



THE NEXT STEP

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Grandma's Gifts

Fonda Younger, Bereavement Assistant (Mount Airy, NC)

New York City's Times Square—Confetti is falling, horns are blaring, and people are cheering, as the countdown to the start of another year begins: "Five, four, three, two, one, HAPPY NEW YEAR!" The big glittering ball drops 2014 to its resting place in history as strains of "Auld Lang Syne" (translated to mean "Days of Long Ago") are heard throughout the crowd. But in your heart, there are no cheers, no confetti, and no singing. Your loved one died, and you feel as if the "ball" landed upon your chest, taking away your breath. What can you do to find

courage for a new year; to face each day with assurance?

This January will mark ten years since the passing of my maternal grandmother—the biggest influence in my life. During my first year without her, I searched for a way to encourage myself. I recalled the goodness she embodied and her faith in God. Each evening, she thanked Him for the blessings of that day and requested strength for the next day.

Taking a notepad and a pen, I jotted down a few blessings from my day. Wanting to keep them in mind, I saw a small gift box on the dresser, beside

Grandma's picture. I folded the paper and deposited it into the box. On the bottom of the box, I wrote "Grandma's Gifts" and ceremoniously placed the box beside her picture. Each week, I added new blessings and reread the older ones. Before long, the year took on new meaning. I saw this exercise as a way to "talk" with Grandma, and to remind myself that God is good and life can be, too.

I still miss her as much today as I did on that chilly afternoon. But I have "Grandma's Gifts" to keep me warm.

Another Fresh New Year

William Arthur Ward

Another fresh new year is here,
Another year to live!
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,
To love and laugh and give!

This bright new year is given to me
To live each day with zest.
To daily grow and try to be
My highest and my best!

I have the opportunity,
Once more, to right some wrong,
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,
And sing more joyful songs!

The Power of Storytelling

Jason Kline, Chaplain (Mount Airy, NC)

In doing grief counseling for a number of years, there are two major concerns I've learned that are most prominent in grief: the need for support and the feelings of loneliness. There are many faces of grief and many behaviors, or phases, the griever will go through, but the one I would like to share with you is the desperation of loneliness in grief. Feelings of loneliness and isolation are common due to the nature of loss itself. The intensity of this loneliness depends on the type of loss.

Loneliness occurs when a level of emotional and physical intimacy has been "severed, changed or forever disrupted," according to Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins in *The Quick*



Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling. Loneliness can be deep and overwhelming and often unbearable, usually leaving one feeling hopeless and with a severed sense of security and belonging.

Loneliness is a craving for a level of intimacy that goes unsatisfied. A part of the bereaved's sense of identity is lost, and their life is shattered.

Consider the words of this

griever:

"The 'loneliness moment' in someone's life is when they are watching their whole world fall apart, and all they can do is stare blankly."

While the source of that quote is unknown – many misattribute it to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* – its meaning rings true: That feeling of "loneliness" is like knowing you're in the world, but in a state of disconnect. You see the world all around you, but you go unnoticed and untouched in ways that you so desperately need. Notice that the quote says "watching their whole world fall apart." Succinctly, you see it happening but are unable to

control it. You're spinning as the whole world stands still, and there is nothing you can do. You feel hopeless and alienated from a reality you know is there because you can touch it, see it, smell it, and hear it, though it is cold and lacking the warmth of intimacy.

In loneliness, you are desperate for answers, seeking help but left in a state of hopelessness and desperation. Please understand, this feeling you feel – it is normal. You see, though a part of you is slipping away, our basic survival instinct is to slip away with it. It is a coping mechanism from experiencing what is

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Power of Storytelling cont.

seemingly unnatural and unintended to be experienced in life. It's a place where nothing makes sense, and the only sensible thing to do is to do what we know is not sensible.

This is normal but can also be devastating if neglected. Untreated loneliness can lead to "suicide or angry, violent alienation," according to Clinton and Hawkins. Despondence is dangerous if left untreated. It is like a tidal wave crashing down on you while you get trapped in the undertow of the current – you flail and kick as you try to gain momentum to the top, only to give up because you realize you can't make it alone. Poet and playwright

Edna St. Vincent Millay captures this feeling well: "Where you used to be, there is a hole in the world, which I find myself constantly walking around in the daytime, and falling in at night."

But the truth is that this is where you need help! It is not healthy to remain in this state of grief, and this is where I make my point – there is power in storytelling! As Lois Lowry wrote in *The Giver*, "The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It's the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared."

This storytelling I am talking about is not a fable. It is you; it is your life, your identity that made you who you are. Sharing your story empowers you to

reactivate in the world – to leave your mark, revive the legacy of your loved one, and embrace the pain.

Your story empowers you to find healing and regain hope, to process the event appropriately and fill the gaps with the power of good memories. Sharing your story expresses pain in ways that tears cannot. It takes you through the journey of emotional bankruptcy and pain, patching and repairing your brokenness little by little with perfect precision. The beauty of telling your story not only offers healing to your listeners. Each time you share is like making a deposit into your emotional bank, replenishing a wealth of

emotional and spiritual health!

Moreover, your story integrates you back into the society from which you were once feeling detached. Your story allows others to gain perspective on you as well as their own circumstances. Sharing your story allows you to realize that you are not alone, that there are others who care, others who feel your pain, and others who have experienced your pain and know how to help you in the way you need! You see, loneliness is universal. I am reminded of the quote from music artist Graham Lindsey: "We are all in this together alone."

What we often don't realize

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Ask the Staff: "Celebrating Old Memories in the New Year"

Sandra Yates, Bereavement Coordinator (Mount Airy, NC)

Q: I lost a family member this past year. How do I handle moving into the new year without them?

A: As we move into the new year, we always think about resolutions that we promise to accomplish. However, many people forget their resolutions after January. Resolutions, as they say, are "a dime a dozen," but when we look back over the past year, we recognize that people are not.

After losing someone, we look back, longing for their presence and knowing that they will forever remain in our hearts, but not with us physically. It causes us to face the reality that they are forever gone and our lives are forever changed.

Thus, to be able to move forward with perseverance and hope, we must take time for remembrance. Look back over the pictures. Recall the good



and bad memories that you experienced together. Weave those fond memories of your loved one into the fabric of your own life. Retell the stories so that future generations will know the characteristics of your loved one and the depth of the legacy that they left behind them.

Allow the loss that you experienced this year to cause you to love deeper and treasure other relationships that mean so much to you in your life. Don't allow their

death to become a sea of constant regret, but allow it to spur you on to a greater depth of caring and compassion for your loved ones and others around you on a daily basis. Resolve this year to love deeper and to say those things that need to be said with a greater frequency—things like, "I love you," "I'm sorry," "I care," and "Please forgive me." Allow their memory to not only lead you to a greater depth of love, but also allow it to encourage you in the coming year. Let it inspire you to keep putting one foot in front of the other, knowing that is exactly what your loved one would have wanted you to do.

It has been said that the past is gone and the present is simply just that: a present. It is a present that each of us is given with each new day. The new year is a present to remind us of our love for that

special person and to remind us that life truly does go on and that we can choose how we live each day. In the words of that classic Scottish work from the 1700s:

Should auld (old) acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?

Should auld (old) acquaintance be forgot and days of auld lang syne (long ago)?

Absolutely not! We must allow those memories to become a path steeped in love and grace, leading us to a life full of expectation, resolve and determination to live more fully each day.

Bereavement Staff and Support Groups

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Patricia Morris, BS, TRS

Mount Airy

2nd Tuesday of every month

9:00 a.m. Good Mourning with Fonda

Prime Sirloin

4th Tuesday of every month

11:30 a.m. Fonda's Lunch Bunch

Golden Corral

Elkin

1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month

10:00 a.m. "Living with Grief"

Matty's Restaurant

1st Monday of every month

7:00 p.m. "Transitioning to the New"

Fairfield Inn

4th Monday of every month

7:00 p.m. Prime Time with Lisa

(Loss of spouse in one's 30s, 40s, and 50s)

Fairfield Inn

Stuart

3rd Wednesday of every month

1:30 p.m. Support with Patricia

Stuart United Methodist Church

Wilkesboro

1st and 3rd Monday of every month

2:00 p.m. Listening with Lisa

Rose Glen Village

Yadkinville

1st Thursday of every month

11:30 a.m. Sharing with Sarah

Ace's Restaurant

Hillsville

3rd Thursday of every month

11:30 a.m. Moments with Bruce

Hillsville Office

Power of Storytelling cont.

is that loneliness is not selective. Everyone in this world feels alone in some way or has experienced it at some time in their life. Your shared story can be inspirational to someone else and empowering for you. Sharing your story facilitates the release of your emotional pain and suffering, which, in my opinion, is the worst kind of suffering, for it unrelentingly grips a broken and silent heart, a place that nobody else can see but you. But through expression, others can see your pain and comfort you with warmth. Find individuals who provide the support described in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*: "I'm

here. I love you. I don't care if you need to stay up crying all night long, I will stay with you. There's nothing you can ever do to lose my love. I will protect you until you die, and after your death, I will still protect you. I am stronger than Depression and I am braver than Loneliness and nothing will ever exhaust me."

As a quick note, most times, your story is best shared with tears! Sharing your story also generates a sense of community where loneliness in loss is dissolved and comfort resides. Your new community will never replace your loved one, but

the hug of another individual can grip the pain. The shoulder of another can catch the tears and help you carry your burden. Sharing your story is also like a lasting hug from the loved one you lost.

Storytelling is what we call hindsight at 20/20, allowing you to receive a revelation of how God was with you, carrying you in your most tragic moments. Your story illustrates the cries of a heart to a God whom you may have felt abandoned you in the moment, yet it also reveals how God worked – and is working – through your story, restoring your sense of hope, peace and security.

Storytelling allows the legacy

of you and your loved one to live on, to leave its mark, and to impact others in ways that we can only imagine. Your story is your legacy, and it matters. Tell your story, every chance you get. You never know whom you will impact and how much it will facilitate togetherness when you feel most alone.



GriefShare.org
offers daily emails to help one through the grieving process.

Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Bereavement Services

Following a patient's death, Mountain Valley Hospice provides specialized grief support services to help loved ones cope with their loss. These services are provided as part of hospice care for 13 months, at no cost to the recipient, and include:

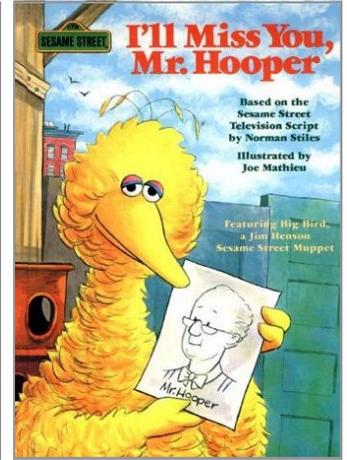
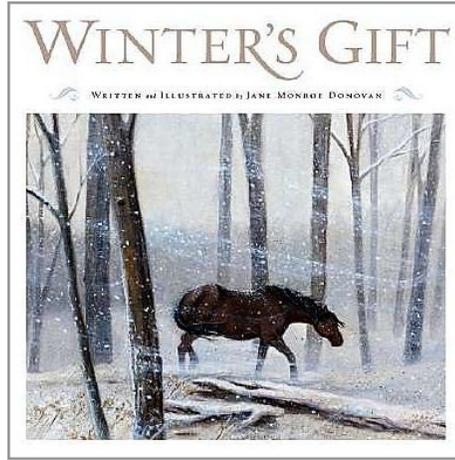
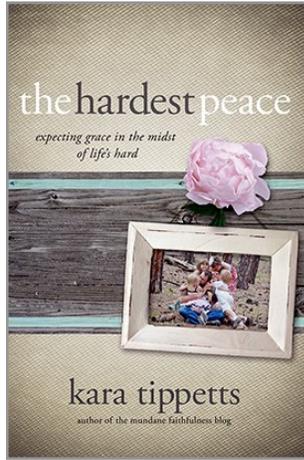
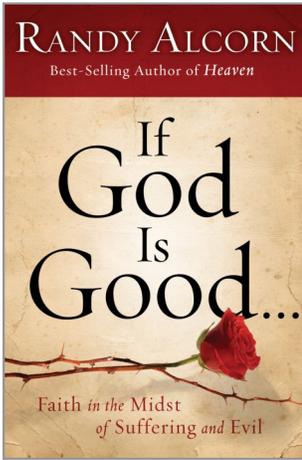
- Grief counseling and education
- Face-to-face/phone sessions
- Monthly support groups
- Monthly newsletter

For questions and comments, contact Mountain Valley Hospice at 336-789-2922 or 888-789-2922, or

mtnvalleyhospice.org/the-next-step-newsletter.

The Next Step — Publisher: Kristie Byrd Editor-in-Chief: Josh Armstrong

Now available at the
Grief Resources section of the **Mount Airy Public Library**:



Books and videos may be borrowed at any of the
Northwestern Regional libraries in Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties.

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