

Sharing from the Well of Grief—poems, reflections, rituals and quotes from apprentices and from the webinars.

Note to apprentices: This document will be updated and posted monthly along with each month's assignments. If you write, read or hear something you want to share with our group, email it to Marv for inclusion.

Thank You—collaborative writing

Thank you, Zack, for the way you would throw your head back and laugh when we all pelted each other with marshmallows.

Thank you Shemiah for singing with me. Your howling brought joy and laughter to my heart.

Thank you, Melissa, for the ways you always catch me with love and adoration when I trip on my ego or my second guesses.

I am grateful for my big brother Chris who leaned in towards me when he asked, "Is there something that I can do for you?" and he deeply listened for my response.

Thankyou Kid for greeting me with your welcoming whinny most every morning.

Thank you, Steve, for your commitment to our friendship and for committing me to our relationship also. I miss you.

Thank you Dusty for your unconditional love and for helping me know your pure and true warmth and love so I always felt your comfort and didn't feel alone.

Thank you Grandma for the smile and warm welcome every time I walked through your door

Thank you Bea for your unconditional love, your warmth and your hospitality.

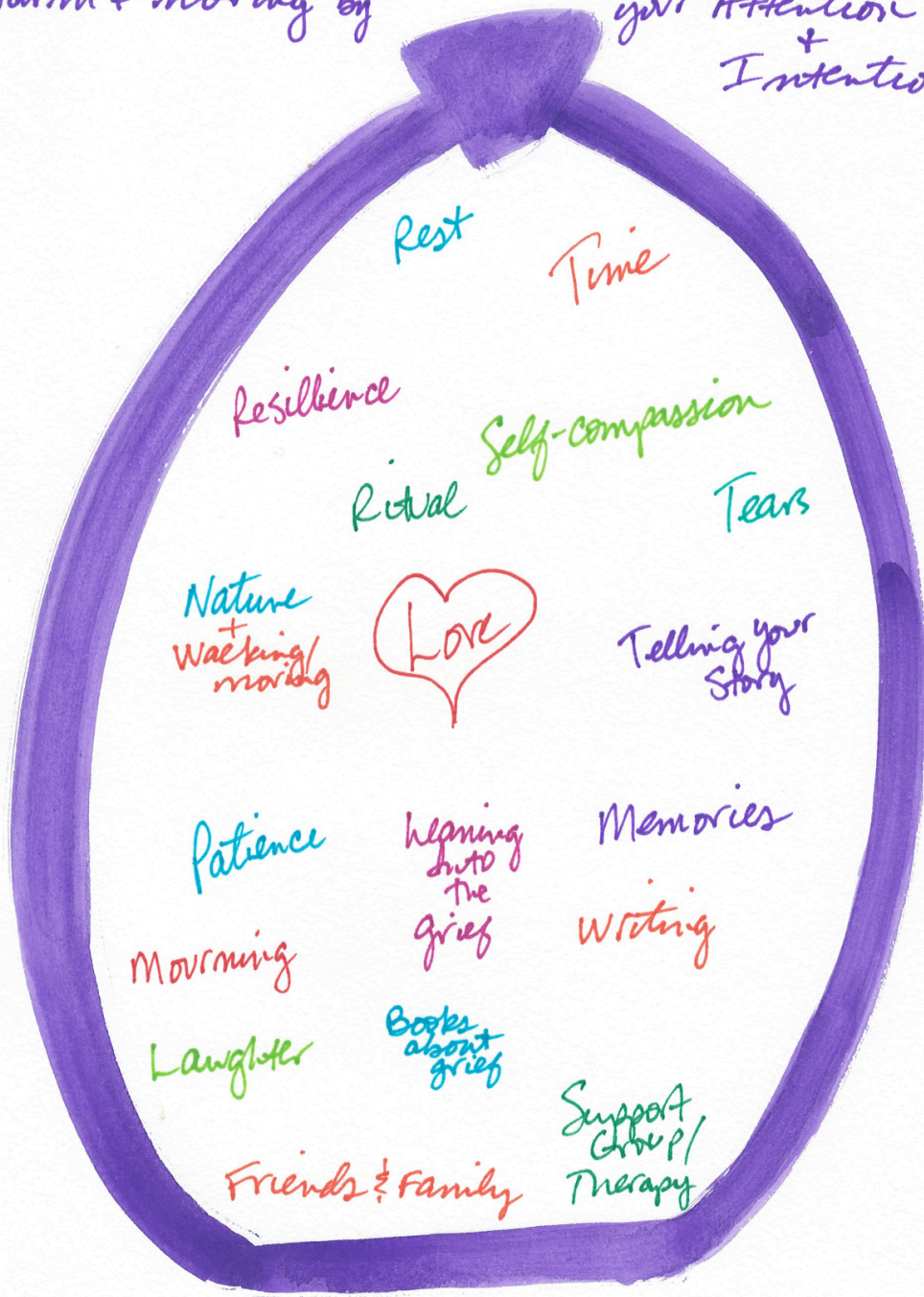
Thank you, mom. For that playful scowl — who me?? — when you were up to something sneaky. You were so often up to something sneaky.

Making cornmeal pancakes at Jenny's house, her mom in the living room, kids everywhere! Thanks Mrs McMahan for letting us.

Thank you Sandra for your wonderful friendship, your kindness, honesty and acceptance of all parts of my life.

Thank you Bill for putting your arm around my shoulders as we walked and talked about everything.

Inside a strong container, keep the materials warm + moving by your Attention + Intentions



The Alchemy of Healing

Julie Derby-Jackson 1/27/24

Grief

by John McGreevy

Grief is a strange thing.

I continue a relationship that I lose. The relationship ends but there is no endpoint.
I start the journey of loss. I may have been on it long before the loss or I may have never
considered it.

It has several chapters all read at the same time.

It's a road I don't want to travel. It's a road I don't want to miss.

It's a journey without a destination. At the end there is nothing. At the end there is everything.
There is no end.

How can all of these things be true?

I Remember

by Beth Gaetz

I remember... the ongoing grief journey I found difficult. The one having an abrupt stop following the funeral and burial.

Francis Weller's chapter of Stories of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal in his book *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* awakened memories.

I remember... attending 'Decoration Sunday' the first Sunday of each September at 2 pm at my father's family graveyard – really the community graveyard. The community came. It was tradition. I'm not sure why I remember the distinct time. My mother's family graveyard in the next county held their Decoration Sunday mid-August. We attended both.

There were always 4 segments to 'Decoration Sunday'.

Initially, you would lay flowers on your relative's graves. Gladiolas seemed to be the most common – long, beautiful and multicolored. The sight and scent of gladiolas trigger long lost memories. There and then, real flowers were acceptable, appropriate and seemingly necessary.

Following this, the eldest member of the family would walk the family up and down the rows of graves, stopping at numerous graves to explain who that person was, how they are/were related to us, what farm they lived on, their descendants, trivial details and lots of stories. It was a history lesson of sorts preserving culture, family tree and community. Tom Golden said 'What is it about stories that help in healing?'

A small chapel is in each graveyard. At the precise start time, I remember it full of people with the overflow on the adjacent lawn. A rotation of denominational clergy would annually preside over a service consisting of a few hymns, a very short homily, and a closing prayer.

Lastly, the community potluck picnic. Tables and picnic tables were set up. The food tables were overflowing with homemade goodness. Families would fellowship over food and catch up with each other.

There was great value placed on this day. So much so that the busy harvest season ceased for this day.

Francis Weller in *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* said the following:

‘healing is experienced within a defined set of rituals that includes extensive community participation.’

‘Ritual is a means of attuning ourselves with one another, to the land, and to the invisible worlds of spirit. ...we need to recover our ritual literacy.’

‘Grief has never been private, it has always been communal.’

‘It is in the sacred space of ritual that we are most able to acknowledge the weight of the grief we carry.’

‘Ritual also evokes a feeling of reverence, a sense of the sacred.’

This quote resonated with me the most: ‘Ritual offers us a way home’.

Mary-Frances O’Connor speaking of complicated grief said ‘So intervention is not designed to get them to stop grieving, that’s not the idea. But rather to take care of ways they’ve become derailed, particular thoughts they’re having, behaviors they’re engaged in that are not helping as they’re trying courageously to move forward.’

Perhaps this ‘Decoration Day’ ritual is an annual intervention helping to move people forward in their grief.

I wish...I could remember fully these Decoration Days. They were sacred. It has been decades since I lived in the area and attended. This tradition continues in that part of the Ottawa Valley.

My hope is that it is considered as sacred today.

Two Poems from Robert Currie:

Home is where the child is ...

I remember
the little red house
on Lower Station Road.

I remember
running with wild abandon
down below.

I remember
the stream
we jumped across

ran through
dammed up
to make our swimming hole.

I remember
the sweet scent of honeysuckle bushes
where I crawled and hid and delighted.

I don't remember
going into the city
to take an entrance exam
to St. David's.

And then Geneva
which should have
been a dream
but ripped

the shy fearful boy
from his world
into a world
he wasn't ready for.

Landscape Dream

Have you ever seen
the southern
Hudson River Valley?

It is heartbreaking-openly beautiful.

A grey silver river
running through
rolling hills.

Covered in trees
which turn red and gold.

This was home
The land was home
And I carried it
in my body memory
for a dozen years.

First healing

From the Well of Grief December Webinar:

Collaborative Poem: My Grief

My grief is bear
My grief is smoldering
My grief is an ocean, calm one moment and churning the next
My grief is ivy
My grief is a turbulent ocean
My grief is an iceberg
My grief is guitar
My grief is a hammer
My grief is a cedar flute, empty inside with music from breathing into emptiness
My grief is a shack in the woods
My grief is a weathered granite boulder in the forest
My grief is a glasshouse
My grief is a piano at the symphony, sometimes unused, sometimes the dominant part of the piece
My grief is Brunne a Boine
My grief is a basket of water, refilled again and again
My grief is a wild animal
My grief is a blaze
My grief is a skunk. It comes out at night and sometimes needs to use its defensive mechanism
My grief is the swampland
My grief is a life preserver that won't let me drown
My grief is a stone that has been broken open by the elements and has revealed its hidden heart
My grief is a fire burnt down to ash
My grief is the embers of last night's campfire
My grief is red rock
My grief is a beautiful blues guitar ballad
My grief is a bonfire on the beach, sometimes roaring and overwhelming, sometimes barely burning
and weak
My grief is a stoic oak
My grief is a cave
My grief is a crashing waterfall
My grief is moving water, a rushing stream; mindful but determined and focused

My grief is the peak of a mountain
My grief is all forms of water simultaneously
My grief is a seed held in the darkness of the earth.
My grief is a leafless tree
My grief is sometimes a screaming fox, sometimes a howling coyote; sometimes a hunting tiger
My grief is furniture moving, paper shuffling and it all belongs
My grief is a cherished companion

Learning from our Enneagram Type Dyad Conversations

All feelings are allowed, they are not bad or good, you can work them all

Self-care is not selfish

Inspired by common elements of grief process. We are not alone in the grief journey

I am grateful for my fellow enneagram style who resonated with my grief and held it with me with compassion.

Betty and I are both 4s. I appreciated Betty's reaching out to my story with compassion and was able to understand my grief. And, I was able to feel her grief in a very intuitive way.

A deep sense of gratification of the validation in listening to my story by Robert; identifying common threads that formed a new connection

Marv, are you kidding? We're Nines and need may more time to process. It was delightful to have some real time to connect with another person in this track. I enjoyed learning a little about Sharon's life, her journey, and her relationship to the various facets you asked us to consider. It was like a gently bubbling brook.

Self-awareness allows for us to know what we're doing (the choices in how we are coping) and making that choice consciously. Allows compassion.

Being able to recognize the grief style of another person will be helpful to interact with them in the most supportive ways

I enjoyed our commonalities on how we grieve and that we both felt safe sharing

"No wonder" is a beautiful way for self-care and compassion as well as compassion towards the other

Idea of recovering 1, self-compassion, the need for order and sorting in the face of chaos, just lovely to speak with another 1--such understanding and acceptance

I really appreciated connecting with another One and the similarities in the ways we process and act and cope.

Setting personal boundaries with others and respecting the boundaries that other people set is important to facilitate healing

Helpful to learn communicating with and about grief

I was struck by how similar our grief language was

We don't have to justify or defend our grief.

Pain and grief do not need to be judged as good or bad

Presented by Eliza Lewis on Nov. 11, 2023

The grief story I'd like to share today is mostly about my Dad and a bit about my Brother. Except, when I talk about grief I am aware that every grief I've experienced since I was 12 years old is under the umbrella of the overarching grief I felt when my friend died of Leukemia in 1975. This is the hole in my soul wound that I believe has shaped my life since that summer day between 6 th and 7 th grade.

It was a turbulent time in my family that summer. No one really thought much about how I grieved, and outward mourning was not welcomed. In short, there was little support for learning, understanding or processing this grief. To add to this within a year my parents would divorce and my brother would temporarily move out of state. Things had become complex and I didn't talk about it. My repressed grief moved toward isolation, sadness, and confusion. I quickly began to be uncontrollably angry, misguided, and engaging in numbing behaviors. Each time another small or large grief or loss came up in my life it opened the wound of this un-reconciled grief. I have had many years to be with it, to push it away, and at times make sense and peace with it. It is only recently through this work with SALC and many other types of support that I am beginning to have a better understanding of the language of life and healing old wounds.

The paragraph from A. Wolfelt's *Understanding Your Grief* describes the conditions that I was living with for many years: "When you don't honor a death loss by acknowledging it, first to yourself and then to those around you, your grief will accumulate and compound. Then, over time, this denied or "carried" grief will emerge in all sorts of potentially harmful ways in your life, such as deep depression, chronic anxiety, physical complaints, difficulty in relationships, addictive behaviors, and more."

This is a picture of my Dad. This is a picture of my Dad and Brother I have had for many years. This is a pin (sailboat) that represents my Dad to me....and life....and the end of his life. Today is especially hard to talk about him because I can't call him and thank him for his Military service as I have done for many years. He lived with his wife in CA since 1976. They have two dogs. I visited as often as possible. This year I saw him for a few days in February and I was with him in May when he celebrated his 91 st birthday. He is a 30 year cancer survivor and had had some artery health issues. He had back pain for a while and in July he had begun to lose weight and his appetite. He went into the hospital with severe back pain on a Tuesday by Sunday he was diagnosed with metastatic bone cancer. He chose comfort care through hospice. He was transferred to a hospice house. I spoke to him through the speaker phone and said as much as I could. I recited some pieces of a poem I'd recently written, saying I love you, and thank you. By 3 pm the next day he took his last breath.

I have been in contact with my stepmom since his death. I spent a few days with her in October. It was sad and difficult to be in his house without him. I noticed his empty chairs and things he used every day that are no longer being used. When I returned home, I had the odd sensation that I am not separate from and I don't live without him. He is still part of my everyday life in some other way now. No memorial or celebration is being planned which is a bit like unfinished business and feels sad, however also contains some ease. I want to honor him on his birthday at the ocean in CA with some sort of ritual. He donated his body to the UCSD medical research department where his cadaver was used to teach future doctors, and then his ashes were scattered at sea. He was a Merchant Marine and Navy Officer and this final act of "right action" (his words) besides not costing anything for his body disposition and

cremation is the kind of logical and rational decisions he made most of his life. What hurts the most about his death is not having him available to share all of the astonishing and amazing things that I see and experience in the world, and not to be able to tell him about my accomplishments silently seeking his approval and demonstrating my abilities to succeed. What I am most grateful for about his death is that he did not suffer some of the most difficult diseases of aging, that his pain was managed, that his active dying time was relatively quick, and he seemed at peace in his last days with angel-like care givers all around.

My Brother died on the first day of summer in 2018. He grew up surfing in San Diego and somehow this is both fitting and incredibly sad. He was 9 days short of his 60 th birthday. Here is a picture of my dad and brother next to each other. This was one of my greatest desires, and therefore a deep grief; longing for my Dad and Brother to be side by side and happily enjoying each other's company. My brother also suffered much grief alone; hiding it away from anyone in the name of stoic strength and valor. He spent a lifetime pursuing steady relationships and fleeting joy. His death felt different and somehow harder for me than my Dad's. Perhaps it had to do with the many actions I have taken and much learning I have done to process my brother's death. I had more regrets with my brother for not being able to talk open and honestly to him about feelings. We spent time together and talked on the phone every few days...we shared life and music, however we spared each other the sad stories of our grief. We each tried to say I'm sorry and never used words only hugs and eyes of understanding. In some ways it left a hole of unstitched gaps in our history together.

In closing, the things that bring me the most comfort now are thinking of and visualizing my father sailing off into the golden sunset with this smile on his face (from his picture), free from stress and pain. And, seeing my brother's transformation into the juniper tree in my front yard where I have connected with him each day through a morning greeting and some time on my meditation pillow while sitting in silence and gratitude connecting with him through this miraculous twist of nature.

Two quotes from Joanne Cacciatore in her *Bearing the Unbearable* book resonate and make sense to me at this point in our reading and learning:

"Disconnection from grief fragments our already fragile identity, and protecting that intimate connection to our dead can be, for us, an elixir of life."

"Now, my heart that has been expanded by suffering has the capacity to hold even more love."

I've included a picture of an airbrush painting my brother had in his home. In the days after his death, it brought me great comfort to think of him floating above his beloved ocean toward the rainbow and a new adventure.



Dad Sailing from Dana Point to San Diego



Painting in brother's house

Grief Styles—Benefits and Limitations

Intuitive Grief—I process grief with talking and crying

Benefits

Ritual, writing

Connections in relationships

Facilitates processing grief, intentional

Present/presence, immediate processing/tending, moves the energy through

Limitations

Limited objectivity and ability to get things done

Exhausting/draining, hard to focus

In your face, little space for the processing to “breathe”

Instrumental Grief—I process grief by thinking and doing

Benefits

Access and move through grief with safety

Decreases chaos and arguing, anger

Helps the processing of what's inside

Ability to expend physical energy which helps me be clear, ability to catch my breath

Limitations

Hard to access tears

Feeling disconnected from the overall experience

Hardens the Heart...Hides the sorrow

The energy of the sadness can drag me down and build. Eventually I need an outlet but it HAS to be someone I trust.

Submerged Grief—I don't access my grief or I postpone it

Benefits

Safer and not as exposed

Survival skill when overwhelmed with loss and need to take care of things, self-protective, not vulnerable when that feels dangerous

Able to move on

Limitations

Never getting to it

A repressed emotional palette.

Being submerged too long can lead to depression, anxiety, being stuck

The Most Important Thing

I am making a home inside myself. A shelter
of kindness where everything
is forgiven, everything allowed—a quiet patch
of sunlight to stretch out without hurry,
where all that has been banished
and buried is welcomed, spoken, listened to—released.
A fiercely friendly place I can claim as my very own.
I am throwing arms open
to the whole of myself—especially the fearful,
fault-finding, falling apart, unfinished parts, knowing
every seed and weed, every drop
of rain, has made the soil richer.
I will light a candle, pour a hot cup of tea, gather
around the warmth of my own blazing fire. I will howl
if I want to, knowing this flame can burn through
any perceived problem, any prescribed
perfectionism,
any lying limitation, every heavy thing.
I am making a home inside myself
where grace blooms in grand and glorious
abundance, a shelter of kindness that grows
all the truest things.
I whisper hallelujah to the friendly
sky. Watch now as I burst into blossom.

– Julia Fehrenbacher

Still

By Betty Glynn Carlson

The pale white moon
Still lingered past dawn
Refusing to fade
Even in a brilliant blue sky.

The golden maple leaves
Still cling to the branches,
Refusing to let go
Even after the first snow fall.

The ancestors still hover
In the pages of letters,
In the skeletons of documents,
Through decades and centuries.

Generations have passed.
Stories have been forgotten.
Names once known
Now have little meaning.

And yet, I am here,
Because of you.
Your dreams and your pain
Linger in the memory of my cells.

The changing seasons
Have left their mark
Like the rings of a tree
Hidden deep inside.

Circling above,
An eagle soars.
Embracing
Earth and sky.

When a second eagle
Joined the dance,
Memories of you,
Circled around my heart.

The beauty of your smile,
and loving presence
Still remains brilliant
Even though you have died.



Your Love Encircles my Heart

from Julie:

Light our candles; ring the bell

Samhain Ancestor Prayer

This is the night when the gateway between our world and the spirit world is thinnest. Tonight is a night to call out those who came before. Tonight

I honor my ancestors. Spirits of my fathers and mothers, I call to you, and welcome you to join me for this night. You watch over me always, protecting and guiding me, and tonight I thank you.

Your blood runs in my veins, your spirit is in my heart, your memories are in my soul.

Please name the ancestors that you are calling in – those who have died since the last Samhain and those who are most connected to your heart & soul.

Silent meditation – 10 minutes.

With the gift of remembrance. I remember all of you. You are dead but never forgotten, and you live on within me, and within those who are yet to come.

Please name the saints, realized beings, teachers & mentors that you wish to ask for guidance in your soul growth.

Silent meditation – 10 minutes.

Let us now express our gratitude for those we have called to us this evening.

Ring the bell; extinguish the candles.

Robert's Dream on 10.10.23 [note: includes preventing suicide]

The David Savage dream

The dream begins -I think- as I'm part of a team living in a barracks. Many of us are getting an opportunity to take a solo trip to the moon. Getting there and back seems to happen within a day. I talk with the guy who just returned, and he overflows with enthusiasm and amazement. So I definitely decide to go. I do have some sort of suitcase or bag with me. I land on the moon, take an enormous jump and land flat on my face, but this doesn't hurt as there is no gravity. Then I do a backflip. I open up my bag, which contains everyday items as near as I can tell. Maybe there are some games or toys in there. Soon I realize I need to pack up all my belongings as it's time for the return trip.

I get back to the barracks where everybody seems to be packing up to leave in a great hurry. I walk around trying to get a sense of what's going on. Everybody is so busy, so preoccupied with their tasks that I can't get anyone to let me know what's going on, to orient me. So I go back to my bunk and start retrieving my things. A guy asks if I have come back from the moon with everything I took, so I check. It seems I do.

Next I start wandering in a huge, strange city. I think I start off with Elayne, but I'm not sure. Apparently we made a plan for me to get food then rejoin her. I walk off in search of food though I am lost as I look for a store. I find one and gather the food, but mysteriously become the cashier instead of the shopper. The end of the shift has arrived, and our replacements are no where to be seen. So two of us just walk off the job. There are three black cars outside the store. I stash my food in a car, then walk off to find Elayne. I'm trying to head back in the direction I came from. Soon I discover that I'm way off. I have no idea where I am.

A man runs past me hollering have I seen somebody running this way. The man seems to be a high school teacher from Summit who is trying to run down a former student who is trying to commit suicide. He says the guy's name is David, David Savage. I know David. We were in a men's group together for some years. I haven't seen him so the guy runs off. I continue to walk without knowing where I'm going. Eventually I come to a passageway, an enclosed hallway. I'm going in one direction, when I see a guy running along a perpendicular passageway. It's David Savage. I yell out his name, but he doesn't stop. Suddenly the high school teacher dashes up, and I tell him I've just seen David running off in that direction.

At this point, I come to a room of sorts with a stairwell and two doorways. I don't know which one to take. I'm exhausted and I have a little boy with me. He seems to be about 2 or 3 years of age. I realize I'm responsible for him and I become worried and protective because there seems to be a lot of chaos, I'm lost, and David is being chased by his high school teacher. Suddenly David bursts into this little cell - it's like a machine room in the basement of a large building. At first I'm scared. I try to keep the toddler behind me, beneath the stairwell so that he is safe. It's tricky because the toddler is curious and wants to see who this guy is.

Then I start to talk to David, softly, compassionately. I don't know what's going on, but I can tell he is maxed out on stress and apparently willing to commit suicide. I say this to him directly, softly, with heart.

I remind him of our past together in men's group. I'm aware the teacher has appeared in the doorway. He's holding back, observing what's going on without David seeing him. I tell David I don't know how to help him but I can hold him, I can hold him warmly, lovingly, safely in my arms until he can calm down. He seems reluctant but eventually allows me to do this, and so I wrap my arms around him in a gentle bear hug. He's stiff at first -always has been- yet eventually sinks in to my body and allows himself to be held.

end of dream

Robert's Interpretation of his Dream of 10.10.23 [note: includes preventing suicide]The David Savage dream

Well of Grief connections 10.16.23

Look at the me who starts off the dream. That's the Robert who likes to feel camaraderie, who likes to have companions. It's the Robert who embraces adventure, even if he needs a little reassurance. It's the Robert who wants to experience the world physically: jumping high and doing backflips (daring). And, it's the Robert who will risk falling on his face and can laugh about it. This is a Robert I cannot remember ever being.

It is the Robert, who often finds himself in surroundings where things are moving fast and furious, though nobody will explain why. It's a place where people won't answer my questions. So I just do what everybody else is doing. This is the story of losing my childhood, even though I was not emotionally ready to lose it. I was so shy. It is the story of going to Switzerland, learning French, taking the entrance exam three times to get into a Catholic prep school, which might seem like perseverance, but which I carried as not being good enough ... not being good enough to get into that school, not being good enough for my father.

Things happen quickly and abruptly in Robert's life. Everything seems strange, unfamiliar, and big ... as in overwhelming. I imagine the starving baby Robert might have experienced the world as strange, unfamiliar, and overwhelming.

Interestingly enough, I am looking for food (starving baby), and there are no people on the streets of this large city to point me in the right direction. There is mystery in Robert's life as he shape-shifts from shopper to cashier. Why does that happen? When I leave the store, there are three black cars parked out front, and I choose inexplicably to stash my food in one of these. Black cars signify funerals or mafia to me. Going back to my creation story (starving baby), is the black car really there for me, for my death?

I start heading back towards Elayne. I think I know the way, but I am utterly lost, knowing that I have picked the wrong direction. Does this refer back to my 9th grade decision to refuse to work. Decisions were being made for me. I was neither consulted, nor guided, nor listened to (my absolute and abject pain). It seemed as if my world was coming to an end ... again. As I type this, I am immediately aware that this 'end of life' is occurring for the third time (near-end of life, end of childhood, end of my moment in the sun. No wonder I'm way off. The high school teacher is the Robert who cares about others, who wants to keep them safe and free of suffering. That teacher has a mentor feel to him. So, something I longed for, something I'm aware I have provided for others.

And David Savage's name comes up. This Robert is the one who is running fast and furious away from pain. It's the Robert, who has often despaired that there is a place for him in the world. And, when I catch sight of

that Robert and ask him to stop, he doesn't listen. He continues to run his mad dash away from everyone and everything.

I am now in a new place with two doors and a stairway, and I don't know which way to go. At this moment, young toddler Robert appears. I immediately feel responsible for him. I want to protect him and keep him safe. Little Robert of sixty-five years plus ago would have hid behind a grown-up's legs out of fear. This little Robert is curious. He wants to see and know what's going on. There is this strange paradoxical relationship between the two. The older Robert wants to protect that little Robert of days gone by, while the younger Robert wants to show that it's ok to be curious. And I refer to the paradox as tricky.

Then David appears. This is the Robert who is terrified and, now, almost spent.

This Robert is maxed out on stress, the stress of despair, and is ready to commit suicide. End the pain. I speak to him softly, compassionately because those are my strengths. I remind him that we share a past together. That Robert and the Robert I am are one. I do notice Robert the teacher in the doorway, holding back, observing what's going on. That too is the Robert I am. I turn back to despairing Robert and offer to hold him warmly, lovingly, safely (and I am the first adult male to have ever held my own father as an adult in real life). Despairing Robert is reluctant (as I often am), but eventually allows this (which I frequently do). That Robert is stiff at first, but eventually allows the Robert I am to hold him. He sinks into me, and again we become one.

A quote submitted by Eliza as appropriate for Samhain

"Let me sit here on the threshold of two worlds: Lost in the eloquence of silence."

– Rumi

Ritual of Remembrance of Carol Bliss

written by Julie

I RELEASE the disease of dementia and the profound effects that it had on Carol and those of us who love her.

I AFFIRM that Carol is no longer suffering from the effects of dementia, it was her worst fear after watching her Mother decline and knowing that it might happen to her.

I RELEASE the images of Carol during her decline as well as any anxiety and fear that she felt.

I AFFIRM that I will remember Carol when she was healthy and lively, always well-dressed and with her sweet voice full of love & appreciation and how she listened closely.

I RELEASE the sadness and suffering that I felt seeing Carol decline during the last few years.

I AFFIRM that Carol and I enjoyed a beautiful, deep friendship for more than 23 years and that I will always remember her and be grateful that she was a part of my life and that I was a part of her life.

I will read this at the shrine that I have created for Carol which contains photos, a candle, and an African violet.

I will burn this printed page & the Golden Empire address labels that are no longer needed after the Celebration of Carol's Life on her birthday November 17th.

August 22, 2023

Ritual Leaving Behind CSI and Teaching CSI & Moving Forward as an End of Life Doula

written by Julie

Light a candle

To burn – OPD business card & DVC business card.

It is my heartfelt intention to leave behind the world of CSI [Crime Scene Investigation] and teaching CSI, which is a world of action, working to solve the mystery, stress, evil & suffering. I am proud of my service to people and to the community while I was in these roles.

It is my heartfelt intention to move towards being an end of life doula with my business Final Season Doula which will be a world of compassionate presence, acceptance of what is & what will be, calm, reflection, meaningful interaction & peace.

My goals are to be of service to people at a sacred time, to use my doula education, my talents, and my life experiences to guide my work as I meet the dying person where they are & how they are. I willingly embrace this opportunity to guide people to a place of peace at the end of their life & to assist their loved ones during the process and with processing their grief.

Migration

I walk out into the bay
until little waves lap my chin,
stand and lose myself in windless water
and cloudless sky. I turn, slow as sand
through an hourglass, look back
to the smudged line of beach.

An undulating ribbon appears;
I stand and wait; the line of butterflies
passes so close that I see the light
glowing through each
orange-and-black wing.

–Marv Klassen-Landis

The Mothers' Prayer

God of Life:

You who heals the brokenhearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.
For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply
pained at these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we
have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope,
together, one for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,
May this be your will
And let us say Amen.

–Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Translation
by Amichai Lau-Lavie

Naming

If I name this grief,
Define it
Without guilt
And redemption,
Call it drowning,
Desolation,
Call it
Fire and stone
Then I am bound
To care for it,
Like a stray cat I name
That demands I feed him.
He comes and goes,
Sometimes disappears
For days and then returns,
Insisting that
I remember.

-Lynne Knight

A Collaborative Poem from the Well of Grief

Life is full of Mystery

Grief comes from love
Love never fails

Stone in my pocket, stone on the hill

Digging clay from the ground

Waiting in the darkness
Darkness can be overwhelming, where is the light?
Darkness gives way to solitude
Darkness holds my sadness in secret
Darkness feeling the light
Light emerges, waves on the sea
Sea-change

Grief sits heavy in my body

Grief is an ache

Grief makes me feel broken
Broken wings, broken arrows
Broken is my heart, alive
Alive, alive, we are living

Loss comes in many different forms
Forms I cannot see

Grief is something I do not understand
Understand I try not
Understanding eases the chaos
Chaos begs for rest
Chaos might be a secret to understanding grief

Nectar needed for frenetic, but focused butterfly work
Work can be a relief

Mystery can be embraced and will lead to discovery
Discovery of uncharted paths
Discovery a good friend in the well
The well is deep, so is the love

Note from Marv:

I have used my Last Word First exercise in three ways:

- 1. In chat as we did.*
- 2. By myself as a journaling or poetry warm-up --sometimes to break through writer's block.*
- 3. In person with 2 or more people. Each person has a piece of paper. They write a short line, then fold it back so it is unseen. They copy their last word on the paper and pass it around the group (or back and forth). The next person uses that word as a first word of a new line. Repeat, repeat. This can be great fun for any age—the results are sometimes quite funny since you are always starting with just the one word without context--more often the results are surprisingly coherent and even profound. Synchronicity in action.*

Excerpts from *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* by Francis Weller

“Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning.”

“Bringing grief and death out of the shadow is our spiritual responsibility, our sacred duty.”

“By restoring grief to soul work, we are freed from our one-dimensional obsession with emotional progress.”

“When we fully honor our many losses, our lives become more fully able to embody the wild joy that aches to leap from our hearts into the shimmering world.”

“Every one of us must undertake an *apprenticeship with sorrow.*”

The First Gate: Everything We Love, We Will Lose

“Grief is akin to praise; it is how the soul recounts the depth to which someone has touched our lives. To love is to accept the rites of grief.”

*“Tis a fearful thing to love
What death can touch.
To love, to hope, to dream, and oh, to lose,
A thing for fools, this Love,
But a holy thing to love what death can touch.”*

-A twelfth century poem

The Second Gate: The Places That Have Not Known Love

“These are the places within us that have been wrapped in shame and banished to the farthest shores of our lives.... *We cannot grieve for something that we feel is outside the circle of worth.*”

The Third Gate: The Sorrows of the World

“The cumulative grief of the world is overwhelming.... Our ways of living have become corrosive to the earth, to prairie dogs and grizzly bears, to bluefin tuna and monarch butterflies and cultures.... Remembering our bond with the earth helps heal our bodies and our souls.”

*“Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
you must wake up with sorrow.
you must speak it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.”*

-Naomi Nye

The Fourth Gate: What We Expected and Did Not Receive

“We are born expecting a rich and sensuous relationship with the earth and communal rituals of celebration, grief, and healing that keep us in connection with the sacred.”

“To be empty, to feel empty, is to live in the wasteland near the gates of death. This is intolerable to the soul.”

“Deep in our bones lies an old intuition that we arrive here carrying a bundle of gifts to offer to the community. Hidden within the losses lies our diminished experience of who we truly are.”

“We are left spiritually unemployed, forced to live a diminished experience.”

The Fifth Gate: Ancestral Grief

“This is the grief we carry in our bodies from sorrows experienced by our ancestors.”

“Ancestral grief also speaks to the grief that remains in our collective soul for the abuses of millions of individuals.”

“So many of our ancestors willingly left their original homelands, via migration, often moving far away across oceans (European roots), many forced to leave via slavery, indentured servitude, etc. This departure from their homelands was often disruptive, especially to the psyche. Gone were the patterns that held myth, song, ritual that provided grounding and identity.”

Mist

you are not sinking—
the mist is rising
allow yourself to float—
love will hold you

—Marv Klassen-Landis