

# Grief Notes

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## Should I learn to waterski? by Ronald Cunningham, Bereavement Coordinator

I remember when I was a teenager, I was “head over heels in love” with the girl of my dreams. Her family had an old boat and spent a lot of time on the water. She decided it would be a good idea for me to go with the family and do some waterskiing. I wasn’t sure about that, but “love” makes you do crazy things. Her dad threw me out with skis, a life jacket and the rope. First try, I face-planted bad. He circled around and I tried to get up again. After a day of face-plants, a loss of dignity and some bruising, I got up for about 7 seconds. I considered those 7 seconds a major high point in my life. I decided from that day on I would take up hiking. I was actually good at that and tended not to bruise so easily. I enjoyed it so much I still hike to this day.

When my grandfather passed away, I felt like my world came crashing in. It was expected. I hate that word. For me, death is never “expected.” I knew he no longer felt any pain and in our belief system he had found peace. It was still heart-wrenching for me. It wasn’t long before people started making suggestions to “help me” move on. I will admit that there were several good suggestions I tried, but somehow, I still felt “stuck” in shock and loss. When I look back on that time, I now understand that those suggestions, as good as they were, just were not for me. It was like my attempt at waterskiing. People who are good at it make it look so easy. It just wasn’t for me. What I did do was to remember that I enjoyed hiking. I started hiking and remembering the good times my grandpa and I had together. I started celebrating those times. He passed over 30 years ago. This morning I had a celebration hike before I went to work. It didn’t change the fact that he was gone, but hiking allows me to gain peace with his passing.

Each one of us has those things we enjoy that can help us with our grief. It can be as simple as holding on to a shirt and allowing ourselves to remember the smell of the one we loved. I have a wrench my grandfather owned and will sometimes just hold it and remember working on projects with him. Just enjoying remembering those good memories. Find what works for you. It might be allowing yourself to get lost in good thoughts when you knit or going on long drives through areas you both enjoyed. Each one of us will have different things. Don’t be afraid to try new things. Just remember if they are not working, maybe they are not for you. Try something you enjoy and allow it to help you with your grief.

