

WICS Newsletter

Widowed Information and Consultation Services

Spring 2015

Ten Tricks Your Brain Plays on You During Grief

Bob Baugher, Ph.D.

Your brain—what an amazing organ. It can outthink the most complex computer. It is—well—it's who you are. Your brain—or you—is reading these words and taking in information in microseconds. So, with all its wondrous abilities, why would your brain trick you, especially at a time when you need it most? Because it's not perfect. However, don't let your brain (or you) take it personally. Just keep reading and you'll begin to recognize how these brain imperfections can influence you during the most difficult time of your life.

Trick #1: *I will feel this way forever.*

When the death occurred, you absolutely believed that you would never laugh again; but you did. Do you remember that first time? Were you surprised when you heard laughter and realized that it was coming from you? After you recovered from the shock, you may have chastised yourself for "forgetting" your loved one. As time has gone by, however, you have hopefully begun to realize that your loved one would want laughter to return.

Trick #2: *Guilt*

Perhaps the cruelest trick your brain plays on you is one where the past continues to be rewritten. Just look at all the ways that guilt can complicate your grief. See if any of these sound familiar:

If-Only Guilt—After the death you find yourself revisiting events in the life of your loved one in which you say, "If only..." or "I should have....." or "Why didn't I?"

Role Guilt—"I wasn't a good enough _____ to this person." We're still waiting for the perfect (choose one) parent/spouse/ sibling/grandparent/child.

Death Causation Guilt—"The death occurred because of something I did or failed to do. It matters little whether I actually had anything to do with the death. I still feel guilty."

Trick #3: *I'm not like those people who use clichés.*

If you're like most bereaved people you've heard so-called words of wisdom and comfort from those folks who think they are somehow helping: *Everything happens for a reason, I know just how you feel, and It's time to move on.* No doubt these feeble attempts at soothing your pain have caused you some degree of frustration as you say to yourself, "What is wrong with these people? Don't they get it?" However, your brain has deceived you again. Why? Because weren't these some of the same statements you offered to others in grief before you knew better? How quickly our brain "forgets" that we, too, used to be a member of the insensitive crowd.

Trick #4: *I need to grieve just right.*

This trick is often played on those of us who have issues with perfectionism. The death you've experienced is like no other. Therefore the grief reactions you've been experiencing have thrust you into a world that is foreign to you—into a confusing array of emotions and thoughts swirling around in your brain. As these reactions continue, another part of your brain is asking, "What's wrong with me? Why am I so?" Following the death of a loved one you'll never hear someone say, "You know, I'm grieving just right." Instead you hear, "I'm not crying enough." Or "I'm crying too much." Or "I should be more angry." Why these reactions? It's just your struggling brain doing the best it can.

Trick #5: *The second year will somehow be easier.*

Another trick your brain will play on you is that it will convince you that nothing can be worse than going through each day of the first year - the first birthday, the first holiday, the first mother's day or father's day, the first Thanksgiving, the first anniversary. All these firsts without our loved one add up to a great deal of pain. For many of us, once the first year is over, our brain conjures yet another deceptive scheme by offering convincing guidance, "Whew! I've made it through one whole year. As difficult as it was, I made it through each day. Year two should be better." Better? Well, maybe for some people. But if you are like many people you discovered that your brain lied. You found that, in some ways the second year was more difficult. Why? Because much of the first-year

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WICS would like to thank

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generous donation to our
children's program.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are no longer interested in receiving the newsletter via USPS mail, please contact our office to be removed from the list

Gifts of Love

In honor of **JOSEPH M. SALVATORE**
from Mary Salvatore

In loving memory of **DAVE McFARLAND**
from Mary Salvatore MCFarland

In loving memory of **BILL NORTH**
from Ardis North

In loving memory of **KATHY TARABOCHIA**
from Richard Tarabochia

In loving memory of **FRAN SITTON**
In loving memory of **IRVING KRINSKY**
from Arnie Sitton and Molly Krinsky

In loving memory of **DICK HALE**
In loving memory of **ANNE HALLMAN**
In loving memory of **JIM MILLER**
from Darlene Hale

In loving memory of **ARNOLD LOFFELMACHER**
from Patti Acheson

In loving memory of **ED CAVIN**
In loving memory of **ANNE HALLMAN**
In loving memory of **MAURICE MEIER**
from Sue Law

In loving memory of **ROGER E. STAATS**
from Darlene Staats

40th Anniversary Gifts of Love

"For your help." - from Sharon Haggerty

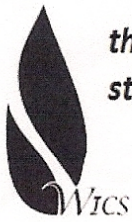
"Let's have another 40 years!" - from Patti Acheson

"For all you do to help others.." - from Susan Stroomer

"With gratitude and good memories." - from Ardis North

Widowed Information and Consultation Services (WICS)

- WICS is non-sectarian and is not affiliated with any other agency.
- WICS is a program that offers group support to men and women who are coping with the death of their spouse/partner. Since its beginning in 1974, WICS has served more than 80,000 men, women and families.



the flame
still burns

Support Group Meetings

For all widowed men and women who would like to share their concerns and experiences and discuss coping skills.

BALLARD: 7 p.m. Tuesdays

Please contact Doug for details.
Contact: **Doug** 206.441.9490

BELLEVUE: 7 p.m. Mondays

10420 S.E. 11th St. — Pilgrim Lutheran Church (Corner 11th St. & Bellevue Way)
Contact: **Kathy** 425.653.7209 (best to call M, W, F during the day) or email at:
clancyKa@comcast.net

COVINGTON: 7 p.m. Tuesdays

25810— 156th Ave SE, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
Contact: **Le** 253.630.0324 or email at: saraacree@comcast.net

FEDERAL WAY: Currently, this group is not having meetings, but are looking for a new place and time. They are continuing to give support, information and connection.
Contact: **Molly K.** 253.839.4560

KIRKLAND: Currently, this group is not having meetings. But, they are offering support, information and connection.

Contact: **Holly** via email: hlfinkbeiner@gmail.com

RENTON: 12:30 p.m. Wednesdays

211 Burnett North, Renton Senior Center
Contact: **Burnie** 425.255.1888 or email at: burnie@comcast.net

Remembering Your Loved One On Memorial Day

WICS invites you to send a gift in memory of your loved. We rely on your donations. Your gift allows us to continue supporting grieving families in our community.

Please help us help others by sending a LOVE GIFT today.

An envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

All donations are tax deductible.



Workplace "Matching Gift" programs can increase your donation. Check to see if your employer will match your gift.

Gifts of Love

Amount: \$ _____ From: _____

In Memory of: _____

Message: _____

Send Acknowledgement to (name): _____

Address: _____

Return to: WICS, P.O. Box 66896, Seattle, WA 98166

An Envelope is ENCLOSED for your convenience.

North

Every Friday

Dinner at 4:30pm

For more info contact:

Delina Bardon
206.789.8852

Federal Way

2nd Monday

of each month
Dinner at 5:30pm.

For more info contact:

Carole
253.927.0404
bzeebee@msn.com

East

Bellevue

Dinner at 5pm before
Monday group meetings.

For locations call:

Kathy Clancy
425.653.7209

All WICS members welcome.



Memorial Day

by Sascha Wagner

*For each grave
where a soldier lies
at his rest*

*For each prayer
that is said today
out of love*

*For each sigh
of remembering
someone who died*

*Let us also give thought to
the mothers and fathers
the brothers and sisters
the friends and the lovers
whom death left behind.*

WICS Weds

A support group for those who
have remarried or are in a
coupled relationship.

For info re: monthly
meetings of WICS-Weds
please call:

Diane at 253.839.5453

Masks

by Sascha Wagner



At times of sorrow
everyone deals with feeling
in unique ways.

Try not to be hurt
if those closest to your heart
Seem to grieve less
or behave strangely.

We cannot always see on the outside
how someone mourns on the inside.

SEABECK

RETREAT

TESTIMONIALS



Uneasy Word

by Sascha Wagner

Hope is not an easy word for griever
but we, more than most others,
need to understand
what hope can mean for us.

Hope means finding the strength
to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace
the joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing
with tenderness and pride
our own life
and the gifts left to us
by those we have lost.

The thoughts run through my mind, wondering why I was there. I have had enough sadness over the last 13 months and I wondered if this was going to be another three days of it. I could have turned around then, and headed back home. In reflection of the weekend, a retreat, that I was not sure that I wanted to be at, I was so glad I came to. I left feeling stronger, understanding more and bonded with several people that are going through the same thing. The closing ceremony was difficult - saying my goodbyes to my new found friends who, 36 hours ago were strangers. I would recommend the Seabeck retreat. Roy

Today, we go to work, take care of the house and yard, cook dinner, pay bills, run errands - all the normal things of life. We often seem to be on "auto". The people we interact with everyday and even some of our friends and family don't see that we are still broken inside. Our life has a big void, and words of comfort like "he'll always be in your heart", just don't make up for that. The weekend at Seabeck, I didn't have to hide my grief or pretend that I'm ok. Everyone there was grieving at one stage or another. I cried, talked, rested, and listened. I could do these things with the support from others who could relate. It takes so much energy to get through our new "normal" life; Seabeck was a respite from that. Linda

Subscriber Form

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Return to: WICS P.O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166

Subscription: \$25 per year

Trick #6: *My grief is worse than anyone else's.*

At first, as you came across other people who had a loss different from yours it may have been easy for your brain to come up with the belief that went something like this: "Yes, these people are also in pain. But their loss is not like mine. Their pain cannot be as intense, as deep, and long lasting as mine." When you began to meet people who had a similar loss, your brain may have concluded, "Their loss is terrible, but they must not have loved their person as much as I love mine." Later, as you look back, you may have realized that the pain you were going through made it difficult to really feel the depth of grief and despair experienced by others as they coped with their own loss. You now realize that, while you can never measure the amount of another's pain, you have come to understand that, in our humanness, we are all united by our grief because it demonstrates that we all have loved.

Trick #7: *Grief feels like going crazy.*

Because the death of a precious loved one is so foreign to any experience we've ever had, our poor brain suddenly finds itself in a world of chaos. The coping techniques we've used with past negative events just don't work as well when it comes to grief. Therefore, our brain can only come to one conclusion: You are going crazy. It certainly feels that way. However, if you were really going crazy, you wouldn't have had a funeral, you wouldn't cry, you wouldn't have memory problems or feel anger or guilt. You would go through each day behaving as if the death never occurred. Instead you absolutely feel that you are going crazy because you do experience all these things in ways you've never experienced before. A mother whose 20 year-old son died in an auto accident explained her grief to me by saying: "Grief is unfinished love." Yes, you feel like you're going crazy because you have loved and will continue to love until you die.

Trick #8: *Relatives who haven't spoken to one another will put aside their differences because of this death.*

When the death hit you and your family, your brain might have concluded, "The tragedy and finality of this death in our family will surely bring people together. Family members will awaken to the fact that life is too short to hold grudges, to persist in silent indifference to the feelings of others, and to withhold forgiveness." However, you have sadly realized again that your brain was wrong.

Trick #9: *I will get a little better each day.*

In the past, when other negative events occurred in your life, you may have found that, day after day, things did get a little better. In the case of grief, you almost cannot blame your brain for coming up with a similar belief. However, you may have discovered that day 90 following the death was worse than day 30 and that you may have felt worse at the ten month point than you did at the five month point. Why is this? One reason is shock, which is your brain's way of cushioning the intensity of the blow. Whether death is sudden or expected, our brain goes into shock for a period of time. The length is different for everyone. As you know, when shock begins to wear off, the pain begins to set in. This is one of the major reasons that, when people look back on the weeks and months following a death, they report that it was like they were in a fog, like they were going through the motions much like a robot. People use terms like, "I was on automatic pilot." Or "I was a zombie." Shock is your brain trying to protect itself (you) from the full impact of the pain.

Trick #10: *Letting go of my grief means letting go of my loved one.*

This brain maneuver is one of the biggest challenges in coping with grief. If you could actually hear your brain speaking to you, the words would sound something like this: "Now that some time has gone by I can feel the intensity of my loss easing up just a little. But wait! I can't let this happen because if the pain begins to leave, the memories of my loved one will slip away as well. So, I must hold on to my sorrow, heartache, and anguish in order to preserve the connection with this person." This brain tactic is related to a type of guilt called Moving On Guilt in which guilt feelings surface at the moment the bereaved person begins to feel a little better. As you know, an important part of your grief work is to hold on to the memories while simultaneously letting the pain of the loss gradually subside.

So, there they are: ten tricks of the brain that complicate the bereavement process. Some you knew already and found yourself nodding your head. A couple of them may have been new to you as you have come to realize that the death of your loved one has challenged your brain in ways it has never experienced before. In considering these tricks, you will now hopefully be a little kinder to your brain as it continues to cope with the loss of someone you love.





WICS Retreat at Seabeck, WA

May 29-May 31, 2015



at the beautiful **Seabeck Conference Center** on Hood Canal.

Sharing Our Paths to Hope and Healing



Retreat Cost:
\$210.00 per person (shared room)
 2 nights lodging & 6 meals
 (Friday supper through Sunday lunch)



Children/Family Program information - see registration form on other side.

Registration begins Friday afternoon at 4:30pm ☞ Friday evening supper is at 6:30pm

Orientation meeting at 6:00pm for first-time attendees



Our Keynote Speaker: **Dr. Bob Baugher, Ph.D.**

Individual Differences in Grieving: Why Are We So Different?



Your Program. ♥ Your Retreat. ♥ Your R&R.

- ♥ Walk the beautiful grounds or explore the beach. ♥
- ♥ Attend practical presentations that are diverse and stimulating. ♥
- ♥ Attend activities that are fun and allow for individual and group participation. ♥
- ♥ Make this weekend yours by paying attention to what you need. ♥

We will send directions and a map with the acknowledgement of your registration.
 Or you can go to the Seabeck website: www.seabeck.org

Registration Due By: **April 28, 2015**

For more information, call WICS at 206-241-5650 or email: wicsoffice@qwestoffice.net

~~~\*~~~ **Limited Scholarships** may be available. ~~~\*~~~

If interested in financial assistance, you MUST call the office before sending in your registration form.

There will be a WICS/TCF Children's grief support program for children ages 5-17 and their parents. If you are interested in bringing your

children to the retreat, call **206-241-5650** for more information.  
Registration information on back of this page.



**2015 REGISTRATION FORM ~ \$210.00 pp ~ Registration due by April 28<sup>th</sup>**



**SPACE IS LIMITED!! SEND IN REGISTRATION FORM & FEE EARLY!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: Home(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Alternate(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply:  
 **Single Occupant** room – add'l cost: **\$40** per person  
(Limited number of single rooms available.)  
 **Double/Triple** Room with: \_\_\_\_\_  
 **Special Diet:** Circle the one/s you need:  
◦ Vegetarian ◦ Vegan ◦ Gluten-Free ◦ Dairy-Free ◦ Diabetic ◦  
Food Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 **Special Needs** (Physical limitations/other considerations)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
 **Chair Massage** – available Saturday for \$20. Payment  
& app't made at retreat. **Please indicate your interest.**

Signature/s: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Waiver:** WICS and Seaback Conference Center assume no responsibility for injury to guests, loss or damage of personal property. Participants are responsible for safeguarding their persons and possessions during the retreat.

**2 Nights** (Shared Room) & **6 Meals:** (Fri. supper thru Sun. lunch) **\$ 210.00** USD per person \_\_\_\_\_  
(Lodging includes all bedding, towel, washcloth & soap)  
**Single Occupant Additional Fee:** **\$ 40.00** USD per person \_\_\_\_\_  
**Contribution to Scholarship Fund:** (To assist others to attend the retreat) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Enclosed with Registration:** (Make Checks payable to **WICS.**) \_\_\_\_\_

**Send Completed Form And Payment To: WICS PO Box 66896 Seattle WA 98166.**  
*Make checks payable to **WICS** or use the form below to pay with credit card.*

**To Pay By Credit Card:** PLEASE print clearly the information below. Circle one: **Visa** **MasterCard**  
Person's Name as it appears on card: \_\_\_\_\_  
Billing Address for this card: \_\_\_\_\_ Billing Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ V code (3 digits on back of card): \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration date: (Mo/Yr) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENTS AND CHILDREN PROGRAM REGISTRATION**

**ADULT - \$150** **Maximum per family: \$375**  
**YOUTH - \$100** (12-17 years old)  
**CHILD - \$75** (5-11 years old)

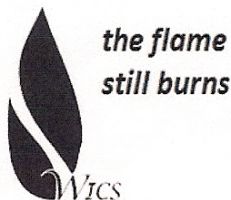
**Reminder:** Sturdy shoes must be worn any time children are playing outside.

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Number while at Seaback: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Diet Needs: \_\_\_\_\_  
1. Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Allergies/Physical Limitations: \_\_\_\_\_ Allergies/Physical Limitations: \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Allergies/Physical Limitations: \_\_\_\_\_ Allergies/Physical Limitations: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Waiver:** WICS and Seaback Conference Center assume no responsibility for injury to guests, loss or damage of personal property. Participants are responsible for safeguarding their persons and possessions during the retreat.



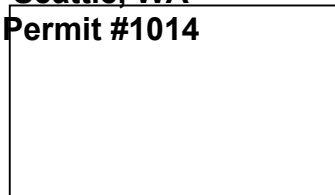
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**Save the Date**  
**Annual SEABECK RETREAT**  
**May 29-31, 2015**  
**Info & Registration Form Inside**



## WICS Annual Retreat in Seabeck, WA ~ May 29 - 31, 2015

For decades the widowed have been crossing the wooden bridge into the serenity of Seabeck Conference Center in historic Seabeck, Washington, just an hour and a half drive from Seattle. The majestic Olympic Mountains rise to the west, scenic Hood Canal lies between you and the Olympics and the wooded hills sloping up from the beach set this place apart from being just another conference center. This peaceful place sets the tone for a *healing* weekend. One feels safe and protected from the outside world while feeling the calm and comfort of being with other bereaved people. We believe other widowed people are the greatest resource and support for this grief journey we have to travel.

Our retreat is just that...a *retreat*. We leave behind the busyness of our everyday lives and enter a relaxed and safe haven to bond with other widowed people. The retreat is a place where we share our thoughts, feelings, and precious memories of our loved ones. The weekend includes a keynote speaker, workshops, sharing time, a reflection room, crafts, and other activities.

The retreat is low-key and there's no pressure to attend every scheduled session. The weekend is yours to use however you need to take care of yourself. If there's an activity and you'd rather take a nap or take a walk, do what YOU need to do. It's a nurturing environment. You are with people who understand what you are going through.

WICS plans the retreat with a bereaved parent group, The Compassionate Friends (TCF). We share the main speaker and workshops, but WICS and TCF have separate sharing groups, memorial ceremonies and housing.

Together, we offer a children's program for those who want to bring their children (ages 5-17). The children's group has their own program, activities and ceremonies. Call us for more information about the children's program.

At our Seabeck retreat you will find caring friends from Washington, Oregon and British Columbia who can relate to you and your grief. Please join us!

**Look for more Info & the Registration Form on pgs 4-7 of this newsletter.**

For more info call: **206-241-5650** or email: **wicsoffice@qwestoffice.net**

