



**Washington Regional Hospice
Bereavement Newsletter
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Writers Speak of Grief

Good writing illuminates any subject. So it is with the subject of grief. C. S. Lewis writes, “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.” It is a most apt description.

Fear consumes one. It is felt physically, emotionally and spiritually. It pervades the present and haunts the future. People are vulnerable and subject to poor judgment when fear is sustained.

Lewis, a scholar, man of faith and gifted writer, was immobilized by fear when he lost his beloved wife after only a short time together. Earlier in his life he had lost his mother. With time, he saw these losses from a different vantage point. “Bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love,” Lewis later wrote.

A Paiute Indian speaks eloquently of the loss of a child in snippets from this poem:

**Son, my son!
What is my life to me,
Now you are departed?**

The circumstances surrounding a death impact when and how one grieves. Emily Dickinson describes an almost universal initial response.

**There has been a death in the opposite house
As lately as today.
I know by the numb look
Such houses have always.**

Faced with sudden or unexpected loss one might respond in the manner described by the authors of *HOW TO SURVIVE THE LOSS OF A LOVE*:

***the fear that I would
come home one day and
find you gone has turned
into the pain of reality.***

“Death at the end of a difficult illness may bring feelings of relief among family and friends, sometimes accompanied by guilt for feeling joy rather than sorrow. The intense emotions accompanying death can be a catalyst for rapid personal growth among survivors.” The poet Robert Browning describes this response.*

*I walked a mile with sorrow
And ne'er a word said she;
But oh, the things learned from her
When sorrow walked with me.*

It is comforting to read the words of Longfellow when he states, “The grave itself is but a covered bridge/leading from light to light/through a brief darkness.”

Lisa Manzini-

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SURVIVING 101

HOW TO SURVIVE THE LOSS OF A LOVE was one of the first self-help books written on the subject. Its authors, Colgrove, Bloomfield and McWilliams, combine the talents of a psychologist, physician and poet to write about this subject in an informative yet creative manner. The following is an excerpt from a page entitled “YOU WILL SURVIVE”:

- You will get better.
- No doubt about it.
- The healing process has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Keep in mind, at the beginning, that there is an end.
It's not that far off. You will heal.
- Nature is on your side, and nature is a powerful ally.
- Tell yourself, often, “I am alive. I will survive.”
- You are alive.
- You will survive.



*Boulden, Jim. LIFE AND DEATH: a Collection of Wisdom. Boulden Publishing, 1991.



WHEN CHERISHED PETS DIE

Pets have long been identified as a source of love and companionship for many. They are primary sources of connection from early childhood to our final years. Science has verified their positive effects on we humans, no matter our life situation.

“As baby boomers age and become increasingly isolated senior citizens, cherished pets may be the only constant companions of the elderly..... If animals play such important roles in our lives, why then is it assumed by so many in our society that the human-animal bond is not worthy of grief when a pet dies?” Animal chaplain, Sid Korpi advocates for those of us who grieve the loss of our much loved pets.

Korpi elaborates on this subject, “In my role as an animal chaplain, I work with human beings who are trying to process the pain of losing a pet and consistently hear people say they feel foolish, guilty, embarrassed, crazy, etc. for the intensity of their sorrow when one of their pets dies....It’s not surprising that grieving animal lovers hide from others what they feel will be perceived as a weakness or defect in their personalities.”**

I hear almost weekly from people who grieve the loss of their pet companions and feel there is no outlet for their mourning. Korpi offers a few suggestions for coping.

- Do not try to convince others of your right to grieve.
- Seek support among like-minded people who value their pets.
- Create a way to memorialize or honor your departed animal friend.
- Check with local animal shelters or go online to one of the various pet loss support sites. One such site is ChancesSpot.org.

It is also important to acknowledge that any loss of someone/something cherished increases other subsequent losses. So whether your loss is animal or human or both, be gentle with yourself. Loving attachments come in many forms. Each one is significant.

LMP

CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me,



And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.
Twilight and evening bell
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For tho' from out our borne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

Stanzas by Alfred Tennyson

**Korpi, Sid. "Pet Loss is a Valid Emotion." *GRIEF DIGEST MAGAZINE*, October 2010, pp. 10-11.