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Doing Your Own

UNDOING

I'm going to be brutally honest, because I believe our experiences, if there is a design to them, are useful to others if we allow them to be. I lost both my parents as my twenty-year marriage was failing. My mother died as my marriage was falling apart and then my father died just after my divorce. It felt like a sandwich of grief had hit me with a freight train, if that's possible. My only support system left was my brothers, who were estranged from my parents and myself and lived across the country, and my children. My son was eighteen and getting ready to be married, and my daughter was fifteen and bitter from the divorce, which took its shape in her via rebellion.

I found myself with no job, no money, no skills outside of being a homemaker and freelance writer, and no home. Just as I was ready to hang my head and cry, a car pulled out in front of me and I totaled my only possession . . . my Jeep. A dear friend, mentor, and counselor told me I could not even begin to imagine the things I was grieving. I didn't realize how right he was until it hit me as I opened the cabinet to get a coffee mug one morning and realized I no longer even had my own coffee mug. I sat there sobbing uncontrollably, and that day I began doing my own undoing, without even realizing it. I no longer cared what happened to me, though I would not have thought that consciously. I was speeding pretty

regularly, drinking too many glasses of wine before bed, and over all, in pretty bad shape.

One night, I decided to see how much carbon monoxide I could take in without dying, I thought. Thankfully I sent a text of gibberish to a friend who was concerned for me and sent a search party to the house I was staying in.

When I look back now, I can see a clear pattern of grief-based isolation, which led me to pull the car into the garage and dare death to come find me. In reality, I was simply hurting and needed desperately to feel in control again. I couldn't help the deaths of my parents, the divorce, or the accident, but I could control the fate of whether or not I lived or died. While this is true, and you may be feeling the same thing, this is not the time to prove you don't need anyone's help.

Just a few weeks before my attempted suicide an acquaintance called me and said she had heard about what I was going through and that I should come with her to a group equipped to deal with this sort of thing. I laughed at the notion that I needed to sit in a circle sharing my woes with a bunch of strangers in an attempt to feel better.

I'm still thankful to her for calling, even though I was

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They say time heals all wounds, but that presumes the source of the grief is finite.

— Cassandra Clare, *Clockwork Prince*

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foolish enough to believe I could handle things on my own. In time I was healthy enough to handle things—and you may be now, but if you aren’t, learn to recognize the signs that you need help and call someone.

“Cry and you cry alone” is only true if that is what we choose. I did, and I shouldn’t have.

If you are contemplating doing your own undoing because life looks lonesome and bleak, keep this in mind. We cannot see what’s just around the corner. Had I died that night, I would have missed some of the best things

waiting for me. If you need help, someone is waiting to help.

Remember to be kind to yourself in this season of grief.

Had I died that night, I would have missed some of the best things waiting for me.

Paulette LeBlanc, who is trained in family counseling, is a published author, editor and freelance writer, who currently resides on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

* footnotes

Loneliness in Bereavement



by Bill Hoy

A loved one’s death—whether spouse, parent, child, sibling, or friend, can leave one feeling utterly alone. In part, that’s because so few people seem to understand the pain of grief. “They just want to fix me,” said one bereaved father. “They don’t understand that the only thing in me that’s broken is my heart—and there isn’t a ‘fix’ for that!” You might experience this father’s frustration as well-meaning family members and friends try to “cheer you up” or encourage you to “move on,” but what can you do with the loneliness that seems without end? Here are four proven suggestions.

Write about the loneliness. Keeping a journal is one way to give expression to the loneliness in your heart.

Talk about the loneliness. Find one good friend who is willing to listen without trying to “fix you.”

Reach out in spite of the loneliness. One of the easiest—and least helpful ways—of dealing with the loneliness of grief is by withdrawing.

Volunteer through the loneliness. One antidote for loneliness is to find ways to give yourself away to others who benefit from your time.

Unfortunately, times of intensive loneliness are a predictable component of bereavement. While no other person can replace the one you’ve lost, finding ways to express your pain and give yourself to others can be helpful. In the end, perhaps you will discover that alone does not always mean lonely.

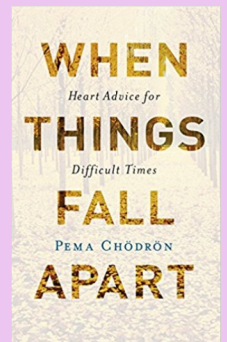
* Dr. Bill Hoy teaches at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is widely regarded as an authority on the sociocultural history of funeral rites, the topic of his most recent book: *Do Funerals Matter: The Purposes and Practices of Death Rituals in Global Perspective* (Routledge, 2013).

When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times



by Pema Chodron

How can we live our lives when everything seems to fall apart—when we are continually overcome by fear, anxiety, and pain? The answer, Pema Chödrön suggests, might be just the opposite of what you expect. Here, in her most beloved and acclaimed work, Pema shows that moving toward painful situations and becoming intimate with them can open up our hearts in ways we never before imagined. Drawing from traditional Buddhist wisdom, she offers life-changing tools for transforming suffering and negative patterns into habitual ease and boundless joy.



Amazon Review

yagottalaugh



“Looks like somebody woke up on the wrong side of the Murphy bed.”

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