

Creating Your Own Therapy ...on The Widow Walk

by Howie Soucek, Rev August 2023

It has long been well-proven that the use of some kind of creative activity on a regular basis is an important therapeutic help for anyone who is suffering from a grievous trauma, whether such as the loss of a loved one, being a family member of an alcoholic, or PTSD, ...et cetera.

Simply the action of creating some kind of expression of your experience, even if no one else ever sees it, has significant therapeutic value. But when you share it with others—whether with one special friend or before a large audience who will benefit from how you have reacted to the experiences that you have had—the therapeutic value is multiplied many times over. Especially, this process allows us to see how much we have in common—and with this, ...comes encouragement.

“Creating Your Own Therapy” offers you some examples of creative works generated by others of us, some of whom you may know, who have suffered or continue to suffer from some great difficulty. Please feel free to submit your own work to *The Widow Walk* for possible inclusion on this site.

Here is an outline of the contents for this section of *The Widow Walk*:

Writing

- poetry
- blogging
- journaling
- creative writing
- correspondence

Music

- original compositions
- favorites

Art

- a variety of mediums...

WRITING

“Researchers have been examining the effects of writing about traumatic experiences for more than three decades. Among the things they’ve learned: It reliably improves physical and psychological health for a wide variety of people. It is tied to better immune function, better grades and better relationships.” — From “Words of War...Peace of Mind,” by Corinne Reilly,

The Virginian-Pilot, © July 6, 2014 (reference to *The Veterans Writing Project* and research at Johns Hopkins University).

No matter the source of the trauma, it is well-established that the writing down of one's experiences and feelings is a powerful help in navigating the difficult journey that follows — this, whether through the use of poetry, blogging, journaling, creative writing, or simple correspondence with special friends and relatives. What follow are some samples for you to consider:

POETRY

☪ • ☪

Wandering all around
Wishing I were bound
With someone like me
Who would see
About the way I feel
All off keel.

I feel so left out
I know without a doubt
That people wonder why
That girl is so shy
Sitting over there
Seeming not to care.

Wanting desperately to share
With someone who will care
The pain and the sorrow
That waits until tomorrow
For a chance to be set free
From deep within me.

—*Off Keel*, by Lynn King Robertson

☪ • ☪

From profoundly deep within me,
deeper that I can see or think,
as naturally as my heart beats,
wells up a soulful, primal moan,
stretching long—so long, each,

again, and again, and yet again.
Not a cry.
More akin to a wolf's howl,
a guttural plea projected, piercing into the ether,
to Heav'n;
to where she is,
my one love;
we, a divine union set before we met.
I have lost the best part of my mortal, earthly self,
and I am left to howl before the stars.

—*My Wolf Within*, by Howie Soucek

BLOGGING

Sometimes a griever has no available support network to help navigate the grieving process and is left to suffer alone. The capacity of the Internet can provide at least a partial solution.

Blogging sites tend to follow a particular theme, activity, or topic — something that a group of people have in common, such that they can share their experiences, feelings, questions, or thoughts about the topic being discussed at the time.

There is some degree of anonymity involved, and one can participate to whatever degree (or not at all) as desired. Thus, there is some sense of “safety” involved, and this makes it a little easier to express some things that might not otherwise be the case.

Probably the best way to find such a blog might be to “search” for it on the Internet via an entry such as “blog about grieving.” Just bear in mind, however, that anything you post online is subject to being shared anywhere else at any time — You have no control over what you post.

JOURNALING

Journaling a Griever's Walk, by Howie Soucek

To “journal” an experience is to write down your personal story about it — a little each day, as it happens—like a diary. You might have nothing to write on a particular day, or a single short paragraph, or perhaps a page or two.

Instead of bottling them up inside of you to fester as a self-destructive stew, your feelings flow out of you, through your arm and then your hand, and onto the paper, ...there to be

externalized and seen as if they are still real, yes, but somehow outside of yourself and easier to control.

There should be no concern about spelling or about the rules of grammar or rhetoric. And you should feel free to keep your journal to yourself ...or perhaps to share with others — but at the least, there is a definitive therapeutic benefit to be had. The added benefit of *sharing* is that others discover that they are not isolated and alone with their own suffering. This is the power of an encouragement that can only come of God's Love.

From October 2012 to October 2014, I shared, with many friends and relatives as it developed, my journal about my and my family's experience with my wife's brain cancer—including its diagnosis, multiple surgeries, therapies, caregiving for my terminally ill loved one for months, ...her death, and the aftermath of grief that unfolded in the following several months.

Here is a "table of contents" of the most significant milestones in my personal account, as they appear by page number in the full document:

- Diagnosis
- Initial surgery
- Second surgery
- Regular journal entries begin
- Third surgery
- Bad news — the PET scan
- Our awesome, humbling decision
- Hospice explained and begun
- Her final breath
- The aftermath begins
- Darkening valley
- Homily for Linda
- How are you doing?
- Life-changing vision
- Reflections on this journal — and moving forward

If you would like to read all or any part of my own journal, feel free to click on this link:

[Journaling a Griever's Walk.](#)

CREATIVE WRITING

Creative writing can take many different forms, but in this case let's say that for someone who is suffering, it might be a matter of telling a short story about it — either your personal story, directly, or perhaps telling it in an indirect way, using different names and circumstances, while

still conveying the same emotions experienced by the writer, and causing or bringing forth a resonant response on the part of the reader.

Such a story could be submitted for publication somewhere or contributed to a community resource designed to engage and support others in the community on a similar journey — or perhaps to a club or organization in the community that emphasizes the sharing of creative interests.

CORRESPONDENCE

Whether by email, texting (or, ...can you imagine writing a letter in cursive?), or other messaging, you can remain in contact with a few very dear friends regarding all things meaningful and important in your life, to include life's wonders, its happy occasions, and yes, its travails and sufferings — all to share with those dear, who reciprocate in a way that affirms the undefined value of relationship (life) versus isolation (death).

The length and the frequency of these communications are of little consequence, and the participants may be next door or thousands of miles apart. Regardless, what matters is the love that is manifest in the sharing.

What follow are some examples of such correspondence, with some of the specifics altered so as to the identification of individuals:

✉ • ✉

[This, to a friend who lost someone dear, a decade before I sent this message.]

Dear Betty,

I know that William been gone 10 years, today, ...and I'll have been without Lin for the same, come this Christmas.

After all this time, it has not gotten any easier for me, as my sense of loss is different, ...yet it is at least as profound as ever before. So, I am empathetic, yes.

At the same time, however, *I consider how blessed I have been* —and voilà! My grief is subordinated (*not denied, not vacated, not less severe, ...but somehow "subordinated"* in a way that causes it to not really matter in the face of my blessings). I pray that you have the same kind of peace as this.

Do you feel me hugging you, today?

With Love,

Howie

[This, to a friend who lost someone dear only a half a year before I sent this message.]

My Dear Arthur,

You are heavy on my heart and mind, and I ask that you please accept this seed,
deep within:

Thus, let me wander a bit with you, here. Yes, I know this path you are on.
There are many of us that walk it with you—some *sharing* their journey more readily than
others; but regardless, ...because it is naturally and understandably so hard for you to see us
right now, it is equally natural for you to feel alone in your pain and anguish.

So for now, let this be a seed that you plant in your mind (your heart, your soul...). You may not
yet be in a position to fully understand the wonders within this seed, but you must trust (which
is stronger than hope) that its wonders will indeed unfold and grow within you over time in a
way that is best for you.

This will not be something your brain will figure out and “understand,” but rather it is
something you will KNOW, gradually and deeply; namely,

...that you have loved— *and always will love*;
that you have *been* loved— *and always will be loved*;
that you have been connected with and in the presence of others

*...but that you will become ever-more sublimely “connected” with and
“in the presence of” others—including eternal God, the Source of all Love—
(and this, NOW, even before your own physical body passes away from the world).*

Your suffering (your anguish, fear, loneliness, anxiety, anger, pain, and sorrow,
et cetera) are *natural* creations of your human brain in this world, and as such, they are
absolutely real to you, *and powerful*; they cannot be denied, suppressed, covered over, or even
diminished by anything anyone says to you or by any rationalizations of your own.

In fact, it is harmful, in my opinion, to deny our suffering in the world. If I attempt to deny or
suppress my grief for my loss of Linda, for example, I shut myself off from her in a way my brain
does not understand—and in a way more real than my loss of her physical
presence. ...Somehow, suffering is part of what Love is.

And the “somehow,” although a mystery to us, is that our suffering, as powerful as it seems, is
effortlessly, completely, and purely OVERCOME by Love (If you would like for me to send you a
copy of my “Thoughts of Love” just ask).

Importantly, *this is NOT to say* that our suffering is removed from us or even diminished, but rather that it is OVERCOME, ...and only Love can accomplish this!

For now, just accept this seed; and let it sink in that the expression, "You are not alone!" is one that may not mean much for you when you are in the initial depths or other moments of despair — but gradually the Truth and com-*fort* that Love is...will grow so strong as to overcome your suffering.

KNOW this, and return your consciousness, over and over, to your countless blessings, past and present, for you have always been and will ever be, in Good Hands.

The beautiful blossom that eventually results from this seed will be your **Real**-ization that not only can you hope that "All will be well," but rather that you will have the *knowledge* that "All *IS* well!" ...and will ever be.

God bless you and your Loved one,
and especially, your Relationship, which is eternal,
Howie

MUSIC

ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

While I have zero talent for this creative ability, there are others I know for whom it comes naturally, ...as yet another avenue for creative expression. While the therapeutic value is always involved, in the case of extreme suffering there is a sublime benefit for the composer — but no less for those who are suffering and who listen to the music (and especially the lyrics) of such a composition. Indeed, I have had the experience on more than one occasion of listening to such a composition written by a friend who had also lost a loved one — and I wept, freely, in her presence, with tears of shared suffering ...but also of Joy!

[Heart Scribe Vibes – Micah Nowell](#)

FAVORITES

Also for those of us who lack this creative talent: We are not prevented from appreciating (and from deriving therapeutic value from) songs that we come across, which have an uplifting, encouraging — or even an inspiring effect upon our spirits. At the least, they help us to know that many others have had similar feelings as we, and this by itself brings therapeutic value.

ART

Across the field of art (whether any of the many mediums of painting and drawing, pottery/sculpture, fashion design, welding, tattoo artistry, cross-stitch, decorations, illustrations for books, etcetera), there are many ways to express (or even to just “get out”) your feelings associated with your suffering—wherever they may range from grieving ...to your experience of *Joy* in successfully navigating your journey.