



## Grief Draws Us Toward Union

We are all grieving. Progressive and MAGA, rich and poor, young and old, everyone. Not only are we grieving, but few are relating to our grief in a way that brings us to a deeper sense of meaning and connection.

We often think of grief as feeling sad because someone has died or left or because we have lost part of our identity. Grief is much more than that. Grief is all the painful emotions that arise when we feel separate. Feeling angry, scared, helpless, frustrated, contemptuous — all of these are grief reactions and almost always when we experience grief, we get lost in the story, the trigger. "Why are we grieving?" we ask. Rarely do we explore "What does it actually feel like to grieve?" Can we grieve consciously?

Rumi said that grief can be the garden of our compassion. Wonderful! The compassionate heart has the defining quality of being a connected heart. A heart not separate but connected to others, to God, to the earth and to ourselves. Grief is not a problem to be solved, but an essential, sacred aspect of each of us as finite human beings. Feeling the grief in your body, the sensations of being angry, or arrogant, of feeling helpless or afraid, however the grief is manifesting right now, is the necessary first step into our connected, compassionate heart. Not only feeling the grief, but bringing mercy and fierce tenderness to the encounter. Love always brings loss. Grief dares us to love again, to be compassionate.

Grief can be collective as well as individual. A recent



survey showed that almost 2/3 of Americans believe that our society is irreparably divided, beyond healing. Political divisiveness, economic disruption (AI, generational inequality, globalization), social injustice, mass shootings, global climate change, ancestral grief — all of these generate collective grief. This meta crisis demands a fundamental transformation in consciousness, rooted in conscious grief work both individually and collectively.

What is your response to the present conditions? We can get lost in reactive emotions. We can distract and try to stay unfeeling. There is a third possibility that is calling out to each of us. Be with these emotions intimately. Let them

be the gateway to feeling connected. Only by being connected to ourselves and to each other, connected to the One, will we find our way out of this seemingly irreparable brokenness. Until we learn to live with the aliveness of our own grief, the grief of others will be too much to bear and we will keep those others at a painful and numbing distance.

— RamDev Dale Borglum

*The longing you express is the return message.  
The grief you cry out from draws you toward union.  
Your pure sadness that wants help is the secret cup.*

Rumi

*God comes to us disguised  
as our life, which seems to  
be the last place we want  
God to be.*

**Richard Rohr**



*When I rise up  
let me rise up joyful  
like a bird.*

*When I fall  
let me fall  
without regret  
like a leaf.*

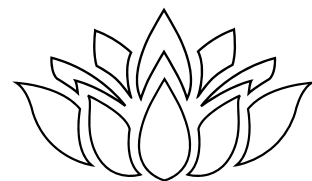
**Wendell Berry**

*Every being exists in intimate  
relation with other beings and  
in constant exchange of  
gifts with each other.*

**Thomas Berry**

*Can you give yourself totally to  
the reality of your life and its  
unknowable outcome?*

**Karen Maezen Miller**



## Into the Light



I fell in love with Miri in the 18 months we spent together. Though we never met, we spent an hour on the phone most weeks for over a year. During our conversations, I observed her live the stages of dying/grief. She carried unresolved physical and emotional trauma that impacted her body in multiple ways and caused her to live with almost constant pain for 15 years.

Miri was a fighter. She spent hours researching alternative healing modalities. It makes me chuckle now, how each week she was off to a different type of therapy, but at the time it amazed me how many ways she found to address her problems and how she was able to pull it off. She was on disability and had little money, but her winning ways and pure heart attracted support from a wide circle of care.

Miri was fiercely independent. Despite pressure from family, well-wishers and medical professionals, she followed her own path, guided by her deep connection to her own body wisdom. At times she was conflicted, but as death came closer she stood her ground and tightened her circle to those who would support her unconventional decisions.

In August she obtained funding to attend True North, a fasting-focused facility. Never docile, she was asked to leave for her demanding personality. In the end they made some accommodations and she made some.

Despite the pain and her failing health, in January she flew from New York to Florida to attend her son's wedding. Perhaps that was what she was waiting for because she started to pull back soon after.

We had many conversations about dying. On the one hand Miri relentlessly pursued healing modality after healing modality. On the other, she often made statements like, "*When I realize I'm dying, I calm down.*" In August she told me, "*I came to a really peaceful place. I am really okay with having my life end.*" However in September she was pursuing a new healing technique. In my notes I wrote, "*Miri is the most alive person I know.*"

In October Miri entered the Life Review phase. "*I want someone to witness/hold space while I tell my story and lift off the weight and trauma as I bring it into the Light.*"

I am telling your story Miri, one little ray of it. Thank you for sharing your Light with me.

— Joanna Brand  
*Living/Dying Project Volunteer*

*Death is really only half the story. The other half is life, how to navigate  
in these slippery waters, how to keep the humbling knowledge of our end  
in sight. We all seem to blow it one way or another, but how important  
it is to admit our mistakes, not turn our back on anything. It's in the  
details of what we have done that we can find our liberation.*

**Natalie Goldberg**

# The Beauty of Conscious Caregiving

*"Caregiving is a crazy-making, life-changing paradoxical privilege, fundamental to our human experience."*

This statement was made by Lisa, one of the first members of our **Conscious Caregiving Group**, which has been operating for almost 2 years and which I have the privilege of facilitating. She goes on to say, *"As a family caregiver, I am no stranger to the love and devotion that drives my every thought and action or the paralyzing overwhelm, despair and grief that comes with the territory. Although I know my experience is as unique as the individuals we are, I also know I am one of many caring for a beloved, living day to day as fully as possible in the face of the struggles and triumphs."*

Lisa is caring for her beloved husband Les, who has a rare form of Parkinson's Disease, and who has lost much capacity from the time of his diagnosis.

She goes on, *"In facing the tremendous challenges, together we have intentionally worked at open and loving communication. When I share my feelings with Les it helps him understand he is not in this alone and he, in return, can express his own difficult emotions. Without judgment we welcome all feelings - of love, sadness and grief as well as frustration and anxiety. We've both grown emotionally through expanding our capacity to share and support each other in the midst of so many losses."* Les brings to the table a gentle acceptance of his plight. They can and do cry together and laugh together. They find humor, naming Parkinson's "Parky." And Parky becomes the fall guy for their frustrations, their anger and anything else that shakes up their old life.

After huge struggles with the medical system, her hands-on care for Les, who needed increasing help with his failing mobility, and with some minor health challenges of her own, Lisa began to ex-



perience what could best be called burnout. She realized self-care was essential, so she began to take breaks away from home, while ensuring there was loving care for Les in her absence. *"Not an easy thing to come to terms with or facilitate,"* she said.

At first it was heart-breaking for her to be away without him - there is always heart-break connected with getting away. All caregivers face some guilt and anxiety about living their own healthy lives while their loved ones live inside bodies that seem to be turning against them. Grief comes with the territory, anticipatory grief for what's to come, and grief for old lives that they have to let go, in order to deal with the present life they are given.

When Lisa goes away, she says, *"I use the time to reflect on myself, to remember, to cry and celebrate, to relax and recoup from exhaustion and just to be in nature and have some fun."* When I talk with Lisa, I'm so moved by how conscious and aware she is of her own inner world - she tracks her feelings and her inner critic and has been able to be com-

passionate toward her "human" falterings.

Self-care is a huge refrain in all caregiving models. But it is a dilemma when the caregiver is exhausted, so immersed in the logistical aspects of medical exams, government requirements for funding, the greater family dynamics. The **Conscious Caregiving Group** is one of the places caregivers bask in compassion, love, interconnectedness. It is a true community of sacred souls who offer each other reflection, empathy, and advice gleaned from personal experiences. It's also a place to acknowledge and honor all of the "human" feelings; anger, self-recrimination and super-ego rants.

My joy is in holding a sacred space every 2nd and 4th Sunday - appreciating the group's willingness to be vulnerable, heart-centered and trusting. Family caregivers in this world have enormous responsibilities for which societal support is often lacking. I'm so grateful the Living/Dying Project offers the kind of spiritual support that fills a deep need for the souls who are doing the courageous work of caregiving.

— Jinn Favre  
*Living/Dying Project Volunteer*



*'What is grace' I asked God.  
And He said, 'All that happens.'  
Then He added, when I looked  
perplexed, "Could not lovers say  
that every moment in their  
Beloved's arms was grace?  
Existence is my arms,  
though I well understand  
how one can turn  
away from me  
until the heart has wisdom.'*

**St. John of the Cross**

*Grief and gratitude are kindred souls,  
each pointing to the beauty of what is  
transient and given to us by grace.*

**Patricia Campbell Carlson**

*Finding out what connects us, reveling in our  
differences; this is the process that brings us  
closer, that gives us a world of shared values,  
of meaningful community.*

**Bell Hooks**

## Project News

We have free-of-charge, volunteer-based spiritual support services for persons with illness, for their caregivers and for the grieving. Our services are offered virtually as well as in person and are available to all regardless of location. If you or anyone you know could benefit from this support, please email us or call the our office at 415-456-3915. As well as our one-to-one support for clients we now also have support groups for illness, grief and caregiving that meet regularly on Sundays via Zoom. Check out our [Events Calendar](#) for upcoming dates.

During the past year Doug Wallace, who has been on our board of directors for 10 years and for most of that time was President of the Board, stepped aside. He has been ably replaced by Kristin Singer. Doug is now our Client/Volunteer Coordinator. Also Aurora Leonard our Associate Director for 3 years has left that position and is now on our board as Chair of the Fundraising Committee. Aurora's previous job is now being ably handled by Annabelle Scott. I am deeply grateful for the selfless service both Aurora and Doug offer to the Project. Their work was largely responsible for the phenomenal growth the Project has experienced over the past few years.

Our website is completely updated and is much easier to navigate. It is still the place on the internet with the most information about conscious dying, grieving and caregiving.

Our social media, podcasts ([Healing at the Edge Podcast](#)), groups and Guest Speaker Series are all thriving. We have a presence on social media that you can check out: [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [TikTok](#). We have a large yet intimate [Zoom spiritual support group](#) every-other Saturday, 9-11 AM Pacific Time. Email the Project if you would like to be on the roster.

I will be facilitating weekend workshops/volunteer training programs via Zoom and in person January, February and March of 2025. CEUs are available for LCSW, LMFT, RN, LAc & Psychologist. Please see the next page of this newsletter for details or go to the [Events Calendar](#) on our website.

### By The Numbers

- We have Clients and Volunteers throughout the U.S., Europe, South America, India, Australia, and New Zealand
- We have served over 10,000 Open Circle Program Clients and their families and caregivers
- We currently have 143 Accepted volunteers and 135 active clients
- Over 16,416 volunteer hours have been logged
- Over 12,000 have taken RamDev's Conscious Living, Conscious Dying Training
- During the past fiscal year our staff and trained volunteers offered free-of-charge emotional and spiritual support to 3308 persons and over 1.1 million received our educational services through social media, newsletters and podcasts, live and online training workshops, courses and lectures.
- During the last fiscal year our Total Expenses was \$308,811. Almost all of our services are being offered free of charge. We need your donations now more than ever to continue our recent growth in providing services and education at this critical time. You can check the [front page of our website](#) for testimonials to feel the impact of our programs.



*You have to be able to imagine  
lives that are not yours.*

Wendell Berry

# HEALING AT THE EDGE CONSCIOUS LIVING / CONSCIOUS DYING DEEPENING PRESENCE IN TIMES OF DYING, GRIEF, LOSS AND TRANSFORMATION



Sponsored by the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy**, this workshop is offered by the **Living/Dying Project**. Participants seeking continuing education as Psychologist, LCSW, LMFT or LPCC will receive C.E.U.s from the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy**. The **Living/Dying Project** offers C.E.U.s for nurses and licensed acupuncturists. A description of the [workshop](#) may be found at the **Living/Dying Project** website.

A CEU workshop for therapists, psychologists, healers, and caregivers that strengthens your ability to stay grounded and open-hearted while accompanying others through life's profound transitions. Also for anyone who wants to deeply explore their own healing.

This course explores an integrative model of healing that supports clinicians and caregivers working with clients facing loss, illness, and end-of-life transitions. Participants will examine healing as a multidimensional process—physical, emotional, and spiritual—through which those engaged in healing work will move toward wholeness, even in the midst of suffering.

Drawing upon Buddhist psychology, developmental theory, energetic awareness, and compassion practices, Dale Borglum, founder of the Living/Dying Project with 45 years of contemplative practice and decades of work at the bedside of those facing life-ending illnesses, offers a clear and practical framework for identifying where you and your clients are on their healing path while determining the next transformational step.

Through guided practice and reflection, participants will gain:

- A practical, robust experiential model of healing that can be easily understood and applied
- Skills for moving from reactivity and fear toward grounded presence and compassion
- Practices to cultivate stability and embodied awareness when facing death, grief, or major life transitions
- Tools to support living—and dying—with greater consciousness and peace

We are all caregivers and all seekers of healing. Through guided meditations, reflection, and dialogue, participants will deepen their understanding of how to bring spiritual presence into therapeutic work, transforming encounters with suffering and loss into opportunities for awakening and integration.

**San Francisco** one-day workshop will be held **January 10, 2026**

**Santa Rosa** one-day workshop will be held **February 21, 2026**

**San Anselmo** two-day workshop will be held **February 28 - March 1, 2026**

**Online Zoom workshops: March 14 and 15, 2026**

For information about locations and registration please visit the [Living/Dying Project website](#).



Workshops will be conducted by RamDev Dale Borglum, Ph.D., who, with Stephen Levine and Ram Dass, established the Hanuman Foundation Dying Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the first center supporting conscious dying in the U.S. Dale directed the center until moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. He is founder and Executive Director of the Living/Dying Project and co-author of **Journey of Awakening: A Mediator's Guidebook** (Bantam Books).

Imagine facing death without fear. Imagine using a life-threatening illness as an opportunity for spiritual awakening. Imagine approaching the unknown with an open heart. We often resist change as a natural part of life. Strength and healing can be found in life's most difficult situations.



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### The Living/Dying Project

Post Office Box 357  
Fairfax, CA 94978-0357  
415 - 456 - 3915  
[www.livingdying.org](http://www.livingdying.org)

## Mission Statement

The Living/Dying Project offers conscious and compassionate support in the spirit of mutual exploration to those facing life-threatening illness and their caregivers. We also offer education and training in the practices of spiritual healing to those confronting life's most difficult situations and to anyone committed to spiritual transformation.

## Supporting Us

### Beloved Community,

The Living/Dying Project is guided by the understanding that **service is a sacred act**, offered in the spirit of compassionate, mutual exploration. For nearly fifty years, we've shared teachings and practices that help people **find freedom from fear, cultivate authentic relationships, and deepen in awareness along the spiritual path**. We believe that our liberation is interconnected, and we dedicate this work to the benefit of all beings everywhere.

In 2025, **RamDev and I, together with our international community of volunteers**, offered spiritual support at no charge to people as young as fifteen and as old as ninety. **Families and individuals have shared again and again that without this care, their most difficult moments would have not only been very different experiences but far less conscious ones.**

In times like these, **the impact of this work cannot be overstated**. We are asking for your help to **close the critical funding gaps** that many small organizations like ours are facing today.

It costs just over **\$300,000 per year** to sustain the Project. We are a small team carrying a vast scope of service, and we rely almost entirely on individual donations to continue offering support freely. To expand our net of care, diversify offerings, and keep our lines open to all who call upon us, **we need to raise \$150,000 this giving season.**

**Every tax-deductible gift—from \$5 to \$50,000—directly** supports one-on-one spiritual companionship through our flagship Open Circle Program; illness, grief, and caregiver support groups; accessible teachings, talks, and community gatherings; training and guidance for volunteers who accompany the dying and bereaved; and the operational heartbeat that allows these offerings to remain free and available to all.

**To give online, please visit [livingdying.org](http://livingdying.org).**

If you or your business are considering a large donation and want to **align your interests with our immediate needs**, please email [annabelle@livingdying.org](mailto:annabelle@livingdying.org).

We look forward to sharing exciting new partnerships and initiatives in the coming year. Please make sure you're subscribed to our e-newsletter to stay connected with the Living/Dying Project's ongoing offerings.

In the meantime, my door is always open to you. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

In service,  
Annabelle Scott  
Director of Programs

*The function of freedom  
is to free someone else.*

ToniMorrison



## Credits

Layout and design of this newsletter was done by Curtis Grindahl, a long-time volunteer with the Project. The photo on page one, **Mammatus Clouds**, was taken by George Ward. The photo **Hanging Over the Pacific** on page two was taken by Curtis. The photo of Lisa on page 4 is a self-portrait.