

Journey

Summer 2023

A grief community publication
from Northern Illinois Hospice



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The Remaining, Mourn...

By Jen Conley, LPC MT-BC

Sometimes the anguish of grief is so devastating, there are no words to express it. This can make issues of loss exceptionally difficult to express. Witnessing art can bring difficult feelings into awareness, making them more accessible for processing and deeper understanding – often resulting in a sense of validation and connection. Art allows us to manifest that which cannot be spoken, and give it form.

Northern Illinois University (NIU) Art Museum will be presenting an exhibit titled, "The Remaining, Mourn..." which will run from August 29 – October 14, at Altgeld Hall, College Ave., DeKalb. The exhibition focuses on the experience of grieving as seen through the lens of nine artists' practices. Through their art, they address both individual and collective loss. The following artists are represented: Selva

Aparicio, Michael Chambers, April Dauscha, Salvador Jiménez-Flores, Millicent Kennedy, Allen Moore, Monika Plioplyte, Nirmal Raja and Anne Wilson. In discussion of the exhibit the NIU Art Museum explains, "Holding materials, as one would onto someone lost, these artists use various techniques to freeze a moment, allowing themselves time to process what remains as well as what is gone. Their materials, and the memories and emotions they evoke, become the 'language' the artists use to create their own rituals to navigate grief/mourning and heal from it."

Loss and creativity are both inherently part of the human experience. Seeing this unique representation of grief, as expressed by these artists, reminds us of the recuperative power of humanity, and the ability to create beauty even in deep sorrow and tragedy.



First in *caring* for life's final months

Story continues on page 3

From Rockford's Bereavement Coordinator

"Summertime and the livin' is easy.... One of these mornings, You're going to rise up singing. Then you'll spread your wings, and you'll take the sky. But 'til that morning, There's a'nothing can harm you with daddy and mammy standing by."

For me, the opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935) is about resilience, about a community's hope for a better future despite the cruel evidence of experience.

Life throws a lot of stuff at us. Quite often when we are at peace, as Clara's lullaby goes, "and the 'livin' is easy," is when life rears its ugly head - and then out of the far corner, here comes trouble and difficulty. We see it on the television, we read it in our newspapers. It's a part of who we are. Instead of taking the negative stance, take a stand. Plant your feet firmly and realize that what you stand upon is firm, is strong, is foundational. Take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale it slowly through your mouth, taking... your... time. This is a simple way to center and focus yourself when those moments (trigger events) arise in our lives, making us remember, and relive, experiences, and lives once lived, and painful moments.

By taking time to center and ground ourselves, and to not allow our negative bias to take over (which is how our brains are wired) we can take charge of our feelings and emotions, instead of our feelings and emotions controlling us.

This is the foundation for resilience, which is our ability to "bounce back" after difficult situations.

Peace,



Andrew J. Vitale, CT
Bereavement Coordinator/Spiritual Counselor



2023 Support Groups and Additional Support Offerings

Open to anyone who has experienced the death of someone close to them, our groups and workshops focus on learning, healing and encouragement. All are welcome. To register, please go to our website northernillinoisospice.org. For more information on Rockford area events, email Andrew Vitale at avitale@niha.org, and for DeKalb area events, email Jen Conley at jconley@niha.org or call 815.398.0500.

Meditation for Grief and Resilience**

Fridays: July 14 - Aug. 25, 2023
10-11:30 AM

Anderson Japanese Gardens
318 Spring Creek Rd., Rockford

Mindful Grief Wanderings & Awareness**

Tuesdays: Sept. 19 -
Nov. 7, 2023
10-11:30 AM

Anderson Japanese Gardens
318 Spring Creek Rd., Rockford

The Landscape of Loss - Navigating Gently and with Resilience

Thursday, September 28, 2023
6-6:40 PM

Northern Illinois University
1425 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb
Altegeld Hall, Room 125

Bridge of Hope

Bereavement Care Group

Wednesdays: Oct. 4 -
Nov. 4, 2023

1:30-2:45 PM

Heritage Woods of Belvidere
4730 Squaw Prairie Rd., Belvidere
Community welcome!

** Anderson Japanese Gardens events are held rain or shine. Please dress appropriately for the weather.

Ask the Expert

Q: How long will grief last? Do I ever get over the loss of a loved one?

A: Grief is the healing process that helps us deal with the loss of a loved-one. Grief does not have a clear beginning or clear end to it. Rather, it is a reflection of feelings surrounding the loss. Grief will ebb and flow throughout our life after a loss. We don't get over the loss of someone, but we learn to live with that loss. We also will eventually remember and honor our loved one without feeling pain. We will grieve as long as we need to.

The Remaining Mourn...

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Part of the exhibition and events will include a presentation by Jen Conley, MT-BC, LPC, Bereavement Coordinator with Northern Illinois Hospice. Jen is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified Advanced Grief Counseling Specialist and will present on *The Landscape of Loss – Navigating Gently and with Resilience*. The talk will be held on Thursday, September 28, in Room 125 Altgeld Hall, Northern Illinois University. It runs from 6 – 6:40 PM with time for questions/discussion following.



Those who have died are referenced in their clothing left behind. In Nirmal Raja's work, material is both weighted and empty of the body that once used them.

CREATING A MEMORIAL GARDEN TO HONOR LOVED ONES

It is an old practice to plant a tree or shrub when a baby arrives or as a memorial to those who have died. Plants are an excellent reminder to each of us of the stages of our lives. Memorial garden plants can represent what your loved one was fond of and can offer a place of peace in which to remember and recall memories.

Modern Farmer offers these steps to create a memorial garden:

- 1) Find a private area in your yard – think peace and solitude.
- 2) Honor your loved one with their favorite plants – daisy, peony, poppy, petunia, lilies, or hydrangeas; what was their favorite color, or did they enjoy peppers or tomatoes? Consider a small vegetable plot.
- 3) Research the specific meanings of plants – some plants hold symbolic meanings: sweetheart roses, yellow tulips for friendship, red poppies for eternal sleep, forget-me-nots and rosemary for remembrance. Aloe symbolizes grief, and peace lilies, of course, peace and sympathy.
- 4) Add appropriate statues and/or décor – a birdbath or bird feeder. Did they love music? Maybe a wind chime. Solar lights or lanterns can offer comforts for evenings. Engraved rocks or river stones.
- 5) Include some place to sit – the main point of a memorial garden is to serve as a place where you can go to remember your loved one(s).
- 6) If possible, incorporate water – the sound of trickling water is a natural, soothing sound. A pond or a fountain can make your memorial garden more tranquil.

Channel your grief into planting a long-lasting tribute to a loved one.

— Shelby Vittek, April 25, 2021





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“If all you did was look for things
to appreciate, you would live a
joyous, spectacular life.”

— Abraham Hicks

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