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Chapters

turning the pages through grief

**NOW
WHAT?**

By
Eileen
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Chapters
publisher

So. My 102 year-old mother died recently and I'm like...HOW can this BE?

Sure, she was ancient. And yes, people were amazed when I shared how old she was. I was proud of her age, as if I had something to do with it. But still, she was my mom, and I had bragging rights. After all, wasn't she still doing crossword puzzles and word find games? She could still follow the Minnesota Twins and Vikings sports on TV. She could banter with the best of them at her assisted living home. Wait, who am I kidding? She was the best of them. Didn't I recently talk to her and she was her usual funny, albeit repetitive, self? Heck, she wasn't even ill.

How could she just up and die on us? Now what?

At first it was hard to know just

what to feel. Naturally, people said she had a good long life. They were not wrong. In fact, she had a great long life, filled with a fun-loving family, friends, and career satisfaction. She was even a small-town celebrity of sorts for her nearly 60 years working at the local newspaper, among many other volunteer pursuits.

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"I want you to know that while I utterly disagree with you in regard to broccoli, I still respect the office of Mom."

It was not particularly surprising that she made the decision to "move on to the next chapter" that day. After all, she was over a century old. Kind of like that analogy of a body in motion tends to stay in motion, the longer she lived, the longer we figured she would live. And yet, it kind of was a surprise.

She firmly believed her late husband, son, daughter, brother, parents and most of her friends were waiting for her on the other side. There was no shaking her convictions that there was an afterlife where she would meet the almighty and the saints—and maybe have the opportunity to give them

continued...

**AUGUST
2023**

All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.
—Havelock Ellis

...continued from front

...the loss grows more acute the longer I go without seeing her or hearing her voice.

some advice. Where as I lack her confidence, I sincerely hope she was not disappointed.

A death after a long life may not be as hard as a younger person passing, or a sudden loss. But it also isn't shrug off-able. It's just different.

In my case, at first I was fine. Relieved even, that she went so fast and peacefully, and on her terms. My siblings and I spent a lot of time tending to her needs over the last few years as her mobility and other capabilities declined—and now, well, she is free and so are we.

But with that freedom, we are also untethered. Mom was the family glue, and the reason for us “kids” to plan get-togethers in our hometown where she lived her entire life. Now what?

Fast forward a couple months and the loss grows more acute the longer I go without seeing her or hearing her voice. So I listen to some older voice mails of hers that I've saved. In one she asks me to find her a recipe using beets and spells it out loud for me: *b-e-e-t*, not *b-e-a-t*. Just in case I didn't know the difference. Even though I was probably 52 at the time. And the one where she comments on how nice my house looked on one of her visits, and then adds that she snooped in all the drawers and looked for cobwebs in the corners. I laugh every time I listen to it. I can't call her back as I have the urge to do daily, but for those couple minutes she's alive again.

Where am I going with this that will bring you some comfort and guidance? I'm not really sure. I am simply hoping our shared experiences can bring a nod of recognition and a knowing that you are not alone no matter what your grief journey.

As each day passes and the new normal without our loved ones evolve, we can't help but to write a new chapter as we go along. In the mean time I guess I'd better get at those cobwebs.

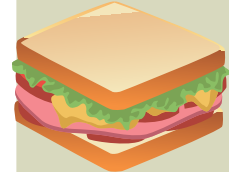
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Sometimes the best advice is a break from advice. Enjoy your favorite beverage and these tidbits of this & that.

- August's birthstone is the **peridot**. They can be formed deep in the earth and expelled to the surface along with lava, and they can be found in meteorites!

- On August 6, 1762, the first-ever sandwich was created, at least with such a name. It was named after the **Earl of Sandwich** when he requested a dish involving meat between two pieces of bread. As the story goes, he requested it as he was in the middle of a gambling game and didn't want to interrupt it.



Grieving stages in society and the need for a different way of thinking

For entire article visit whatsyourgrief.com



It seems ironic how hard people work to cram grief into things like grieving stages, phases, tasks, etc, when you consider that grief ranks up there as one of the most complex experiences that almost every human will experience in their lifetime.

Grief can be likened to another complex and universal human experience—love. Both are things that most people will experience in their lifetime. Love and grief can both be simple yet also incredibly nuanced and layered.

Unlike love, grief is considered a negative state. It involves pain, despair, unhappiness, depression, and (gasp!) sometimes a lack of “normal” and productive behavior. It feels terrible, so people treat it like something that should be controlled,

corralled, cured, and eliminated.

But when you come to know grief, you start to see that it involves many unexpected thoughts and emotions. Though it may seem entirely negative at face value, it often involves more positive things such as warm memories and connections as well.

That said, grief exists mostly on the painful end of the human-experience continuum, so it makes sense to want to find ways to help ease the pain. However, if we recognize that (1) it's not all bad, (2) significant loss stays with us forever, and (3) we're likely to experience new losses throughout our entire lifetime, doesn't it make sense that we should get better at allowing the experience of grief to ebb, flow, and exist?

