

# LIFT

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

July 2021  
Bereavement Newsletter

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

We are tickled with our brand-new Bates Bereavement Center and can't wait to show it off! We have begun in-person groups, counseling sessions, and the monthly luncheon. The Sole Mates Mall-Walking Support Group is once again on hold due to the mall's limited hours. We look forward to resuming that at a later time. Meanwhile, plus join us:

Grief Education Support Group  
Tuesday, July 6, 5:30 pm  
WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center  
1933 University Avenue

Monthly Luncheon  
Tuesday, July 20, 11 am  
Cotton Patch Cafe  
4116 Sherwood Way

*For more information about bereavement services and events, please call Hospice of San Angelo Bereavement Department, 325-658-6524 or email Karen at [kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com](mailto:kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com).*

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## POETRY RX:

### HOW 50 INSPIRING POEMS CAN HEAL AND BRING JOY TO YOUR LIFE

By Normal E. Rosenthal, M.D.

#### Introduction

You may well wonder how I, a psychiatrist with no formal literary credentials, have chosen to write about the power of poetry to heal, inspire, and bring joy to people. It all started with a single phone call that came in late one night.

The caller was my friend David, and I knew immediately by the tone of his voice that something was wrong. He choked up as he told me that he had recently lost someone very dear to him. "How can I go on?" he mused. "How will I manage?"

Clichés and generalities readily come to mind in such situations, but I searched for something specific to say, something that might actually help. Recognizing that David is a person steeped in the arts, I said, "There is an art to losing, and like all art, it can be developed."

He was silent for a while, and when he spoke again his voice sounded more cheerful, as though he had tapped into some hidden source of hope.

"Do you know the poem 'One Art' by Elizabeth Bishop?" he asked. I told him no.

"Well, let me read it to you," and he began: "The art of losing isn't hard to master."

As he read on, his voice gathered strength and energy with each stanza. Afterwards, his mood was lighter – and strangely, so was mine.

"Can a poem really help a grieving person?" I wondered, "and, if so, might other poems also have healing powers?" I marveled also at how David had reached into the depth of his grief and presented me with a gift – a poem that offered a fresh perspective on how to help someone out of the darkness that can engulf you when you lose someone you love. I shared the poem with patients and friends, many of whom found comfort in the words, and looked for other poems that might have similar effects.

Once I started looking, I found such poems everywhere. One friend, a therapist, had been so moved by a poem about aging by Wendell Berry that she had given copies of it to patients (*I Know I Am Getting Old*). I holstered my promising finding with Internet reports of comfort and relief in response to particular poems.

The idea of this book is that poetry can not only inspire and delight, but can actually help you feel better, soothe your pain, and heal psychological wounds. In short, as the book's title suggests, poetry can act as a kind of medicine.

Although all literature can console, there is something about great poetry – its rhythms and cadences, its conciseness and brilliance – that has a power and charm all its own. One way in which poetry exerts its effect is that it is easier to remember, recall, and reproduce at will.

How to Get the Most Out of a Poem

Although reading a poem seems like a very straightforward activity, it can be greatly enriched by a few simple tricks.

- Remember to enjoy the poem. It should be fun, not work!
- Read it aloud. Reading a poem aloud deepens its therapeutic potential.
- Read the poem more than once. One mysterious aspect of a poem is how successive readings reveal new layers of meaning.
- Experience the poem with all of your senses. A poem is no more a purely intellectual experience than a song or a painting or a spoonful of ice cream.
- As the reader, you complete the poem. Allow yourself to experience the wonder a poem provides when it opens up new spaces in which your mind can roam.
- Listen to others reading the poem. Many of the poems in this collection are read aloud online by talented women and men, and can be found on the Internet.
- Tolerate – and even savor – ambiguity of feeling and thought. Often in poems, circuits are not completed; ideas are left unfinished or equivocal. This is not accidental. The unfinished business may serve as a focus of continued puzzlement, a brainteaser lingering in the mind, begging for a solution.
- Pay attention to details. Punctuation, the separation of lines, their placement on the page, form, rhythm, and rhyme, as well as the white space that helps give the poem its shape, may all be a part of what the poet is trying to communicate.

*Poetry RX: How Fifty Inspiring Poems Can Heal and bring Joy to Your Life by Norman E. Rosenthal, MD, is available in hard cover, paperback, and Kindle editions at Amazon.com.*

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YOU CAN DO THIS AT HOME

Reread a poem that has “spoken” to you in the past. Following Dr. Rosenthal’s suggestions, let it speak to you again.

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