



E-Mail Newsletter

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Taking care of you

Thank you to Lori aka Lolo for finding this. It is so appropriate for this months Newsletter.

"FEBRUARY: AN ARROW THROUGH THE HEART" by Susan Arlen, M.D.

(from the **Newsletter of The Compassionate Friends, Inc.**)

Dr. Arlen is the medical director of the Hospice at Somerset Medical Center. She is board certified in rehabilitation medicine, and she is a psychotherapist, specializing in the losses associated with death, disability and life-changing illness.

In the month of February, we are still in the firm grip of winter. Bone-chilling winds whip around bleak, bare trees, gray days alternate with bright, blue skies, but give little warmth. Having survived January, we have learned to conserve our energy, and we have grown accustomed to the weather.

Though we may still intensely dislike the wintertime, we have learned to take pleasure in the bright sun and the clear, blue sky. The stark landscape may even be appreciated for its unique beauty. Why does this happen? Why do we accept the bundling up and the shivering of winter? How is it that we can find pleasure and beauty in our misery? The answer is a paradox; We have a choice, and we have no choice. We can continue to wish for balmy air, laden with the scent of flowers, or we can mumble about the cold and grumble about the necessity for bundling up to face the chill days. If we focus only on what we don't have, or long for the past warmth of summer or the future rebirth of spring, we tend to lose any ability to notice the aspects of this month that might engender some pleasure. Try as we might, it is impossible to change the course of nature. We cannot bring back the summer anymore than we can fast-forward the seasons. By focusing on what no longer is, we lose the capacity to find beauty, happiness, or pleasure. If we continue to bang our heads against unchangeable situations, it only increases our feelings of helplessness and futility.

Our alternative is acceptance. By February, we recognize that hoping, wishing and dreaming will not bring back the summer's warmth, so we accept what is. We learn to live with reality of the situation. It's not that we don't remember the various beautiful times of the summer, it's not that we don't yearn at times for them again; but now, we recognize that has passed. Though our souls may be warmed by the memories of summer, summer is gone. Now, we are free to live in the reality that is today. We enable ourselves to find beauty and joy in February. The mid-winter landscape has a quieter and more tranquil beauty. Rarely flamboyant, it does not overwhelm the senses; and the ability to recognize and appreciate this soft beauty can give us a sense of peace.

The month of February is similar to the completion of that long, middle phase of bereavement that results in acceptance of what has occurred. The memories of precious times will always be there to warm our hearts, and they will continue to bring tears and pangs of yearning, but realization of the finality of the loss had also occurred.

It takes a long time to accept situations that we do not want as permanent. It takes much time and heartache to recognize that we cannot change situations. It is a long process during which evolves a changed concept of ourselves, the world, and our place in it. It is not that the world has really changed, but with the death of a loved one, OUR world has changed. Again, we have a choice. That long and painful middle portion of the bereavement process may remain with us for a very long time as we struggle to maintain our old ways of being in spite of the agonizing loss.

If we become fixed or stuck at this time, there is a double tragedy. Life is lived in

"Friends

Helping

Friends."

• *Everyday*

is

A gift, that's

why

We call today

"the present"

the past and the present is filled with yearning for what should have been and what has been stolen from the survivor. Certainly, we are not "happy" about the situation, but slowly we realize that things will never again be the same and that as survivors, we must go on. After a time, which varies from situation to situation, we accept the finality of the loss. With this acceptance, the ability occurs to perceive beauty without feelings of disloyalty.

Though Valentine's Day does not have the same tradition and resultant dread of Christmas and other holidays, it can still bring a great deal of pain. The very symbol of this day, Cupid's arrow piercing the heart, can feel quite literal for the bereaved whose hearts feel as if they have been broken. Old, tattered, cherished cards will be wept over, as well as bits of lace, red satin ribbon, and the poetry of a spouse, parent or sibling that is especially precious.

Red roses and red valentine hearts are symbolic of the invisible blood that the bereaved have shed over their loss. When we feel despondent, isolated or cheated on Valentine's Day (or any other day), the pain we are feeling is because of the great love we had. The experience of that love will never die, the memory of that love, of that loved one, will live on in our hearts. We must now live on—for the sake of ourselves and our loved one.

We must give ourselves permission to enjoy again, even through tears. Let's remind ourselves of the blessings that we have had, despite the deprivation, and let's not deny others their blessings.

We should seek things that will bring us peace. A snow-covered landscape can be beautiful, glistening, and pure. Any view of a situation takes on the meaning that we assign to it. If we choose to believe that a scene or a situation is bleak, it will be bleak. If we focus on one aspect of beauty, we see beauty.

Until next month

Good grief

AnneGD@groww.org



Chatting Tips: staff@groww.org

When you do get in to the chat room, are you finding you can't keep up and the screen is too small? Look up at the top right hand corner and click on the button which says FLOAT... it will open a new window... now MAXIMIZE that window by clicking on the square in the upper right hand corner... the square is between the "-" and the "x"... it will make the room larger, then type *chat font size 14 or 16

If you are having trouble connecting to the chat rooms, you may need to update your java. Are you getting that blue screen when you try to log on? Try this link and follow the instructions, it should solve your problem

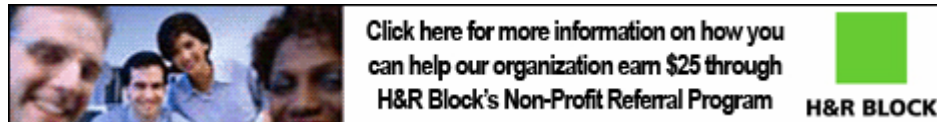
<http://java.sun.com/getjava/download.html>

Help GROWW

[A New Way to Help GROWW](#)

This is to make everyone aware of another way to generate funding to keep the GROWW web site viable and available for those that are trudging their way through the loss of a loved one. As we approach the end of the year, we are also approaching another annual event that just cannot be avoided; namely filing our federal income tax returns. This year, H&R Block has initiated a Non-Profit Referral Program to help organizations such as GROWW.

Here is how it works. For each new client (anyone that did NOT file their prior year's tax return through H&R Block), H&R Block will send \$25 to GROWW. All you have to do is present the official certificate to the tax professional when you visit any H&R Block office and file your tax return for 2006. All you need to do is go to the HelpGROWW web page at <http://www.groww.org/helpgroww/index.htm>; scroll down to the banner that looks like this:



Click on this banner and a certificate will open in a new window. Print the certificate, present it to the tax professional at your local H&R Block office, and file your tax return. You will be helping GROWW, get H&R Block guarantee of accuracy, and perhaps get a larger refund. Thank you in advance.

By: PhillipGene F.

Living With Loss Magazine: Hope and Healing for the Body, Mind & Spirit offers articles, poems, and resources for the bereaved by grief educators and presenters, bereavement facilitators, caregivers, authors and writers, and most important, the bereaved themselves. Our mission is to offer compassion and hope with the most current resources, tools, and perspectives in the bereavement field. Most important, we invite the bereaved to consider alternative and innovative ways to cope with the diverse issues and concerns that make their grief journey unique.

A New Magazine

Living With Loss Magazine features the most respected and experienced contributors in the bereavement field. Veteran columnists, Rev. Dr. Richard Gilbert, Rabbi Earl Grollman, Dr. Alan Wolfelt, , Dr. Robert Thompson, Sue Grant, Nita Aasen, and Rachel Kodanaz join newcomers, Harold Ivan Smith, Dr. J.Shep Jeffreys, Linda Goldman, Harry McDonald, Mitch Carmody, Sandy Goodman, Norm Bouchard, and Editor, Carla Blowey.

Topics and articles will present traditional and alternative perspectives, resources, and tools for healing the grief that resides in our body, our mind, our heart, and our spirit while living *with* loss.

Living With Loss Magazine is published quarterly.

One year subscription \$32. Multiple copy and multiple subscription discount rates for after care programs at funeral homes, hospices, and hospitals. For more information call 888-604-4673 or visit us online at www.livingwithloss.com.

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Links

Art For Your Sake:
"Healing dreamscape" photomontages made from your dearest photos by digital artist Nancy Gershman.

(Hyperlink goes to: <http://www.artforyoursake.com/healingdreamscapes.html>.)

MOURNING HAS BROKEN-
A Collection of Creative Writing about Grief and Healing

revised second edition
now available!

Foreword by Alan Wolfelt, PhD
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please visit

<http://at.yorku.ca/kope/mhb.htm>

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Contact Information

For information or questions about GROWW, please write to staff@groww.org

Anyone who hasn't signed up for a password for the message boards and would like to do so please go to the following link and submit the information required. Please remember we are all volunteers here and it may take up to 48 hours to process your request.
<http://www.groww.org/community/boards/passwordform.htm>

Poetry

THE DASH

I read of a man who stood to speak, at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on this tombstone from beginningto the end.

He noted that the first came his date of birth and spoke the following with tears.
But he said what mattered most of all, was the dash in between those years.

For the dash represents, all the time he spent alive on earth.
And how only those who loved him know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own; the cars, the house, the cash,
what matters most is how we live and love and how we spend our dash...

So think about this long and hard. Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left, that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough, to consider what is true and real.
And always try to understand, the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger, and show appreciation more,
and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect, and more often wear a smile...
Remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash
would you be proud of the things they say and how your spent your dash?

by Linda Ellis

