



“The road that is built in hope is more pleasant to the traveller than the road built in despair, even though they both lead to the same destination.”

--- Marian Zimmer Bradley

Connecting

February 2021

Hope

When we are grief-stricken, we often lose hope. But exactly what is hope? Hope is a feeling of expectation, that what is wanted, will eventually happen. “It is to believe that something positive, which does not presently apply to one’s own life, could still materialize” (Lazarus). It is a “process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling, and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful” (Stephenson). “Hope is the ability to envision a future that we wish to participate in.” (Jevne & Edey). Optimistic people, on the other hand believe that future good things will happen, but do not tie those outcomes to their own actions. For example, you may be optimistic that your stocks will do well. It is harder, then, to be hopeful than optimistic because it is not only enough to dream about a future state, but there is a need to participate and see one’s own role in getting there.

Hope is equated with goals. For example, mastering something, survival and/or transformation. One can believe that you can still face reality, the failures, the challenges — yet still endure or overcome adversity so that you can get to the other side of whatever “this” is. “I hope to see my mother, or husband, or child again someday.” That is hope based in spirituality. Hope is an embodied or “felt” experience. For example, by practicing mindfulness and

being present in the moment and appreciating all that is around you at that particular second of time. What does hope feel like in your body? It comforts us. It raises our spirits. Hope is often linked to our past experiences, those things that we have gone thru in the past that have led us to our future as we know it today. When are some times that I remained hopeful in my past? For me, it was after a number of unsuccessful pregnancies. I remained hopeful that I would one day deliver a healthy baby. That encouraged me through two difficult pregnancies. You will each have your own examples of times when you kept hope alive in your life.

When we seek out grief support, we are hopeful. Hopeful that we will feel heard, understood and validated. We are hoping that we will be worthy as a human being. Hopeful that we might see new possibilities for our present situations, and be able to reframe a current experience into a positive outcome for our future. We hope to be in a safe and nurturing environment, where we are not judged in any way, regardless of how our grief reveals itself to ourselves or others. So, to re-establish some hope in our lives after a loss,

“We must be willing to let go of the life we planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

-- Joseph Campbell

Hope reassures us that life is ever changing and every season in life is temporary.



A quick “self-assessment” helps to evaluate where we have been and where we hope to go from here:

- 1) What kind of person do I hope to become after this loss?
- 2) What do I hope to be doing a year from now?
- 3) How do I hope to feel after a year, five years, ten?

When everything around us seems dismal, life is meaningless, the world seems to have lost its colour, it is often the hardest thing for us to be hopeful and full of enthusiasm for the future, isn't it?

Why does Hope matter?

Hope encourages us to keep living. When hopelessness is all consuming, folks may want to end their lives because they don't see any way out of the darkness. Hope helps us see a way out and shows us the light at the end of the tunnel.

Hope reassures us that life is ever changing and every season in our lives is temporary. We do not just wait through the cold winter for the spring to arrive. Rather, we move through winter with joy in order to bring the spring.

Hope gives us strength and energy. Sometimes it is just the slightest glimmer of hope that propels us into feeling positive and energized, worthy of wonderful things that we

have yet to experience. We might then open the doors we once closed in despair.

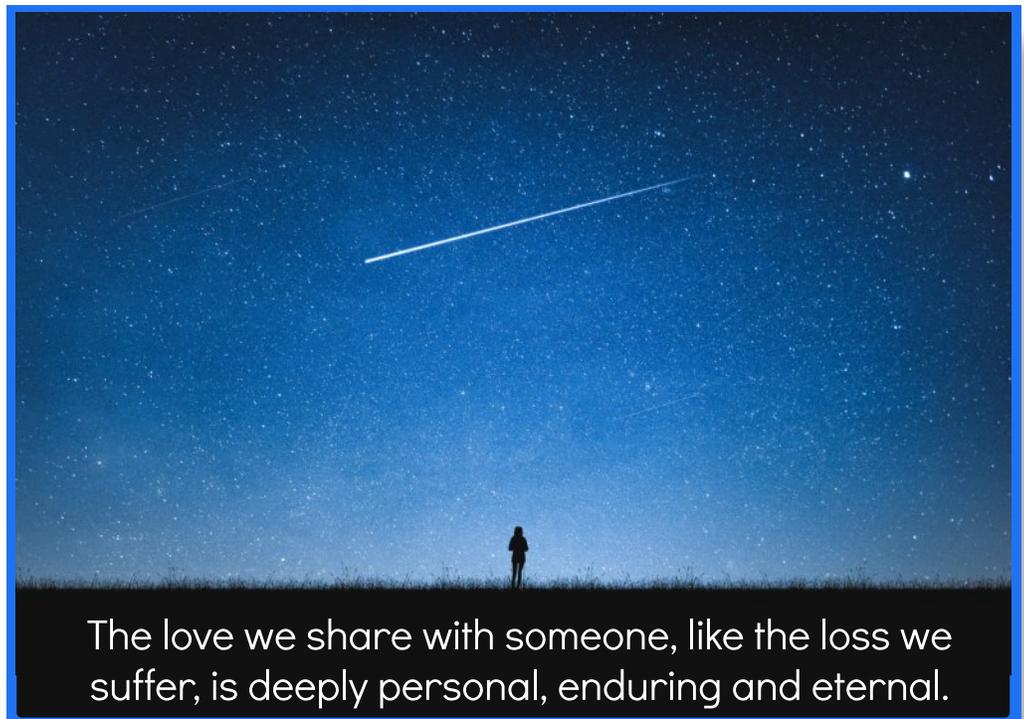
With hope, we open up to new possibilities. We take action. Instead of just waiting hopelessly for someone to come and take us to a place we want to be, we realize that nobody will come to rescue us if we are not willing to switch from hopeless to hopeful.

Try to think of three major factors in your life that have caused you to feel hopeless in the past. Now, recall the top three motivators in your life that gave you hope in those difficult situations. You might revisit some of those same motivators on your grief journey. Yet we know that not every void in our life or hole in our heart needs to be (or ever can be) urgently plugged or filled to capacity. The love we share with someone, like the loss we suffer, is deeply personal, enduring and eternal.

In a letter to Ludwig Binswanger on April 11, 1929, Sigmund Freud described love and loss this way:

“Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually that is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish.”

So perhaps we just want someone to tell us that where there are things like love, appreciation and fond memory, there will also be sadness, yearning and pain. And though these experiences seem in opposition to one another, we can experience them all at the same time. Hope is something we rely on to lift us up, make us feel lighter, give us a glimmer of light to guide us forward....



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One thing that might be helpful is to make a “Hope” collage....cut out pictures from newspapers and magazines. It might be the whole picture or just a tiny part of an image of what you think are positive or hopeful images. You might take pictures on your cellphone of a lovely garden, a child at play, a beautiful sunset a songbird delivering a beautiful song, anything that strikes a chord with you as being a hopeful image. Perhaps somewhere you would like to go someday...something you hope to do, or to learn how to do. You might put together a hope kit, filling it with objects and mementos you have that once brought you much joy, but no longer hold interest or promise anymore....for example, a guitar pick from when you enjoyed playing an instrument, a love letter from your dating days with your spouse, your child’s first toy...now being saved for a first grandchild someday....anything that you might have that holds a feeling that softens your heart with memories of past experiences. Hope can resurrect those joyous images....

Who has borrowed something in the past? Perhaps a cup of flour when you ran out in the middle of making cupcakes, maybe a shovel from your neighbour, or a good book that you have not yet purchased....I suspect we have all borrowed something sometime, when we needed something that we didn’t have. Well, the good news is ...

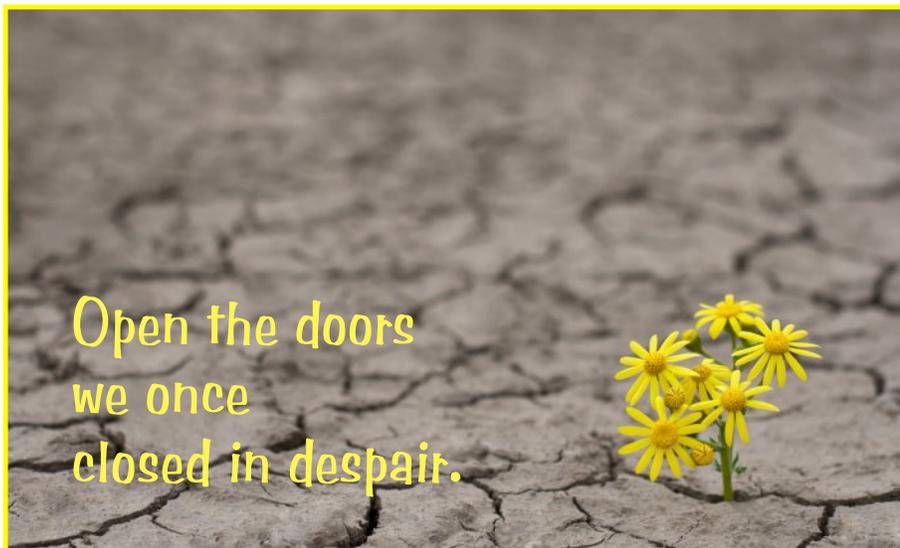


We can borrow hope!

When we feel that we do not have any hope left in ourselves, we can borrow some from others. I will be happy to give you some of my hope until you rediscover your own. Joy can, and will, find its way into your life again ... you have to be willing to embrace it when it presents itself. Finish the sentences:

I hope _____ .
I wish _____ .
I will _____ .

Do you see any difference in the words and in how they are effectively different in our mind's eye? I hope is more of a yearning, a desire, or a fantasy (I hope I meet my Prince Charming at WEM). I wish is like a polite request for something...(I wish you would go away.) I will is a reasoned choice, a determination, or the decision to control one's own actions. (I will finish the Boston Marathon this year!) It is a decisive thought process, an affirmation of choosing to see something through to its completion. Which one do you think is most likely to effect change?



During the pandemic we are basically in a state of rocking back and forth, but going nowhere fast. We “hope” it will be over soon and things will go back to normal but hope is not a beautiful thing if it is just keeping us stuck in a stagnant mode. A state of limbo waiting on something that may or may not happen is not helpful. We are not experiencing the here and now because we are so focused on an unpredictable future.

If we can just accept the situation as it exists right now, and let it be, we may minimize our suffering, reduce our resistance to the rules and regulations, and allow ourselves to operate from a place of clarity and mindfulness.

Zen teacher Joan Halifax says,

“Wise Hope is not seeing things unrealistically, but rather seeing things as they are, including the truth of suffering — both its existence and our capacity to transform it.”

To achieve “*Wise Hope*” we can reframe our thoughts through acceptance, and then take action.....

Hope says:

“I hope I don’t gain much weight during this pandemic.

Acceptance & Action:

“I don’t know when this is going to end, but I am keeping things as normal as I can. Get fresh air, lots of exercise, set regular sleep times, eat healthy, and be sure to prioritize self-care. Choosing my daily routine increases my well-being and happiness overall”.

Hope says:

“I hope the quarantine will be over soon!”

Acceptance & Action:

“I finally read that book I wanted to. I’ve changed my carpets, cleaned the garage and took a course on Investorline to help me manage my own investments! I am crossing things off my “to do someday” list and it makes me feel good.”

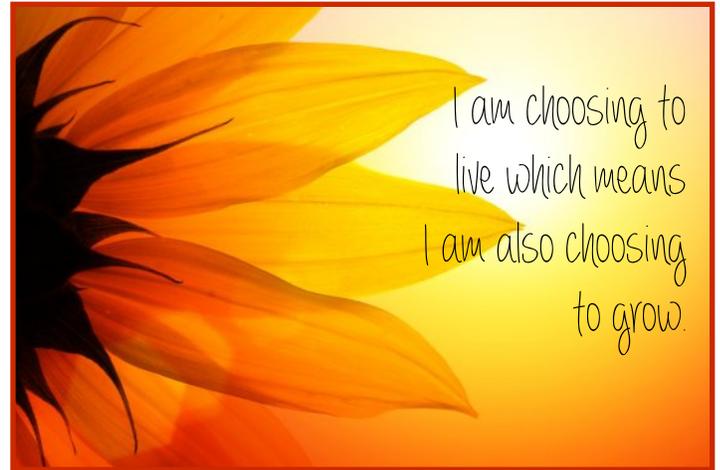
Hope says:

“I hope things will be back to normal.”

Acceptance & Action:

“Things may never go back to pre-pandemic times. Wearing a mask may be the norm to keep us well. A booster shot every fall may be routine.”

“We adjust accordingly. Like a plant who is either growing or dying, I am choosing to live, which means I am also choosing to grow. Some things are working for me and others aren’t so it is a “RESET” time.”



Psychologist Carl Jung refers to this as the “shadow” aspect. Although this isolation may be frustrating, boring, lonely, stressful, it can also be an opportunity to reset, transform, grow, change direction, and reinvent ourselves. We know that after a death, things will never go “back to normal” for those of us who grieve. We create a new “normal” after someone dies; and it may well be the same “post” pandemic. But if we take care, we will grow and prosper one day ... collectively!

Until then, I offer you this:



HOPE
Hold On. Pain Ends.

With Gratitude for References and/or Contributions from:

Yurika Vu, “A Mindful Self Love Day” Tiny Buddha

Emily Lucas, “Hope vs Optimism”

Carl Jung - Psychologist

Kamran Akbarzadeh, author & founder – Dream Achievers Academy

Sigmund Freud letter from www.whatsyourgrief.com

Joan Fairfax & Eleanor Haley “Understanding Grief”



Carol Dickson, CGSC
Certified Grief Support Counsellor
Links Support Group Facilitator

(780) 851-6562
carol@stalbertbereavement.ca



*I came alone;
I left connected.*

St. Albert Outside Agency
Operating Grant Program



St. Albert Bereavement Fellowship
(780) 851-6562

