

From the Chair....What is the “new normal” after the presidential election?

by Ben Wolfe, MCDES Chair

Ok...the United States of America’s presidential election is over. We have a new president. He was voted in by the electoral college and as of today, as I type this, not yet two weeks since inauguration, there are those who wonder what is going to happen to these United States. What will happen to concerns about racial issues, immigrants, sexist language, women’s rights and minorities? What will happen to our future as a country that welcomes the world and tries to be open and supportive to help other world citizens? What will happen to our environment when we are not its stewards? What will happen when science is not believed and “moral injury” for many will be on the rise? What will happen when “alternative facts” become THE facts? The election is over. What will now be our “new normal?”

Our MCDES membership is comprised of hundreds of multidisciplinary folks providing end-of-life and bereavement services to patients/clients/residents/parishioners, and their families, significant others, as well as their colleagues and friends. We work with helping persons move from coping and surviving, to being transformed and thriving. We know it is not “stages” one moves through in bereavement or end-of-life issues, but rather a transformation from what we thought we knew, to what is now our reality. Working with individuals who are dy-

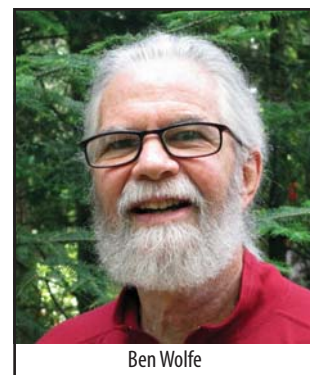
ing and their families, or working with those who are bereaved is not easy work. It is, however, an opportunity for those of us who provide companioning services to appreciate that life is short, for not only our patients or clients, but also for ourselves.

The “new normal” after our presidential election was discussed in the most recent issue of *Networker Magazine*, Jan.-Feb., 2017. In the “Clinician’s Digest” segment, an article entitled “Healing after the Election: What Therapists and Their Minority Clients Are Saying” by Chris Lyford, makes the following statement:

“Mainstream publications like *USA Today* and *The Boston Globe* have likened post-election anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder, the latter dubbing it ‘a new kind of grief.’ And given the heightened sense of anxiety, shock, and helplessness being reported among Clinton supporters, especially in minority communities, it’s easy to see why some experts agree.”

In my “From the Chair” article this past summer, I mentioned that as therapists, counselors, chaplains, social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, nurses, police and fire personnel, those in funeral service and volunteers...whatever our role.... we have learned those who respond

to grief by being “active in their grief” do better than individuals who are “passive”... waiting for something



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or someone to come along and “fix them.” This speaks also for each of us living in these challenging post-election times....we too can be “active,” or “passive.” To be deliberate in our actions, whatever they are. To be involved...to get involved...it might be action regarding gun control, race or gender issues, wage discrimination, Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security, drug costs, costs related to end-of-life concerns, education, or it could be clean water or air pollution.

Whoever you voted for in the presidential election, the election itself is now over. We can either sit back and be passive, or we can help move this country forward. Take your own stand about what you believe. Each of us needs to take some responsibility, to take some action to move whatever it may be forward in a positive way.

Be ACTIVE in this “new normal.” Continue to, or begin to be respectful, supportive, helpful and appreciative of one another. Remind yourself that empathy is shown by not only putting ourselves in the place of others, but by the actions we take to help resolve issues at hand. It’s never too late to step forward...to put empathy into action.