fear and weakness.

But, when you accept as a simple fact
that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational,
then I can quit trying to convince you
and can get about the business of understanding
what's behind this irrational feeling.
And when that's clear,
The answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand
What's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works,

Sometimes, for some people.

Because God is mute,

And God doesn't give advice

or

Try to fix things.

"They" just listen

and let you work it out for yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me.

And if you want to talk

Wait a minute for your turn,

And,

I'll listen to you.

Anonymous

Emotional Stepping Stones

As you can see, grief is like a snowflake... unique in its design, distinctive in its makeup and personalized in its delivery. It attacks all people of all nationalities and all religious beliefs. It is not selective. It comes to all.

As you start to reconstruct your life, you may be discouraged and have problems finding the right tools to build your life again.

Do not be disheartened. This time is like a large bend in the river bed, spreading into a delta of decisions. These decisions will be dealt with in your time and on your own schedule.

Emotional Stepping Stones:

- Death
- Seeking or holding your dead loved one
- Phone Calls
- Friends and family support
- Leaving the hospital
- Funeral arrangements
- Vigil or visitation
- Actual funeral day
- Burial
- Cremation
- Loneliness
- Grief
- Choosing the headstone
- Visiting the cemetery for the first time
- Seeing the headstone for the first time
- Friends and family support dwindling
- Returning to work or society
- Attending family gatherings
- Returning to school
- Reality of the death events sets in
- Special holidays
- Anniversary of death
- Establishing new relationships

The list goes on. Memories bring pain and tears; they also bring laughter. The memories are needed to heal, for believe it or not, we do grow in our pain.

Did you ever wonder why Memorial Services, Memorial Masses, Candle Light Services or Remembrance Days are so important? We need to remember.

For in remembering them, we continue to show the love that we have for them. They will continue to live on in our hearts.

On the next two pages, you will see an example of an Advent Calendar that was made for a young lady whose father had died.

In the past, her father was an integral part of making Christmas so very special. They were dreading celebrating this holiday without him.

When this calendar was created for her in memory of her father, she was overwhelmed. The entire family opened each door each day during the month of December. This very special tribute to her father helped the entire family with their pain and sorrow as they recalled times of Christmases past when life was full of laughter.

Merry Christmas





The Journey of Life

Temple Bailey

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is the way long?" she asked. And her guide said, "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning." But the young mother was happy and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children and gathered flowers for them along the way and bathed with them in the clear streams; and the sun shone on them and life was good, and the young mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

Then night came, and a storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold. And the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Oh mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come." And the mother said, "This is better than the brightness of day for I have taught my children courage."

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary, but at the time she said to her children, "A little patience and we are there." So the children climbed and when they reached the top, they said, "We could not have done it without you, mother." And the mother, when she lay down that night, looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardness. Yesterday, I gave them courage; today, I have given them strength."

And the days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old, and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong and walked with courage.

And when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide open.

And the mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother even when you have gone through the gates."

And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said, "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a Living Presence."



Julia Skalazoob
1880-1968

Afterword

This is the fourth and final book in the follow up series. I am deeply grateful to all of the families who have shared their grief with me, so that others might grow from their experiences.

I am particularly indebted to Richard Anderson, who saw the need for these books and encouraged me wholeheartedly from the very beginning.

Sincere thanks to Ruby McCarroll and Marion Fisher, two teachers, who volunteered countless hours editing all four books.

A special note of thanks to Brenda Lofthouse and Leanne Hart for their friendship and support while reading and commenting on early drafts.

And particular thanks to you, the bereaved, for the opportunity to be of service to you this past year. If you and members of your family have been helped by these books, then, both Richard Anderson and I have been well rewarded.

Cheryl McQueen

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cheryl McQueen is a Registered Nurse and a Grief Counsellor, with extensive experience in critical care, pediatrics, and psychiatric nursing. She is a graduate of St. Joseph's School of Nursing in Hamilton, and obtained her Master's Degree from Regis College, University of Toronto.

Cheryl established Bereavement Services Support & Education in the Greater Hamilton area in 1988. In 1991, she joined forces with Richard Anderson of R.H.B. Anderson Funeral Homes Ltd. to provide follow-up to the bereaved in the Haldimand-Norfolk counties.

Since then Cheryl has facilitated many grief support groups including groups for children and senior citizens. She is also funded by Richard Anderson to provide grief education workshops and crisis intervention for schools, communities and the workplace.

She has developed and written many workbooks for the bereaved, including "Wee Kids Grieve 2" and "When Mom & Dad Separate" for children six to twelve years of age.

Cheryl's most recent publication, "When Someone Dies - A Kid's Book About Funerals and Feelings" is a colouring book explaining the funeral home procedure to children ages four to nine.

She resides in Dundas, Ontario with her husband Nairn and two sons, Mark and David.

Bereavement Services Support & Education

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