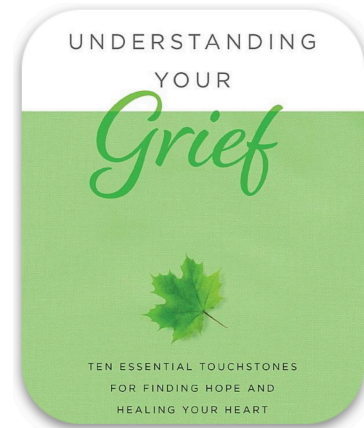


# Understanding Your Grief

... Finding Hope and healing your heart (a summary by Pat Evert)

## • Introduction

This book leads you gently through the principles and feelings of grief as you become acquainted with your own mysteries. It's a compass, a travelers guide, for the meandering days of grief ahead. **The death of those precious to us changes our lives forever.** To be bereaved means to be torn apart and have special needs. In future years, we'll continue to get even better at loving and taking care of ourselves. I believe that universal grief awareness and support have the power to change world.



Grief responds to attention and expression. Your grief will keep trying until you give it the attention it deserves. The mysteries of life and death can't be fully explained but must instead be pondered. I invite you to first befriend the concept of surrender. Understanding begins to dawn only after we surrender. Surrendering to the unknowable mystery is a courageous choice, trust in God and in ourselves. **Think of your grief as a wilderness** – a vast, mountainous, inhospitable forest. You are in the wilderness now. Its unfamiliar and often brutal surroundings. **You must journey through this wilderness.** To find your way out, you must become acquainted with its terrain and learn to follow the sometimes hard-to-find trail that leads to healing. In this wilderness of your grief, **the touchstones are your trail markers.** They are the signs that let you know you were on the right path. If you actively engage with your grief, I believe you will find your way out of the wilderness, and you will learn to make the most of the rest of your precious days here on earth. It's an expression of the present alive with a sense of the possible. Hope is a belief that healing will unfold. The contents of this book encourage you to feel with your heart and your soul. Grief is first and foremost a spiritual journey. Pondering the meaning of life and love, and the possibilities of all mysteries.

Own your rightful role as expert of your own grief experience. **You will feel empowered to own what you are feeling and undeterred by the responses of others.** Companioning is about being present to another's pain; it is not about taking away the pain. Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being, it is not being responsible for finding the way out. Companioning is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them.

• **Touchstone One: Open to the Presence of Your Loss**

Your pain is the key that opens your heart and ushers you on your way to healing. The capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn. To heal in grief is to become whole again, to integrate your grief into your self and to learn to continue your changed life with fullness and meaning. To heal you must actively attend to and express that which has broken you. Paradoxically, it is gathering the courage to turn toward the pain of your grief that ultimately leads to the healing of your wounded heart. You are on a journey that is naturally frightening, painful, and lonely. You cannot embrace the pain of your grief in one sitting. If you were to feel it all at once, you could not survive. Instead, **you must invite yourself to “dose” your pain—to feel it in small waves then allow it to retreat until you’re ready for the next wave.** You shouldn’t expect yourself to give the pain of your grief your full attention all the time. Befriending pain is fatiguing, difficult work, so it’s absolutely essential to replenish your energy as often and as fully as you can. When you set your intention to heal, you make a true commitment to positively influence the course of your journey. You choose between being what I call a “passive witness” or an “active participant” in your grief. Slowly and in doses, you can and will return to life and begin to live again. You cannot “get over” your grief, but you can reconcile yourself to it. That is, you can learn to incorporate it into your being and proceed with meaning and purpose in your life. You cannot run from it. **To lessen your hurt, you must embrace it. As strange as it may seem, you must make it your friend.** Set your intention to be a spiritual optimist, and marvel at what happens. Reconciling your grief does not happen quickly or efficiently. **It takes time. A long time.** And there are no rewards for speed. Consequently, you must be patient with yourself. Allow me to assure you that if you are openly mourning, you are not immature, overly emotional, or crazy. But the societal messages about grief you may receive are! I often say that our culture has it backward in defining who is “doing well” in grief and who is “not doing well.” Ultimately, however, if you deny the emotions of your heart, you deny the essence of your life. To be present is to notice and give your attention to whatever is happening around and inside you in each moment. It is to honor and mindfully experience the now. On any given day, you may feel especially sad. It is in such moments that **your grief requires your presence. It is asking for your full attention** and self-compassion. Grief is not a disease—it is a normal part of love. But the death of a person you have loved is likely to leave you feeling disconnected from both yourself and the outside world. The pain of your loss is both normal and necessary, it is productive pain. **These are the very opportunities that will allow you to integrate your grief over time and heal.**

• **Touchstone Two: Dispel a Dozen Misconceptions about Grief**

1. Mourning is the outward expression of grief. The only way to move toward fully integrating loss is not just by grieving but by mourning, expressing your grief.
2. Do not try to determine where you “should” be in your grief. Just allow yourself to be naturally where you are and present to whatever you’re experiencing. You and only you are the expert of your own grief.
3. “How long should grief last?” This question itself is an outgrowth of **our cultural impatience with grief.** The disturbing result is that far **too many people view grief**

**as something to be overcome rather than experienced.**

4. Tears of grief foster genuine healing.
5. The Bible itself says: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Grief is a spiritual journey of the heart and soul.
6. You may lose many other connections: loss of self, identity, security, goals and dreams. Expressing these losses will help you continue to be present to your unique grief journey.
7. Instead of avoiding anniversaries, you may want to commemorate the life of the person who died.
8. The goodbyes to the person who died will unfold slowly over time. As you mourn in the years to come, you will naturally begin to feel that you have arrived at a goodbye that feels right to you.
9. **You don’t “get over” grief; you learn to live with it.** You learn to integrate it into your life and the fabric of your being.
10. Life’s greatest challenges—getting through school, raising children, pursuing a career—are in many ways team efforts. So it should be with mourning.
11. The experience of grief and mourning after the death of a significant loved one is among the most consequential things that will ever happen to us. You’ve suffered a serious emotional and spiritual injury.
12. Allow yourself to experience griefbursts without shame or judgment, no matter where or when they occur.

Spending time and energy focusing on and expressing your grief is essential self-care. It’s hard, necessary work. But if you mourn openly in doses for as long as it takes, your grief will soften over time.

**• Touchstone Three: Embrace the Uniqueness of Your Grief**

In general, **the stronger your attachment** to the person who died, **the more difficult your grief journey will be.** It only makes sense that the closer you felt to the person who died, the more torn apart you will feel after the death. You also experienced the griefs of all the incremental losses along the way. Other common causes of anticipatory grief are advanced age in someone you love, a coming separation or divorce, pending major medical issues or procedures. A sudden, unexpected death obviously does not allow you any opportunity to prepare yourself for what was about to happen. But are you ever “ready” for that moment at all? When we feel that a life was cut short, our innate sense of injustice colors our grief. Accepting that we have little control over the lives of those we love is a difficult thing indeed.

Part of the benefit of mourning comes from the routine act of **moving your grief from the inside to the outside**—over and over again, as often as you need to. But the other part is that mourning serves as a signal to the people in your life that you’re hurting and you need their empathy and support. For healing to occur, social support must be ongoing. Whatever your unique personality, rest assured it will be reflected in your grief.

Mistakenly, some people think that with faith, there is no need to mourn. If you internalize this misconception, you will set yourself up to grieve internally but not mourn externally. **Even if you have faith, you still have the right and the need to mourn!** Your grief is not the only stress in your life right now. And the more intense and numerous the other current stresses in your life, the more overwhelming your grief journey may be. If at all possible, take steps to de-stress your life for the time being. Give up optional obligations, and defer any unnecessary projects. **Now is the time to concentrate on mourning and being self-compassionate.**

One way to think about yourself is that you are the sum total of all that you have experienced in your life so far. Your consciousness is in large part a creation of what you do and what happens to you. Grief overload is what you may feel when you experience too many significant losses all at once or in a relatively short period of time. This time you may feel like you're struggling to survive. The more "experienced" you are with death, you begin to integrate death and loss more seamlessly into living. A vital part of healing in grief is often "telling the story" over and over again. The more you tell it, the deeper your acknowledgment of the loss becomes and the more you begin to discover some level of understanding and reconciliation with what happened.

#### • **Touchstone Four: Explore Your Feelings of Loss**

Naming the feelings and acknowledging them are the first steps to integrating them. In fact, it's actually **this process of becoming acquainted and friendly with your feelings that will help you heal.** Shock, Numbness and Denial serve as a temporary time-out or psychic shock absorber. Especially in the beginning of your grief journey, your emotions need time to catch up with what your mind has been told. These are all normal responses to a life-altering experience. During this time is to reach out for support from caring friends, family, and caregivers you trust. Allow yourself to be nurtured. If you feel disorganized and confused, know that you are not going crazy, you are grieving. You may also experience a sense of their presence. This is the intense, near-constant ache of missing the person who died. They're gone, and you want them back. Don't worry about the normalcy of your experience. You are not crazy! You may need to talk and cry for long periods of time. At other times, you may just need to be alone. Don't try to interpret what you think and feel. Just think and feel it. Go slow and be patient with yourself. True resilience in grief doesn't mean being phony or avoiding your grief. It means embracing the realities of grief. It means befriending and expressing all the feelings we're reviewing in this chapter. While unpleasant, anxiety, panic, and fear are often normal components of grief. The good news is that **expressing them usually makes them more tolerable.** And knowing that they are temporary may also help you during these trying experiences. Our culture doesn't understand how normal and necessary explosive emotions can be. Expressing volatile emotions is typically judged as wrong. Still, you must give yourself permission to feel whatever you feel and to express those feelings. If explosive emotions are part of your journey (and they aren't for everyone), be aware that you have two avenues for expression—outward or inward. The outward avenue leads to healing; the inward avenue does not. You must go through it. If you feel it, acknowledge it and express it openly. One of the worst things you could do is ignore or repress feelings of guilt. The

answer is that depression plays an essential role. It forces us to regroup. When we are sad, we instinctively turn inward. We withdraw. We slow down. It's as if our soul presses the pause button and says, "Whoa, whoa, whoaaa. Time out. **I need to acknowledge what's happened here and really consider what I want to do next.**" You acquiesce to the instinct to slow down and turn inward. You allow yourself to appropriately be with and feel the pain. Paradoxically, **the only way to lessen your pain is to move toward it, not away from it.** It causes you to slow down and give your grief the time and attention it needs, which in turn allows you to begin to explore and discover meaning in the life of the person who died and their relationship with you. These feelings also give you the space you need to reconstruct your own self-identity and rebuild meaning and purpose in your life moving forward. When you watch someone you love endure physical pain and loss of quality of life, you begin to understand that death can bring relief. And so when the death occurs, your feelings of relief may be just as pronounced as your other feelings. **Patience is paramount, as is self-compassion.** You feel what you feel; there are no rights or wrongs. This is the cycle of experiencing a feeling in grief: feel it, acknowledge it, befriend it, share it, and finally, have it witnessed and empathized with by others.

#### • Touchstone Five: Understand the Six Needs of Mourning

Your wilderness is an undiscovered wilderness and you its first explorer. The magic of the six needs of mourning is that while they're painful and difficult, they're also, **over time, transformative.**

#### THE SIX NEEDS OF MOURNING

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death. You can know something in your head but not in your heart. Gently confronting the reality that someone you care about will never physically be present in your life again. In fact, encountering the reality is **such a difficult task that it can only be accomplished a little bit at a time, in small doses.** At other times you may hope you will awaken from what seems like a bad dream. Be patient and compassionate with yourself as you work on each of them.

2. Embrace the pain of the loss. This need of mourning requires us to embrace the pain of our grief—something we naturally don't want to do. I'm first asking you to acknowledge the appropriateness of the pain. Over time you even need to learn to look upon your pain as part of your love and make it your friend. Even so, you will discover that you need to dose yourself in embracing your pain. Dose your pain: yes! Deny your pain: no! Actually, **doing well with your grief means becoming well acquainted with your pain.** You will befriend your pain by sitting with it, being present to it, and thinking about and feeling it, even for years.

3. Remember the person who died. Precious memories, and objects that link you to the person who died (such as photos, souvenirs, clothing, etc.) are examples of some of the things that give **testimony to a different form of a continued relationship.** Our culture may be encouraging you to move on, but one of the paradoxes of grief is that you have to go backward before you can go forward. It takes time, patience, and yes,

lots of backward motion. When people share their fond memories of the person who died with you, this can be a great gift.

4. Develop a new self-identity. Your personal identity, or self-perception, is the result of the ongoing process of establishing a sense of who you are. Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have with other people. You may occasionally feel childlike as you struggle with your changing identity. Your self-identity has been assaulted. Be compassionate with yourself.

5. Search for meaning. The person who died was a part of you. This death means you mourn a loss not only outside of yourself but inside of yourself as well. At times, **overwhelming sadness and loneliness may be your constant companions**. This is normal and part of your journey toward **renewed living**.

6. Let others help you—now and always. To be truly helpful, the people in your support system must appreciate the impact this death has had on you. They must understand that in order to heal, you must be allowed—even encouraged—to mourn long after the death, a necessity to be experienced as a result of having loved.

**“Grief knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can,** and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys.” ~ Alphonse de Lamartine.  
Fulfilling these six needs over time will help you understand how you have been transformed by this loss.

• **Touchstone Six: Recognize You are Not Crazy**

“Whole years of joy glide unperceived away, while sorrow counts the minutes as they pass.” ~ William Howard

**Your mind and spirit are directing your attention** away from others and toward yourself because you need this self-focus **to integrate your grief**. Your willingness to prioritize caring for yourself now is what will allow you to reconnect with others later and return to supporting them in their daily lives and trials. They may want you to quickly reenter the regular world because they don’t understand your need for temporary retreat. The death of someone you love—is so hard to fathom that your mind compels you to revisit it and revisit it and revisit it until you’ve truly acknowledged and embraced it. And over time, **remembering and telling the story helps bring your head and your heart together**. Allow yourself this necessary repetition. When someone loved dies, you may feel like you’re surviving fairly well one minute and in the depths of despair the next. Sudden mood changes can be a difficult yet normal part of your grief journey. By acknowledging and allowing for temporary feelings of helplessness, you help yourself. When you try to “stay strong,” you often get yourself into trouble. Instead, surrender to your vulnerability. You have every right to experience intense pangs of missing the person who died and to feel temporary paralysis or loss of control. Whatever you do, don’t try to deny or suppress a grief burst when it comes on. It’s powerful because it wants and needs your attention. Although the pain of a griefburst hurts so deeply, allow it to wash over you. Opening to the presence of the loss often includes embracing the feelings that are stirred up by the belongings of the

person who died. If you get rid of their belongings prematurely, you in effect rid yourself of a natural and necessary medium of healing. Using drugs and alcohol to help you only brings temporary relief from a hurt that must ultimately be embraced. They will eventually wear off, and you will still have to struggle with the pain. Alcohol taken to mask painful feelings is only a crutch and when overused, may in fact cause an entirely new set of problems. **Remember, You're Not Crazy, You're Grieving.**

• **Touchstone Seven: Nurture Yourself**

“Self-care is giving the world the best of you instead of what’s left of you.”

~ Katie Reed

To practice good self-care allows you to integrate the death of your loved one into your heart and soul. This journey will leave you profoundly affected and deeply changed.

**Self-nurturing is about self-acceptance.** You are being wise in giving attention to the reality of how you have been “torn apart.” Your mind has also been torn apart by this loss. There’s no better way to nurture yourself cognitively than to practice mindfulness. Only thinking about one thing at a time—whatever you’re doing at the moment. Forget multitasking and try uni-tasking. Mindfulness gets you out of your head and into your heart. If at all possible, avoid making any major changes in your life for at least two years. Give yourself at least a full twenty-four months to consider any other major changes in your life.

The Five Love Languages, author Dr. Gary Chapman introduced the idea that human beings feel cared for by others in five primary ways:

1. Receiving gifts
- 2. Spending quality time together**
- 3. Hearing words of affirmation**
4. Being the beneficiary of acts of service
- 5. Experiencing physical touch.**

“I understand now that I’m not a mess but a deeply feeling person in a messy world. Now, when someone asks me why I cry so often, I say, ‘For the same reason I laugh so often—because I’m paying attention.’” ~ Glennon Doyle

**Whenever a grief feeling arises, I encourage you to notice it and let it absorb your full attention for at least a few minutes.** Embracing and befriending your feelings in this way acknowledges their right to be there and over time helps them soften. I hope you will treat your wounded emotions with tender loving care. You’re hurting. You’re suffering. When we are touched in comforting ways, our brains are flooded with dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. These feel-good hormones help regulate our mood and make us feel calmer and happier. What’s more, **touch stimulates the vagus nerve**, which branches out throughout our entire bodies. Its role is to calm the nervous system, which in turn helps boost our immune systems and can lower our blood pressure and heart rate. You open up your heart to love again and be loved in return when you reach out to others. While each of us is a capable, autonomous individual,

**we are not meant to exist for very long on our own. We're built to interact with and rely on others.** We're built for empathy, connection, and love—especially when we're grieving. The best way to build bonds with others is through proximity, repetition, and quality time. When you're near someone frequently, you're more likely to develop a strong relationship with them. But another key factor here is quality time, which is **time spent with another person in which you're focusing on each other**, communicating well, and mutually empathizing. You are a worthy person who needs and deserves connection. If you find that certain friends can't handle your grief talk, try sticking to lighter topics with them and lean more heavily on the friends who can be present to pain. Consider finding a grief “buddy”—someone who is also mourning a death, someone you can talk to, someone who also needs a companion in grief right now. You're not alone. There are probably a number of people who cared about and miss the person who died. Consider giving them a call or stopping by for a visit. When you are torn apart by grief, I would encourage all of us griever to put down “nurture my spirit” at the top of our daily to-do lists. I have intentionally worked on spending more mindful time in nature, being conscious of what I am grateful for, and being fully present to the people I care about when I'm in their company. Work on being present to and appreciating the now. You may find yourself becoming kinder, more gentle, and more forgiving of others as well as yourself. Whether indoors or out, make a place for solitude and contemplation. The word contemplate means “to create space for the divine to enter.” Start each new day with a meditation or prayer. Visit the great outdoors. Mourners often find nature's timeless beauty healing. Sit in quiet contemplation of your relationship. Offer up your thanks for the love you shared. Close your eyes and feel the person's spirit surround you. Imagine the person who died strong and smiling. Imagine them waving to you. And imagine your reunion when, one day, you come to join them.

#### • **Touchstone Eight: Reach Out for Help**

When geese fly in a “V” shape, the flapping of the wings of each individual goose results in an uplift for the bird that follows. The entire flock achieves seventy-one percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. It's up to you to find your way through your wilderness of grief. But paradoxically, **you also need companionship as you journey.** You need people who will walk beside you and help provide you with divine momentum.

“Sometimes we need someone to just listen. Not to try and fix anything or offer alternatives, but to just be there... **An ear that listens can be medicine for a heart that hurts.**” ~ Steve Maraboli

Sharing your pain with others won't make it disappear. However, it will, over time, make it more bearable. It strengthens the bonds of love that make life seem worth living. The rule of thirds: About a third of the people in your life will turn out to be neutral in response to your grief. They are not equipped to be empathetic grief supporters. Another third of the people in your life will be harmful to you in your efforts to mourn and heal. They will pull you off the path to healing. You will feel worse after you spend



time in their company. The final third of the people in your life will turn out to be truly empathetic helpers. They will be **willing to bear witness to your pain and suffering without feeling the need to take it away from you.**

Effective helpers may help you: 1. Embrace hope, these are the people you know who help you feel hopeful. 2. Encounter your loss, they give you an invitation to take the grief that is inside you and share it with them. 3. Feel companioned on your journey, Those who companion you in your grief realize that as they help bear your burden of sorrow, they shoulder some of the weight.

It's also important to keep in mind that those closest to you may understandably grow grief-fatigued in the months to come. A good grief companion will help you feel seen, heard, affirmed, and understood. If you've suffered past losses in your life, it's common for those griefs to come up again when a new loss occurs. **"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."** ~ Maya Angelou. Carried grief is dangerous because it's a common, invisible, insidious cause of long-term wellness issues that negatively affect your quality of life. It causes some people to die while they are alive. The good news is that engaging with and reconciling longstanding carried grief can be a transformative process. I've heard mourners describe it as "waking up" and "truly living for the first time." Just imagine what might be waiting for you on the other side. Complicated grief isn't abnormal or pathological. It's simply normal, necessary grief that has gotten amplified, stuck, or off track somehow. It has encountered barriers or detours of one kind or another and as a result has become stalled, or denied altogether. The obstruction often comes in the form of a pronounced and prolonged encounter with anger, anxiety, sadness, or guilt that does not soften with time and active mourning. **Beware of replacing the relationship prematurely.** Many of these behaviors can be healthy in moderation and when accompanied by active mourning.

- **Touchstone Nine: Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution**

"Loss has transformed the way I now see, breathe, and feel life. I'll never be the same person again." Jennifer Ross

**A total return to "normalcy" after the death of someone loved is not possible because we are all forever changed by loss.** We as human beings don't resolve or recover from our grief but instead become reconciled to it. With reconciliation comes full acknowledgment of the reality of the death. What had been understood at the head level is now understood at the heart level. Energy and confidence are renewed, and the desire to become reinvolved in the activities of living is reawakened. There is also a deepening wisdom about the fact that pain and grief are difficult, yet necessary, parts of life. You will recognize that life is and will continue to be different without the person who died. Changing your relationship with them from one of presence to one of memory. Reconciliation doesn't just happen. It's an active, intentional process. You reach it through deliberate mourning. To journey toward reconciliation requires that you descend before you can transcend. You don't get to go around or above your grief. You must go through it. **The unfolding of this journey does not return you to an "old**

**normal” but instead leads you to discover a new normal.**

As long as we’re consistently doing the work of mourning, we do eventually realize that over the course of months and years, we’ve come a long way. C.S. Lewis wrote, “There was no sudden, striking, and emotional transition. Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight, when you first notice them, they have already been going on for some time.” Movement toward reconciliation in grief is often draining and exhausting. For many it takes much longer and involves a lot more hard work than they ever imagined. If you find yourself in this situation, you’re not alone. “Have I mistakenly given myself a deadline for when I should be ‘over’ my grief? **Am I expecting myself to heal more quickly than is possible?**” **Embracing and expressing your grief is probably some of the hardest work you will ever do.** As you do this work, surround yourself with compassionate, loving people who are willing to walk with you. Reconciling deep grief is not a fast or efficient process. So if we can let go of any expectations for healing quickly or in a certain way, we actually end up suffering less. If you take meaningful action to work a bit on one or more of the six needs of mourning most days, **you don’t need to worry about the outcome of those actions.** Permitting yourself to have hope is central to achieving reconciliation. Refusing to give in to despair may be the greatest act of hope there is. Grief and love, they coexist, each deepening the experience of the other. Some are empathetic listeners, and simply talking to them about your grief can help ease your sense of hopelessness. Others are survivors of a similar loss, and their wisdom about how it gets better can rekindle your hope. Spending time with them can lift your spirits. Having faith means believing and trusting in something that has no logical proof or material evidence. My faith is inspired by moments, when I am able to notice the good, sweet, and tender in life, despite the deep wounds of my grief. Reconciliation may seem like an impossible, distant destination. It’s true that it usually takes a long time and a lot of hard work to get there. But I promise you it’s there, waiting for you.

• **Touchstone Ten: Appreciate Your Transformation**

When you leave the wilderness of your grief, you are simply not the same person you were when you entered it.

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern.

**Beautiful people do not just happen.” ~ Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross**

**You are new—different than you were prior to the death.** Life is like a river. We are floating down a river that twists and turns. We can never see very far ahead. We can never go back. Sometimes the going is smooth; sometimes the rapids are rocky and dangerous. And sometimes a waterfall plunges us over the edge.

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable.” ~ Helen Keller

Anytime we gain something new, we give something else up. Sometimes we choose the things or people to give up. Other times they're torn away from us against our will. Either way, we're bound to suffer loss. Every loss in life calls out for a new search for meaning, including a natural struggle with spiritual concerns, often transforming your vision of your God and your faith life. Yes, exploring your assumptions about life is growth. When we learn to embrace vulnerability in grief, we learn to be OK with expressing our deepest, truest feelings. We learn to openly share our souls with others. We learn to be genuine and authentic. And when all of this happens, miracles unfold.

**To be vulnerable is to take risks to reach for what we want in life.**

We all have gifts, and part of our responsibility is to discover what those gifts are and put them to use. Yes, learning to use your potential is growth. Paradoxically, **it is in opening your broken heart that you open yourself to fully living until you die.** You are on this earth for just a short time. We suffer after a loss because we are human and we are privileged to love. And in our suffering, we are transformed. You have to live not only for yourself but also for the precious person in your life who has died—to work on their unfinished work and to realize their unfinished dreams. Would they believe that their life and death brought meaning and purpose to your life? Yes, your soul has been transformed by the death of someone loved. Nourishing your grieving soul is a matter of surrendering to the mystery of grief. As I noted in the beginning of this book, real learning comes when we surrender:

- Surrender our need to compare our grief (it's not a competition);
- Surrender our self-critical judgments (we need to be self-compassionate); and
- Surrender our need to completely understand (we never will).

A FINAL WORD - I feel lost AND I am finding my way. I grieve AND I love. I love AND I mourn.