



“Paying It Forward” is a Way of Life at *GriefWorks*

I am continually amazed at the spirit of “paying it forward” that pervades co-founder Mel Erickson’s leadership and counseling. Most of her life has been a mission to offer grieving children, teens, and families support and comfort during their darkest hours. Because of her own significant personal losses and the subsequent help and support that she received, Mel has been vibrant with the determination to aid others through their losses. Her education in counseling and specialization in thanatology, the study of grieving and loss, were direct results from her life experiences with losing significant loved ones at a very young age.

Other *Griefworks*’ staff reflect Mel’s mission through their own journeys and work. Office manager, Debbie Brenner, is a walking testimonial to serving others as she was served through her personal tragedies. Her commitment to help others burns brightly to clients who call with questions about getting help or to fellow college students, as she gives her own testimonial to them.

Counselors Gwen Waller and Michele Ray exude such compassion and professional counseling expertise as they guide children and teens through support groups at schools to learn how to grieve in healthy ways. School districts far and wide are so appreciative of the support that their students receive from our counselors during crisis and trauma. Their career paths were defined by their own pain in losing loved ones and their passion for helping others get through their individual losses.

What an amazing staff whose determination to “pay it forward” makes *GriefWorks* the lighthouse of support and education to the grieving. I am so fortunate to witness the *GriefWorks* staff’s gifts to the community and to those who are hurting.

I also am grateful to all of you who make our work possible. Many of you have benefitted from grief support and are now paying it forward so others can find healing. Thank you! We invite all of you to consider joining our team through your financial support.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Daryl Thompson
Executive Director
daryl@griefworks.org



GriefWorks depends on generous donations and volunteer involvement. To donate on line, please visit www.GriefWorks.org. Tax-deductible contributions also can be mailed to *GriefWorks*, P.O. Box 912, Auburn, WA 98071-0912. For more information, call 253-333-9420 or 800-850-9420. Thank you for considering partnering with us in serving the bereaved.

Save the Date...

Friday, April 17, 6:30-8 p.m.
White River Historical Museum
All *GriefWorks* supporters are invited to attend a special donors’ event, *Glimpsing Back and Paying it Forward*. Hors d’oeuvres and local wines will be served. Guests can enjoy the museum exhibits and bid in the silent auction. Watch for your invitation and bring guests as we celebrate *GriefWorks*’ 10th anniversary in a venue that honors the past. For details, call (253) 333-9420.

Upcoming...

Grief Talk Support Groups

Tues. Jan. 27- Mar. 3, 6:30-8 p.m.
Mon., Feb. 23-Mar. 30; 12:30– 2 p.m.
Tues. Mar. 17-Apr.21, 6:30-8 p.m.
Mon. Apr. 13-May 11, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Call for locations and to register.

Public Forum

“Is it Grief or Depression?” Feb. 3rd, 10:30 a.m.—Noon, and Feb. 5th, 7-8:30 p.m. No cost to attend. Call *GriefWorks* for location.

Family Night Series

Grief education and support for all ages. Please call or e-mail for info or to register.

Ongoing Enumclaw Groups

GriefWorks staff facilitate two support groups at the Enumclaw Public Library. There is no cost or pre-registration, which are sponsored by Enumclaw Regional Hospital.

Grief Support Group:

First and third Wednesday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m.

Caregivers Support Group:

First and third Thursday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m.

Grief Tip

You may find healing in doing repetitive things with your hands—activities you don’t have to think about very much because they become second nature, or something that demands more attention and distracts you from your pain. Consider trying knitting, crocheting, carving, woodworking, polishing, solving jigsaw puzzles, painting, braiding, shoveling, washing, or countless other activities.





Ask Dr. Bob

Everything you wanted to know about loss, but were afraid to ask

Dear Dr. Bob,
My mother died in January 2008 and I've been going through a lot of grief. Fortunately I've been attending a grief support group, but I have this incredible guilt with my mother. I can't even write about it in this letter, but trust me, it's heavy. It just eats away at me. And, no, I don't feel like I can tell my grief group. This

must sound strange, but I haven't talked to anyone about it. I don't really know what my question is. I guess I just wanted to hear what you have to say, even though you don't know what my guilt is about. Sorry if this sounds confusing.

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,
It sounds like you are experiencing what I call *Unmentionable Guilt*. This is the kind of guilt that you think is so terrible you really can't tell anyone. So, like you say, it "eats away" at you.

When I am asked to speak at The Compassionate Friends (a national bereaved parents support group: www.compassionatefriends.org) the most frequently requested workshop is the one on Guilt. We are the only species that feels guilty for longer than a few minutes. We think about the past, turning it over and over, processing it, reviewing the *what ifs*, the *I should've's*, the *why didn't I's*, and the *if only's*. Sound familiar? Quite often when we share our guilt with someone, we receive trite advice, such as "Don't feel guilty" or "Get over it," which convinces us that it was unwise to open up. You have a deep guilt that seems so terrible that you cannot even risk telling a soul.

Here are a few suggestions. Pick whatever seems best for you at this time:

1. Write the entire guilt story on paper. Get it out of your head; see it on paper. Then tear it up or burn it.
2. If you have a religious belief, have a conversation with God. Share your secret guilt and listen for a reply.
3. Think of the person in your life you trust the most. Then imagine a conversation with this person in which you share your guilt. If you decide to actually meet with this person, give a few instructions prior to your the discussion. For example, say something like, "I am going to tell you something I've never told anyone before. Here is what I need from you...."
4. Ask yourself, "What would it take for me to begin to forgive myself?" Ask this question as often as you need to.

Guilt is a tough issue. Unmentionable Guilt is tougher. Be good to yourself and do some good grief work, OK?

Best,
Dr. Bob

Bob Baugher, Ph.D., has taught for over 25 years and currently is a psychology professor at Highline Community College, where his classes include Death and Life. He has led numerous community and national bereavement workshops as well as written or co-authored several books, available at www.GriefWorks.org.

Founder's Corner



Years ago I wrote an article called "Lemons to Lemonade, A Cliché To Live By." I shared my conviction that, with God's help, most every lemon can be turned into lemonade. During his three and a half years of chemotherapy, however, my son David asked, "Gee, mom, how much lemonade can a guy drink?" David was right. In the depths of anguish and suffering, it is hard to imagine ever feeling joy and purpose for living again.

Yet, because of our lemons (which I often think of as detours) and how we choose to respond to them, we are who we are today. With hindsight, we can see how our personal history has shaped us and, perhaps, how the support of others nurtured us toward a healthy recovery and lifestyle. Probably there were people along the way who contributed to our healing: perhaps counselors, support groups, authors, or educators. I certainly have a list of folks—professionals, family and friends—who clearly contributed to my healing and personal growth. Some still do.

Would I volunteer for the lemons? Never! Do I find gratification in the "lemonade"? Yes! Because of our personal histories, the staff of **GriefWorks** can be present with those who are in *their* darkest hour. We can welcome their expressions of emotional pain because we know that *this* is the shortest path through grief—to where life is sweet and has meaning once again; to a time when we have the energy to share our lemonade.

Our course, not everyone makes or enjoys the same flavor of lemonade. Our staff chooses to offer education and support to the bereaved. You might serve through another method. Our work would not continue, however, without the support of those who give back to **GriefWorks** financially.

Contributing financially to **GriefWorks** is one way to make lemonade...or to "pay it forward." If you are able, would you please consider joining us today in making lemonade for those who are still juggling lemons? We *all* appreciate your help!

*Mel Erickson, along with Nanette Flynn, founded **GriefWorks** in 1998 as a bereavement resource providing education and support for people grieving a death or seeking to understand the grief process.*

GriefWorks

PO Box 912

Auburn, WA 98071-0912

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