

Ontological Storytelling of Death and Dying: Who Listens? (In Memory of my Friend: Ivy M. DuRant)

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Abstract

This case study aims to discover why and how people tend to conclude that grievers of loved ones, acquaintances, friends, or even pets should remain under concealment. Some non-grievers in our society feel that grievers should conceal their heartfelt pain of those whom they have lost to death and dying. Grandmom, Mom, Matterie, Shabba (my pet), Brenda, and then Ivy were all individuals close to my heart. As the author, I take aim at finding consolation and answers as to why people in society today feel that grieving should remain concealed publically. These behaviors are seemingly constituted by non-grievers with such feelings of not knowing what to say, how to say it, or what to do, or is it simply because they really do not want to experience sorrow first handedly with others? Alternatively, this study seeks to reveal these behaviors or biases which may be imparted because non-grievers are unable to sympathetically or uncaringly, tune into their own intuitive super subconscious minds for grievers with a heart of care earnestly. Who listens, to our pain? This study is not suggesting that people intentionally do not want to show deep heartfelt care and concern for grievers to be mean, but brings to light how non-grievers really may not understand the complete social economical interventions that go along with the grieving process, and what grievers feel in the deepest part of their souls themselves over the loss of a loved one, acquaintance, friend, or pet. This case study hopes to discover the awakening of death and dying ontologically by delving deeper into the sense-making of common sense, and Social Constructivism as it relates to death and dying.

Introduction

Organizational storytelling paves the way to understanding the secular materiality of grievers' feelings, through the idea of "social constructivism. This case study depicts the joy of "*Being-in-the-world*" (sc'MOI, 2012), by sharing life story experiences with one another. It does not have to be religious comfort to tell the story although it is helpful at the

appropriate time. However, what is commonly acceptable seems to be the methodology of ontological secular materiality with the understanding of auto-ethnography as comforting the bereaved in death and dying occurrences. Hence, three major topics expounded upon in this study include the literature review, the case study background, and the discussion of Ivy's death with reflections of understanding the critical need of grasping the importance of how to properly comfort the bereaved! The materiality being revealed in this study emphasizes comfort as materiality, secular as materiality, compassion as materiality, and listening as materiality. In dealing with these materialities one should prepare for sensitivity sharing of specific ethnographies for which one is going to address.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the beauty of knowing how to comfort a griever, melts the ice of fear and discomfort through authentic love and understanding with the passion for caring. This particular organizational storytelling includes moving past sense-making and social constructivism to the ontological approaches of storytelling materialities. Therefore, it unites narrative and ante-narrative perspectives, with auto-ethnography organizational storytelling.

Oblique erudition is the capability to foresee a problem and demonstrate the ability to solve the problem. The result of the objectives in dealing with the problem of death and dying stressful situations is discovered when one tries to psychoanalyze a "*what if*" I do something different" *orientation*. Now, the consequences of the results should be a better or healthier course of action in the healing process of death and dying. The experience of death and dying is a phenomenon, which may aid in depression due to the loss of a loved one. The emotions of fear, anger, aggression, and despair may possibly paralyze the griever's thinking process when it comes to what one should do next, or how to deal with such painful grief without support. Therefore the traumatic experiences of death and dying with which we are forced to deal with, on behalf of our loved ones, may ultimately interfere with griever's confidence in dealing with how, why, or when a loved one took flight.

In conclusion, when considering the metaphysics of death and dying, the concept of unfamiliarity of "*being*" and the devastation of *reality*," *the concept of unfamiliarity appears to* cast upon the human spirit a shadow of discontentment, and in some cases, the fear of the unknown taking place in one's very own private "*BEING*". Therefore, to affectively comfort the bereaved ones, there are some suggestions that might be helpful such as: 1. Just being there for the bereaved to comfort them, 2. Just being available to listen to their story and grief, 3. Just allowing the bereaved to reflect and express themselves, 4. Just letting them weep, and 5. Just offering a prayer of comfort and security, but establishing consentology, first. These helping observations, like parenting, instills a sense of renewal and faith that one can continue to go on, with one's life after the final resting place here on earth of the lost loved one. It has been reported that oftentimes, the need for the bereaved to go on with their lives would be pleasing to the deceased. This idea must be communicated to the bereaved (Wild Net GEO, 2007). *Who Listens?*

Figure A.1 portrays a computational process whereby this study enacts engagement, portraying how effective engagement between griever and non-griever may ultimately lead to griever welcoming once again hope, comfort, acceptance, and finally one's healing of the death and dying unpleasant experiences by the unwinding of a spiraling affect.

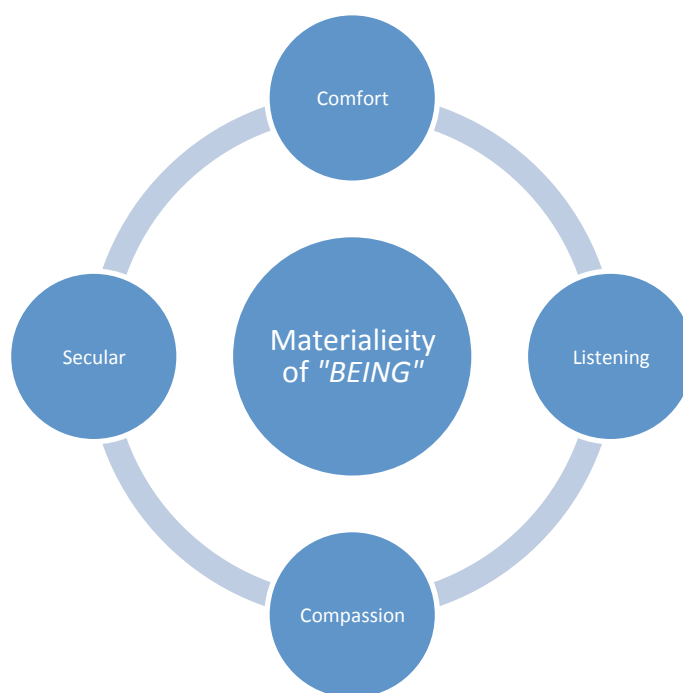


Figure A1: Computational Engagement

Literature Review

In all walks of life and in every entity of life death and dying is experienced and a high level of grief is launched. This literature view depicts several scholarly empirical ideologies of the many facets surrounding how societies deal with loosing someone so dear to their hearts. Therefore, pure common sense portraying the elimination of criticisms during one's hour of bereavement is ethically and morally expected; and the ontological storytelling as it relates to death and dying features various scholarly authors focus about this problem. Four points of interest this literature review considered for this case study as an asset include articles written by the following scholarly authors:

First, F. Beryl Pilkington's, (1993) article: "The Living Experience of Grieving the Loss of an Important Other". This article supports this case study's deliberations of griever's grieving the loss of a loved one, and how the loss warrants the proper affection from others in order for the healing process to ignite its powerful "self". Pilkington's article points to the fact that vast amounts of deaths, stems from all walks of existence. I believe that when such devastation is suddenly thrust upon griever's, the pain tends to enter into our space of "Being" as the formality of our demise may enter in its faintest nature while visibly distinguished. This article acknowledges that individual pain stemming from such loss is indescribable by others. Unless the person on the other end of the stick has an ear to listen tentatively and sensitively to the griever's dismay, no one can feel one's pain for the loss of another, but you (the griever). Regardless of a non-griever's observations of the griever, the true feelings of that griever cannot be detected.

I appreciate knowing and understanding that the author of this article understands that normative conjectures pertaining to bereavement contains diminutive implications in the nursing industry where predictions or control of human experiences are limited. Nurses are continuing their efforts to understand and implement innovative ways of participating in these lived experiences of first the deceased and secondly the bereaved. Their efforts are most affective towards griever's grieving the loss of a loved one to the point where the griever does not have to conceal their true feeling about their loss from a human scientific perspective. Every death and dying experience of the loss therefore is unequalled. While this article is very enlightening, and well-structured and comprised of many important factors, it omits the reality that non-griever's tend to not know how to deal effectively with griever's by simply listening and not asking the wrong questions or making appalling remarks.

Secondly, William K. Cody's (1991) article's approach to "Grieving A Personal Loss", highlights the moods of "lived experiences" of the deceased by the grieved. Hence, this author indicates how the design of the decease's subsisted

familiarity pertaining to grieving becomes an intensified struggle surrounding the unrest of their loved one's transformation. This generally occurs during a possible metanoic transparency away from the "now" seeing that diverse potentials may very well surface in abiding through, and at a distance from the "gone" presence of others in radiance to that which was dear.

Both authors here share the same ideologies of grieving. The methodology is also the same. This case study seeks to understand why non-grievers feel that griever should hide their true feelings about the loss of their deceased, dear loved ones. It has become apparent, that from reading this article that the assessment of Parse's style revealing the underlying meaning of the bereaved "lived experiences", may be somewhat contradictory by reflecting on what is remembered about the loved one during the grieving period. This article though advantageous excludes one aspect which I find important to this case study, and that is how and why people tend to conclude that grievers of loved ones should remain under concealment. This is an undeveloped concept thus far, which deserves an awakening in society. As the author for this study, I analyze the grieving phenomenon of grievers' loss, which I find to be unswerving stemming from an "ontological viewpoint". The main beliefs are specified in this theory. Contrary to the author's belief, people must be able to relieve themselves to another no matter how painful publically, if necessary, without scrutiny. Endurance over grief by the non-griever comes with company, that is, in the form of an unusual living experience of "*Who Listens?*"

Thirdly, the article "Dying and Grieving Seen through a Unitary Lens" (2006), written by Violet M. Malinski, RN; Ph.D., represents Todaro-Franceschi's views relating to the "unitary view of energy". The author here points out how the discipline of unitary individuals bring to light auxiliary initiatives relating to becoming extinct and broken heartedness, based on others presumptions that life somehow converts, but is in no way actually lost. This author bring out this assumption by relating to her study of synchronicities pertaining to deceased loved ones in terms of a beginning healing modality for the griever.

This article is supportive to this case study because it recognizes non-grievers support to grievers during death and dying crisis. This supportive position shows a dynamic change in relationship with the loved one experiencing the loss of a loved one by compassionately, and sympathetically listening and offering effective support. The article shows how this unified emerging description of unitary lens in dying and grieving is able to assist nurses in being truly present with those who are grieving a loss. It does not, however, specifically, infer that this concept is befitting for individuals outside of the nursing industry. Also, it does not provide insight for how the unitary lens concept can provide assistance to non-grievers during their time with grievers.

Fourthly, Bernard Burns' (2012) article "Kurt Lewin and the origins of OD" reflections of Lewin's OD theories, coincides with the author of this study's ideologies. These reflections reveal behaviors or biases which may be imparted because non-grievers are unable to sympathetically or uncaringly, tune into their own intuitive super subconscious for grievers with a heart full of care earnestly. Their perceptions, feelings, actions, core beliefs of death and dying and how to approach a griever is not yet learned.

Organizational Development, although is about human beings and corporations and the people associated with these conglomerates and their functionalities' imposes a significant phenomenology. This concept is significant to "organizational storytelling", and includes going beyond sense-making and social constructivism pertaining to the ontological storytelling of grievers' losses. Whereas, materiality of death and dying from the OD industry perspective is befitting for planned modifications about how death and dying may arrive out of non-grievers coming into the understanding of knowing better what grievers are actually experiencing in their "Being". Such experience at the same time hopes that they will realize they will soon overcome the worst part of their grief.

This article in subtle ways may imply that premeditated revolutionized changes including the implementation of common-sense, when helping grievers to begin accepting their loss overtime is recognized as a goal-oriented approach towards the healing of grief. This article does not in no way touch on death and dying, but the same concepts, methodologies, and ideologies suggested in OD can indeed be applied to the new era of death and dying from another point of view. So, from this position, this case study therefore, unites narrative and the ante narrative perspectives, with auto-ethnography of both the griever and non-griever outside the organizational setting. That includes the private and personal setting of human behavior. Lewin developed four notions which would engage participants in a joint effort for a better approach for consideration, value, and bringing about change organizationally and socially. Therefore, based on

Lewin’s OD perspectives, five models are developed relating to death and dying effectiveness when dealing with grief for this phenomenon.

The foregoing authors have provided empirical theories which may be utilized in comforting the bereaved. These articles were based on grieving from medical professions points of view, and from an Organizational Development (OD) point of view. Their viewpoints and examples helped me to gain better insight of death and dying from various other careers. This new information adds to the book of knowledge as it relates to griever and non-griever in death and dying situations.

Figure A.2: demonstrates the emotional heartfelt healing process. It is a circling intertwining model picturing non-griever who do not know what to do, what to say, or how to handle the bereaved. This model illustrates numerous methodologies for unfreezing griever’s immobility and aims to assist griever into resuming their life by embracing peace, happiness, and reflection of their loss. As the author of this study, I believe that negative attitudes derived from a quasi-immobility symmetry, which is supported by numerous complexities of fields driving and restraining life renewal after the loss of a loved one or pet is deterred when griever have not been able to find consolations and answers sustainable enough for the loss of their loved one or their pets in a caring way. This circling intertwining model below enables both non-griever and griever to change quickly in the environment of their “Being”.

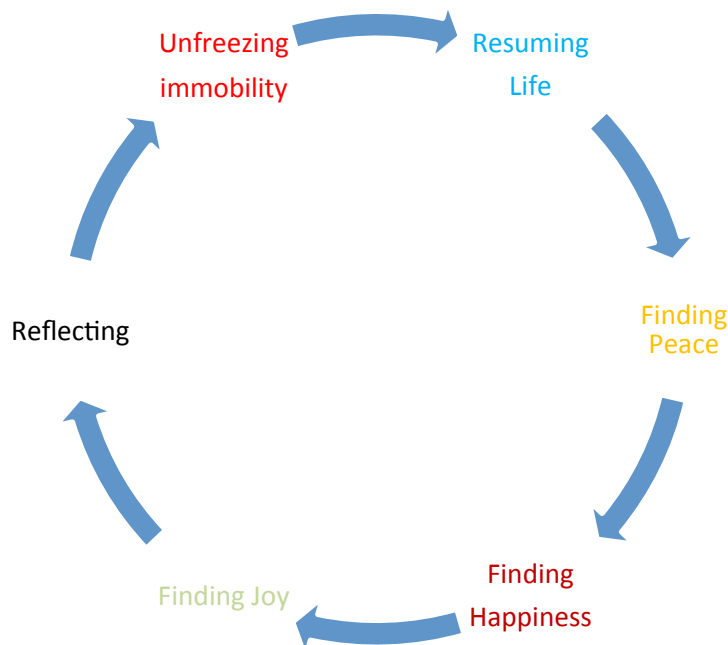


Figure A.2 Circling intertwining non-griever potential success

Case Study Background

Although this paper is in memory of my dear colleague and co-writer Ivy M. DuRant, please understand that I am equally grieved over the loss of the others mentioned in this article.

As I sit in my home trying to relax in my bed watching television waiting for the ball to drop at Times Square in my hometown, New York City, I am haunted by the *Being* of beautiful memories of my dear mother, grandmother, and three of my very dear and closest friends and also my deceased pet cat Shabba, of twenty two years: Matteriea (Woo), Brenda, and now Ivy.

Ivy was my cohort, colleague, and co-writer. It was so painful and unbelievable, how I was constantly finding myself being drowned in my own tears, which were suddenly coming from know where at the sound of loud cheers, thanks, and joys from the clock striking 12 on January 1, 2012. It was a HAPPY NEW YEAR! For so many, and for me in many ways as well; but, for me, this New Year’s cheering is different. It is one of sorrow mixed with thanksgiving, praise, joy, and

happiness. Unfortunately, for the first time ever in my life I realize that I do not know quite how to deal with my feelings regarding death and dying. While my mother passed during my trip to New Delhi, India in December of 2010, and my friend, Mattered died only a month later, in January of 2011 (whom I did not know was that ill); and my cat Shabba died a week later, I cannot believe this crossroad I have come to, not really knowing myself, my own strengths, or my own will to overcome such hurt, pain, or devastations. Who wants to listen? Lately, these hazards seem to be like rivers of water, I unfortunately step into over and over again. What will I do without those loved ones, whom I could call on from time to time, any time or day, with which I spent many years. Who will ever believe what I am feeling, let alone listen. This is a depressing melody in my heart, one I cannot seem to make go away. So, here I sit crying and writing my ontological narrative, to sooth my pain of my “*Being*” in this particular time, in such devastating and heartbreaking despondency.

Martin Heidegger (1998), in Dave Robinson’s and Judy Groves’s book, “*Philosophy: A Graphic Guide*”, in his article: “The Quest for Being” asked the question: “What is “is”?” he goes on to say that ‘If we forget this basic question of *Being*, we lose sight of the way we are in the world” (pg. 120). So that I would not lose sight of the way I am in this world, and that I do not become unauthentic in my “*Being*” of *knowing myself*, I decided its best, that I move these primordial anxieties out of my life in order to go on with my life authentically helping others to also overcome death and dying. I was finally able to accept the fact that I too will travel this path of the *No Longer Being* in this world sooner than later. I therefore decided to gather my thoughts and begin sharing my story with others. Ridding my pain and sorrow of these misfortunes stimulated various metanoias (Grant, 2011) of transpersonal encounters I ultimately experienced. This experience now leads me to wanting to share my ontological ante-narratives of these individuals.

I have learned through research, reading, and writing that what I feel and how I react over the deaths of loved ones that my inner feelings of my soul cannot be tacited by others, not feeling that exact pain I feel. As a leader of many areas, I do strongly believe that my deeper inner soul metanoias revolves around everyday life devastations. So, here, in this article, it is intended to be a provocative awakening for those who might feel that crying, slipping into a state of depression, or even becoming somewhat immobile at times or for a period of time, after the loss of a loved one or loved ones are unnatural or in humane. It is not!

This case study aims to show that it is perfectly okay to express yourself either privately or openly in death and dying situations. I agree with Dr. Grant, that once such trials and thistles take place, the preparentorial experiences (Genesis, KJV) overtakes the “you” in the *Being* of such tragedies, which ultimately factors into the equation the pain of depression, broken heartedness, and loneliness, as trials and tribulations for self-evaluation lead towards understanding *the-self*.

As I have gotten older and better understand societal stipulations and confinements placed on individuals, I can now better analyze the comments we’ve heard from some, saying “Don’t Cry” or “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”, 2 Corinthians 5:8 (KJV Bible), or our Heavenly Father, or the Greater Being”. While, I do believe these are true, I am quite resistant to the saying, Don’t Cry! Don’t Cry? What? Are you for real? That person lying stretched out across the front of the church or at the Funeral Home means the world to the bereaved. Personally, from my experience those beloved individuals and my pet were everything to me. Again, I ask the question: How can you say to me DON’T CRY! And that if I cry it is a sign of weakness, or a sign that I do not believe in God or His word? *Who Listens?*

Now, my ontological story is this: The inexperienced person, non-griever, trying to console the griever may be unknowingly causing more hurt and pain, innocently. I say innocently, because they really do not understand what to say, what to do, or how to handle such a situation if thrust upon them. The ontological questions I would pose to them at the right time is this: When do you feel that the right times for griever to express their feelings over the dead is right? Do you not feel hurt that the person who is grieving may be inconsolable over someone special? On the other hand, what suggestions might you offer the griever to help push back the flooded river of tears? These individuals whom I reluctantly viewed as selfish, inconsiderate, maybe uncaring, and simply put, heartless, are those who have failed to see the ontic-ontological criteria of potential in *BEING* sensitive by caring (*Krell, pg. 55*). This is what the griever is left to bare!

No one wants to think these awful feelings about the inexperienced consoler. However, as I study great past philosophers, I cannot help but to grasp hold of several of their enlightening concepts namely: our own self-beliefs that are “self-justifying” by Jacques Lacan (1901-81), “mistaken-identity” by (Derrida), “falsification theory” by Karl Popper, “Being and Time” by Martin Heidegger, and “consciousness” by Karl Marx. Indeed, while all deaths are painful not *being* in the “know” (the need to be in contact) of another’s situation can also be to one’s detriment, as I have so appallingly found out over this past year. The intuitive super-subconscious internalized mind is the internal sense of the mind and Soul

which senses a crisis dealing with *quametics*. This is the energy pulling at one's intuitive super-subconscious mind that speaks to the heart. It informs the mind of what is right or what should be done. I'm often times reminded of the 1963 quote by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who once said "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter; meaning, in the case of non-grievers when the time comes to speak one has a moral obligation to respond to the griever or grievors. Failure to do so depicts one's personal path to dying by refusing to console the bereaved with words of care, concern, compassion, and love. So, the question remains, *Who Listens?*"

Discussion

On December 2, 2011, at 8:38 a.m., I received a text message from Ivy, which read, "I have a copy of the book it arrived today from the UK", I replied on the same day with "Oh great, I hope to get mine soon". It was two days later before I realized I had not receive any response from Ivy, which was unusual because never was there a time that we texted, called, or e-mail one another and never received an immediate response. We always had something interesting to share with one another, and were often bouncing our new ideologies off on one another. Writing, coming up with new ideas, and creating new words were our passion. Mirror imaging our mentor was our shared delight as well. We both would spend endless hour discussing the things we needed to do to be just like our mentor, Dr. David Boje. He was our motivation to get the work done in a timely fashion, and for the most part, we did. See, Ivy was one of my accountability partners.



Figure B. **Grieving** Angel Statue Gift for Condolence Present (Yahoo, 2012)

Since Ivy's passing and the passing of my other loved ones, I have found myself interrogatively, forcefully questioning myself, and constantly illocutionarily confused about the causalities of my unavailability during each of their diagnosed critical illnesses. The cause of Ivy's death however, was unfortunately not determined until after her passing. But, as far as the others, I did not realize how crucial their situations were; because, I was simply too busy, and not in tune with my intuitive super-subconscious "*BEING*" to sense just how ill they were until it was just too late. So, here, I ask the ontic question of myself: *Who Listens?* The pain I feel inside because I know, that I should have been there for each of them, right by their side haunts me into depression deeply, day after day. Again, I ask the same question. *Who Listens?*

I can't help but to reflect over and over again, how, if only, I would have taken the time to communicate with Ivy the day after her texting me, as I usually would, I would have known that she was battling some sort of virus; because, she would have told me she was not well, and I would have in returned replied to her, what is wrong with you? This would have perhaps led us into deeper conversations about the bat scuffle encounter she experienced. Hearing Ivy explain exactly what happened, would have, without a doubt, led me to encourage her to seek medical attention immediately. I know she would have gone! That was just the person she was. We embraced each other's opinions, and we *listened* to each other. If she said do something within reason, I did it, and if she suggested something to me, I considered it also. We were friends "*Who Listened*" to one another!

Sometimes when our hearts and minds speak to us we fail to listen tentatively, pushing our intuitive super-subconscious minds away. In this ontological narrative we find that there really is no beginning and there is no ending to “*Being*”. Meaning, our beginning and ending is eternal.

Conclusion

In closing, I aim to share my experiences of death and dying by provided insightful knowledge of how organizational storytelling paves the way to understanding the secular materiality of griever’s feelings. The purpose of this study was to explore how the beauty of comforting another might possibly melts the ice of discomfort through the warmth of love and understanding with the passion for caring. This particular organizational storytelling includes moving past sense-making and social constructivism to the ontological approaches of storytelling materialities. These concepts unite narratives and ante-narrative perspectives within auto-ethnography organizational storytelling.

Three major topics developed in this study includes: the literature review, the case study background, and the discussion of Ivy’s death with reflections of understanding the need for knowing how to effectively comfort the bereaved! The materiality’s being revealed in this study emphasizes comfort as materiality, secular as materiality, compassion as materiality, and listening as materiality. These concepts are intended to enhance one’s intrapersonal understanding of comforting the bereaved.

I hope, that by reading this article, that readers will be encouraged to further examine their personal sensitivity level when and while dealing with grieving individuals. I aim to show, how examining one’s personal sensitivity level when and while dealing with griever/s may be accomplished by the non-griever’s availability to the bereaved, with an attentive ear through listening, rather than talking so much, and risk providing unwanted advice. An understanding of personal sensitivity awareness helps readers to recognize that multi-auto-ethnographies are found in various cultures based on diverse belief systems and values. Such understanding and awareness appears to better prepare one to better share their own personal experience when relevant to a grieving individual’s circumstance. The need to do this is the key to comfort, and it seemingly portrays a level of authentic care. The literature review provided an appreciative inquiry into the “*Being*” of awareness. For example, what does one say when one does not know what to say in the moment of despair, stress, and sorrow? When it is your time to speak, thinking first about what words of comfort you want to share with the griever will help the comforter with what to say or what not to say at the appropriate time. We must think before we speak to ensure that a sense of genuine care and comfort is relevant for the bereaved.

As the author, it is my hope, that those who read this article will have a clearer understanding of the value of listening, and in return are able to determine if their listening techniques can be analyzed by exploiting the helpful techniques provided in this study. The question therefore, of *Who Listens!* to the bereaved, intends to provide opportunities for the non-grieving or comforter to better play a meaningful role when and while consoling grievers during their hour of bereavement by listening, comforting, expressing their sympathy, and rendering a heart of care. This case study implies that one’s pain; because, of the death of a loved one does not signify a lack of faith in God or weakness, but it does signify in most cases, an authentic “heart of care” (Boje, 2012). It intends to express, that it is ok to cry unconditionally, just as long as the griever is able to one day soon, resume his or her daily life and share their feelings of their loss with an understanding comforter... Although, I know who the ultimate comforter is! Additionally, it is my hope that readers might become more observant in recognizing the true feelings of grief displayed by the griever otherwise hidden (Pilkington, 1993).

The right words of comfort are in most cases appropriate in times of grief and sorrow. Playing a song, offering a prayer of comfort, singing a song or even offering a poem for the bereaved are all processes which may lead to a griever's beginning to heal. This is how I *listen!*

My poem of comfort to you all:

OH, JOYFUL MOMENTS

Oh, joyful moments the bereaved may recall
Weeping for a loved one who no longer calls
The echo of that precious voice I still recall
With joy and sadness my heart cries for all
Oh, joyful moments how precious they are

My soul proclaims come to my aid
with words of triumphs so they won't fade
Unseen Angels standing at the door
Taking role call for all they adore
Oh, joyful moments how precious they are

The time has come for journey's end
A new beginning of "Being" in the "in"
The new realm of the greatest "Being" of all
Here, away from earth into the beauty of the unknown
"Being" in the eternal "being in time"
Oh, joyful moments how precious they are
when recalled

Composed by: Krishna M. Coppedge, (2012)
In Memory of my Mother: Mrs. Elaine Randall

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