



WHY ARE BOUNDARIES SO IMPORTANT WHEN GRIEVING, ESPECIALLY DURING THIS ELECTION YEAR?

“I can’t stand the negative divisiveness anymore! I just want to shut myself off from the world and tell everyone to go away!” Austin fumed.

“Are you talking about the upcoming election? The WNBA and how Caitlin is bullied? The global threats? The impending recession? All the predictions of the stock market and its implications for retirement plans? Or that you just don’t know how to cook dinner?” Tina asked. Austin nodded. “All of it.”

“And more!” Keith chimed in, “It’s television, Social media, coffee with friends, family gatherings. Even watching sports with the guys. It’s just TOO MUCH!” He looked around the table, embarrassed, realizing he was shouting. “Sorry, but you’re all nodding. Yes Austin, I don’t know how to cook dinner either, just do takeout and frozen dinners. It will be okay. Kwik Star has taco meat already cooked. I live on that.” The group chuckled.

“I know what you mean. Friends and candidates are posting horrid stuff on Facebook, I don’t know what to believe anymore. I try to ignore it as I post pictures of Harry, but it’s, always in my face; no pun intended.” She giggled uncomfortably. “Sorry, Harry only died a couple of months ago, and...” She stopped. Tears filled her eyes. How can I deal with everything in the world when I’m grieving?”

INTENTION TO HEAL: CREATE AN ISLAND!

You must create a buffer around your life this season: a boundary where you decide what you allow into your life, and what you won’t so that you can heal your heart. I like the idea of creating an island. Let’s build that first and then return to the election-year survival tactics.

World politics, elections, and whatever else is coming may compound your personal grief from 2024 to 2025. In 2020 all our lives changed. Amid COVID, elections, and riots, my late husband and I moved into a small apartment at Friendship

Village. I decorated it to be our Island Paradise complete with palm trees to bring me peace amid all the stress. Our life was saturated with long-term care, lift chairs, power chairs loaded and unloaded beyond my strength, precious belongings downsized, and numerous trips to Mayo Clinic; the valets knew my name. So many ICU, ER, doctor visits, helicopter transfers, and ambulances, frustrations, disappointments, and dreams deferred while learning how to handle finances and my daughters’ grief. I felt like I was on “Survivor!” Have you ever felt that way? I suspect so, which is why I’m writing this now.

It takes clear intention to heal. We may never have experienced grief before or like this. It’s as if we’ve been caught in a tsunami of emotions: sadness, anger, depression, confusion, hopelessness, shock, hatred, futility, relief, guilt, blame, and so much more! To identify that all these emotions are normal surprises some. To learn it takes months even years to heal is unexpected, very frustrating when you don’t want this feeling and yearn for earlier times. As in “Survivor” you need a game plan to overcome the challenges and not let others dictate detours. Set your GPS for your personal “Island.”

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISOLATION AND INSULATION?

Your island is your safe space. You create it by making intentional decisions with a nice buffer around you. You will use this image to insulate your life while you grieve. We know the power of insulation; it keeps your home comfortable be it a steamy summer or a wicked winter. The Latin root of the word insulate is *insula*. **The very same root for the word island!**

...Continued on page 2



I'm not condoning isolation. To isolate yourself is to cut yourself off completely, to disallow interaction and care. Our dear friend and grief group leader, Deb Gingrich lost her husband Craig last month. She is "cocooning:" Simply giving herself time with her sons and family. That is to be respected. But isolating yourself from love and care is not healthy, you need people. Remember the words of the poet John Donne, "No man is an island entire of himself; every man is a part of a continent, a part of the main." In loss, we stay connected and make healthy choices.

To insulate oneself is to protect something from the intrusion of something unpleasant. We often refer to this as boundaries as we choose when to say yes, or when to say no. Boundaries can often dissolve as we are grieving. When going through a trauma it is normal to depend on others. We were designed to shut down during a trauma. Shock makes us rest so we can heal. You are not going crazy. You simply need to stop, rest, eat, drink and sleep. No need to apologize. Eat the chocolate and carbs for a while. Sit on the couch and watch movies or sports. It's okay. No judgment. Just don't get stuck there for months! And once the shock wears off, decide to survive and take control of your life.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CREATE MY ISLAND?

Grievors are so vulnerable yet courageous. The root of courage is "cour" which is "heart." To move through grief takes courage and a vulnerable heart to face feelings and to set the tone of what you will or will not allow into your life. Just as our founding fathers and mothers chose to create a country based on freedom, making decisions and sacrifices, to ensure that, so must you. They changed their identity from a collection of colonies to become the United States of America. Jefferson penned our Constitution and clarified our identity and rights. So too we determine our identity and the rights on our island. Consider taking a pen to paper as we deal with the following questions.

WHAT IS MY IDENTITY AS I MOVE FORWARD, WHAT DO I INTEND TO DO?

Identity is the root of everything whether you are grieving or making changes in your life. I suggest you **choose the identity of a griever who is intentionally deciding to heal.** You are a person who will feel the feelings and turn to Understanding Your Grief, Ten Touchstones by Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Please order a copy!! If you turn to one resource, THIS IS IT! Every single person in our grief groups attests that this is a game-changer. Amanda uses the suicide version in the Wednesday night group.

WHAT THREATS TO MY HEALTH AND HAPPINESS MUST I AVOID?

Living on Stone Island, Florida, for ten years I can tell you waterfront life means sharks, alligators, stingrays, jellyfish, and snakes. Surviving on that island required acknowledging the threats and keeping safe boundaries. **What will you not allow on your island?** Toxic people? Those who wish you well but don't truly understand? Spam calls? Political ads? The news? Unhealthy escapism? Refusal to talk? Overdoing junk food and alcohol? **List everything that saps your energies and hinders healing.** It's okay to turn off or limit news, and mute political ads, television, and social media. Consider reading the news instead of watching it. Next to each item on your list, jot how you will insulate from these.

WHO DO I WANT ON MY ISLAND?

Who will sincerely care and listen to you and not give ill-intentioned advice? This is a tough one because it implies deciding those whose presence or voice must be diminished. That includes sorting family and friends. You can't cut them out completely but you can determine how much time or influence you allow. Allow the greatest percentage to those who bring comfort in healthy ways.

WHAT WILL GIVE ME COMFORT ON MY ISLAND?

Did you know the word comfort is more than an arm around the shoulder or your favorite foods? Com = With, Fortis = Strength. Scripture talks about the "Holy Comforter." Prayer can open you to comfort and strength. What foods bring you comfort? Pasta? Fruit? PBR or a good wine? A soft blanket as you watch old faves? Telephone calls with friends or family? Sitting in the sun on a cold day next to the window? Favorite music? Put on the tunes and turn it up! Build, paint, workout, learn pickleball?

WHAT MUST I REMEMBER DURING THE ELECTION YEAR?

Now that you are well insulated, let us return to our initial question: Peace during a contentious time. Remember you have rights, We have the right to free speech which can also include not listening to everyone's speech if it's sapping you!

...Continued on page 5

Questions from a curious heart will always reveal new things. This issue is loaded with questions, and hopefully some insights on why we must question our own questions to heal. Both grief groups spent hours pondering personal questions, and now offer their insights to help you heal. They also want you to know there's a seat at the table if you wish to join us. The elections and world events are upon us, what questions may help grievers during this divisive season? As a widow whose husband was dying during COVID-19, elections, and riots, I offer you my insights to protect your grieving hearts.

IS ASKING "WHY" HELPFUL OR A HINDERANCE?

"Why did this happen? She was so young, smart, years ahead of her, and just like that," Lester snapped his fingers, "she's gone and I have to go through my life with this hole in my heart. This makes no sense!"

"Why did she die? Who's responsible?" growled Keith. "Marilyn went in for a small simple procedure—a success the doctor said. But then something changed. She went downhill. They took her to the ICU." Keith paused, his face red as he slammed his fist into his palm. "And all those doctors? None of them can tell me what she died from! Are you kidding me?! How can I live without her?"

"Why did he get cancer? How am I going to go on? Tim's the only man I've ever loved. My high school sweetheart!" Marcy reached for a tissue and blotted her swollen eyes. "I reach over at night, and he's not there. Not there to talk things out. Not there to tease me. Not there with his tender touch on my hand telling me everything will work out. He is not even there to fight or tell me he loves me. I miss our morning coffees, going to a movie, sitting in church, or how he would kiss the back of my neck while I made dinner! Why did God do this to me?"

"Why did I let him go? Where was I? What was I thinking? Letting Davey go to the beach with his friends?" Susan could barely raise her head to look at the group. "I should have been there watching him, rescuing him. My little boy. What kind of mother am I? If only I could go back to that morning!"

QUESTIONS ARE NORMAL, BUT ASKING "WHY" CAN DRIVE US CRAZY!

Questions. Millions of questions. Questions that have no answers. Questions loaded with anger, shame, blame, fear, guilt, blame. Questions searching for eternal answers. Questions that rob our sleep or choke us as we dare give them a voice.

Questions about the meaning of life: Where is my loved one now? Without him/her, what is my purpose now? Is God punishing me? Did I make this happen? And always: Why? Why? Why?

The answers? There are none. We can speculate. We can believe. We can mourn with others, yet the trite answers of well-intentioned people often pierce hearts.

The plain simple "fact?" This side of heaven, we don't know. We can trust. We can pray. We can beg, berate, and believe all at the same time. Yet sleep will evade us as you toss and turn haunted by such questions. They will never heal your heart.

CAN CHANGING TO DIFFERENT QUESTIONS HELP?

Healing your heart is what we are about at Locke, whether that is a talk with a funeral director, a staff member, or a Grief Group with Vicki, Deb, or Amanda. To heal we must feel the feelings, and release the internal grief of our mind and body no matter how ragged and raw. The feelings inside unanswerable questions must be expressed and acknowledged. Many times. **Voicing them diminishes their power if we don't get stuck in their vortex. Begin by asking different questions. For example, instead of saying *How am I going to do this?* Ask: *Who can help me with this?***

Questions can reveal meaning and purpose as we start on the path towards peace and comfort. It will take perseverance. Persistence is key. You can't hurry the healing. Patience and pacing amid the grief will pay off. It takes longer to heal your brain and heart than to heal a broken bone. It would be cruel to tell someone in a cast that *They should be over it by now.*

Do not let anyone rush you or tell you to move on, as you gently move forward day by day the best you can.



WHAT QUESTIONS HAVE OTHER GRIEVERS FOUND HELPFUL?

HEALING HOMEWORK: This list of questions is offered by both our afternoon and evening grief groups. We know many of these are swirling inside. It's very overwhelming. Why not try one that speaks to you? Consider starting a notebook or document. Or meet with a trustworthy friend. Then do something that fills your soul, a walk, good food, a comedy, shopping, a game, something you loved doing in your early years. You must take breaks and care for yourself.

...Continued on page 4

Remember, we are here for you if you want someone to sort it out. Just call me at 319-233-6138 and ask for Continuous Care or for Vicki.

Did you know that most people need at least two years to heal, even if they still miss their loved one? We feel to heal and the more we process the more we heal. There is no reward for speed. Laughter and tears are what you need with supportive people, especially others who are on the journey.

- Who am I without my loved one?
- Am I going crazy?
- Will my heart ever heal? What will it take? (Yes. Time. Lots of Time. Join us.)
- Am I being patient with myself? Am I giving myself the time I need, or have I set a deadline for when I should be “over it?”
- What am I grateful for even in the midst of the grief?
- What are some of my favorite memories?
- What did my person love about me?
- What did I love about my person?
- What drove me nuts? With whom can I share this?
- How did my loved one bring out the best in me? The worst in me?
- What negative stories do I need to stop telling myself?
- Are those thoughts true?
- What positive stories can replace them?
- Are there places I need to forgive myself? Things for which I had no control?
- What do I need to forgive as I look back on our lives together?
- What are things I wish I had said?
- Who can I trust to truly listen and help me process these questions?
- How did he/she change my life?
- How did he/she affect the lives of those around him/her?
- What is my loved one’s legacy?
- How can I honor my loved one?
- What can I do to get out of the house?
- What activities do I enjoy? How can I return to them?
- Where can I go to get out into nature?
- What are some of the simple pleasures I enjoyed as a child? How can I recapture them?
- How can I reach out so others don’t suffer the same as my loved one?
- How am I caring for myself? Some simple indulgences?
- What brings me joy? What would feed my soul?
- What is the next thing I should do?
- Do my adult children know what is best? Or do I trust my instincts?
- What if I don’t want to get rid of anything right now?
- Would it help to join a grief group and be with those who understand?
- Would it help to turn to a doctor, a counselor, a pastor?
- How would it help to change things in my house?
- Take down decorations I never liked? Throw away old stuff when it was my partner’s, but not me? What if my adult kids don’t want me to do this?
- How can I begin to let go of his/her things? Is it ok that I hold onto them for a while?
- Is it okay to start looking for a new partner to have fun, and enjoy the years ahead?
- What if my adult children don’t want me to do this? Whose needs are more important?
- How do I release my loved one and allow new love in?
- How can I make my home feel safer?
- Would it help to get a pet? A security system? Lights?
- Is it ok if I leave on the radio or television just for company?
- Who do I trust to give my house key or lock code?
- Do I need to wear a medical alert device now that I’m alone?
- Who can help me figure out finances and paperwork?
- Who can help me with technology issues?
- What are some tasty meals I can keep in the freezer?
- What nutrients help with stress?
- Who can mow the grass? Help with odd jobs? Clean my house?
- Is it normal that I keep making decisions the way he/she would want things to be?
- Just because he/she did it, does it mean I can’t? What do I need to learn?

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WHAT WILL BE YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS ON YOUR ISLAND?

- ◆ You have the right to grieve in your own way and create boundaries.
- ◆ You have the right to say no or yes.
- ◆ You have the right to vote and not engage in the drama.
- ◆ You have the right to temporarily insulate and disengage from the world.
- ◆ You have the right to establish the tone of your home.
- ◆ You have the right to leave if an event or discussion gets too heated.
- ◆ You have the right to say: **“I’m grieving, and need to give my energy to healing. I choose not to engage in political discussions and ask you to respect that.”**
- ◆ You have the right to focus on the best of humanity and creation.
- ◆ You have the right to get out and do simple things that bring joy.

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Kind words are short to speak, but their echoes are endless.

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.

I’m reading a book about antigravity. I can’t put it down.

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS IS A 2-PART WORKSHOP

Session One: November 7

Session Two: November 14

At Either

1:00 PM Cabin Coffee on Kimball Ave in Waterloo

5:00 PM Locke at Tower Park on Kimball Ave in Waterloo

Or Both!

Holidays are especially challenging when you've lost a loved one. Included will be the healing of rituals and memories, releasing expectations, honoring loved ones during the holidays, strategies for social events, and communicating with family as you make intentional plans. Comfort and joy are possible amid mourning. Let's see what we can do to make it so.

Recently shared in Grief Group:

Jeff told this with a twinkle in his eye: *“When people ask me if I’m married, I respond ‘no,’ my wife left me for another man. They respond that they are sorry to hear that. I say ‘No, it’s OK, his name is God!”*

Lynn shared this from Beth Moore’s book, *All My Knotted Up Life*: *“I asked my mother-in-law how she survived such losses (2 year-old, and a daughter). She said, ‘I didn’t mean to, I just kept waking up.’ Sometimes you wake up when you don’t even want to. But God keeps you waking up, until one day, many days later, you grow a little gladder that you did. I found that walking by faith is 50% hanging in there until you’re far enough down the road to develop hindsight.”*

Overheard at a funeral. A little boy stared at his grandfather lying in the coffin. He turned to his mother, “When is he going to turn into an angel?”

Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, to join our quarterly newsletter list.

JOIN US every week!

2024 Continuous Care Support



Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00—2:30 p.m.
 LOCATION:
 Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball,
 Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.
 LOCATION:
 Locke at Tower Park,
 4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Thursday Dates:

October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
 November 7*, 14*, 21
 December 5, 12, 19

* Surviving the Holiday Workshops

December 4, 18
 November 6, 20
 October 2, 16

Biweekly Wednesday Dates:

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.
 LOCATION:
 Locke at Tower Park,
 4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Suicide Grief Support Meetings

Please feel free to bring a friend. All groups are free & open to the public.
 Call with questions 319-233-6138.
 WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is

canceled.

In This Issue

- Why Are Boundaries So Important...
- Questions
- Surviving the Holidays Workshop
- Recently Shared...
- Dates of Continuous Care meetings