Healing through Laughter by Kimberly Demeny, BS, MS Ed.Psych.

Grief after the loss of a loved one is a very personal process, and there is no “correct” way to do it. It is a situation that most of us will go through during our lifetimes. Many people experience a range of emotions, including sadness, despair, anger, worry, fear, despondency, uncertainty, and loneliness. The process, the time it takes, and the emotions that go along with it are unique to each person. But one emotion is not typically linked with the period of mourning after a death: joy with laughter. At times people who are grieving will find themselves laughing at an amusing story or situation, completely separate from the subject of their deceased loved one. They may then feel guilty about the momentary lapse into humor, as though feeling any joy during such a sad time diminishes the importance of the one who has passed on. Guilt can often accompany moments of happiness. As contradictory as it seems, humor and laughter can be a helpful part of the grieving process.

"If you can find humor in anything, you can survive it."
– Bill Cosby

Laughter can actually help one heal after a loss. When we grieve, our immune systems can be suppressed, making us more susceptible to anything that can attack or weaken our bodies; laughter can help to boost the immune system and restore balance. In addition, during a time of high stress such as with a significant loss, the brain is not able to accept the enormity of the situation. The brain protects a person from the full brunt of the situation. The reality has to be accepted in bits and pieces, so it is not so overwhelming and all-consuming. As a result, many people in the bereavement process notice that they have difficulty concentrating. The cliché is that laughter is the best medicine, but it may actually be truer than expected as one continues on the journey after the death of a loved one. With grief, stress levels rise and depression can manifest or even increase if the person already suffered some depression or anxiety; laughter can momentarily ease the pain, lowering stress and helping to improve mood. After the death of a loved one, one may find himself in “a fog,” unable to retain information or remember things; laughter, joy, and humor can have a positive impact on memory and brain function.

"Laughter sets the spirit free to move through the most tragic circumstances."
– Captain Gerald Coffee, POW

Because laughter can be so beneficial, those facing loss may decide to schedule laughter in their day. Even though this may seem artificial, this scheduled laughter is valuable. The humor may include telling stories about the loved one, reading an amusing article, or watching a favorite TV sit-com. In any way one chooses to experience joy and laughter, easing the heaviness of grief is a positive respite from the burden of loss, even if it’s only for a moment or two a day. As Captain Gerald Coffee, POW, said, “Laughter sets the spirit free to move through even the most tragic circumstances. It helps us shake our heads clear, get our feet back under us, and restore our sense of balance and purpose. Humor is integral to our peace of mind and ability to go beyond survival.”

Nancy Weil,(CLL, GMS) has written a book Laughing Your Way Through Grief. While the title may strike some people as unexpected or maybe even inappropriate, for Weil and others like her (who call themselves humor professionals), giving people the permission to laugh, even when the situation is so full of despondency and loss, is imperative. Laughter-like sorrow, anger, bitterness, despair, and confusion-is an appropriate response to grief. In spite of how bad things are, laughter can help distance a person from feeling the heartache for a moment and, perhaps, keep the situation in perspective. So be kind to yourself if you are experiencing grief; try to laugh a little each day, even when the situation is anything but humorous. Eventually laughs come more frequently.

Kimberly Demeny, BS, MS Ed. Psych. works with Connect Inc., a cancer concierge nonprofit dedicated to helping those facing a cancer diagnosis and working to connect people to resources for a more confident and hope-filled journey. Services are offered at no cost and available at 2360 A Dousman Street, Suite 2 or 920-445-8992 or info@connectcancer.org.
Grief and Loneliness: Me and My Shadow  
by Maureen Kramlinger

What is it about loneliness that makes us want to hide the fact that we are lonely? Anyone who has suffered the loss of a loved one naturally feels a gaping space in daily life and a cavernous emptiness within. Why don’t we talk about it?

I suspect it’s because a common reaction to loneliness is the feeling of shame. Perhaps we think if we admit to loneliness, we’ll seem defective: “If I’m lonely there must be something wrong with me. Maybe I’m needier than anybody else. Maybe I’m not attractive enough to draw others to me. Maybe nobody wants to be with me.” No wonder loneliness holds its tongue, becomes a secret, and leads to more isolation.

Feelings of loneliness are normal—a part of our human experience, especially during mourning. In her book, *A Time to Grieve*, Carol Staudacher relates loneliness early in the grief process with longing for the loved one, the “only one who matters.” She observes that when we lose the person closest to us, we feel as if “our whole world has lost its center.”

Those who are left seem inconsequential. In early intense grief one feels apart, set adrift on a sea of sorrow: “No one else knows how I feel or feels like I feel.” At night, especially for those who live alone, a “dark foreboding threatens to swallow us.”

Later in grieving, the way we experience loneliness changes. When comfortable habits woven through our relationship are ruptured by loss, and familiar words or actions don’t take place, a void is created.

*We’re devastated when we realize that the familiar call, note or gift from our loved one won’t come again, ever.*

With so much going on inside us, being out in public actually can take its toll. We may not want to be with others. We may feel as if we need time alone to absorb our loss. They may not understand our natural withdrawal, which may in turn intensify our sense of loneliness. And, if others give us time alone, we may believe we’re no longer important.

Even as we move toward reconciling our loss, we still may feel lonely when we decide to reach out to engage more with life and with others again, but aren’t sure how to do it. On the other hand, we may see the time we’ve spent alone begin to yield as a gift—a desire for self-discovery or a new ability to take a pleasure in our own company. As one widow said, “It still hurts, but I’m getting more used to being alone. Now I want to work on me—to learn more about who I am and what I want for the rest of my life.”

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Do You Feel Like You are Losing Your Mind?  
by Maureen Kramlinger

"Not only have I lost my husband, but I’ve lost my mind."

The death of a loved one forces us to make quick decisions about final arrangements, financial matters and the like. On top of that, our minds are preoccupied with our grief and all that we have lost.

It is completely normal to feel overwhelmed, confused and even disoriented. Many bereaved report being unable to concentrate or learn anything new. They also complain about not being able to remember anything.

**HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO HELP KEEP YOUR MENTAL ACUITY ON TRACK:**

1. Remember, mental depletion is normal and will be reversible once your mind no longer has to work so hard to absorb the loss.
2. Do practical things to keep on track: put keys/glasses in the same place, make lists, keep a calendar.
3. Do mental activities, such as paperwork, when you’re most refreshed.
4. Ask for help from someone you trust to discuss options, set priorities, review plans and give you feedback before you finalize important decisions.

You haven’t lost your mind. You haven’t misplaced your mind. Your mind is just temporarily assigned to the priority task of doing grief work. Work with what’s left.
BOOK REVIEW

Taking the Trip – A Journey through Widowhood
by Romaine Presnell • Review by Joan Faltynski

Loss of a partner – unexpectedly or through prolonged suffering – rarely puts us in a writing mood. Trying to keep thoughts in any semblance of order expends far more energy than we can or care to muster.

Hard as it is to believe, writing – in journal or diary form – is a highly recommended and proven form of self-care during the grieving process. Romaine Presnell is one who has been there, losing her husband to bladder cancer in less than two years from the time of diagnosis. She used the writing of a journal to bring her from desperation to hope. This journal she shares in her book entitled Taking the Trip.

In a mere thirty pages of easy, yet heart-warming reading, we see and feel our own emotional roller coaster and feel supported by virtue of taking this trip of sadness in solidarity with this friend and many others who have walked this path before us.

Try as we might to accept the frequently heard advice that "time is a great healer", those words are slow in sinking into the fiber of a hurting heart. Romaine is proof of the truth of this advice. Her journal aids each reader to this realization of grief. "You will do it your own way. You will do it in the time that it takes you." Don’t deprive yourself of this gift of healing.

Reviewed by Joan Faltynski, former teacher and principal, and current office assistant at Proko-Wall.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 pork tenderloin
- 1 small carrot, peeled and quartered
- 2 small whole potatoes
- 1/2 small sweet potato, peeled and quartered
- 1 tablespoon oil

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line the base of a small roasting pan with baking paper. Combine garlic, salt, mustard and ginger and smear over the pork tenderloin. Place the pork in the middle of the prepared roasting pan and arrange the vegetables around it. Drizzle the oil over the vegetables. Roast the pork and vegetables for 35 minutes. Remove the pork and allow to rest. Continue to roast the vegetables for 5-10 minutes until cooked through.
**Grief Support Groups**

“Shared tears and laughter are healing; trying to help others is a potent pain reliever.”

—Erin Diehl, who lost her husband of 43 years to cancer.

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**The Compassionate Friends**

For parents and grandparents grieving the loss of a child.

**Door County**: 2nd Thurs. of each quarter at 7pm. Summer meeting July 1 at Door County Memorial Hospital in Sturgeon Bay. Call Dawn Sandusky, 920-854-9801. Voicemail 1-800-589-2669. www.doortc.org

**Green Bay**: Meetings 3rd Thurs. of mo. 6/21, 7/19, 8/16; 7pm, First United Methodist Church, 501 Howe, 7pm, 370-3858

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**Grief Share Program**

Support group for people experiencing the death of a loved one.

**Green Bay**: Pilgrim Lutheran Church: 1731 St. Agnes Dr., Videos and discussions to find comfort and healing from grieving. Registration appreciated. Contact 965-2233 for schedule.

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**Living with Loss**

**Heartland Hospice Support Group**: 5 week sessions throughout the year in Green Bay, Shawano & Peshtigo. For more info on dates and locations, and to register, call 336-6455 or 1-866-631-3149.

**Asena Care Hospice Support Group**: 1294 Lombardi Ave., Green Bay, call Mandy for schedule, 497-4672

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**Navigating the Waters of Grief**

Unity Hospice's Adult Bereavement Support:

**Green Bay Area**: Unity Office, 2366 Oak Ridge Cr., De Pere.; Tuesdays, July 9 through August 6 from 6-7:30pm; Registration req., call 338-1111 or 1-800-900-9249.

**Women's Luncheon**: monthly on 3rd Wednesday from Noon-1:30pm at a local restaurant. Call 338-1111 for location.

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**LIVING WITH LOSS**

**Appleton**: Affinity Visiting Nurses Hospice; meetings every 1st Tues. at 2:30 pm at Thompson Community Center, 820 W. College Ave.

**Men Journeying through Grief**: Meetings every 1st Wed. at 6-8pm at 816 W. Winneconne Ave., Neenah. Pre-registration is not required, but appreciated for meal planning purposes. Men Only.

**Peace through Grief**: Looking at the many pieces of life that are affected by a loss; 6-week support program looking at the grief experience. Pre-registration required. Call 727-2000 or 1-866-236-8500.

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**Pulaski Grief Support**

Open to all faiths and all ages. Third Wednesday of month at 6:30 pm. At Assumption B.V.M. in the church basement in St. Clare Room. Enter at the southwest door. No registration required. 822-3223.

**St. James Grief Support**

St. James Parish, Cooperstown; July 14 from 6-8pm. Contact Tom Bekkers, 660-8066.

**Holding Care**

Grief support provided by St. Philip the Apostle. Upcoming sessions: Mondays, Aug. 13, 20, and 27 from 2:30-4:30pm in the Adult Center. Call Sr. Helen Keyzer 468-7848.

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**Aurora Grief Share**

**Green Bay**: For adults; 4-week session; Wednesdays from 1-2pm, Aurora Baycare Hospital Chapel, 2845 Greenbrier Road. Call 288-3094 or email renee.lubinski@aurorabaycare.com.

**Manitowoc/Two Rivers**: Aurora Baycare Hospital: 5000 Memorial Dr., Two Rivers. Call 920-288-5100 or Sheila.Hamilton@aurora.org. Check in at Hospital Front Desk.

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**Lakeshore Grief Support Programs**

All sessions are free and registration is not required. For more information please call Robb Spaulding at 920-320-4232.

**Manitowoc**: Monday, 6/3, 7/1, and 8/5; 6-7 pm, Manitowoc County Office Complex 4319 Expo Drive

**Two Rivers**: Saturday, 6/8 & 22, 7/13 and 27, 8/10, & 24, 10:11:30am; Aurora Medical Center Michigan Conference Room; 5000 Memorial Drive

**Two Rivers**: Wednesday, 6/12, 7/10 and 8/14; 7:00 PM-8:30 PM; S.O.S. (Survivors of Suicide) St. Peter the Fisherman Parish Hall, 3218 Tannery Road; Two Rivers, WI 54241

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**Ecumenical Grief Support**

**From Mourning to Hope**. Green Bay. Various grief seminars and support groups. For more information call, 920-737-2790.

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**Depere Community Center**

Grief support groups will be held the second Monday of every month at the DePere Community Center at 600 Grant St. Upcoming sessions are 6/10, 7/8, and 8/12 from 5:30-6:30pm. ✩
NUMBERS & EVENTS TO REMEMBER
Meyer Theatre, 494-3401, www.meyertheatre.org
St. Norbert College, 403-3950, www.snc.edu/performing arts/tickets
Fox Valley PAC, 730-3760, www.foxcitiespac.com
Green Bay Visitors & Convention Bureau, 494-9507, 24 hour service call 494-1111.
Wisconsin Travel Information, 800-373-2737.

Neville Public Museum Exhibits:
MuseumPLACE: A Celebration of Community (6/23/12 - 11/17/13)
The Golden Age of Video Arcade Games Featuring the Bradley Czech Collection (4/25/13 - 9/2/13)

Village of Bellevue Leisure Services:
All are welcome.
Bingo: 3rd Thur. of month; 1-3pm; Community Center;
Movie Matinee: 2nd Thur. of month; 1:00-3:00pm; Bellevue Community Center, 1811 Allouez Ave.; $1.00
Heritage Hill: 448-5150:
Fees: $7-$9; under 3 free.
Heritage Sundays: June 9, July 14, Aug. 11. Learn more about your family's history.
Civil War Re-enactment: Sat., June 22 - Sun., June 23.
Hops on the Hill Beer & Food Tasting: Thur. 7/11, 6-8:30; $35, $40 at door.
Laura Ingalls Wilder Days: 7/26-27; 10am-4:30pm.
World War One Experience: 8/3-8/4.
Fur Trade Era in Wisconsin: 8/17
Kids Free Week: Tue.-Sun. 8/27-9/1.

Green Bay Botanical Garden
Wednesdays, June 5-Aug. 28; Wednesday Cookout: 11am-1pm. Free admission with lunch purchase.
Sun. June 16 Father's Day Open House; 9am-8pm; Dad's free.
Sat. June 22 - Sun. June 23 Great American Family Campout; 4:30pm - 10:00am. Register online.
Tues. June 25 Kid's Day Open House; 9am-8pm; FREE for kids (0-18).
Thurs. July 4 Independence Day Open House; 9am-8pm; Admission is FREE for all Veterans.
Sat. July 13 25th Annual Garden Walk; Sat. 8am-4pm; $10-members; $15-non-members.

Hazelwood Historic House:
Admission $4-adults; $3.50-Senior Citizens; $2.50-children (ages 5-17); children under 5 free. 437-1840.
Museum Tours; Thur.-Sun., 12-4pm. 6/1-8/26.

Hazardwood Historic House:
Admission $4-adults; $3.50-Senior Citizens; $2.50-children (ages 5-17); children under 5 free. 437-1840.
Museum Tours; Thur.-Sun., 12-4pm. 6/1-8/26.
Fri. June 7- Sun. June 9: Haviland & Blooms; 12-4pm
Sun., July 14, 2013; Building a River Highway - Reliving the Aquila on the Foxy Lady; 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
$35.00/person, reservations required.

Knights on the Fox: Tuesdays July 9 thru Aug. 6; 6:30-8pm, St. Norbert College; Admission free. 403-4011.

—Calendar of Events—

Green Bay Muslim Community:
Wednesday, August 7; 7:30 p.m. If Tombstones Could Talk; Allouez Cemetery Walk
Saturday, August 24;
Flower Fairy Tea Party; 1-3pm. $15 adults/$5 kids. Reservations needed.

Green Bay Bullfrogs
Baseball June 1- Aug. 1; Joannes Park; Tickets $5-$8. 497-7225.
Farmer's Markets
Green Bay Farmer's Market; Saturdays, 6/1-10/26; 7am-Noon; Downtown Green Bay. 448-3030.
Farmer's Market on Broadway; Wednesdays, 6/5-8/29; 3pm-8pm; Broadway District; 437-2531.
Farmer's Market Park Square Mall; Mon. 6/11-10/8; 2-6pm. 499-2421.
Oneida Farmer's Market; Oneida One Stop-Hwy. 54; Thursdays 6/27 thru 8/29; Noon-6pm. 496-7423.
Dine on the Deck: Wednesdays, June 5 thru Aug. 28; 11:30am-1:30pm; City Deck; 437-5972.
Summer in the Park Concert: Thur. June 6 thru Aug. 29; 11:30am-2pm; Jackson Square Park. 437-5972.
National Railroad Museum: Day Out With Thomas; June 12-16; 8:30am-6pm; $16; 437-7623.
Fridays on the Fox: June 28 thru Aug. 9; 6-9pm; City Deck. 437-5972.
Knights on the Fox: 11:30am-2pm; City Deck; 437-5972.
**JUNE**

Sat.-Sun. June 1-2  St. Jude/St. Patrick Church Picnic; 1420 Division St., Green Bay

June 4-16  South Pacific; St. Norbert College, Webb Theatre, 8pm; 920-403-3950.

June 7-22  The Love Boat II; Meyer Theatre, Tickets: $29.00.
Sat.-Sun. June 8-9  St. Agnes Parish Summer Festival; Sat. 4-11pm, Children’s Activities; food & beer garden, cash raffle; Sun. 10:15 Polka Mass; 11am-6pm, Salute to Service.

Sun. June 9  St. Mary of the Angels Parish Picnic; 10am-5pm; corner of Cass St. & Irwin Ave.; games, refreshments, booyah, burgers, Polish sausage & kraut, homemade desserts; silent auction until 3:30pm. Alvin Styczynski & band Noon-4pm.
Fri. June 14 and July 12  Bridging the Arts; Art Display, Downtown De Pere. Call 339-4072 ext. 1249 for info.
Sat. June 15  Green Bay Blizzards v. Chicago; 7:00pm, Resch Center; Tickets $19.99-$119.99. 494-3401.
Thurs. June 20  Gallery Night; Various art galleries throughout the Olde Main District. Trolley ride included.
Fri. June 21 - Sat. June 22  Savour Green Bay; 4pm Fri, 11am Sat., Downtown Green Bay.
Sat. June 22  Everybody’s Rummage Sale-Summer; ShopKo Hall, contact 920-494-3404 for more information.
Sat-Sun. June 22-23, St. Bernard-St. Philip 6th Annual Summer Blast, Sat, 4-9 pm; Sun, 9:30 bring chair for outdoor Mass, picnic to 3:30
Tues. June 25  Kids Day; 8am-8pm special events at city of Green Bay parks. 448-3365.

**JULY**

Thur. July 4  Festival Foods Fire Over the Fox; Downtown Green Bay; Admission Free
Thursdays, July 11-Aug. 15  Algoma Concerts in the Park; Heritage Park-Algoma, call 920-487-5498.
Thur. July 11-18  Restaurant Week, Various Brown County Restaurants, contact 888-867-3342 for info.

July 18-21  Pulaski Polka Days; Pulaski Polka Grounds; Thur. $1 (5pm-midnight); Fri.-Sat. $10 (4pm-1am); Sun. Free (12:30pm-6pm). 822-3869.
July 18-28  Les Miserables; Walter Theatre, St. Norbert College; $29-$33; 403-3950.
Sat. July 21  Vendor Fair & Craft Market; Bridge Point Church, 2421 West Point Road; 9am-3pm; Free admission; 496-0048.
July 19-Aug. 10  Heritage Trail: Curly’s Story; Meyer Theatre, 494-3401.
July 20-28  Kewaunee/Door Salmon Tournament; Lake Michigan/Algoma. 920-883-9792
Sat. July 27  Jim Gaffigan: The White Bread Tour, 7:00pm, Cofrin Family Hall, Weidner Center, tickets needed.

**AUGUST**

Thurs. Aug. 1  Taste on Broadway, Broadway District in Downtown Green Bay, 5:00pm-11pm; 437-2531.
Sat. Aug. 3  Breweriana and Beer Collectible Show, KI convention Center, starting at 9am. 432-4555.
Thur. Aug. 8  Family Funathalan, Pioneer Park, 4:00pm-7:00pm.
Fri.-Sun. Aug. 9-11  Algoma Shanty Days; Downtown Algoma; Admission button fee; 800-298-4888.
Sat. Aug. 10  Green Bay Chill, Resch Center, 8:00pm.
Sat. Aug. 10  Annunciation Church Picnic; 401 Gray St., Green Bay

Thur.-Fri. Aug. 15-16  Salute to Our Veterans; Daddy D Production; Riverside Ballroom; $43/person (dinner & show); $27/person (show only). 544-4244.
Fri.-Sun. Aug. 16-18  Baylake Bank Tall Ship Festival, Leicht’s Memorial Park-Downtown Green Bay, 9:00am.
Fri.-Sun. Aug. 23-25  Artstreet; Downtown Green Bay; free admission; 435-5220.

Proko-Wall has gathered information on as many local events as possible. Proko-Wall is not recommending any particular event and lists them only as a public service.