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50+ Living our best lives now and in the future!

Life-Long Learning, Spiritual Growth, and Healing

Bonnie Tryon met her husband of 52 years while a student at UCLA. Tom became a well-known



chiropractor in their community and one of the area's first yoga teachers. Bonnie, who earned two master's degrees and is a Certified Health Education Specialist, used her expertise while working part-time in her community; however, her primary focus for several years was being a stay-at-

home mom for her three children. Then, Bonnie became a widow. As she was working through the grieving process, she learned that she had bone marrow cancer. Now in partial remission, she credits her spiritual practices for helping her through a very challenging period.

Nutrition and Diet

Bonnie's first master's degree was interdisciplinary in gerontology, health education, and management. Also, as a certified Health Education Specialist, she has been particularly interested in nutrition. "I did

management, and health seminars for different businesses."

When her late husband encouraged a vegetarian lifestyle in the 1970s, Bonnie accepted and embraced it for twelve years. Then she realized it wasn't right for her. Even though she still eats a primarily plant-based diet, she also enjoys European cheese and other foods. "Everyone needs to find the best diet for their own body."

Working with Students & the Community

While working on her first master's degree (interdisciplinary), Bonnie developed a "Y.E.S." program for youth and elders sharing through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. She pulled together panels of older adults and brought them into schools to meet with students. The kids asked the older adults about their lives.

Always wanting to teach, Bonnie got a second master's degree in education. She accepted a substitute teaching position at a middle school. Unfortunately, she was given no guidance and did not know what to do with disrespectful kids. "I ended up being really firm...I was just surviving."

A River and the Flow of Life

Bonnie and her husband had purchased a home on

the Umpqua River, where they raised three children. Tom loved to practice his yoga on the peaceful bank of the river. Later, when he only wanted to work part-time, he worked with patients at home twice weekly in a separate location on their property. She counseled patients who had osteoporosis and nutritional needs.



Widowhood and a Cancer Diagnosis

One and a half years ago, Bonnie became a widow. “It is such a shock when you lose someone. Part of



what I have learned is that it is necessary to ‘feel what you feel’ and to process your loss. I think it is important to forgive and release the past as needed.

“I am getting more and more used to being alone after 53 years of being with someone.”

When she was first grieving, Bonnie learned that she had multiple myeloma. “I am now in partial remission, hoping I am going to be around for a while because there is more that I want to do.”

Finding Strength through Spirituality

Bonnie’s late husband introduced her to spiritual practices, which comfort and reassure her. Two of the affirmations she uses come from Louise Hay: “Divine Spirit is the structure of my life. I am safe and loved and totally supported.” And “I lovingly forgive and release the past. I choose to fill my world with joy. I love and approve of myself.”

Drawing from what she embraces spiritually, Bonnie has “learned that if I worry about the future,

I am missing ‘the now.’ I have to keep saying, ‘Feel now.’ Cancer has reinforced that for me.”

Two Loving Companions

Bonnie lives with her two canine companions, Luna and Charlie. “Luna is an English Cream Golden Retriever, and Charlie is a Golden Doodle. They are my day-to-day family. All my life, I have taken care of others. I can talk to my dogs, feed them, and make sure their needs are met. My dogs sleep with me and cuddle at times. My neighbor is like their godmother.”



For Relaxation

“I play crystal singing bowls and love playing for people. I like to walk and play with my dogs. I also enjoy weaving and working with various fibers.” In addition, Bonnie does “breathing practices—deep breathing to relax.”

Bonnie can still watch the river's gentle flow from a large window near her dining table. “I live in a beautiful place and can go out into nature by stepping out my door; I feel it is a healing place.”

Advice

Find joy in the moment and choose to put joy in your world.

Crystal Singing Bowls

As reported in [Science Direct](#), singing bowls “produce a soothing sound believed to have a powerful effect on the body’s energy system, helping to balance the chakras and promote healing.” While various studies have explored “the effects of singing bowl sound,” there is still no universal agreement on why this type of meditation has some healing benefits.

Why Forgiveness is Essential for Good Health

Holding grudges, feeling anger toward someone who slighted you, carrying resentment, or refusing to forgive others can ultimately harm the person who refuses to let go of these feelings. [Karen Swartz, M.D.](#) of The Johns Hopkins Hospital, explains, “Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure, and immune response. Those changes increase the risk of depression, heart disease, and diabetes, among other diseases.” Fortunately, some [studies](#) suggest that forgiveness can help improve cholesterol levels and sleep and reduce pain, anxiety, blood pressure, the risk of a heart attack, and stress levels.



An Active Process

As one study [suggests](#), forgiveness “is an active process in which you make a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether the person deserves it or not.” By releasing negative feelings, we are more likely to feel empathy and compassion toward the person who may have wronged us.

Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness is also important for our well-being. A 2019 Stanford University Medicine [article](#) noted, “Research has shown that those who practice self-forgiveness have better mental and emotional well-being, more positive attitudes, and healthier relationships.”

Daylight vs Standard Time

Like it or not, Daylight Savings Time (DST) ends **November 3rd** this year.

That means it will get dark an hour earlier in the evening but light an hour earlier in the morning. It

may feel like we are getting an extra hour of sleep during the morning. However, switching back and forth each year has come under heavy criticism due to health risks.

Health Risks When Moving from DST to Standard Time

Sleep research suggests that moving from DST to standard time can disrupt our circadian rhythms, which help regulate sleep and energy levels. People with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) may experience some depression because of perceived shorter daylight hours. Shifting to Standard Time can also cause a period of adjustment, which can lead to mood changes and fatigue. However, most health risks occur when we move from Standard Time to DST.



More Significant Risks when Shifting to DST

Studies have found that when we shift to DST, heart attack incidents increase, as do strokes. Traffic accidents generally spike, likely due to less sleep and initially darker mornings. Also, mood disturbances such as depression and anxiety are more likely during this transition.

Efforts to Make DST Permanent

Several states, including Washington, Oregon, and California, have passed legislation to adopt DST permanently, but they all must get federal approval.

The Sunshine Protection Act of 2021 proposed making DST permanent. The Senate approved the Act, but the House did not, claiming multiple issues critics suggested were problematic.

Permanent Standard Time Presented as a Better Option

The Uniform Time Act of 1966 does allow states

to opt out of DST and stay on permanent Standard Time. Interestingly, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine has taken the [position](#) “that the United States should eliminate seasonal time changes in favor of permanent Standard Time, which aligns best with human circadian biology,” also citing health and safety issues that can arise from seasonal time changes.

Grief: A Part of Life

Paula Marie

Many people are uncomfortable talking about death in our culture. Yet, it is part of life.

Loss of a Spouse or Partner

Losing a spouse or partner is one type of loss many of us will or have experienced. For most, it means



that the shared routines, activities, and plans are also disrupted; the widowed person grieves not only for the loss of a partner or spouse but for

the life they had shared and the future they had planned.

Common Characteristics of Grief

Grief research suggests that after a significant loss, people will typically experience some degree of shock, denial, anger, bargaining, guilt, depression, or sadness, testing different ways to cope and, eventually, acceptance. All of us grieve differently. However, we tend to experience some of the same emotions over time, though not necessarily in a particular order.

The Widowhood Effect

I was widowed nearly 2 ½ years ago. For the first few weeks, I was in shock and denial. Then, I experienced “the widowhood effect.” I couldn’t sleep at night and didn’t feel like eating much during the day. I broke out in horrible hives and started experiencing heart arrhythmia. A month after

my husband passed, I had unintentionally lost between 12-15 pounds.

A 2023 National Council on Aging [article](#) suggests that those who experience the ‘widowhood effect’ could experience increased mortality risk by 66% during the first 90 days of widowhood. Even as widows survive, they may have compromised health because of caregiving while neglecting their own needs. In addition, the trauma of grief can affect sleep patterns and overall immunity.

Brain Fog and Healing

Writing for the [American Brain Foundation](#), neurologist Lisa M. Shulman, MD, FAAN, explains that as the brain interprets intense grief from losing a loved one as trauma or PTSD, it can lead to brain fog until healing begins. She suggests that practicing meditation, journaling, and other behaviors could help facilitate the healing process.

Advice

My best advice to anyone who has lost a partner or a spouse is to connect with other widowed people (support groups, friends, etc.) and be kind and patient with yourself. For those who know someone experiencing such a loss, acknowledge their loss, listen to them, and show kindness and patience.

Honoring a Life

To honor and remember someone special you have lost, you can purchase a commemorative brick to be placed on the plaza above the historic Oregon City Elevator (at the end of the Oregon Trail). A 4” x 8” brick costs \$100, and an 8” x 8” brick costs \$300. For more information, click [here](#).

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