I couldn't believe it when Gary died. It happened so fast. Gary had wanted to live so bad. I wanted him to live. We all prayed, but God had other plans. So much confusion in my mind, day and night. Death was so elusive. Gary was dead. I don’t know how many times I had to tell myself that he was dead, gone, not alive.

Gary’s death stopped my life in its tracks. Stuck. I didn’t know how to live without Gary. I had to figure out how to live on my own. Every problem I had with the car, house, computer, yard work, Gary had always been there to help me. I felt so mixed up trying to figure out what needed to be done, how to do it, or who to get to do the job. So much I didn’t know needed doing. When I would have a problem with something, my first thought was to “ask Gary,” but then my next thought was, “Oh that’s right, Gary is dead,” then I would think, “I can’t believe he died.”

I didn’t know what to do or how to live without Gary. I had never lived by myself. So I accepted and read every book or pamphlet given or borrowed to me. I wrote down the names and numbers of people who offered to help me if I needed. I went to hospice bereavement classes which helped me deal with the way I was feeling – which was guilty, angry, sad, lonely, scared, confused, and very tired. Also I went to Griefshare classes, which helped me figure out how to go on without Gary. At Griefshare, sharing with others what I was going through and listening to others who had lost a spouse is what helped me the most. We also read Bible verses, and how they applied to what we were going through. Many of those verses gave me comfort.

It’s been so hard. It would have been our 46th wedding anniversary this year. I told myself I cannot have gone through this great sadness that permeated my life, without having it help someone somewhere lessen their pain. I also couldn’t believe how unaware I had been to others’ pain who had lost a loved one, and I felt guilty about that.

continued on page 2...
We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends whose loved ones passed away. We are thankful for the opportunity to have shared in their lives.

In memorium

We intellectually knew Gary had died, but emotionally I had not connected the permanency of Gary being gone forever. Gary was dead and I had to remind myself and convince myself that he really was dead.

My emotional connection to Gary was the hardest to release. There was such a void in my life, but it took me awhile to even realize that is what the feeling was. I was so sad. I missed Gary so much. After months of living without Gary, my willpower to keep going was slowing down. I found myself abandoning my books and I could no longer concentrate to read. I abandoned my journal because I couldn't think of words to write. I sat in my rocking chair, with TV on, iPad in lap, playing games but not really paying attention to either as I ate ice cream, popcorn, and licorice waiting for the day to pass so I could go to bed. Even that was a chore, as I frequently had disturbing dreams, and I didn't sleep well. Day after day was becoming burdensome. Friday evenings were the worst – so lonely – as most people look forward to Friday night. I dreaded them and was relieved when the weekend was over.

I was so lonely. I prayed to God to help me. My prayers were answered when I got Oliver. Oliver forced me to get up and take care of him. He was such a cute puppy, I couldn't not take care of him. He really has been a blessing for me and the whole family.

After the first year passed I was hoping to feel back to normal, but I finally realized it would never be normal, as I had known. But that is okay, that is life. Life changes.

Today my days are easier to get through. I can go on “automatic” as I clean, cook, mow, and scoop snow. I do the best I can and believe I am through the worst of it. I can see how far my life has moved on since Gary died. I know I will be okay. I have no choice. God continues to prompt me to do His will.
Rescuing yourself from a bad day ~cont. from back cover

Have realistic goals that you can meet. Be fair to yourself. The bad news is that we all have bad days that blindside us, but the good news is those days enable us to feel the beauty of a good day, the love of a dear friend, the magnificence of a gorgeous sunset, and the elegance of a bouquet of flowers. Make a list of Affirmations, promises to yourself, and hang them on the bathroom mirror or refrigerator door, reminding yourself what you have promised yourself to do, like, “I commit to healing,” “I express my emotions,” “I tell people what I need,” and “I make time for myself.” If we are determined to make the best of each day, we can claim crisis as an opportunity for good things to happen. Staying in dialogue with God helps too, whether we are ranting, raving, crying, questioning, or bringing our most passionate feelings to our Creator. God is the only One capable of handling the full intensity of our negative emotions, our questions, our fears, and our pain. You will see answers, often in unexpected ways, which will get you out of the doldrums.

Be Daring. Try new avenues of help, opening yourself to new experiences like joining a support group, attending a bereavement conference, seeking private counseling, or checking out the grief books in your own public library. Let yourself be inspired by the heartfelt messages of these facilitators, speakers, and authors, as they share their wisdom, giving you both a challenge and motivation while filling your soul up with hope and good thoughts. You would be surprised at the happy faces that greet me after bereaved grandmas, moms and dads, and siblings show me their new tattoo (and most times their only one) inscribed with a sign that gives them support and a deep connection with their loved one. Just touching it seems to infuse them with new strength on a bad day. Collect some memorabilia, special objects with great sentimental value of your loved one, and make a Memory Box or add to the one you already have, filled with letters, cards, pictures, diplomas, prayers, medals, whatever warms your heart, like Denis’ little Ziggy doll dressed in graduation cap and gown, with “I is a brane” emblazoned on its chest or Peggy’s last Mother’s Day card three months before she died, which read, “Remember all that trouble I used to give you” and on the inside proclaimed, “I’m almost through!”

Be Positive. It’s what you tell your head. Each morning when I get up, if I say, “I’ll never see my children again,” my stomach does flip-flops and I feel devastated. But instead, if I say, “I’m one day closer to seeing Peggy and Denis,” my heart sings. Stay in the present. Every moment is precious. Now is the time for us to forgive, reach out, and express our love. As Mother Teresa reminds us, “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” Repeat things that you know bring a glow to your day. It could be reading, golfing, walking the dog, visiting a good friend, playing with a grandchild, listening to soothing music. Follow your heart. That’s the rule of thumb. Do what you can handle, not what overpowers you. Some of us might be letting the laundry pile up, ignoring the cooking, avoiding relatives, or not answering the telephone, but we might be creating the most gorgeous garden or knitting hundreds of scarves or becoming a master carpenter. We grab onto anything that is a lifeline for us. Some might be letting the laundry pile up, ignoring the cooking, avoiding relatives, or not answering the telephone, but we might be creating the most gorgeous garden or knitting hundreds of scarves or becoming a master carpenter. We grab onto anything that is a lifeline for us. Some might be letting the laundry pile up, ignoring the cooking, avoiding relatives, or not answering the telephone, but we might be creating the most gorgeous garden or knitting hundreds of scarves or becoming a master carpenter.

We have the power to choose. We can control how we do our grief work and our attitude toward our healing. When we can’t control what’s happening, we challenge ourselves to control the way we respond to what’s happening – that’s where the power is. We can infuse our life with action and love. Our choices will direct our healing through every step of the process, and we will feel the comforting rewards of our positive actions.

So, as we are busy rescuing ourselves from a bad day, let us remember (and even smile at) Voltaire’s prophetic words, “Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats,” reminding us to be grateful for life and the chance for a better tomorrow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Wife, mother, grandmother, educator, author and speaker, Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S., shares her gifts of hope and inspiration with the bereaved, since the deaths of her two eldest children, twenty-one-year-old Denis and nineteen-year-old Peggy, in the same 1986 automobile accident. In addition to being Founder (1987) and Chapter Leader of The Compassionate Friends of Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York, (along with her husband Joe), she is also a Charter Member of Bereaved Parents/USA since 1995. Elaine shares her unique gifts of caring and humor with audiences across the United States at workshops and seminars, in radio and television appearances, and through her numerous magazine articles.

Coping resources available ...
If you or someone you know and love is experiencing loss... or if you are walking along with someone in their loss... we have grief resources available for you, including specific materials to help with the loss of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, or grandchild. Books, workbooks, and DVDs are available for check-out from our Hospice office. Call us at 712-737-5279 for more information, or stop by our office to browse the selections.
It's no fun to be struggling to stay alive and be positive about life, when our heart is broken and we feel overwhelmed and lost with the death of our loved one. Even though we are making progress and have promised ourselves to “hang in there,” to go through our grief rather than choosing to avoid it, we still have to deal with the excruciating bad days that can suddenly appear without any warning.

When my two oldest children, 21-year-old Denis and 19-year-old Peggy, were killed in a 1986 car accident, I had no idea how long the grief process would be part of my life. I gradually learned that it’s not a short-term process, nor is it a long-term process, but rather a life-time process. It’s how we handle it, make the most of it, incorporate it into our lives, that helps us put our best foot forward, giving us the power to be valiant on those days that are dark, bleak, scary, and threaten our hard-earned progress.

I found some of these ideas a real tonic to lift my spirits, give me hope, and help me climb out of the dark pit that seemed to surround and engulf me. Hopefully, some will work for you.

**Be Connected.** Love never dies. We want to keep the communication lines open with our loved one. Whether we are talking to them, praying to them, writing about them, lighting a candle for them, our relationship continues. They are not gone, they have simply gone ahead. To feel even closer to them, some of us lovingly wear a linking object, something that belonged to them, like a sweater, a hat, a piece of jewelry. Others march directly to the tattoo parlor to choose a meaningful symbol, a heart, a butterfly, a shamrock, to feel connected in a special way. Each of us finds something that helps our heart remember all those treasured memories with our special person that bring a welcome smile to our face and lighten the burden in our heart. Maybe making a shrine on a tabletop, cabinet, sideboard, or TV, sharing framed pictures of our loved one or any objects that were meaningful to them, or items significant to us like angels, butterflies, flowers, printed prayers, or sayings, would help us feel lovingly connected when we miss them so much. Some hang their loved one’s picture by the front or back door, throwing a kiss or greeting to them as they enter or leave their home, making them a part of their everyday lives, always remembered, staying connected.

**Be Determined.** We want our loved one to be proud of us, watching over us as we walk each stepping stone of the grief journey. It’s hard work. Hang on while riding the roller-coaster of grief. You can yell and scream all you want as your grief hits all those curves and dips and bumps, but don’t give up. Know that a bad day just means you can “start over” tomorrow.

**Seasons**
Hospice Newsletter Fall 2018

Rescuing Yourself from a Bad Day

-*by Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S.*

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When is it the right time for hospice?
The decision to choose hospice is a very personal one. It involves talking with your family, physician, and loved ones about your illness and the care options available. Many families wait to call hospice until the final days and weeks of their loved one's life, not knowing they could have started receiving additional specialized nursing support, medications, medical equipment, and supplies related to their loved one's life-limiting illness much earlier.

Hospice is a special concept of care designed to provide comfort and support to patients and their families when a life-limiting illness no longer responds to cure-oriented treatments. Here are a few things to consider: hospice's expertise in palliative, or comfort care, assures the patient of pain control and symptom management; hospice enables patients to focus on living their remaining days fully, at home if they choose, among family and friends; hospice emphasizes family involvement – understanding that everyone's definition of “family” is unique – and helps individuals to support each other during this time of life. Hospice comes alongside caregiver's by having someone they can lean on, seek guidance from, and receive much needed support during this difficult time.

What can hospice do for my loved one?
Hospice care is an additional layer of support for your loved one in their home or care facility, working in partnership with your family and your loved one's physician. When a patient chooses hospice care, they receive a team of support for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. In addition to this team of care, hospice provides medication, medical equipment and supplies related to their life-limiting illness. When one is faced with serious illness, contacting hospice is a choice that can lead to fewer worries and more meaningful moments.

Who can make a hospice referral?
A patient can be referred to hospice care by anyone. Patients can even refer themselves. However, a physician must approve eligibility and admission.
Talk with your physician or contact Orange City Area Home Health and Hospice for more information at 712-737-5279.

Does choosing hospice mean I'm giving up hope?
We understand that making the decision to accept hospice is often a difficult decision. Confronting the reality that an illness will not be cured can be frightening and may be thought of as giving up hope. When one receives a diagnosis that their life-limiting illness may not be cured, hope often changes. Hope may change to hope for comfort, understanding and choosing treatment options according to their wishes.

Hospice neither prolongs life nor hastens it. Although the statistical evidence shows that those who choose hospice care have a slightly longer life expectancy. Our medical team strives to control the symptoms that cause pain and discomfort. With hospices’ supportive services there's a sense of relief as trained professionals can offer care and guidance.

Our focus is not on death but life. We want our patients to live their lives fully. Hospice focuses on how we can help patients achieve personal goals, gain control of their life, and live each day the way they want to. Unfortunately, sometimes people wait until their final days to involve hospice. By contacting hospice earlier, patients and families can take the time to understand their options and choose the path that will have the most positive impact on quality of life. As difficult as it is for someone to accept hospice, patients and families often tell us, “I wish we would have called hospice sooner.”

How is the cost of hospice covered?
Hospice coverage is widely available. Medicare pays 100% of hospice care. Medicaid, the Veteran's Administration, and private insurance companies generally have hospice benefit coverage. We provide needed hospice services regardless of a person's ability to pay.

Can I make my own decisions about the amount and choices of care received in the hospice program?
Yes. The patient directs the care they receive. Orange City Home Health and Hospice will explain our treatment and care options. Our patients determine what works best for them. We know that no one understands what the patient is going through better than they do. We respect and honor our patient’s choices.
Bereavement Services through HOSPICE

Orange City Area Home Health & Hospice Bereavement Services help families understand and deal with grief through a variety of bereavement services. A Bereavement Coordinator offers the following services to each hospice family for up to a year following the death of their loved one:

- A Bereavement Coordinator will visit within the first month after the funeral.
- Short-term individual bereavement counseling is available to family members provided by the bereavement coordinator.
- Bereavement support groups are available throughout the year. The six-week support group is designed to help individuals understand the dynamics of grief and provides a safe environment in which to express their feelings.
- Monthly support mailings are sent to assist the bereaved in understanding the unpredictability of the grieving process. Included in the monthly mailings are inserts for coping through the holidays and special occasions.
- One-to-one trained bereavement volunteers are available to provide support, to be a friend, and to listen to the stories and concerns of the bereaved.
- Annual Service of Remembrance (Spring).
- Annual Lights of Remembrance (Winter).
- Acts as a community resource for grief education: including community presentations and professional trainings.
- Grief resource library.