

Coalition News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support
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Vol. 43 No. 3

Since 1977...Education and Support for Those Providing Care to Grieving Persons

September 2021

Mark Your Calendars

Sept 9 ◆ *What is a Death Doula? Panel and Discussion.* Virtual event. Information at <https://www.lakewoodcemetery.org/event/what-is-a-death-doula-panel-and-discussion/>.

Sept 17–19 ◆ *Healing Takes Time* with keynote speaker Dr. Melissa Mork on *Tasks, Coping, and Resilience with Grief*. Contact 507-381-1177 or hopeunitedgriefgroup@gmail.com.

Sept 23 ◆ *Hospice Nuts & Bolts*. Offered by MNHPC. Information/registration at <https://www.mnhpc.org/hospice-nuts-and-bolts>.

Sept 23 ◆ *Suicide Prevention Summit*. Information/register at: <https://www.uwlax.edu/ex/suicide-prevention/>.

Sept–Nov ◆ *A Legacy of Healing Speaker Series*, offered by Pathways Minneapolis. More information on page 14 and at <https://tinyurl.com/PWLOHSS>.

Oct 1 ◆ *MCDES Virtual Fall Conference*. Registration is open. Information is on page 1 and at www.mcdes.org.

Oct–Dec ◆ *Moral Injury Recovery in the Aftermath of COVID*. Offered by the Shay Moral Injury Center. Information at <https://shay-moral-injury-center.teachable.com/>.

Dec 16–18 ◆ *End of Life Symposium*. Offered by City of Hope. Information at <https://cme.cityofhope.org/content/end-life-symposium>.

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MCDES Virtual Fall Conference: October 1, 2021

The Personal and Professional in Times of Ambiguity and Change

Speakers:

Pauline Boss, PhD, and Ted Bowman, MDiv



Pauline Boss, PhD

Ted Bowman, MDiv

"Tis a truism that the personal narratives of grief and bereavement counselors will be triggered when doing their work with others. Stories evoke stories. Shared accounts of loss can overlap with or evoke the personal loss experiences of the grief volunteer or professional. At those moments, the quality of grief care can be compromised or enriched. In this workshop, registrants will be presented with perspectives and tools for addressing the ambiguities of loss and of grief care, while also grieving.

Pauline Boss, PhD, is a family therapist and educator widely recognized for groundbreaking work on what's now known as the theory of ambiguous loss. For 40 years, she has studied the family stress of loss from a social psychological view. She shares thoughts about loss and grief from her forthcoming book, *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change*. More about Dr. Boss and the University of Minnesota ambiguous loss course, for CEU's, is at <https://www.ambiguousloss.com/>.

Ted Bowman, MDiv, is an educator, author and consultant who specializes in change and transition, whether it occurs in families, an organization, or the community. His emphasis is on aiding people in utilizing their strengths and the resources of others in facing change and transition. His new book, *Ambiguous Parables: Poems and Prose of Loss and Renewal*, will be published fall 2021. Please visit his website: <https://bowmanted.com/>.

This program is designed to meet the Minnesota Board of Nursing CE requirements for 6 contact hours for RNs and LPNs. It has been approved for 6 credits from the MN Boards of Social Work and Psychology. Application has been made for 6 credits from the MN licensing boards for Licensed Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Funeral Home Personnel.

A conference brochure and registration information are available at www.mcdes.org.

From The Editor: On Growing Pains

“The world is not growing worse and it is not growing better - it is just turning around as usual.” ~ Finley Peter Dunne

The memory catches me off guard. I wake up slowly, stretching like a cat in the sun, when suddenly, I hear my mother’s voice, echoing from long ago. Mom sits patiently on the side of my bed, rubbing my back, pulling me gently from my dreams. I know she probably has more urgent morning tasks to complete before she leaves for work. She could just yell from the kitchen, “For the last time, Sharon, get out of bed!” But she doesn’t. Instead, tenderness is her common technique, which ensures a good start to my day. She also creates a lasting memory of love. I am grateful and miss her dearly.

Mom would sometimes say, “Wake up, my beautiful daughter.” Maybe she had been just sitting there beside me for a few quiet minutes, watching me sleep. But then, seeing me yawn and stretch, she’d exclaim, “You just grew another inch!” And in my adolescence, seeing me in my too-short, too-tight, out-grown jeans, she would comment, “Does it hurt to grow so fast?” Mom referred often to my “growing pains,”

which, I now understand, she meant not just as physical but also emotional hurts I’d surely encounter as I grew. Mom was a constant encourager in my stretching and maturing. I recall many “growing pains” over the years, especially during my teen years, but as mom often told me, “Growing up’s not easy.” She prepared me well for life. Thanks, Mom!

It recently occurred to me that the term, “growing pains,” might also apply figuratively to more than just growing children. I’ve also heard it used in reference to communities, to countries, and even to democracy itself, all of which continue to experience and demonstrate, often painful growing pains. Although it sounds simplistic, it strikes me that the approach my own mother used might work pretty well for all of us. Using more gentleness, kindness, and even love with one another might help direct future outcomes of this “growing so fast it hurts nation” of ours. What would a metaphorical back-rubbing, tender-murmuring gesture to one another, in politics, in relationships, in communication...look like? I propose it might be just the opposite of what we’re currently seeing, doing, and hearing. Shouting, arguing, accusing isn’t going to result in a good outcome. I still believe in the old adage, “Love wins.”

It’s been a long time since adolescence, but I still stretch before I am fully awake; before my feet hit the floor in the morning and I am ready to face the day.

And, as an “elder,” I’m thinking even aging is yet one more experience that is not without “growing pains.” We are still growing, even as we age; sometimes with less attractive outcomes than when we were 8 or 12 or 18. But still, I don’t mean just physical growth. Emotionally, we all face inevitable growth which includes confronting loss, pain, and sorrow. We cannot avoid it, and yet again, how comforting a thought, if, as a community, as a nation, as a people, we could just be a loving presence to one another, sitting alongside, as we all stretch and grow, reminding one another...“you are beautiful,” humoring, encouraging, telling one another that no matter what, we are all believed in. We are all community. We are one country. We are loved.

MCDES turns 45 in 2022. As an organization, we, too, have experienced growing pains. There have been organizational and financial challenges along the way. There were times when our very existence seemed doubtful. But, because of caring founders and members who believed in the concept, MCDES has stretched, grown, changed and survived. As an organization, it stands today, strong and sure, a great example of what hard work, belief in a mission, and even love can do. Thanks to all of you who have helped make that happen.

This issue of *Coalition News* is once again filled with articles and insights to both inspire and educate. Thanks to all the contributors who help make these quarterly editions a reality.



Sharon Dardis

Coalition News is published quarterly by the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support. Your submissions are encouraged. **Editor:** Sharon Dardis **Layout:** Verla Johansson **Deadline for September newsletter:** **Nov. 1, 2021.** (covers Dec., Jan., and Feb. events). Please send your items to: **Sharon Dardis** 9267 Wedgewood Dr., Woodbury, MN 55125 612-940-6405 or SDardis@aol.com. The Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support (MCDES) is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 interdisciplinary organization dedicated to providing education, networking opportunities and support to professionals and volunteers who are involved in the care of dying and grieving persons.

From the Vice-Chair

By Kay Johnson, MCDES Vice-Chair

I am choosing to share a story around my own experience with aging parents and the necessary transition of my widowed father to senior housing. COVID has brought about so many challenges to the senior housing industry that a positive story might be welcome for those MCDES members connected to that work or to those in the senior housing field.

I suspect that my story will bring to light the journey of many families caring for loved ones. It is a roller coaster we are thrust onto, strapped into and unable to get off, while other pieces of life that we also need to juggle, continue to happen all around us.

Getting ourselves, our other family members and the older adult who needs housing to the point that they understand a different living situation is needed, is no small feat. We all recognize that older adults generally wait too long before moving into senior housing. Home care patients are hesitant to have others in their homes and hospice patients wait too long to enroll in hospice services. It's a process that can entail both good and bad. The will to live and to live independently, is strong and fierce.



Marion, (Kay's father's companion), Kay and Darle (Kay's father)

My parents (Betty and Darle) moved from Colorado to Minnesota to be near me for care, shortly after my mom was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2001. Between my two ill parents, the doctor appointments, specialty appointments, and hospitalizations felt endless. During those 15 years of caregiving, I was working a demanding job while being the mom of three young (toddler and two grade school) children. I'll never forget one evening, coming home from an unexpected hospital visit for my mom, to say good night to my young daughter in her bedroom. She looked at me with that beautiful cherub face, those baby blue eyes, and asked where I had been. I explained that grandma needed me to take her to the hospital and her reply was, "We need you too, Mom." It was a constant push-pull-tug to manage all of the expectations and needs. I never felt like I was enough for anyone and there certainly wasn't time for self-care. Without the support of my husband, I could not have done it. Most days, I don't think I did anything well for anyone.

My parents lived in a townhome close to our home. I spent time doing medication management, serving as their health-care case manager, and coordinating meals. I communicated with my relatively uninvolved three siblings who lived out-of-state. I provided socialization and assisted with anything else my parents needed. I lacked patience. There were never enough hours in the day but I didn't give up trying. I kept going.

My sweet and beautiful mom (the glue that held our family together) died suddenly, in 2006, at the age of 76. My dad continued to live alone in the townhome. After he found a companion, I was able to step back a little, but

I continued to monitor his ability to function independently. In his generation, men did not cook or clean. We had some "spirited" conversations throughout the years, but neither of us changed our stance. (I still maintain to this day that women don't like to clean a bathroom any more than men do.) As the years passed, I was pulled back in more and more. His macular degeneration seemed to be one of the hardest hurdles. Purely by accident, I learned he had been pulled over by a really nice police officer about six times on his way to see his girlfriend. None of these resulted in an "under the influence" ticket which the police officer initially thought was the case. Worry consumed me as I thought about what might unintentionally happen in the future. Conversations occurred, including asking my siblings to please have the tough conversation with him. Finally the day came. We were fortunate no one was injured. A clinic called to say that he was at the clinic and had hit something with his car—he did not know what—kept driving and ended up at the clinic with two flat front tires and body damage on the front end of his car. I was finally able to influence the doctor regarding his inability to safely drive. I took the car to the auto body shop and told my dad it was not coming back to him. I sold the car and my dad no longer drove. The neon "daughter of the year" sign was not flashing for my dad.

After many intense and stressful conversations, it was understood that a move to senior living was warranted.



Kay Johnson

Recognizing Normal Grief

by Pauline Boss, PhD

Note: I am writing this for *Coalition News* in advance of my talk at the annual conference (with Ted Bowman) and in advance of the December 14 publication of *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change* (W. W. Norton, 2021). This article is a glimpse of what I write about in that new book.

Just two months after my husband of 32 years died, I was in a medical clinic for a routine visit. As usual, upon intake, I was asked: Do you feel safe at home? “Well, yes, as safe as one can feel during a pandemic!” Do you feel depressed? “I am grieving.” The nurse looked up and said, “We have no place for that on the form. Do you mean you are depressed?” I said, “No, I am grieving.”

Later when I spoke with the doctor and said my husband died recently, they suggested there was medication for that. Did I want some? I said, “No! I am sad, of course, but functioning—also writing again.” The doctor said, “Let me know if you change your mind.”

What we know is that the mission of MCDES is to provide education, networking, and support to professionals and volunteers who care for the dying and grieving. What we didn’t know is how severely we would be taxed by this time of pandemic, now in its second year, with at this writing over 4 million deaths worldwide, and another spike due to an even more lethal mutation, the Delta variant. Most of us have experienced some personal loss during this time of pandemic, thus adding to our professional stress as we try to help others who are grieving. And yet, we are missing a major point.

Because of its urgency and frequency right now, I share a glimpse of a chapter in my new book about something I am passionate about: recog-

nizing normal grief, what it is, how it differs from depression, and how sadness can be normal after a death in the family.

Our society, in particular, still has a denial of death, a denial of suffering, and a denial of ambiguity. We like certainty, winning, not losing. Unlike much of the rest of the world, we have slipped into the pathologizing of grief and thus the medicalizing of it, so it is cured, fixed, out of our view. We do not want to witness public suffering. Grief is meant to end, to have closure, and get back to normal.

While some mourners do indeed need medical help, the majority of mourners need information and support for the management of their grief. They also need to know there is no timeline, that we live with loss and grief, and that closure is an impossible goal. Instead, we search for meaning and new hope, not a final ending to the sadness. As professionals, we need to know that people grieve differently, that culture and religious beliefs matter, and that the environment or context in which the loss occurred matters.

What is Normal Grief?

Normal grief is defined as a “natural and expected response of deep sorrow and pain after losing someone or something you love.” (Boss, 2021, p. 93; also see Boss, 2011, p. 27).

Someone or something to whom you have been deeply attached. There were vast differences in how Freud



Pauline Boss, PhD

wrote about grief in his personal letters than in his academic writings. But I will paraphrase what he wrote, even professionally, early on: that while mourning was something different, it never occurred to him to regard it as a pathological condition that needed medical treatment (Boss, 2021, p. 89).

Any of us who have lost someone dear to us knows that it hurts physically and emotionally. The symptoms of normal grief start out similar to those of complicated grief (Shear et al., 2021), except with normal grief, the oscillations of pain and sadness grow farther and farther apart, with less intensity over time. They never go away, but research shows that most people can find joy again and can live well despite the occasional sadness of grief.

Closure is a good word for the closing of roads during a flood or closing a real estate deal, but it is not a good word for the ending of a close human relationship. Normal grief is ongoing, with ins and outs, ups and downs. It does not need closure nor do many people want it. A friend wrote of his wife’s death that he knew he had to go on with his life and take care of their children, but he received comfort from feeling she was present in his heart and mind, the idea that she was with him in

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spirit, and in the kids' faces and mannerisms, in their DNA. He didn't want closure on that.

Where did I learn that closure was a myth and that many people can nevertheless move forward despite the complications of that loss? I learned this from 40 years of clinical experience, working with individuals and families, who, through no fault of their own, must live with agonizing ambiguous losses where family members have been kidnapped or disappeared, with no verification of life or death. From this clinical work and from working with therapists, humanitarian workers, and families of the missing around the world and across cultures and religions—in New York after 9/11, in Fukushima after 3/11, in China, Russia, Kosovo, Tbilisi, Ukraine, Mexico, Ireland, United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland, Australia, among others—I learned that closure is a myth and that families are more resilient than I thought. Not all, but many showed me that they can live with losses, clear or ambiguous, if given human connection, social support, and understanding by professionals that the pathology lies in a social context of ambiguity, not in the mental health deficiency of people who experience it.

What surprised me most is that the majority of people I worked with were able eventually to move forward and experience some joy again, even though they were living with unanswered questions. They learned to live with "not knowing" by increasing their tolerance for ambiguity. This builds resilience!

I saw this with families of kidnapped children, missing-in-action soldiers, the disappeared, and even with more com-

mon ambiguous losses, such as adoption and divorce or living with a spouse who has dementia or a terminal illness. Here, but gone. While the ambiguity doesn't go away, it does not need to immobilize those left behind.

I have always thought that fishermen and fisherwomen are especially good at tolerating ambiguity, as are hikers who go off the trail, or people who travel to foreign countries without knowing the language. All demonstrate a high tolerance for ambiguity, a good indicator of mental maturity and the ability to withstand the stress and anxiety of the troubled times of uncertainty, such as now, with the pandemic and the changes it brings.

Indeed, as professionals, we know how to intervene with both ambiguous and clear losses. But first, we must increase our own tolerance for unanswered questions; not an easy task for those of us who come from cultures that value precision and control—and winning.

Whether losses are clear, like a validated death, or ambiguous, like the lingering of someone who is missing physically or psychologically, the other lesson from current research is that we need to find some meaning in the loss of a loved one. That happens more readily if we can find some purpose in dealing with the loss, such as working for a cause to prevent the illness that took them from us. Or it may be parenting well because your deceased partner could not continue to do that. I highly recommend the book *Continuing Bonds* (Klass et al., 1996), for that is what normal grief is: we do not forget, we remember our loved ones and continue the bonds—now changed, transformed, more spiritual. As I say it: "Gone, but still here in our hearts and minds."

In my new book, *The Myth of Closure*, there are more details about interventions, but suffice it to say here, that we in MCDES need to pay as much attention to normal grief as we do to the symptoms of grief that require medical treatment. And please, if you are grieving, and the doctor asks if you are depressed, say that you are grieving. Know the difference between normal grief and needing medical treatment. Grief is not automatically depression.

References and Suggested Readings

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Three Resources for Deepening Grief and Bereavement Care

By Ted Bowman, MDiv

Finding words for losses and the resulting grief can be a life-long quest. Both grieving persons and those offering grief care share in this pursuit. I assert this as one who has yearned for differing words to differing grievers (one size doesn't fit all) and as a seeker for words that adequately address my own losses.

While sitting on the grieving side, I found myself applauding Barbara Abercrombie's preface to an unusually strong collection of poetry and prose about losses. Her first words were: What are the right words? She follows that provocative question with:

"The language of condolence, no matter how well intended, irritated me. My husband had not gone to a better place as if he were off on a holiday. He had not passed like clouds overhead, nor was he my late husband as if he's missed a train. I had not lost him as if I'd been careless, and for sure, none of it was for the best. He had died.

I knew, of course, euphemism was offered in kindness, and I was grateful for friends for any attempt to comfort me, but what I really wanted was the language of hard truth and reality."

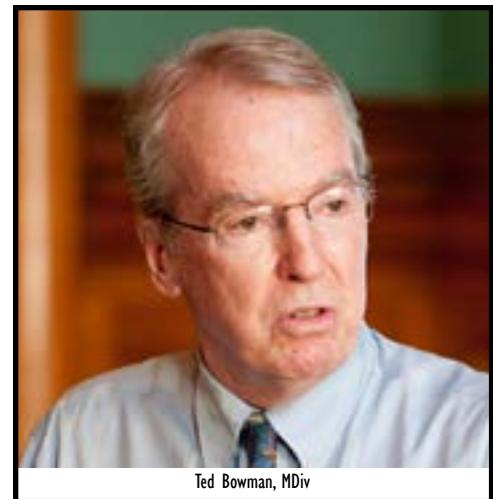
As a lover of words, she collected a rich variety of poems and prose about loss as reality, not as euphemism.

"I needed writers who turned their stories of loss and mourning into the narrative of clarity of memoir, not attempting to advise how to fix or heal grief, but telling how it felt, how they managed to get through it."

(These quotes are from the preface to *The Language of Loss: Poetry and Prose for Grieving and Celebrating the Love of Your Life* (2020). Novato, CA: New World Library. The collection includes more than 140 pieces by over 120 writers.)

One of the poems in the Abercrombie collection is an extraordinary testament to loss by Elizabeth Bishop. First published in *The New Yorker* in 1976, "One Art" has become a classic presentation of a loss continuum, the ambiguity of loss, and the pursuit of finding words for loss. Her poem begins with: *The art of losing isn't hard to master*. What follows is a masterful overview of the many losses that are parts of life: door keys, an hour badly spent, places and names. She asserts she misses these things, but the loss is not a disaster. Then, the poem changes as Bishop faces the loss of someone, which is disaster.

On June 18, 2021, *The New York Times* printed an article entitled "19 Lines That Turn Anguish Into Art." The authors of the article, Dwight Garner and Parul Sehgal, assert that Elizabeth Bishop was a master at containing and concealing emotion, but her extraordinary poem "One



Ted Bowman, MDiv

Art" is a moving testament to loss.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/06/18/books/elizabeth-bishop-one-art-poem.html>.

A third resource that goes deeper in considering loss and grief is a brief but haunting memoir about a father's death, *Notes on Grief* (2021) by Nigerian-born writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She, too, muses about the words for grief.

"Grief is a cruel kind of education. You learn how ungentle mourning can be, full of anger. You learn how glib condolences can feel. You learn how much grief is about language, the failure of language and the grasping for language."

Later in this evocative small volume, one reads:

"Grief is not gauzy; it is substantial, oppressive, a thing opaque. The weight is heaviest in the morning, post-sleep: a leaden heart, a stubborn reality that refuses to budge. I will never see my father again.

'Never' has come to stay. 'Never' feels so unfairly primitive. For the rest of my life, I will live with my



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MCDES Membership Update

Since the origins of MCDES in 1977, membership has been a part of our organization. It was embedded in the organization in order to provide professional identity and to allow for high-quality professional programming. In recent years, the MCDES board has explored the status of our membership model. Is it still something that adds value and relevance? Yet the decision of what to do around membership seemed to belong to you, MCDES members. So in March, a survey was sent to 250 current MCDES members.

What did we learn? Forty-five percent of you spoke (112 members), and you gave us a clear message! How important is being a member of MCDES to you? Eighty percent of you said “very important” or “important” with only seven percent noting it is “not important.” Fourteen percent responded that it was “somewhat important.” The numbers were nearly the same for the breakdown of benefits – lower conference fee, free access to the newsletter, and professional affiliation, with lower conference fees getting the highest numbers. Professional affiliation had the lowest support, and yet even here only twelve percent of you indicated it was not important.

Many of you took the time to offer comments and suggestions. The predominate themes within the comments were connection, networking, high caliber programming, the value of the newsletter, relevance, and appreciation. You also challenged us, dear members! You tasked us to be creative and to explore ways to expand programming and networking.

The central purpose of this survey was to help us make a decision about membership. We asked the questions, and you gave us the answers. With your clear support of membership, there was only one possible outcome. We will continue with our current membership model with appreciation and excitement. To quote two of the respondents:

“Offering membership sets (us) apart from other organizations.”

“MCDES has made a wonderful contribution to the community, bringing forward the importance of facing and addressing end-of-life concerns. Thanks to all involved in making this organization continue to be vibrant and relevant.”

If reading this reminds you that your membership is soon due, here is how to do so! General MCDES membership information is at <https://www.mcdes.org/membership-form.html>. There are two options for renewal:

- Renew online at <https://www.mcdes.org/membership-form.html>.
- Renew by mail by using the membership form at https://www.mcdes.org/uploads/2/8/8/0/28802855/membership_form.pdf.

Finally, a word of thanks from the board. We are grateful to all who took the time to respond and provide specific feedback. We are grateful to all past and current members who inspire and challenge us. You, the members, make this organization strong and compassionate. We value your feedback and strive to remain true to our vision to lead the region in professional development in grief-based education, resources, and support.

MCDES Board

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hands outstretched for things that are no longer there.”

From *Notes on Grief* (2021) New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

I commend the Bishop poem and these two volumes as resources that can aid the reader in discerning layers of loss and grief that are easily and often avoided, overlooked, and unacknowledged. Each writer—Abercrombie, Bishop and Adichie—call for realistic words for realistic grief caring. Well-known grief scholar and practitioner, Alan Wolfelt, uses the word *companionship*, for quality grief care. These three have been my recent companions.

Conference Scholarships Available

A quote from the MCDES March 2021 membership survey says it best, “Offering scholarships sets MCDES apart from other organizations.” Because of the generosity of a previous board member and her family, the Dorothy Geis Scholarship Program continues to enable those who need help with conference registration fees. Scholars also receive a one-year membership to MCDES, which gives further discounts for future conferences, as well as a subscription to the quarterly newsletter. For further information or to request a scholarship, send a one-page email to info@mcdes.org with a brief bio, reasons for your need for reduced fees, and why you would like to attend. Include your name, email address and phone number. Please send your request no later than 10 days before the event. Scholarships are awarded in the order in which they are received.

Book Review: *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change*

By Pauline Boss, W. W. Norton & Company, 2021

Reviewed by Eunie Alsaker

Some years are indistinguishable from others. Some years take on historical consequence only with hindsight. And some years are so significant we know at the time that they are water-sheds. 2020 and 2021 are such years. During tumultuous times, we turn to our leaders to help us make sense of what is happening and to process our losses. Pauline Boss once again demonstrates her proven leadership in the field of grief and loss in her new book, *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change*, in which she integrates classic themes with new insights. The end result is an inspired and much-needed framework for living through the pandemic. On days when I haven't known where to turn, I am grateful for her voice.

Anyone in the field of grief and loss is familiar with Boss and her concept,

philosophy, and term, "ambiguous loss." She paved the way for debunking the myth that mourners complete their grief and close that chapter of their life. While popular culture, steeped in black and white thinking because it is tidy and convenient, purports otherwise, Boss teaches about the complexities of loss. She knows that holding two truths at once, that our loved one is absent in some way and that our loved one remains a crucial part of our lives, is not only possible, but desired. She reminds us that change happens when we quit searching for that finish line and embrace the paradoxes, the "here and not here," of loss.

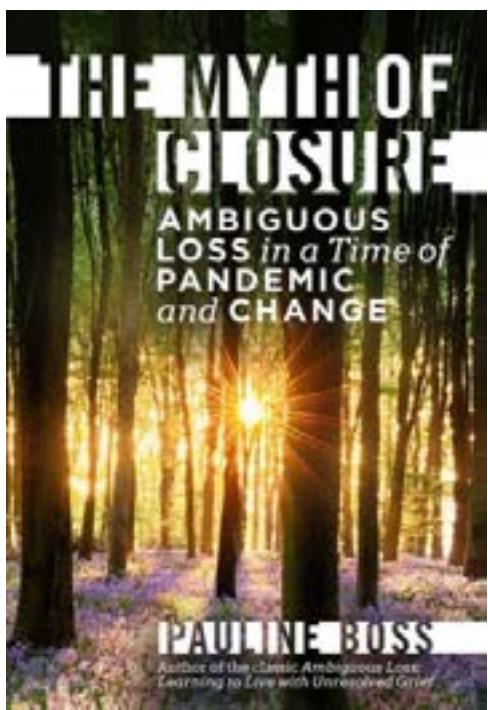
The COVID-19 pandemic threw us into the deep end of ambiguous loss. We were separated from our loved ones, rituals were largely gone, simple freedom of movement ceased. Many lost jobs, income, and loved ones. Big and little losses surrounded us. All this during a time when the losses from climate change and systemic racism are becoming more visible. Boss tackles not only individual loss, but the losses we have experienced and are experiencing as a larger societal unit.

The first half of the book explores these losses. Boss writes a particularly powerful chapter on "Racism as Unresolved Loss" and helps us understand the impact of living in a "nation born out of ambiguous loss." (p. 22) The second half of the book dives into the reconstruction of either/or thinking and offers principles for holding these complexities.

Ambiguous losses cannot be fixed, but we can live with them, and live well. How can this happen? Key themes for Boss are acknowledging and naming these losses, increasing tolerance for ambiguity, and developing resilience. Talking about resilience has become so ubiquitous, that it sometimes is too vague to be helpful. Boss counters this by offering specific guidelines for developing resilience. She writes of creating meaning in this changed world by exploring what a specific loss means to us and discovering what makes the loss easier to bear, of adjusting mastery by focusing in on what we can control, of reconstructing our identity following profound change, of normalizing conflicting emotions, of revising our attachment through continued bonds, and of finding or creating something new to hope for.

Boss asserts that we will never attain closure from the losses of this moment in history, but she does ask what changes might come from it. She, like all of us, hopes for a tipping point in the direction of a positive shift where there is a healthy balance of resilience and despair, and lays out a paradigm for such a possibility.

Not only is this book useful, it is a beautiful melding of Boss' 80+ years of personal experience with life and loss with her 40+ years of professional work as a family therapist, professor, clinician, and grief expert. Loss is fresh for Boss, as her husband died from a stroke last year, and she lovingly dedicates the book to him. She brings her mix of the personal and professional to life in a dynamic and important book for our time. Please watch for its release on December 14th and join us for our fall conference where Boss will bring her wisdom to life.



Book Review: *Ambiguous Parables: Poems and Prose of Loss and Renewal*

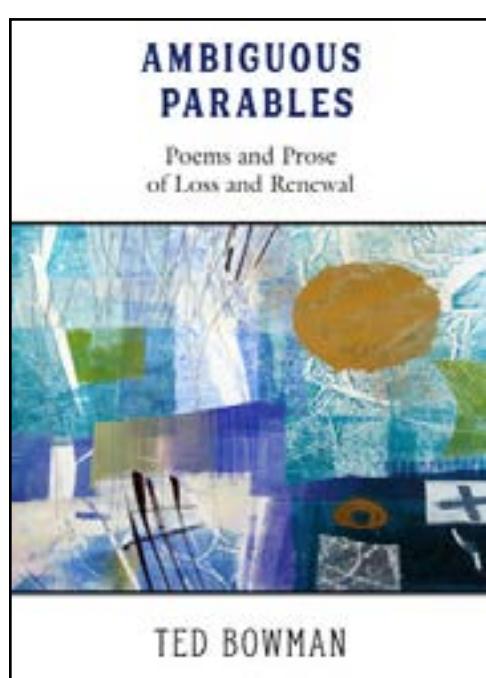
By Ted Bowman (October 2021)

Reviewed by Eunie Alsaker

Ted Bowman loves and seeks out words, especially those that attempt to express the inexpressible. When struck by the ambiguity of change and the heartaches and devastating losses of life, he turns to the wisdom of others but also picks up his own pen. If you have ever had the pleasure of meeting Ted, you know about his warmth, honesty, and generosity. He has a way of asking about the essence of your life and is quick to articulately share the same about himself. Reading his poems produces that same experience. He titles one of his poems "Holding the Chaos Fondly." This phrase echoed in my mind as I read and reread his beautifully crafted words.

Ambiguous Parables: Poems and Prose of Loss and Renewal (October 2021) is focused on the many losses of Bowman's life. He cuts into the nuances of the universal losses of childhood, the previous safety of beloved places, and the many deaths of extended family members. He movingly brings us through the loss of his mother, first to Alzheimer's and then to death, as well as a Father's Day without his dad, something many of us can relate to. What does one do when habits or traditions / Lose their meaning? (Father's Day, p. 66) He recollects the national shock and grief of 9/11. When the unthinkable happens and his 17-year-old grandson dies, he finds solace in writing. By doing so, he welcomes us into this unwanted experience but also provides a place for others to turn in order to feel less alone, if they too must live with the inconceivable. Last year Ted suddenly lost his vibrant and bright wife, Marge. Resuming writing helped him process this new world, and he composed a beautiful tribute to her which begins the book. "I will

color this time / With more than a black arm band..." (*I Will Color This Time*, p. 7) Amidst the many losses, Bowman also writes of things found: bright colors, new homes, comfort, companionship, insights. He broadens his scope and writes of travel, passing encounters, the mysteries of time, and loving moments with grandchildren. "Little did I know that being a grandpa/ Means seeing acorns differently." (*Acorns, Beorns, and Coorns*, p. 12) Ted asks questions that make us dig deeper into ourselves and demonstrates how he searches for his own understanding. His presence through these pages is a gift to us all.



Distinctions

By Ted Bowman

(We interrupt this regularly scheduled program for breaking news...)

My pupils widened,
Straining to see what I did not want to see
While their eyes burning or raw with dust
Struggled to see some way out

My ears became dog-like,
Hearing sounds not heard before
While the roar of engines, crumbling
buildings

And screaming drummed in their heads

My feelings heightened AND numbed
Just as they experienced emotions no one
should ever face

My lungs gasped; easy breathing
interrupted

Their lungs filled with fire, smoke, and
dust

My stomach turned
Too many had eaten their last meal

My tear ducts opened
About the time their air ducts collapsed

My thoughts wandered hither and yon
Their realizations became crystal clear

My body froze in place
Their bodies were cremated

My heart broke
Theirs stopped beating

My life was turned upside down
A building imploded on theirs

I observed
They experienced

I wanted to do something/anything
Their choices were limited

I had distance
They were too, too close for comfort
These distinctions are crucial
Still we were joined and always will be
Death of this kind is contagious
I will always live with it

(Begin 9/11/01)

Firefly Grief

By Andrea Tatley

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don't go back to sleep.

~ Rumi

Occasionally, when my body wakes at 3:00 a.m., with no intention of re-connecting with the dream world, this 13th-century Persian poet, theologian and mystic speaks into my soul, “The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don’t go back to sleep.” At 3:38 a.m., I am following Rumi’s advice. I put my feet on the floor, step over a sleeping sheltie, make my way down the hall, through the sliding glass door and onto the peaceful deck. Gazing up at the sky, gratitude wells up for the clear view and the cool mid-summer breeze. It is hard to understand how the earth can balance temperatures in the 90s during the day and dive to the 50s at night. I wonder, and occasionally worry about Mother Earth’s mental health....

As I survey the southern sky, I am greeted by Jupiter and Saturn and then briefly, out of my right eye, I notice a light and think, “How strange, at this time of the morning... a light.” Then it turns off. The tiny light goes on, back off and on again. I realize it is coming from our gazebo, fondly called the “cat house,” as each morning you can find a small cat-shaped indentation on each cushion. A lightning bug has been spending time together in the pine cluster, with the cats. Community—even the animals approve.

I first chased fire flies in the church yard when I was small. We would bring a canning jar and lid, freshly emptied, and washed clean of the remnants of last summer’s tomatoes. It would sit next to me on the pew during the evening church service and as soon as the last “amen” was spoken, we would grab

our jars off the wooden pew, sprint past our parents to the outside grassy area, where we’d prepare our jars with small fistfuls of grass and sticks. The moments were filled with joyous laughter as we ran through the church yard in hopes of catching a prize to light up our bedrooms that evening.

I am still drawn to the magic of fireflies. Up and down, all around the blinking lights sail, as if they are caught in a glorious nighttime dance of light and dark. Some nights, when I am watching our little residents, I lose track of the light. The little bug darts behind an apple tree or disappears down the creek. I am tempted to wonder if the light will return. On those dark nights, as it reappears in my vision, the brightness is breathtaking. It is not really gone; I am just not in the place to see it fully. So, I shift my position, so that my view is a bit better.

The dance of the fireflies reminds me how both grief and healing seem to dart here and there in our lives. We get excited when we see the light of healing, then, with our hopes high, we experience the painful void left by grief. At times, this mystical partnering is visible and predictable, other times it disappears, reappearing again, often in an unexpected part of our inner landscape. Like the lightning bugs, grief, and thus healing, represent a threshold for us—a transitional time of “in between,” of “not yet.” Memories appear, some bring a dark discomfort, others, remind us of the light of healing. We experience loss; individually and collectively. We grieve, find solace,



Andrea Tatley

experience the relief of healing, and then find ourselves right back at grief’s door, and it starts all over again. Some days, it feels like we are stuck on repeat. We wonder if the light of healing will return. We cannot always follow grief and healing’s direction, it feels random—just like the firefly’s flight path. Sometimes the light has moved out of our vision, and we need to shift our position to see it.

One thing I have noticed watching lightning bugs is that while you are never sure where the light will appear next, you know that it is there, and that it will show up. We wait and watch for the appearance of the light, with assurance that it will shine again. The process of healing and grieving is like the fireflies of summer. We follow along as best we can, trusting that the flight pattern is taking place, even when it is not always in our view. It seems as if Rumi was right, the breeze has secrets... and so do the fireflies.

Editor's Note: MCDES Board Member, Andrea Tatley, holds an MDiv in spiritual and personal formation. She has been in the field of grief and loss for 11 years through her work as a spiritual health provider and palliative care specialist, and also as a spiritual counselor for 20 years. Much of her coaching work focuses on nature-based therapy as it integrates with spirituality. She appreciates time in the woods or by a lake with camera in hand, leading retreats and taking groups on heart-opening trips to sacred locations.

From Ladders to Trees

by Ronald Bell, DMin

Have you ever climbed a really tall ladder? Once, I was tasked with changing a lightbulb on the roof of our church building. We rented the ladder from the local hardware store, had it delivered and set up. Suddenly, no one else was brave enough to ascend it. I remember holding on for dear life, thinking to myself, "Breathe; one foot at a time." It was one of the scariest moments of my life, but also intellectually simple. After taking a second to center myself, the task was pretty straightforward: one foot at a time, no deviation or leaning, ascend straight up. For many of us, we have viewed life like climbing a ladder. We take one problem at a time, we solve the pieces we can and then move to the next portion to begin the work again. Unfortunately, life isn't really like climbing ladders. Instead, life is more like climbing trees.

Climbing trees isn't as simple as climbing ladders. Climbing trees requires a different posture. Instead of the assurance of the next rung on the ladder, tree limbs can be tricky. Tree limbs often are not in a straight line. Some limbs require us to stretch or move laterally to grasp them. Often, when climbing trees, you discover there is no viable way to ascend and instead you must descend and recalibrate. Climbing trees requires dealing with leaves, insects, twigs and sometimes precarious animals in their habitat. Climbing trees is difficult. Life is more like trees than ladders.

This past summer, with the conviction of Derrick Chauvin, many assumed the community would simply heal, move to the next rung on

the ladder and assume a new normal. There was an expected sense of relief that justice had been served and all of the pain of George Floyd's murder and subsequent unearthing of racialized trauma experienced in communities around the world, would somehow resolve itself. Collectively, we thought that certainly that rung of pain and grief was settled. Again, life is not as clear as ladders.

Instead, for both Saint Paul and Minneapolis, this summer proved to be especially sorrow-filled. Weekly gun violence took the lives of precious young Black and Brown children all across the metro. The heightened murders, gang violence and random shootings should not be viewed in a vacuum. They were not the result of some mysterious nexus point, but instead are the continuation of a communal trauma gone unhealed.

The Black Ministerial Alliance, which consists of seven predominantly African American inter-denominational churches in Saint Paul and many more in Minneapolis, created an initiative called "21 Days of Peace." The initial initiative had three basic plans:

1. Organize churches to send members and volunteers to stand on street corners alongside police officers as an act of peaceful presence.
2. Organize churches to send members and volunteers to do weekly prayer walks through neighborhoods affected by gun violence.
3. Organize weekly healing circles for volunteers and community members to talk about the trauma they were experiencing by living in neighborhoods ravaged by violence.

My role was to lead the weekly healing circles for Saint Paul. My role was to help volunteers and community



Ronald Bell

members grapple with the trauma they were living through the grief they were experiencing. What I discovered very quickly is that this would be tree work.

I remember our first healing circle. I had prepared a whole session on trauma and how the brain works. I had notes to share from both Bessel Van Der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*, and Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands* (my two favorite books). I had mapped out a series of breathing exercises I was going to have the participants work through, and maybe even have them do some journaling, if we had time at the end. It took all of five minutes to discover that all of my plans, my ladder climbing plans, were insufficient. This was tree work.

For the first half hour participants shared their grief. The circle provided a safe space to be vulnerable. I listened as mothers, fathers, community leaders and pastors disrobed their sorrow and anxieties. I want to be honest in saying that there was a part of me that was uncomfortable with what I thought was a loss of control and order. Yet, I could sense that this may have been the first time many of them heard their words and grief out loud. This was the first time they were able to give voice

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Vice-Chair continued from page 3

I was concerned about how my dad would behave in that environment and braced myself for the onslaught of calls that might ensue (much like the school pink slips sent home about children). He was what some might call “a character” and one never knew what was coming out of his mouth. I began selling most of what he had accumulated in 83 years of living, cleaning and staging his home. We toured communities, while waiting for his townhome to sell. The community we chose (Lakeview Commons) was not a brand-new sparkling community with all of the “bells and whistles.” It was a lovely property that felt comfortable, peaceful and had nursing 24/7. Our senior living consultant, Maryann, was everything we needed at this challenging time. The words of Amanda Gorman come to mind, “Be the Light” and she certainly was that for me. She quickly built trust with my dad and myself. She was pleasant, respectful, empathetic, reassuring, non-pressuring, kind, understanding, non-judgmental and knowledgeable. She was the “rock” I needed at that time. The apartment he wanted was available. His mind was made up. Although his finances were very limited, we rolled the dice, paying a deposit to hold it.

The pieces seemed to fall into place. The townhome sold and we moved him into his chosen apartment in June of 2015. He was pleased with a couple of new pieces of furniture which eased the transition. Some days were more challenging than others as he adjusted to his loss of independence.

His VA benefit allowed for home care benefits which also eased my caregiver load. The Lakeview Commons (LVC) team was incredibly welcoming,

especially Maryann. She never left my side in terms of guiding me to the right person in the community to talk with. Follow-through always occurred. She always had a beautiful smile, was warm, and compassionate. It’s clear that her work was a “calling of the heart” and we were so fortunate to receive it.

March, 2016 led to my dad’s lung cancer diagnosis. We finally had an answer to his progressing decline. Treatment was not an option and he agreed to hospice care. Again, I was grateful for additional services for him, with the goal of having dad die in his new home at Lakeview Commons.

April 30th, I was out running errands and received a call from my dad. His voice sounded distressed and he sounded as though he was crying. I was alarmed as I’d never witnessed my dad cry. I immediately rerouted and headed to LVC. Upon arrival, I could see that he was transitioning and time was short. I called his girlfriend who came to visit and say goodbye. I called each of my three siblings and placed the phone to dad’s ear for priceless final goodbyes. I stayed by his side until he died shortly before 8 pm on May 1st. My dad was able to leave the community as he had entered it, through the front door with a “dignity walk.”

Everyone I came into contact with at LVC was delightful, respectful, professional, compassionate, positive, kind and responsive. The road that family members travel as they walk beside their aging loved ones is sometimes long, hard, hurtful, lonely, sad and exhausting. To have experienced relief and comfort due to our interactions with Maryann and belief in LVC, was enormous. I was able to lean on her and because of that, I was able to catch my breath and breathe again. Maryann was an ally; my load could finally be shared. It was a beautiful gift to find a new home for my dad, where there was no history, no emotional wounds, and where he could live out his life safely and comfortably. I, in turn, was provided peace of mind. Some breath of life came back to me and my young family, who had sacrificed so much throughout the 15 years. I am forever grateful for almost one year of relative peace and comfort at LVC.

In Ram Dass’ words, “We are all just walking each other home.” I am grateful to be connected to all of you who give so tirelessly each day and show up for others like Maryann did for my dad and me. May we continue to be inspired by those we serve, remaining open to the lessons of life, loss, joy, gratitude, and forgiveness.

“Your chances of avoiding the nursing home are directly related to the number of children you have, and according to what little research has been done, having at least one daughter seems to be crucial to the amount of help you will receive.”

~ Atul Gwande, from *Being Mortal*

Editor continued from page 2

Note our upcoming virtual fall conference with Pauline Boss and Ted Bowman. Both of these local presenters are rich in knowledge and compassion. They have “walked the walk” and come from a place of deep understanding of all things related to grief and loss. Please consider joining your fellow colleagues for a day of on-line learning and networking. Not only will you gather CEUs, you will find the day-long event renewing, relaxing and energizing.

Thanks to Kay Johnson, Vice-chair, for bravely sharing her experiences as an aging parent caregiver. Many of you will relate to her honest assessment of how she managed these difficult times with loved ones. Sharing our personal experiences brings us closer to one another. Thanks, Kay, for trusting us with your story.

Much gratitude to Pauline Boss and Ted Bowman for a peek into their areas of expertise and topics for the upcoming fall conference. We look forward to both their book releases and are grateful for their generosity, sharing insights and advanced copy snippets with us. A big thanks, also, to our own board member, Eunie Alasaker, for taking the time to review both Pauline and Ted’s books. Eunie’s reviews always make me anxious for more! Thanks, Eunie, for the great overview of both these upcoming editions.

MCDES asked and members answered! Thanks to everyone who responded to the March survey regarding membership. See page 7 for details. It was an overwhelming response: yes, MCDES membership matters! Your feedback was most appreciated. Thanks to all who took the time to respond and to the board committee for their efforts in tabulating the results.

Your two newest, talented board members contributed articles for this issue. Thanks to Rev. Ronald Bell and Andrea Tetley for sharing their thoughts on fireflies, ladders and trees. Turn to pages 10 and 11 to learn more!

The Sundries section is rich with resources and ways for all of us to expand our knowledge and expertise. Also check out Mark Your Calendars on page 1 for upcoming important events. We strive to be inclusive so please remember to send future events for publication to sdardis@aol.com. Please remember to peruse more area resources on the last page. Please let us know if you see discrepancies, omissions, or wish to add to our listings.

Lastly, please consider submitting future articles pertaining to death, dying, and bereavement to *Coalition News*. Email sdardis@aol.com for future leads. We are always happy to follow up. We welcome insights from all our members. Our collective knowledge-base is impressive and it needs to be shared. As Kay Johnson, Vice-chair reminded us in her article on page 3, Ram Dass said, “We are all just walking one another home.”

During these stressful times, during these “growing pains,” we can all use a little encouragement and gentleness from one another. Let’s continue to share our stories, our insights, and our love. Let’s encourage others to do the same. We are all in this together! Let’s stretch, grow, and do our individual parts to help this nation; this world, keep on growing, stretching, evolving and changing.

Thanks, as always, for all you do, so well, for so many. Take good care, stay well, and hopefully, we will “see you” all at the fall conference.

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to their trauma and space to let those emotions unfurl, expand and be fully present without judgment or edit. This was tree work.

In many ways, the healing circles operated as a testimony service. Instead of music, tears; instead of singing or preaching, silence. We ended each session with a bit of breath work and prayer. That was all. For 21 days, once a week, these circles gathered. What happened as a result of providing this space was a desire from participants, volunteers and community members to continue in the practice. What is happening now, is that for the first time since George Floyd’s murder, there is an intentionality around Black churches in the metro providing trauma healing circles for our community. In fact, beginning in September every member church of the Alliance will be participating in a joint bible study on Trauma using my book, *The Four Promises: A Journey of Healing Past and Present Trauma*. This is tree work, we done climbing ladders.

Editor’s Note: MCDES Board member Ronald Bell, MA, DMin, has been working in the field of grief, loss and trauma for 12 years. He is an ordained elder and senior pastor of Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church. As a pastoral counselor and community leader, Ron has worked with hundreds of individuals and families over the years, helping them navigate trauma and loss. Ron is also a writer and has written extensively on the subject of grief and trauma, including his books: *Is There Space for Me: Embracing Grief through Art*, and *The Four Promises: A Journey of Healing Past and Present Trauma*. Ron has a passion for journeying with individuals and families as they navigate their own grief and trauma.

Death & The Arts: Poetry

Editor's Note: Paul Laurence Dunbar, born in 1872 and the author of numerous collections of poetry and prose, was one of the first African American poets to gain national recognition. The poem below is in the public domain.

With The Lark

by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Night is for sorrow and dawn is for joy,
 Chasing the troubles that fret and
 annoy;
 Darkness for sighing and daylight for
 song,—
 Cheery and chaste the strain, heartfelt
 and strong.
 All the night through, though I moan
 in the dark,
 I wake in the morning to sing with the
 lark.
 Deep in the midnight the rain whips
 the leaves,
 Softly and sadly the wood-spirit grieves.
 But when the first hue of dawn tints
 the sky,
 I shall shake out my wings like the
 birds and be dry;
 And though, like the rain-drops, I
 grieved through the dark,
 I shall wake in the morning to sing with
 the lark.
 On the high hills of heaven, some
 morning to be,
 Where the rain shall not grieve thro'
 the leaves of the tree,
 There my heart will be glad for the pain
 I have known,
 For my hand will be clasped in the
 hand of mine own;
 And though life has been hard and
 death's pathway been dark,
 I shall wake in the morning to sing with
 the lark.

Sundries

A Legacy of Healing Speaker Series

For over 30 years, Pathways Minneapolis has been a holistic health leader, providing free complementary healing approaches and supportive services to individuals in health crisis. This fall, Pathways is offering a three-part, 'Legacy of Healing' speaker series. Speakers and topics include:

September 21: The Science of Joy

The pandemic placed great stress on peoples' mental wellbeing. Henry Emmons and Aimee Prasek discuss their innovative online solution, The Joy Lab, that infuses science with soul to uncover joy as an antidote to depression and anxiety.

October 18: Healing as a Spiritual Path

When on this path of spiritual growth, our hearts and souls will open and unfold. Gregory A. Plotnikoff and Catherine Duncan share meaningful insights from more than six decades of fostering health and healing in those who suffer.

November 10: Healthy Self—The Practice of Eating

Broaden your knowledge of nutrition and discover how food impacts health and vitality. Carolyn Denton and Brenda Langton focus on foods to include in the diet---HOW & WHY, and provide simple strategies and recipes to put the knowledge into practice! Learn more about these three programs, and register at <https://tinyurl.com/PWLOHSS>.

Call for Proposals: Due November 7, 2021

Planning for the 2022 International Death, Grief and Bereavement Conference is underway. The theme for 2022 is "Individual, Collective and Global Loss: How Do We Best Support the Grieving?" The conference organizers are seeking presenters who will offer insight, research, strategies, timely information and resources. You may submit proposals for a concurrent session, poster presentation or roundtable presentation. Proposal submission information is at <https://www.uwlax.edu/ex/dgb/>.

Healing from Trauma

Many of us have experienced trauma and how the danger of unhealed trauma can keep us from connecting with one another and with God. The latest episode of United Methodist Communications' "Get Your Spirit in Shape" podcast features Rev. Dr. Ron Bell (who serves Camphor Memorial UMC in St. Paul) talking about his book that teaches us how, step by step, to tackle the important work of healing and how to move us from victim to survivor. Listen to the podcast or read the transcript at <https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-healing-journey-for-trauma-ron-bell-get-your-spirit-in-shape-ep-096>.

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Sundries continued from page 14

Developmental Impact of Early Parental Death: Sustaining Post-traumatic Growth Throughout the Lifespan

Impacting millions of youth across the globe, early parental death is an important topic. This causal-comparative study examined a group of young adults who experienced a parental death during adolescence and a group of young adults who had not experienced an early parental death. The journal article is at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00302228211024466?journalCode=omea>.

Qualitative Study on Traumatic Experiences of Suicide Survivors

The suicide of a loved one can be a traumatic experience. The objective of this study was to investigate trauma-related experiences of suicide survivors. This study with people who had recently lost a family member or a close one to suicide, was conducted at least two months after the event. More information is at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00302228211024486?journalCode=omea>.

Thousands of Young Children Lost Parents to COVID. Where's Help for Them?

More than 46,000 children in the U.S. have lost a parent to Covid-19. Families say finding even basic grief counseling has been difficult and there's been no coordinated effort to help these children access services or benefits. Read the article at <https://lookout.co/santacruz/coronavirus/covid-today/story/2021-06-23/thousands-of-young-children-lost-parents-to-covid-wheres-help-for-them>.

What Bobby McIlvaine Left Behind

We have all heard and read many personal grief and loss stories from the events of 9/11. This September 2021 story from *The Atlantic* by Jennifer Senior, "What Bobby McIlvaine Left Behind: Grief, conspiracy theories and one family's search for meaning in the two decades since 9/11" is especially personal, illustrative and poignant. Princeton graduate Bobby McIlvaine had no reason to visit the Twin Towers but went there the morning of Sept 11, 2001 to help a friend set up for a conference at Windows on the World. His remains were some of the few found in the rubble following the collapse. His parents' and girl friend's stories illustrate the depth and difference of each grief experience. Read Jennifer Senior's story at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/09/twenty-years-gone-911-bobby-mcilvaine/619490/>.

End In Mind

Our community abounds with helpful death and dying resources. End in Mind, <https://www.endinmindproject.org/>, "takes the universal experience of dying to help you re-imagine what it means to live fully at any stage of life." Subscribe to their newsletter, and find interesting podcasts, upcoming events, and inspirational quotes, all relating to death, dying, living, and bereavement.

Lakewood Cemetery

by Sharon Dardis

Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, was established in 1871. The beautiful grounds are inviting, but the website, www.lakewoodcemetery.org, is also a resource worth exploring. Their events calendar offers many opportunities for meaningful ways "to grieve and remember."

September events include birding walks, walking tours, and lantern lighting celebrations. My favorite amongst the offerings this month is the Autumn Equinox Tea Ceremony and Grief Circle on September 22. (There is a fee.)

Offered in the Lakewood Memorial Chapel, this ancient silent ritual "welcomes grief" to acknowledge transitions and losses. Tea has been used for centuries for sacred rites and deep meditation. The ceremony will be used to facilitate the processing of grief. There is an optional grief circle following the ceremony. Further instructions invite attendees to bring a journal for post-ceremony reflection and to dress comfortably. I would add to bring a few tissues and also check the most recent updates for Lakewood's current Covid guidelines. The website states "further resources for grief support and community will be offered following the ceremony. The tea ceremony guide is Christian Ament, a trained death doula, palliative care and hospice provider."

You can find more information about the tea ceremony and other upcoming events on Lakewood's website, www.lakewoodcemetery.org.



Minnesota Coalition for
Death Education and Support
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Coalition News

September 2021

MCDES Board Members

Eunie Alsaker, Secretary
Diane Bauer
Ronald Bell, Jr.
Allison Chant
Sharon Dardis
Kay Johnson, Vice-Chair
Kelli Kinney
Christine Lewis
Andrea Tatley
Peter Thoreen, Treasurer
Tim Thorpe
Florence Wright, Chair

MCDES membership does not imply certification or accreditation of its members.

Grief Resources

Jewish Grief Education/Support Group:
www.jfcsmpls.org.
Pathways—A Healing Center: www.pathwaysminneapolis.org.
North Metro Grief Support Coalition: 763-413-2985.
Allina Support Groups: Search for “grief support” at www.allinahealth.org.
Capitol City Grief Coalition: Contact coordinator Lois Knutson, 651-227-4430.
Downtown Coalition for Grief Support: www.mplsgriefsupport.com.
MN Network of Hospice & Palliative Care: <https://www.mnhpc.org/grief-support>.
Children’s Grief Connection: www.childrensgriefconnection.com.
Compassionate Friends: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>.
Hastings Area Grief Coalition: <https://account.allinahealth.org/events/59327>.
Weathering Life’s Losses—Adult Support Group, and Kids in Grief Support Group. Thurs., Stillwater, 651-430-4586.
Grief Support-Essentia Health-St. Mary’s Medical Center (Duluth): www.Essentiahealth.org/griefsupportduluth.

West Suburban Coalition:
www.westsuburbangriefmn.org.

Dakota County Grief Resources:
<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/HealthFamily/MentalHealth/Training/Documents/GriefLossSupportServices.pdf>.

Youth Grief Services, Fairview:
www.fairview.org/youthgrief.

The Young Widowed Support Group:
mcraem@parknicollet.com.

Center for Grief, Loss & Transition:
<http://griefloss.org> or 651-641-0177.

South Mpls Coalition for Grief Support:
www.trustinc.org/programs/grief-support

Bloomington-Richfield Grief Coalition:
www.brgrriefcoalition.com.

Prince of Peace Grief Support, Burnsville:
<https://popmn.org/mission/support-groups>

Edina Coalition for Grief Support:
www.edinagriefsupport.org.

The Grief Project: www.griefproject.org.

Brighter Days Family Grief Center: www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org.

Crisis Text Line: Text “MN” to 741741.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).