



Issues -9-20

## In This Issue!

- ◇ ASK FOR SUPPORT
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Check out our updated website:

[www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com](http://www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com)

The Bereavement Link has all the past Touchstone Issues...you can download and send to a friend.

## Quotes of the Month

Be patient with everyone, but above all with yourself. I mean, do not be disturbed because of your imperfections, and always rise up bravely from a fall. I'm glad that you make daily a new beginning; there is no better means of progress in the spiritual life than to be continually beginning afresh.  
FRANCIS DE SALES

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death is but crossing the world, as friends do the seas; they live in one another still.  
WILLIAM PENN

## Touchstone

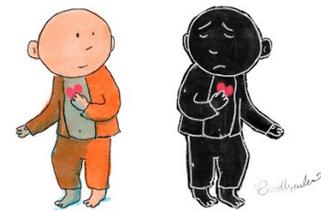
Self-sufficiency and independence are normally seen as signs of strength, an admirable quality. But not during grief! Bereavement is a time for surrender, a time to give it all up and depend on friends and family to keep you safe through the storm. You found out when your loved one died that you could not control everything. And in the early stages of grief, there is nothing more soothing or helpful than to give up trying to control things and to rely on other humans for aid. Let go and receive all the love and support you need. Your true friends will be there for you. It's nature's way, or God's way, if you prefer to see it that way. A quick reminder here: Do NOT bury the grief, push it away and try to carry on with your life. You may succeed, but the grief will come back to haunt you later in life. Better to get it over with now. Surrender to the grief, let it run its course, and reach out for help from others as you endure.

**ASK FOR SUPPORT** So where can you find this type of help? Start close to home, with your family and close friends. Find a partner willing to listen. Someone who has also suffered intense emotional loss, possibly in your own family. There is someone in your life who has a big heart and sympathetic ear, who could lend you this special kind of support right now. Take a moment right now to decide who you know that might be willing to do this for you: \_\_\_\_\_.

And vow to talk to him or her soon. Explain that you really need to ventilate and would they be willing to listen? Rely on your loved ones for other help, too. Now is the time to be selfish and ask for aid from your closest friends and family. What do you need help with? Anything and everything. Just ask. Take as much time off from work as you can and neglect your usual routine at first to allow the shock of bereavement to mellow a little bit. Ask for help with household tasks or babysitting chores, or maybe just a shoulder to cry on.

BACK TO LIFE ! YOUR PERSONAL GUIDEBOOK TO GRIEF RECOVERY

Turn towards the difficult feelings.



## Touchstone

### *Postcards-by-Deacon Dan McGrath*

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

*“The bud stands for all things, even for those things that don’t flower, for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing, though sometimes it is necessary to reteach a things its loveliness.” --Galway Kinnell*

On my way to spend Thanksgiving with our daughter, I decided to stop in Seattle to spend a few days with my cousins. On the way, I found myself thinking about the last trip Carol and I made to Seattle, for her kidney and pancreas transplant in 2008. I remember how scared and how hopeful we both were, getting the call that they had a good match. I also thought finally, our life could get back to normal. For fourteen months Carol had been on dialysis, waiting every day for the phone to ring for a possible transplant; it was a difficult time. As I remembered all this, I thought how brave Carol was. At the same time, I observed sadly that my hope for “getting back to normal” was only a daydream. As I drove by the hospital where Carol’s transplant took place, I remembered the weeks afterward, when daily we celebrated new milestones of recovery: No more diabetes, insulin, dialysis.

From our apartment across from the hospital we walked around Seattle enjoying just being together. Life issues that seemed so important before didn’t matter at all anymore. The only thing that was of any importance was just being together—taking care of Carol and being thankful for all our blessings, free from all the health obstacles that Carol had lived with for so long. We would say later, “Being in that little apartment was one of the best times of our lives.”

In her book “Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness,” Sharon Salzberg writes, *“To reteach a thing its loveliness is the nature of metta (a Buddhist term meaning lovingkindness). Through lovingkindness, everyone and everything can flower.”*

After Carol’s transplant, lovingkindness seemed very natural and easy. But how do you experience lovingkindness when the one with whom you have been loving and kind is gone from your life?

I found Sharon Salzberg’s words especially healing as I

entered my second holiday season following Carol’s death. The anxiety and fears I’d faced the year before had seemed crushing at times, until I realized that they were completely normal and common for all who experience loss. Turning and facing the source of my fears in the ensuing year—not running away from them—made me a stronger and more compassionate person and at the same time helped me recognize a few things.

**First:** To recognize the gift and grace of grief one must face head-on the pain, suffering and fear that grief brings. Running away, ignoring, medicating or hiding from those fears only make those feelings stronger. I once read, “When you ignore your fears they just go down to the basement and lift weights and come back stronger.”

**Second:** As Robert Frost said, *“The only way ‘round is through.”* In the book “Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself,” Kristen Neff, Ph.D. says, *“We need to bravely turn toward our suffering, comforting ourselves in the process, so that time can work its healing magic.”*

**Third:** There is nothing I can do to fix or change what has happened. Life, death and everything in between are intricately connected to rhythms of the universe in ways we don’t understand. Surrendering my tight grip to control my life has helped me to trust that all will be well.

**Fourth:** Since my Seattle trip, when I’m engulfed in negative emotions of fear, loss and loneliness, I remember those days in our little apartment, when the only things that mattered were celebrating new life; fixing wonderful meals in our little kitchen; and surrounding each other in lovingkindness, compassion and gratefulness for each moment together. Nothing else was of any concern. Deep in our hearts we knew everything was going to be Ok.

**Lastly:** Loving kindness begins within. It must start with loving and caring for oneself, then move out to others with kindness and gentle care.

*“We were new buds flowering from within...reteaching each other of our loveliness in words and touch watching each other...flower again from within of self-blessing.” Galway Kinnell*

Deacon Dan and a “Postcard” from Carol

## Touchstone

At times during your bereavement, you may find yourself drawn to the written arts or music for solace. There's something very comforting about the wisdom shared through the ages via poetry or thoughtful quotes about grief and loss. And music touches the soul in a way nothing else can.

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### I WILL

*As long as I can I will look at this world for the both of us.  
As long as I can I will sing with the birds,  
I will laugh with the flowers,  
I will pray to the stars for both of us.*

~ Author Unknown

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### ANGEL THOUGHTS

*"If you give up when it's deep winter,  
you'll surely miss the promise of your Spring,  
the beauty of your Summer  
and the fulfillment of your Fall. Don't let the pains of one  
season*

*overshadow the joys of the rest of the year.*

*Try not to judge life*

*by one difficult season;*

*cherish instead*

*the exceptional seasons*

*given you in love."*

~Sec. Cerge Remonde, PMS

### DO NOT WEEP

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;*

*I am not there, I do not sleep.*

*I am a thousand winds that blow.*

*I am the diamond glints on snow.*

*I am the sunlight on ripened grain.*

*I am the gentle autumn rain. When you awaken in the morn-  
ing's hush*

*I am the swift uplifting rush*

*Of quiet birds in circled flight.*

*I am the soft stars that shine at night.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry;*

*I am not there, I did not die.*

~ Author Unknown

## THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

*There's an elephant in the room.*

*It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it. Yet we  
squeeze by with, "How are you?" and, "I'm fine,"  
and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.*

*We talk about the weather;*

*we talk about work;*

*we talk about everything else—*

*except the elephant in the room.*

*There's an elephant in the room.*

*We all know it is there.*

*We are thinking about the elephant  
as we talk together.*

*It is constantly on our minds.*

*For, you see, it is a very big elephant.*

*It has hurt us all, but we do not talk about  
the elephant in the room.*

*Oh, please, say her name.*

*Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.*

*Oh, please, let's talk about  
the elephant in the room.*

*For if we talk about her death,  
perhaps we can talk about her life.*

*Can I say, "Barbara" to you  
and not have you look away?*

*For if I cannot, then you are leaving me alone  
in a room—with an elephant.*

~ Terry Kettering

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### FREEDOM

*"There is a freedom, bittersweet, from pain which no one  
can hide; It's a relief from sorrow and earthly pain - a path  
to the other side.*

*And those behind will weep for me, and I for their gentle  
touch. The path I walked to free my soul has cost me very  
much.*

*When you reach out to touch me and I am no longer there,  
Take heart my dear... don't weep to long, for I am every-  
where.*

*In the faces of my babies, in the work that I would do,  
In the laughter and the sorrow, in the memories within you.*

*In every life a spirit dwells that touches people's hearts.  
Some are good and some are not, but each one plays a part.  
I was mostly happy and kind and sometimes even wise,  
And I hope that everyone I touched saw compassion in my  
eyes."*

Author Carol McGrath



2825 Lexington Ave. Suite B  
Butte, Montana 59701

### Touchstone

#### **Book Suggestions**

- ⇒ The Gift of Imperfection-Berne Brown
- ⇒ Healing a Friends Grieving Heart-Wolfelt
- ⇒ Love Poems from God-Daniel Ladinsky

### Touchstone

#### **Website Suggestions**

- ⇒ [www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com](http://www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com)
- ⇒ [www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com](http://www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com)
- ⇒ [www.theconversationproject.org](http://www.theconversationproject.org)

**Senior Solutions-2825 Lexington Ave. Suite B  
Butte, Montana 59701**

Phone: 406-299-3777 Fax: 406-299-2730  
[www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com](http://www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com)