



Issues -4-19

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*"To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness"*

~Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

In the beginning stages of grief, it is important not to suppress it. Unfortunately, you must experience the excruciating pain and depths of despair in order to process grief properly, and make it through in one piece.

There is no getting around this. Efforts to bury, deny or avoid grief only postpone the inevitable. If you don't meet your grief head-on, it will come back to haunt you later in life. Unresolved grief can manifest itself through physical symptoms or psychological problems. So... with bereavement, sooner is better than later.

During your Internet travels, you may have come across some offers, e-books or phone counseling, offering a quick fix or easy way out of your misery. Well, I am sorry to tell you that there is no easy way out of grief, and anyone who tells you there is, is doing you a grave disservice. I would have to say they are probably taking advantage of your pain and vulnerable state of mind!

## Quotes of the Month

*"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the things which you think you cannot do."*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

*"Tragedy reeks down your door and takes you prisoner. To escape takes effort and energy. Seeking joy after facing adversity is taking back what was stolen from you."*

*Sheryl Sandberg*

No one experiences the same amount, intensity or duration of pain in their grief. But severe raw pain is universal to all major bereavements. And even in today's "enlightened" society, giving way to grief can be seen as weak, unhealthy or morbid. This can prompt friends to try to distract you from your mourning. Well-wishers can actually make you feel wrong or embarrassed for your expressions of grief and sorrow, and you may in turn try to stop it in yourself.

You can short-circuit this task, the working through of pain, by cutting off your feelings or denying the pain. Thought-stopping procedures are not helpful in bereavement, and I say again to you: do not avoid or deny the pain, especially in the beginning.

BACK TO LIFE !

YOUR PERSONAL GUIDEBOOK TO GRIEF RECOVERY

[www.recover-from-grief.com](http://www.recover-from-grief.com)



## Touchstone

### *Postcards-by*

#### *Deacon Dan McGrath*

*(Note: My wife died Oct. 23, 2015 these postcard reflection were written following her death)*

The weight of grief is heavy. I struggled each day with the emotional weighing and reweighing I found myself doing after Carol's death. It was hard to relax or sleep as anguish overcame me at times.

In her book "Daring Greatly," Brene' Brown says that "hope is a function of struggle." For me, grief was all about the struggle. It was hard some days to find the hope to continue moving forward. I have to be honest with you, for the first time in my life I came to understand how one would contemplate suicide.

I missed Carol's presence so much and most of the time my brain thought that Carol was still there. I found myself looking for her in the aisles of Walmart or reaching for my cell phone to tell her about my thoughts. It was like losing my ability to stand and stay balanced. The counter weight of my other half was gone and I didn't know which way to lean.

One way I found relief was through reaching out. I became a volunteer reading aide three days a week at a local elementary school. I also found it when I reached out to "James," whom I connected with while I delivered soup and bread during my parish's "Lenten Meals on Wheels" program. In visiting him I discovered that he was legally blind and needed help to read mail and pay bills. I decided to spend Saturday mornings helping him with these things. In those moments of helping first graders and visiting "James" I forgot about death. In reaching out to others, I found the strength to move on.

Another way I found relief was by reaching back to the grace of my life with Carol. Since her death I found myself wondering what I could have or should have done differently as her caregiver. I had to remind myself that I was not the cause of her stroke or the many health issues she suffered from. My purpose was to care for her. To love her. I did that well.

I also found relief by reaching toward gratitude. I am grateful to have spent every day with Carol during my life and to have found the grace of those last months with her. I am grateful for all the support we received. I am grateful that her death was peaceful. In the end she was able to visit with our children, family and friends and she was talking, eating, singing and laughing just two days before she died.

Finally, I found relief by reaching inward and upward to my own spirit. I came across a meditation from a book I read each day, "Healing After Loss: Daily Meditation for Working Through Grief" by Martha Whitmore Hickman:

*"It is easy to think we have some ultimate claim on those we love, rather than that we have been privileged to share one another's lives for a time. They with us, we with them. But always there is some essence which is at its heart a mystery. Where it came from and where it goes, we don't know. Perhaps there is a trace of the divine in each of us which comes from its home in God and returns to that home. Before the mystery I am silent and I am glad."*

We can learn a lot about the value of our lives by reflecting on death.

More Postcard reflections visit:

[www.postcardreflections.blogspot.com](http://www.postcardreflections.blogspot.com)

## Touchstone

### **INDULGE YOUR GRIEF**

This is another exercise in which you can give full vent to all your powerful emotions, and get in touch with your deepest pain. Don't do this every night, maybe just a few times in the beginning of your bereavement:

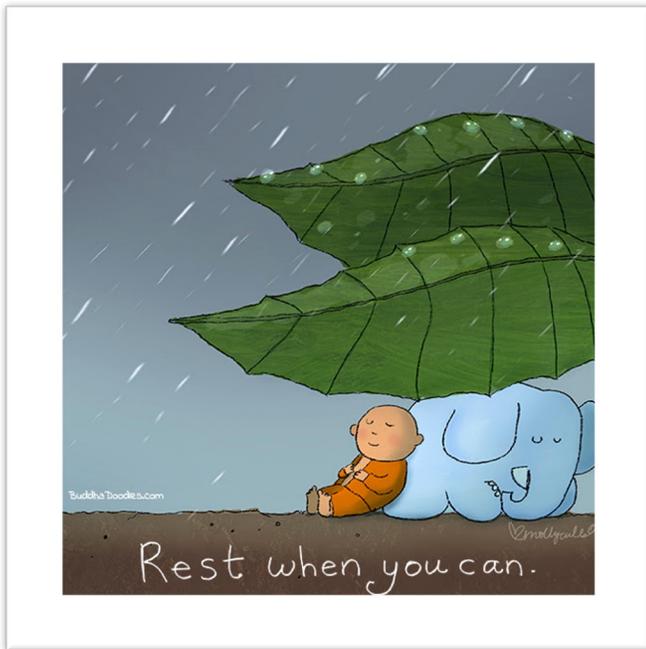
Bring together a collection of mementos and other reminders of your lost beloved.

- Examples would be a photo of him or her, a CD player with his favorite music, his cologne, a favorite old shirt, a piece of jewelry or a toy.
- Ensure that you will not be disturbed, and then lay down in bed and surround yourself with his or her memorabilia. Light a candle.
- Allow yourself to get in touch with his or her essence and indulge your grief fully.
- Pray, meditate or just think about your lost one.
- Cry if you feel like it.
- After 15-20 minutes, get up and move to another room, put away the mementos.

Out beyond ideas of  
wrongdoing  
and rightdoing there is a field.  
I'll meet you there.



Rumi



## Touchstone

### Book of the Month Suggestion

#### Option “B”

*Facing Adversity,  
Building Resilience,  
And Finding Joy*

Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant

### Touchstone 3 P’s

Sheryl Sandberg began her 2016 commencement speech at the University of California, Berkeley, by saying, “I’m not her to tell you all the things I’ve learned in life. Today I will try to tell you what I learned in death.”

Sheryl spoke about her husband’s sudden, unexpected death that happened a little over a year before this speech. She said,

*“For many months afterward, and at many times since, I was swallowed up in the deep fog of grief — what I think of as the void — an emptiness that fills your heart, your lungs, constricts your ability to think or even to breath. Dave’s death changed me in profound ways. I learned about the depths of sadness and the brutality of loss. But I also learned that when life sucks you under, you can kick against the bottom, break the surface, and breathe again. I learned that in the face of the void — or in the face of any challenge — you can choose joy and meaning. I’m sharing this with you in the hope that today, as you take the next step in your life, you can learn the lessons that I learned only in death. Lessons about hope, strength, and the light within us that will not be extinguished.”*

Sheryl pointed to the many kinds of losses and difficulties the students had likely experienced in their college years and told the graduates, “You will almost certainly face more and deeper adversities. There’s loss of opportunity, loss of dignity, loss of love, loss of life itself. Many of you have already experienced the kind of hardships that leave an indelible mark. The question is not if some of these things will happen to you. They will. What I want to talk about today is what to do next.

She went on to describe the results of decades long research into human resiliency done by Dr. Martin Seligman, who found that coming back after tragedy depends on our dedication to overcoming the **Three P’s**:

**Personalization:** “The belief that we are at fault. This is the lesson that not everything that happens to us happens because of us. This is different than taking responsibility, which we should always do. When Dave died I had the very common reaction to blame myself. Asking what I could’ve or should’ve done. It wasn’t until I found the Three P’s that I accepted that I could have prevented his death. His doctors had not diagnosed his disease. I was an economic major—how could I? Not taking things personally allows us to recover and thrive.”

**Pervasiveness:** “The belief that an event will affect all areas of your life. That there’s nowhere to hide from the all-consuming sadness.” Sheryl describes brief seconds of relief from grief, gratitude for the love of others and her own tangible resources, and gradual signs of healing in her family as indicators that, though her “large reservoir of sadness” remained, it did not consume her life.

**Permanence:** “The belief that the sorrow will last forever. For me this was the hardest one by far. For so long it felt like the overwhelming grief would never leave. We often project our current feelings out indefinitely. We’re anxious. We’re sad and then we’re sad that we’re sad. Instead we should accept our feelings but know that they won’t last forever.

Sheryl concluded with a new and deeper understanding of living with meaning after loss. She pointed to the cultivation of gratitude as the point of transformation. “Feeling gratitude and appreciation is the key to resilience. People who take the time to list the things that they are grateful for are healthier and happier. It is the greatest irony of my life that losing my husband helped me find deeper gratitude.”



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### Touchstone

#### **Book Suggestions**

- ⇒ Daring Greatly, by Brene Brown
- ⇒ Where Did You Go, by Christina Rasmussen
- ⇒ Second Firsts, by Christina Rasmussen

### Touchstone

#### **Website Suggestions**

- ⇒ [www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com](http://www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com)
- ⇒ [www.ourneyofhearts.org](http://www.ourneyofhearts.org)
- ⇒ [www.optionb.org](http://www.optionb.org)
- ⇒ [www.grief.com](http://www.grief.com)

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