

LIFT

Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant

August 2021
Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today
West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

Grief Education Support Group
Tuesday, August 3, 5:30 pm
WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center
1933 University Avenue

Monthly Luncheon
Tuesday, August 17, 11 am
Outback Steakhouse
4505 Sherwood Way

Upcoming: Fall Session of Building Bridges

Building Bridges, HOSA's bereavement program for grieving children and their families, will begin September 14. For more information, please contact Melissa Salvato at 325-658-6524 or msalvato@wtrc.com.

For information about bereavement services and events, call Hospice of San Angelo Bereavement Department, 325-658-6524 or email Karen at kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com. Bereavement services are also open to the public.

ONE ART

By Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

--Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

Excerpt: "19 Lines That Turn Anguish Into Art"

By Dwight Garner and Parul Sehgal (New York Times/ June 18, 2021)

Elizabeth Bishop's 1976 poem "One Art" is, deservedly, among the most revered in the English language. It is a poem about loss—about the capacity to endure misfortune and grief.

"The art of losing isn't hard to master," it famously begins. In the second stanza the speaker encourages us to get used to life's subtractions. The speaker casually lists some of the things people lose all the time. Small things. In the third stanza, the losses mount, and we're pushed to confront other, heavier types of loss. Places vanish. So do names. Still, the speaker remains cool and detached.

But a subtle change occurs in the next stanza. The speaker has begun to draw from personal experience, and the poem begins to warm. The exclamation – "And look!" – is full of feeling, and brings us closer to the speaker. As the poem continues, the losses grow larger: a house now, a pair of cities, two rivers and a continent.

The final stanza opens with a dash. It's an unexpected turn. Suddenly the speaker is addressing someone new: a more specific "you." We realize the speaker is wrestling with the loss of a loved one. It's a loss so deep, it can barely be acknowledged. The speaker strains to write the words.

In the last stanza, the steady refrain, “the art of losing isn’t hard to master,” changes slightly, but crucially. That “too” is new – a small concession, a sign of uncertainty. The structure is breaking, and so is the poetic voice. A storm is blowing through. The composure of the preceding stanzas is lost in a rush of parentheticals and contractions. “Shan’t,” a formal word, almost feels desperate here – a paltry attempt at keeping up appearances, holding things together. The italicized imperative feels like a final crack in the façade as those repeated, stuttering “likes” reduce the speaker to a kind of faltering inarticulacy. It’s almost as if we are watching the poem being written in real time, the speaker forcing the final word, “disaster,” onto the page. Over 19 lines, the speaker has made an inventory of losses – concrete and abstract, large and small.

Excerpt: Takeaways from “One Art”

By Norman E. Rosenthal, M.D. in *How 50 Inspiring Poems Can Heal and Bring Joy to Your Life*

- **There is an art to losing.** Like all skills, the ability to survive loss may improve with experience, a fact that may offer comfort when loss occurs.
- **Accept the loss.** Acceptance of suffering is fundamental to dealing with all types of adversity. In general, acceptance of suffering lessens the pain, just as denial of suffering amplifies it. The value of acceptance is perhaps best expressed in the famous Serenity Prayer attributed to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, which reads in part, “God, give me the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed.”
- **Beware of all-or-none thinking.** This type of thinking has been classified as one form of cognitive distortion, which can contribute to depression and other negative mood states. When people engage in all-or-none thinking, they gravitate towards extremes – for example, that something either is or is not a disaster. This may cause emotional problems, such as depression in the former case or denial in the latter. When you encounter adversity, including the loss of a loved one, it may be neither a disaster nor easy, but something in between, as the poet finally concludes.
- **Write it down.** Bishop’s advice to herself to write down her thoughts and feelings is in line with modern science: writing down your deepest thoughts and feelings can be therapeutic and instrumental in recovery from trauma. James Pennebaker, professor of psychology at the University of Texas in Austin, pioneered this line of work, which has revealed many physical and psychological benefits that can accrue from such writing exercises.

August 2021



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Hospice of San Angelo, Inc.
P.O. Box 471
San Angelo, Texas 76902