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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Working in academia, I always look forward to Marian University’s commencement ceremony. It is a time for those completing their degree programs to “commence” their careers and move forward to new things. For me, it’s the time when I look at those inviting months of summer when I’m free to pursue a variety of tasks – consulting work, gardening, milking goats and making cheese, research and last but not least, a clean house!

And suddenly, it’s mid-July. Few of these projects are underway and fewer are completed. Each day I try to pull a few weeds but the thistle manages to bloom anyway – fortunately the thistle flower is a beautiful one, ironic for such a noxious weed not even my goats will eat!

I wonder at the way time flies so quickly and consider how it is I seem to get so little done. The projects pile high and I attend to them one by one.

Perhaps it is the same for many of you reading this column. Indeed, we each must continue in our work – comfort the dying, support the bereaved and learn and educate always. As “one of the oldest interdisciplinary organizations in the field of dying, death and bereavement” (see www.adec.org, “Discover ADEC”), the membership of ADEC has a special role in the world. As a group, even as we review these statements, we live ADEC’s mission and vision. We are advocates promoting excellence and recognizing diversity in the care of the dying, support of the grieving, sharing research, and death education.

Although we continue our work in our local areas, ADEC members also belong to an international association providing unique opportunities for cross-national and cross-cultural engagement. Our annual conference is only the beginning. ADEC’s roots were established in volunteerism and it still takes countless volunteer hours to accomplish all the tasks required to keep ADEC moving forward. Our management company is vitally important but it is important to remember that ADEC is volunteer-governed and the vast majority of tasks that keep ADEC moving forward are done by volunteers.

Consider volunteering for ADEC. You can volunteer a little or a lot, it can be time-limited or ongoing around the calendar year. Volunteering can be as simple as helping with the Student and New Professionals Silent Auction at the conference, or writing an article for The Forum, or reading abstracts for conference presentations. For those who want bigger challenges, there are opportunities to be a committee chair or co-chair, or serve on a committee. It doesn’t matter where you live, and ADEC volunteers are not required to attend the annual conference (although we would love to see you there). Most committees meet by conference call and we strive to find times that can accommodate any time zone.

There is plenty of room for innovative and entrepreneurial ideas to help ADEC maintain our position as a leader in the discipline. Take a look at the ADEC website and click on “ADEC Committees” under “Discover ADEC” -- if one catches your eye, email the chairperson and offer to help. Or, under “My ADEC”
you will find a "Volunteer" tab – click on it, fill in the requested information and check the boxes of any and all committees for which you have an interest or relevant set of skills.

Whatever your skill set, there is a committee waiting to welcome you. Take a look at the ADEC website today, and our new committee structure. ADEC needs your ideas, your energy, and your enthusiasm! You will make lots of new friends and find a bigger connection to ADEC and your colleagues than you thought was possible.

Janet McCord, PhD, FT
President
ADEC

PRESENT IN PORTLAND!

ADEC is seeking submissions on a breadth of topics related to death, dying and bereavement. Share your expertise and your work with thanatology professionals at the 2017 ADEC Annual Conference, April 5-8 in Portland, Oregon. Choose from a variety of presentation types varying from 15 minutes to 90. The submission window will stay open until September 9. This is your chance to share your work and your passion with friends and colleagues in beautiful Portland. Find out more details by clicking the button below.

POEM IN HONOR OF ORLANDO SHOOTING

In honor of those who were impacted by the shootings in Orlando on June 12, 2016.

I am sad. Again.
I am saddened. Again.
Worse, I am saddened that I will be sad again. And again.
And again exponential times.
I am sad that when I take my last breath the latest "breaking news" I hear could well be of another shooting.

One of these next times
someone I love or know will die.
One of the next times a
senseless sacrificial slaughter
will take place in my area code.

Factually, sad has become
too threadbare from repeated usage.
Sad has lost its power to capture what I am feeling after Orlando.

Perhaps, if I made sad a verb:
I sad.

Sad that the young with futures, energy and ambitions will die, or be mangled, or PTSD-ed!

I am sad that too many Americans have developed immunity to shock, rage, anger, yet, offer a worn cliché for a sound byte on network news.
"What can you expect in this crazy world?"

This time LGBT. Next time who?

I grieve for the “Einstein” or “Gates,” the “James” or “Adele” who chose to go dancing on a summer Saturday night, who sweat and smiled, laughed and fussed, and, finally, groaned and bled.

What might these 49—No, these latest 49—have created or invented, designed or solved, birthed or loved?

I am sad. Again.

Harold Ivan Smith, DMin, FT

STUDENT PROFILE, JAMISON BOTTOMLEY, MS

So that the ADEC community can get to know its students, Connects will continue to feature stories on ADEC scholarship recipients.

Jamison is a graduate student at the University of Memphis where he will begin his doctoral training in the Clinical Psychology Program in the Fall. Both personally and professionally, Jamison is interested in the experience of suicide bereavement. His research has paid particular attention to the nexus between meaning making and suicide survivorship – how survivors reconstruct a world of meaning in the wake of an often inexplicable, traumatic death. Currently, Jamison is spearheading a qualitative examination of the experience of suicide survivorship, including how survivors attempt to reconstruct a world of meaning and how organ donation, in particular, can serve as an alternative vehicle for meaning making. Additionally, Jamison is conducting a longitudinal, mixed methods study that attempts to identify the needs of survivors of suicide, examine how those needs are met or not met through various avenues of support, and how the intersection of needs and support affect grief trajectories and meaning making. Jamison has also conducted research that examines the role of interpersonal closeness and conflict on psychological well being among bereaved college students and students exposed to non-fatal suicide behavior.
Do you have a mentor/role model who has significantly affected your career path in thanatology? Tell us why you chose this career path.

I have been touched by suicide on numerous levels and have long wondered how survivors of suicide adjust to life after loss. My mentor, Dr. Robert Neimeyer, allowed me to cultivate a path toward legitimate psychological inquiry in pursuit of this understanding and has played an essential role in my early professional development by providing me with a guiding framework from which to examine grief and loss. This guiding framework, along with my engagement with this line of research, has undeniably colored the way I view human existence and has challenged me to examine how I personally view my own existence.

Intrigue and inspiration are at the core of why I chose a career in the field of thanatology. Intrigue served as the foundation for my pursuit of doctoral training and inspiration helps to continue fueling my drive toward a deeper understanding of suicide loss – an understanding that hopefully leads to the construction of efficacious forms of bereavement support for a substantially underrepresented population. I am also inspired by the testimonies of survivors who have somehow found a way to reconstruct a world of meaning following one of the worst experiences an individual can endure. The resilience I have had the privilege to personally witness, and the relationships I have had the pleasure of gathering along the way, encourages me to continue advocating for survivors through research and practice.

What advice would you offer a more junior professional in the field on growing their career or keeping their work fresh?

This is a difficult question to respond to because I am still very junior in my training and in the field of thanatology as a whole. However, I can certainly say that any success I have had in this early portion of my career can be attributed to my longstanding passion for investigating and understanding suicide bereavement and my admiration for those who have endured such an experience. Therefore, I would encourage anyone who is on the precipice of embarking on a career in thanatology, and clinical psychology more broadly, to let their passions dictate their direction. I had little framework to scaffold my graduate training when I arrived at the University of Memphis, but I followed my passion and fostered relationships that put me on a path to success in the field. I have also found that this passion is rarely static. As you dive deep into a domain that you are passionate about, you might find that in learning more about that domain, you are often inevitably ushered into a period of introspection in which you learn and appreciate more about yourself. I found this to be an incredibly rewarding byproduct of following my own passion.

What do you think the future holds for your work and that of others like you? How will that impact what you do?

In the future, I hope to gather what can be gleaned from my earlier research in order to develop a modality of group therapy that is meaning-centered and tailored for survivors of suicide loss. Although much more research needs to be done with regard to suicide loss broadly, I believe constructing efficacious modalities of therapy and support for survivors is the next step for this field that is incredibly imperative and growing. I hope to meaningfully contribute to that endeavor through research that identifies elements of effective support that can be incorporated into existing group therapy formats or used to create new approaches to group therapy for survivors of suicide. Without question, many survivors of suicide will be able to reconstruct a world of meaning following loss, but many others will have incredible difficulty in doing so. It is my goal to shed some light on the promising pathways survivors can take toward reconstructing a world of meaning in the wake of such a devastating loss, and I will consider myself successful if I am able to achieve some semblance of that.

**REFLECTIONS ON YOUNG WIDOWHOOD**

My husband died suddenly three years ago. I was 30 years
old. As the third anniversary of his death looms, I sometimes wish I could go back in time and tell myself to be kind. Not to others, but to myself. At a time in my life when I needed kindness most, I was critical and judgmental.

I desperately sought a manual for grief, like a magical unicorn that would guide my way through the darkness that is grief. Of course, like unicorns, that manual doesn’t exist.

I had no idea how I should feel then. So when I felt enormous guilt and shame, I thought I should feel this way.

I felt guilty when I started to come out of the fog of grief and had fleeting moments of happiness, when I reasoned it was better he died suddenly rather than after a prolonged illness, when I wanted to move forward with my life and my dreams when he couldn’t move forward with his. And I felt enormous shame. As if I wore a black W pinned to my chest akin to the Scarlett Letter. Somehow my husband’s death meant that I was damaged goods. I felt shame when I showed emotion, mostly when I cried, when I was angry. I felt ashamed of wanting to continue to wear my ring when I was no longer married. And so I took it off before I was ready.

My guilt and shame were rooted in fear of how others perceived me. And letting go of that fear was escaping a cage of my own making. I wish I could go back in time and tell myself to be kind. And tell myself there was no reason to feel guilt or shame. I wish I could have seen myself then like I see myself now. I was and continue to be a survivor.

By Nikki Sewell, LCSW

Nikki Sewell is an LCSW in New Haven, CT supporting clients throughout the spectrum of loss at her private practice. She also provides crisis intervention services at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

ENTERTAINMENT IN PORTLAND

As hard as it is to believe, we are only about 9 months away from ADEC in Portland! The city of Portland has a lot to offer and has something to cater to just about any interest. Below are some of the top arts and entertainment venues in the city. Many of these places have evening hours – perfect for stopping in after a day of concurrent sessions!

**Portland Art Museum**—This museum has many different exhibits and collections. In April of 2017, the featured exhibition will be “Rodin: The Human Experience.” Other collections include American/European/Native American and Asian art as well as many pieces featuring silver. The museum is also free from 5p-8p on the first Thursday of the month—which just so happens to fall during ADEC in 2017. Group tours for adults are available and members of Merrill Lynch or Bank of America get free admission when they show their credit/debit cards.

For more information: [www.portlandartmuseum.org](http://www.portlandartmuseum.org)

**Living Room Theaters**—A movie theater that is a bit different than the typical multiplex. This theater contains a full menu/bar as well as patio seating that can be enjoyed before or after the movie. This theater also caters to adults – after 7pm only people 21 and over are admitted. This theater is listed on Trip Advisor as one of the Top Ten Things to do in Portland.
For more information: (including a virtual theater tour): [www.pdx.livingroomtheaters.com](http://www.pdx.livingroomtheaters.com)

**Portland’s 5 Centers for the Arts**—Consists of 5 performance venues and is considered to be one of the top art centers in the country. The theaters hold different types of productions, including Broadway shows, stand-up comedy and rock concerts.

For more information: [http://www.portland5.com/](http://www.portland5.com/)

**Director Park**—A public park in downtown Portland that is way more than your average city park. Director Park contains Teacher’s Fountain and Elephants in the Park (a café), and often has performances by multiple Portland performance artists, including The Metropolitan Youth Symphony. For fans of chess, there is a life size chess board in the middle of the park as well!

For more information: [www.directorpark.org](http://www.directorpark.org)

**Oregon Museum of Science and Industry**—This museum contains a multitude of science and space related exhibitions. There is a movie screen that is considered to be the biggest screen in the state! They also have many “after dark” events where adults can explore the museum.

For more information: [www.omsi.edu](http://www.omsi.edu)

This is just a very small sample of everything Portland has to offer in the arts/entertainment realm. It looks like ADEC picked a great city for 2017!

Aileen Gockowski, MEd, PCC-S

**GRIEF RITUALS INVITE HEALING**

Ritual is powerful. The symbols and symbolic actions speak not only to the conscious mind, but also to the subliminal part of the psyche which is where deep healing takes place. Another aspect of ritual’s power is that it often addresses multiple needs at the same time. It can offer a scaffold for support, and also create space for expression of a wide range of feelings. Ritual can help people experience that all bonds are not severed, which eases the transition toward acceptance of the death. Grief rituals encourage movement through the healing process, and invite mourners to create a meaningful life without the beloved.

Ritual does these things, in part, because it provides a container, and offers a focus — something to do with the contradictions and pain all jumbled inside. This helps the mourner get a better handle on turbulent feelings that threaten to overwhelm. For example, writing a letter on the monthly date of death gives the mourner a way to channel the angst that tends to arise near that date. There is
need to honor grief, to acknowledge the overwhelming pain and the great ache of that emptiness. The ritual act of writing the letter provides a way to honor the sorrow, and the love. This practice assists in accepting the death, and at the same time allows the mourner to maintain connection with the beloved.

As the mourner continues to accept and adjust to all of the many ways the death impacts on life, ritual can help in solving the conundrum of how to stay connected with the beloved dead, and move forward without him or her as a new life is constructed.

By Candice Courtney

Candice Courtney is the author of “Healing Through Illness, Living Through Dying: Guidance and Rituals for Patients, Families, and Friends”

EARN YOUR CERTIFICATION

Use the summer of 2016 to advance your career and get your application in order to become a certified thanatologist through ADEC’s Certification in Thanatology program. September 17 is the deadline to earn your CT. The exam will be November 5.

If you're already a CT, now is the time to step up and become a Fellow in Thanatology (FT), ADEC's most prestigious distinction.

CTs and FTs should recertify every three years. Visit the ADEC website to view the guidelines and learn how to recertify in 2016.

FEATURED UPCOMING EVENT

July 20, 2016
Keeping Up in Grief: A Vital Component in Self Care
William (Bill) Hoy, DMin, FT
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. CST

REGISTER NOW

JOB BANK

As a member benefit, ADEC members may post job ads at no charge. Nonmembers may post a 300-word job ad for $150 per 60 days. Submit your posting via email.

FEATURED JOB LISTING:

Chapters Health System
Bereavement Supervisor – F/T (MSW and LCSW)
Hudson, FL

The Bereavement Services Supervisor (BVSS) provides programmatic oversight for the affiliate’s Bereavement Programs and provides clinical counseling expertise and programmatic consultation to Bereavement Specialists, members of the IDG and the community, including the adult bereavement program and the program for grieving children. More information.
ADEC CONNECTS SEeks Feedback

ADEC Connects is interested in your engagement with social media and social networking sites. Please take two minutes to fill out this brief survey so we may gain better insight into how our members interact and would like to interact with ADEC.

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