

THE EXPERIENCE OF A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING FROM GRIEVING  
THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

by

Jennifer Granader

A Thesis

submitted to

Center for Humanistic Studies

in partial fulfillment of requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Humanistic and Clinical Psychology

2000

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
I. Personal Knowledge and Experience.....	1
II. Statement of the Thesis Question.....	17
III. Review of the Literature.....	24
IV. Research Model.....	40
V. Methods and Procedures.....	48
VI. Handling and Presentation of Data.....	57
Anger.....	62
Loss of Faith.....	64
Loss of Trust in the Future.....	65
Dreams/Spirituality.....	67
Making Death a Friend.....	70
Belief in Fate.....	71
New Outlook on Life.....	73
Creative Synthesis.....	81
VII. Implications and Applications.....	84
References.....	87

Appendices:

A. Letter to Co-Researchers.....	92
B. Participation-Release Agreement.....	93
C. Interview Questions.....	94

*In memory of*

*Peter Paul Matti*

*To Honor you for  
the Gift of  
Life's  
True Meaning*

\* \* \* \* \*

~~To my soulmate, Marvin,~~

~~You are my true love.~~

I honor you this year.

It has been unique,  
filled with love and very busy,  
and ever so new and changing.

I give you my heart and soul  
for eternity.



## Acknowledgements

To my mom, for loving me unconditionally since I took my first breath. Thank you for being my most valuable and cherished life teacher and best friend.

John, thank you for being so encouraging, accepting, and a great teacher of mystery. I resonate so much with you within all the mysteries of being.

Kim, thank you for sharing so much with me. Your brilliance, creativeness, and friendship have helped practicum run smoothly, allowing me to learn in abundance.

To the class of 2000, some I know better than others, but all are cherished. I will always keep a piece of you in my heart and wish you the best.

I thank my Angels for walking with me down the path and taking my journey with me. Thank you, Angels, for the encouragement, guidance, love, enchantment, and always keeping me on the right path.

## Abstract

This study utilized the heuristic model of qualitative research to explore the question, "What is the experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one?" The six phases of heuristics were incorporated into this research approach, which included initial engagement immersion into the question, incubation, illumination, explication, and a creative synthesis. Based upon the experiential nature of this question, which emerged from my personal experience, heuristic methodology was the research method selected. A review of the current literature failed to identify an identical study based upon the experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one. Thus, this study was structured around the existing literature reviewed. Comprehensive interviews were conducted with 11 co-researchers to study the experience connected to the research question. The researcher also practiced immersion into personal experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one. The steps in the heuristic formula were used to organize data. Seven themes were revealed and identified through data analysis. These themes are: (1) anger, (2) loss of faith, (3) loss of trust in the future, (4) dreams/spirituality, (5) making death a friend, (6) belief in fate, and (7) new outlook on life. These themes depicted death as a connected experience to a spiritual realm as well as providing meaning to life for those who survived the death of a loved one. Co-researchers verbalized positive outcomes from their experiences of grieving the death of a loved one. These research findings could be used by therapists, counselors, clergy, hospice workers, medical professionals, and individuals in search of personal growth. This study has implications for anyone dealing with the death of a loved one and the grief process.

## Chapter I

### Personal Knowledge and Experience

It was Thanksgiving morning when my stepfather, Pete, limped down the stairs. I remember pouring a cup of coffee while staring out the window of the kitchen. It was autumn in full effect, and I could feel change. The breeze that whispered through the cracked window was crisp with a scent of pumpkin pies whirling through the air.

We had just moved into our new house that week. The house was filled with the vibrant energy of excitement, along with our overwhelming tiredness from moving. We thought Pete had pinched a nerve from carrying all of the boxes. My mom, Pete, and I did not think much more that day of the tingling sensation that he was experiencing in his right foot. We proceeded to get everything together and drove to my grandmother's house to eat and visit with family. No one brought up the fact that Pete was limping. That was the last healthy Thanksgiving Pete would have. The tingling sensation never went away; instead, it proceeded further up his leg.

My mom and Pete were true soulmates; they fit together like two puzzle pieces. Their love and spiritual connection illuminated from their very presence. We had a beautiful, small, immediate family connection which exuberated love, kindness, and a spiritual attachment. I was 20 years

old and in my second year at the community college. When I was not in class, I worked with animals at a veterinary clinic, which I absolutely loved. However, I soon had to take a leave from work to help take care of Pete.

A few days after Thanksgiving, we had to take Pete to the hospital because of the tingling sensation that crept up his leg. We were thinking that it might be a slipped disk or a pinched nerve. Never in a million years did we suspect a brain tumor. I can still recall the fear, sadness, horror, confusion, and helpless feelings that overcame all of us in that room. I just could not comprehend and digest the fact that Pete had a mass of cancer that was spidering within his brain. The doctors talked with my mom about the prognosis and scheduled Pete to have a biopsy at University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan. By that time, the tingling and slight paralysis was creeping slowly up his leg. We were told that on the day of the biopsy, the doctors would be able to give an estimated life expectancy.

After the surgery, while Pete was recovering, the doctors talked with us, the family. They explained that the tumor was a "Level 4," and it was rapidly growing and spidering. They gave him 3 months to live. I can still recall the pain that suffocated the room, the feeling of emptiness, and the tears that flowed from the thought of losing Pete. I was grieving already.

Suddenly, I thought back to that Thanksgiving morning when I observed and felt the season of change. I started to pray for a miracle. I think everyone was praying.

It was Sunday morning a couple of weeks after Pete had come home. His best buddy, Roger, called to tell us about the front page of The Flint Journal. There was a large article about an experimental treatment being done on brain tumors at a clinic that was only 20 minutes away from our new house. The morning was cold and rainy, but I still volunteered to drive north until I found a Flint Journal. I brought the newspaper home and, as Roger had told us, there was an article about a new successful treatment for brain tumors. My mother picked up the phone immediately and left a message at the Myro Clinic asking them to call us as soon as possible. They called back that Monday and asked that Pete come in so they could review his case. He was accepted. That was the beginning of our small miracle, but not the end of our grief.

Although I think that all of us had already started grieving, we were very optimistic about finding the experimental treatment that was being used at the Myro Clinic at St. Joseph's Hospital in Pontiac. My mom made the phone call and explained what we had been experiencing for the last few weeks. The clinic asked us to bring Pete in a couple of days later. Shortly

after the first visit at the Myro Clinic, my mother asked me to take a leave from work so I could stay home with Pete and transport him twice a day for radiation treatments. On Thursdays, he received chemotherapy.

At the beginning of treatment, Pete could hardly walk and had to use a cane. The tingling and paralysis had crept up the entire right side of his body. It was now winter and very cold. I can remember praying to God, like I had never prayed before, for a miracle. I had even tried to bargain with God. I said that I would take the brain tumor instead of Pete, because I felt so bad for my mom and him. Their love was so strong, like two parts that fit perfectly to create a whole. It did not seem fair. Even though we were optimistic, we were all still hurting and grieving the disease.

My mom used to leave for work by 7:00 a.m. Pete and I would leave by 7:30 a.m. to get to the clinic for the first treatment of the day. We then returned to the clinic at 3:00 p.m. for the second treatment of high doses of experimental radiation. Pete had to be transported in a wheelchair from the car to the clinic, and this was very hard because of the snow and freezing weather. One day, I forgot my gloves. It was about 20 degrees below zero with the windchill factor. I had to help Pete into the wheelchair and get him into the clinic. My fingers were so cold that I wanted to cry, but I did not want Pete to feel bad or to feel like a burden, so I just let them freeze. To

this day when my hands get cold, my fingers turn stark white. I must have gotten frostbite that day, but I never said a word about it.

Every day was a struggle. My mom tried extremely hard to keep Pete positive and to elevate his spirits. Every Thursday, she would take off from work and take him to his all day chemotherapy. She would sit with him and read, talk, and then run out to get both of them lunch. We became familiar faces at the Myro Clinic and Dr. Franklin's office. Pete was quite a character, although he was probably not the most cooperative patient in the world.

The treatment started to take a toll on Pete, my mom, me, and the rest of the family. By Christmas, Pete was losing his hair, but he was walking much better. All of us were exhausted, emotionally and physically, but my mom never showed it. She always kept positive for Pete's sake, although she was grieving inside.

After Christmas, it was time for an MRI to see if the treatment was killing the cancer. My mom took the day off from work and took Pete in for the first MRI since the beginning of the treatment. It was a miracle! The tumor had started to shrink! No wonder Pete was able to walk a little better. No more wheelchair--Pete was using a cane, and he was given a prescription to begin physical therapy. The family was ecstatic. Everyone had a greater sense of hope, trust in medicine, and destiny itself. Everyone looked at my

mom as an angel. We believed that she and Pete were meant to be together, soulmates, so that he could truly feel love in his last days. My mom was meant to take care of him.

During this entire process, all of us were still grieving the disease. We would ask: "Why Pete?" "Why is this happening to us?" "What did we do to deserve this?" During this process, I was slowly growing emotionally and spiritual although I would not realize it for many years to come.

Even though Pete's tumor was shrinking, he was scheduled to have a couple more months of treatment. At this point in the process, my stepbrother, Mike, was planning on getting married within the year. This was wonderful news to all of us. More important, it was one more reason for Pete to fight for his life. I continued to take Pete to treatment, still searching for answers and not really understanding this whole process of life. I was fighting with God and my own feelings toward the disease. I remember crying a lot and feeling angry that God was slowly taking away Mom's husband and my stepfather. I just did not understand. I felt stuck right in the middle of grief. I was terribly confused.

As the treatment went on, the tumor was shrinking and shrinking. Pete was getting better and better. It had already been about 6 months since U of M diagnosed Pete and gave him only 3 months to live. We had already



doubled their prognosis! Everyone was in disbelief. Pete and my mom started to live a semi-normal life again. Pete did not go back to work, but they were able to go out to dinner and shows, enjoying the extra time they had together. At this time, Pete always seemed to be in good spirits.

Mike, my stepbrother, was graduating from college in May and then getting married in September. Pete had a lot to look forward to. He also had a lot of planning to do. My mom and he were planning a graduation party for both Mike and his fiancée, Kelly. We had family over every weekend. That spring and summer felt like a success. The tumor was not active, and my mom and Pete were relieved. They were still enjoying all of the extra human life that they were able to spend together. The graduation party was a success, and the end of summer was nipping at our toes. That is when I made the decision to go away to school.

So off I went to Eastern Michigan University. Everything seemed to be going okay at home. My mom and Pete moved me into the dorm and went home. I thought it would be nice for them to spend some time alone together. It was so hard to be away so I usually returned on Friday night to spend some time with them.

At the end of September, almost a year since the diagnosis, life seemed great. Mike's wedding rolled round, and we had a wonderful time.

Pete was so happy to see his son get married. I remember the song "Everybody Hurts" by REM from that weekend. I must have heard it a million times. All I could think of was our whole situation. Still, it was a nice weekend. It was fun to see my mom and Pete dancing, mingling, and having a great time. Their glow illuminated the entire hall.

Everything seemed to be somewhat normal. Pete was going to try to go back to work shortly. He worked in downtown Detroit at the GM headquarters as a numbers cruncher in the Customs Department. He had a long drive downtown, and an even longer walk from the car to his office. We worried about him walking so far because he still had a limp. Dr. Franklin did not want him driving a car in case he had a seizure caused by pressure from the brain tumor. He reminded us that although it was not active, it was still there. However, Pete was a fighter. Nothing was going to keep him home. He went back to work even though it was difficult because of the long walk.

Then one day, he tripped and fell at the office because of the limp. I felt so bad when my mom told me that I cried. I felt so much sympathy for Pete. He was fighting so hard, but kept getting knocked down. When he fell, that was the end of work. He was forced to take an early retirement due to the illness, and things proceeded to get worse.

Once again, when the season of change fell upon us, so did the tumor, which began to show signs of activity. My favorite season was suddenly becoming the enemy. Pete started to get sick again. He was in and out of the hospital with the shakes, his memory was starting to go, and he was having trouble walking.

At this time, my mom and Pete decided to take a vacation to Bermuda. I remember receiving their postcard at school. They were in paradise; it was like Heaven. I still have that postcard. My mom knew that this was it. The tumor was about to erupt like a volcano, but she still kept positive for Pete. It had been a year and a month since Pete was diagnosed when the nightmare crept upon on us once again.

Pete was rushed to intensive care during the day on New Year's Eve. He had kidney failure and was not expected to ever go home from the hospital, especially since he only had one kidney. Once again, we were horrified and grieving the unknown. Pete was in intensive care four 4 days when, miraculously, he started to recover. The doctors were astonished; they could not scientifically explain his recovery. Finally, they decided that this was due to all of the garlic in the Chaldean food which Pete was eating. We were always taking food to Pete; in fact, I do not think he ever ate hospital food!

When Pete recovered enough to come home, he was scheduled for an MRI immediately. I do not think any of us really needed to see or hear the results to know what was going on. Our worst fear had reappeared; the tumor was growing again. There was nothing else to do except pray and hope for another miracle. We had already been blessed with a few, and I guess this is where I struggled. I knew that we had already been blessed with more time with Pete, but I could not help thinking, "Why can't the tumor just disappear?"

The next few months were hard while Pete's memory started to slip and he began to get a lot worse. On Mother's Day of 1994, my mom called me and told me that Pete had collapsed and EMS was on its way to the house to rush him to St. Joe's hospital. I was living at school, about 40 minutes away from the hospital. I jumped in the car and managed to beat the EMS van to the hospital by minutes. I was sitting in a chair in the emergency waiting room when I heard, "Hi, Jen." It was Pete being wheeled in on a stretcher. How did he know I was there? I guess that is just the way it was. He just knew things and could feel my presence. My mom still can.

I will never forget what I experienced that day in the hospital. While waiting for my mom to get there, I went up to the room with Pete. Soon, nurses came in, followed by my mom. We were quietly sitting with Pete

when all of a sudden the other man in the room went into a "Code Blue."

About 30 doctors and nurses were instantly in the room, and we were pushed to the very edge. We were stuck in the room while they tried to resuscitate the man for about 25 minutes. I was completely shaken by the thought that I had been in the room while that man had passed away, although he was someone I did not even know. I wanted to know why we had to witness this while we were faced with the same in our future. At the time, I did not realize that we learn and grow from experience, whether good or bad, and they are equal in teaching.

We had been grieving for a year and a half, but it did not end there. Pete was no longer able to walk when he came home from the hospital. With the help of Hospice, we had everything we needed to take care of him at home. My mom had them set-up the hospital bed in the sitting room, which had a beautiful view of all the flowers in the backyard and a huge screen door that brought in a peaceful breeze for Pete. My uncle came out to the house and built a ramp so we could take Pete out on the deck to sit in the sun and visit with people. This was the beginning of the end.

Family and friends pulled together to help us out. My mom had the whole summer off since she was a teacher. I remember Father's Day when we had everyone over and I gave Pete a t-shirt that read "Best Father in

Clarkston." Mike and Kelly announced that their first baby would be born in September. I prayed, as I think everyone did, that Pete would be here for the birth of his first grandchild.

One day in June, close to my birthday, Pete and my mom gave me a beautiful emerald ring that Pete had selected from his friend's jewelry store. By this time, he could not sit up in the wheelchair alone; he was held in by special straps. Later, Pete was sitting out on the deck listening to the radio when I heard him begin to cry for the first time since any of this happened. It was an awful feeling for me to hear him cry; I could not bear it. I went downstairs and sobbed. I do not know why it hurt me so deeply to hear him cry. Even now, I cry when I think of that moment. I knew he was hurting and did not want to leave us, but he did not have a choice anymore. He was slowly losing the battle that he had fought so hard.

By the Fourth of July, Pete had become completely bedridden and was in much discomfort. He was trying hard to keep it together and worried about who was going to take care of us. There were about 20 people in the house, day and night. My mom was getting so tired of facing the loss of Pete every day. Whenever she left his side, it was only for a few minutes. We knew the end was coming soon.

Although we had been grieving for so long, we had not really touched upon the process yet. The hospice priest, Father Robert, came to our house frequently, and we became very close to him. He was like an angel and brought great energy to the house when he visited.

One day, a butterfly landed on Pete's shoulder and my mom let it sit there until it naturally flew away. After it flew away, Pete told my mom that he wanted to go home and start all over. My mom asked him, "Baghdad?" in a joking way; she always tried to keep his spirits up. He said, "No, home." Did he mean Heaven? Was the butterfly a sign or a spiritual creature that brought Pete a message? We did not know.

A week later, Pete was unconscious. My mom and all of us thought we would never again hear his voice or look in his eyes. My mom was still constantly at his side; she had been sleeping on the couch in the sitting room for 3 months by this time.

One morning, my mom woke up to Pete's voice. He was saying that he was hungry. Pete was awake--another miracle! He had rallied, and once again beat the odds! He was coherent and alive. It was now August, and we had a little more precious time with Pete. I felt such joy for my mom. She had been so sad while Pete was unconscious. All of us took this opportunity

to talk to Pete and tell him everything we wanted him to know. He was awake and alive for about a week, until August 6th.

Pete slipped back into unconsciousness and his breathing became labored. Mom, auntie, and grandma were awake most of the night with him. My grandma got up at 5:15 a.m., made the "sign of the cross" over Pete's body, and told him to let go. She walked back into the living room so my mom could have a couple of minutes alone with him. That is when he took his last breath. It was August 7th at about 5:20 a.m.

On August 7th, I was at my apartment, 40 minutes away, when I abruptly woke up from sleep at about 5:20 a.m. Ten minutes later, the phone rang, and it was my mom. I got dressed and rushed out the door. It was humid, and dew had set everywhere. The early morning was beautiful, and it was very quiet. I got in the car, turned it on, and it was silent for a second. The radio then came on, and the song from the movie "Pocahontas" started playing. I started to cry and did not stop until I got to my subdivision. As I was driving closer to my house, another song was playing. The words which flowed from the speakers were, "I wasn't there the day my father passed away." I could not believe the coincidence of the music that was being played and the part of life I was experiencing.



The whole family was there when I walked into the house. We kept Pete's body in the house for a couple of hours. None of us could believe that he was really gone. Although we had grieved for almost 2 years, we were right back at phase one--denial. We just could not believe it. Pete was gone. The next few days, the funeral and the mourning, are still a blur. As days passed, I had to get back to school and my mom had to go back to work.

I had no idea how much I was going to grow personally and spiritually through the process of grief. I dealt with things my own way, and I began to accept the fact that Pete was not with us in a physical sense. Certainly, he was with us spiritually and in our hearts. I spent a lot of time alone that fall sitting outside and asking Pete to make the wind blow if he was with us, always looking for a sign or validation. Sure enough, the wind would blow and a freeing feeling would rush through my body.

As I processed the entire experience of Pete dying, through grief I grew spiritually and personally in a way that I could never have imagined. I became more aware and immersed myself in readings about intuition, angels, and the spiritual realm. I taught myself to meditate for relaxation and use as a grief exercise. I felt so free, whole, creative, and authentic.

As time passed, I began to realize how much I learned from Pete, his illness, and his death. Everything Pete brought to my life was a gift that

never stopping giving. My experience with him taught me about life, death, myself, and spirituality. It brought me closer to God and formed the core beliefs that I now have about life and the soul. I started this experience asking, "Why is this happening to Pete, our family, and me." Now I thank God and Pete, every day, for the experience and strength they gave me to grow. I now truly believe everything happens for a reason, and I learn from every soul with whom I come in contact. I believe in angels, signs, old souls, soulmates, God, intuition, and life beyond death. That is why I ask the question, "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one?"

In the next chapter, I will present the definition of terms that make up my research question.

## Chapter II

### Statement of the Thesis Question

The purpose of this chapter is to define my research question, "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one?" The wording of my question erupted from a deep personal need to share and understand the mystery through heuristic research. My choice of words in my question will hopefully engage my co-researchers to be able to define and bring life to their experience for the purposes of my study.

There is no love without loss.

And there is no moving beyond loss without some experience of mourning. To be unable to mourn is to be unable to enter into the great human life cycle of death and rebirth--to be unable, that is, to live again. (Lifton, 1975, p. vii)

The words that I will be defining in this chapter are: experience, spiritual, awakening, grieving, death, and loved one. I will provide definitions from the sources I consulted, my own personal working definitions and those of various experts in the field.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) defines experience as, "The actual living through an event or events; actual enjoyment or suffering; hence the effect upon the judgment or feelings produced by personal and direct impressions. Also, a sum total of the conscious events which compose an individual life" (p. 216).

The definition of experience that I would like my co-researchers and the reader to understand includes several key components: Experience is an accumulative process where there is continual movement; it is unable to become stagnant (Shrag, 1969). Jourard (1971) refers to experience as a flowing process of fantasy, feelings, one's own perceptions, and unique memories.

Moustakas (1981) discusses how experience is a subjective expression of self. "In true experience every expression is creative, the creation of the person one is and is becoming. There is only the spontaneous expressing self, finding satisfaction in the pursuit of being" (p. 3).

The subjective expression of the self is multifaceted: "Experience, in its lived concreteness, is the act of experiencing figures (objects, events, situations, persons, modes, chimeras, hallucinations) not in isolation but contextualized within both determinate and indeterminate backgrounds" (Shrag, 1969, p. 18).

Rogers (1961) further encompasses his views on the individual's holistic experience and awareness in the following: "What this seems to mean is that the individual comes to be--in awareness--what he is in experience. He is, in other words, a completely functioning human organism" (pp. 104-105).

The question of this research study is "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one?" This question was answered by capturing my whole experience as well as the personal experiences of the co-researchers. The purpose of this study is to seek the depth of spiritual awakening that is planted and grows through grieving the loss of a loved one.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) defines spiritual as: "The moral feelings or states of the soul; the soul or its affections as influenced by the Divine spirit; pure; holy;--opposed to carnal" (p. 576). In defining spiritual, The Dictionary of Psychology (Chaplin, 1975) states, "Pertaining to spirit; concerned with more elevated aspects of life, which may or may not be connected with a specific religion or religious practice" (p. 509).

For the purpose of this study, I view spiritual as the soul, the higher self, awareness of the connection to the divine and the mystery of the invisible, and the awareness that the body is physical, but the soul is of spirit and is connected to all energies of the entire universe. I feel the most connected to Roger's (1961) depiction of "spiritual" when he speaks of the purpose of becoming a warrior.

Spiritual warriors are open to the world, not shut off from it. They do not ask to control it but accept it as it is and seek inner guidance in order to respond to it in ways that are aligned with their highest intentions. They know that the fears, aggravations, and confusions of life aren't accidental, instead, our Souls can take advantage of the particular opportunities they offer--opportunities to learn, grow, and share.

Life is not a matter of avoiding the tough lessons, but of extracting all we can from them for the advancement of our spiritual selves. The difference between a Spiritual Warrior and a lot of other people who wander around waiting for success, or love, or abundance to happen to them is that the Spiritual warrior ACTS, not REACTS. (pp. xx-xxi)

I feel that once one is aware and recognizes his or her soul, one has been awakened and is ready to encompass all the mysteries of the invisible, unexplainable, and growth.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) defines awakening as "To rise from sleep, or from torpor, indifference" (p. 43). My definition of awakening incorporates awareness; to be jolted into an experience that awakens your senses. The experience of grieving a loved one awakened my senses giving me the opportunity to grow and become more aware spiritually. I hope through the research of my question to find similar themes between myself and co-researchers on the experience of being awakened spiritually from our similar experiences.

In defining grieving, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) states:

To feel grief, suffering, pain. The mental suffering from remorse, bereavement, or the like cause of it. Also, a distressing state of sadness in response to a significant loss, usually of a cherished person. Includes a period of mourning in which the bereaved individual may weep, sigh, and become preoccupied with thoughts of the deceased. (p. 267)

The conceptual framework of Parkes (1978) concerns the way in which the representations of the loved one are part of the person's sense of self, and can themselves be changed--but only gradually with effort, as a result of the discrepant signals. This enables our understanding of grief to go beyond simple reaction to, a mismatch, to incorporate the gradual changes in identity that occur on the way to the resolution of grief.

My own definition of grief is whatever initiates one into grief; the news of a terminal illness, a death. Even an event years later can trigger a delayed or denied grief. One will pass through many stages on the journey to healing, transformation, and awakening. One grieves over a life-changing experience that challenges them to grow, transforming them one way or another, ultimately helping them to see the world through new eyes.

Grief is a wound  
that needs attention  
in order to heal. (Tatelbaum, 1980, p. 43)

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) defines death as "the act or fact of dying; cause or occasion of loss of life; anything so dreadful to seem like death, or a state of being dead" (p. 150). In defining death,

Dorland's Medical Dictionary (1995) states, "The cessation of life; permanent cessation of all bodily functions" (p. 346).

For the purpose of this study, I view death as the ending of the physical essence and beginning of the spiritual essence. The lessons that the soul was here to learn in the physical have been accomplished. My mother always told me, "The only thing between us and our loved ones that have passed is time." Kapleau (1989) stated, "There is no self that is reborn, there is an ongoing continuity of 'again--becoming.' In each moment of life the individual is born and dies, yet he continues. The same is true of the moment of death" (p. 168).

The Dictionary of Psychology (1968) defines loved as:

Complex yet basically integrated emotion comprising strong affection, feelings of tenderness, and devotion to the well being of the loved one. This emotion takes many forms including concern for fellow humans (brotherly love); responsibility for the welfare of a child (parental love); self-esteem and self-attraction. (p. 294)

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) states that loved is "to have or manifest love for; to take delight or pleasure" (p. 357).

When I ponder the word "loved," I feel a compelling force of unconditional love for family, friends, and all of mankind. It is an emotion that is felt deep within the soul, not just in the human body.



Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1961) provides the following definition for the word "one": "Being a single unit, being, or thing. Denoting a particular thing or person--an antithesis to another, other. Denoting a person or thing indefinitely; a certain" (p. 419). My definition of one is a being, standing alone; may refer to unity when concerning love; one as a person.

To conclude this chapter, I offer the wise, poetic words of Shakespeare (Verity, 1923):

Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak  
whispers the o'er fraught heart  
and bids it break.  
Through grief there is growth. (p. 36)

In the next chapter, I will present a literature review of other related works dealing with the spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one.

## Chapter III

### Review of the Literature

I started my literature review by utilizing the CHS library, the Dissertations Abstracts on-line library, EBSCO host from my own personal computer, my personal library, and books I purchased from bookstores in Michigan and Chicago. I also reviewed CHS Master's Theses as well as the on-line library catalog.

Within the realms of my search, I used the following keywords: death, dying, spirituality, and grief. I had luck with those keywords in conducting my extensive search. Then I expanded my search using the same keywords and found more literature that was relevant to my research.

The phrase "spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one" did not register with the computer search I performed. However, I did find two similar dissertations.

Henard (1998), who studied at the University of Virginia, wrote her dissertation on "The Relationship between Spirituality and the Grief Experience (Death)." Henard used a quantitative model to conduct her research. The purpose of her study was to investigate the relationship between individuals' spirituality and their grief experience. She used 62 adults, and the criteria encompassed that they had experienced the death of

an immediate family member from 6 to 13 months prior to the study.

Henard's statistical run failed to show a significant relationship between spirituality and the grief process.

Riley (1999) studied at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. She utilized the phenomenological model to conduct her study titled "Transformation: Through the Process of Bereavement and Use of the Spirit." Riley's exploratory research study examined how the death of a loved one and the bereavement they experienced gave them the opportunity to transform. She also explored how spirituality and transformation complement and manifest from each other. This study offered the opportunity to look at how loss and spirituality in connection to bereavement provide the opportunity for a person to transform. She used a phenomenological model, which included the interviewing of 8 co-researchers in a semi-structured 1-hour session. She taped the interviews and then analyzed the data using the model of phenomenology.

I found many articles from the September 1999 Death Studies magazine, including: "Notes on Suffering, Death, and Native American Spirituality" (Clark, pp. 441-462); "Dying, Mourning, and Spirituality: A Psychological Perspective" (Marrone, Klass, Schwartzberg, & Halgin, pp. 495-520); "The Meanings and Correlates of Spirituality: Suggestions

from an Exploratory Survey of Experts" (Mahony & Graci, pp. 521-528); and "Adolescent Sibling Bereavement as a Catalyst for Spiritual Development: A Model for Understanding" (Batton & Oltjenbouns, pp. 529-547). I have reviewed these articles in an attempt to understand the bereavement process in connection to spirituality.

Marrone, Klass, Schwartzberg, and Halgin (1999) examined the cognitive assimilation, accommodation strategies during the process of mourning the death of a loved one as well as during the process of living our own dying. Marrone, et al. (1999) view spiritual matters as valid clinical issues, especially in work with the dying and persons-in-mourning. From their perspective, human beings, in addition to being physical, psychological, social, economic, and political beings, are also religious and spiritual beings. "Therefore, to understand fully their responses to loss, one must understand their religious and spiritual concerns. . . Transformation is a significant part of the process" (Marrone, et al., 1999, p. 550). Marrone, et al. further stated:

Researchers and theorists have attempted to describe the stages, phases, and tasks related to the processes of human grieving and mourning. Only in recent years, however have theorists considered existential change, religious conversion, or psychospiritual transformation a significant part of the process. (p. 549)

Marrone, et al. (1999) give the phases different names and focus on distinct aspects of bereavement. This model brings together different loss reactions within the boundary of four main phases, which include:

- a. cognitive restructuring, which involves the reorganization and restructuring of our thoughts and concepts so as to assimilate the news that a loved one no longer occupies our world.
- b. emotional expression, which involves the challenge of feeling, identifying, accepting, and giving some form of expression to all of the emotional turmoil, cognitive, confusion, and physical pain that may be experienced.
- c. psychological reintegration, which is concerned with integrating new coping behaviors and cognitive strategies so as to better deal with a world without the deceased.
- d. psychospiritual transformation, which involves a profound, growth-oriented spiritual/existential transformation and fundamentally changes our central assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about life, death, love, compassion, or God. (p. 551)

“If there was any reason for my father’s death, it was to open my eyes and force me to grow up” (Schwartzberg & Halgin, 1991, p. 241).

I enjoyed reading and reviewing the article by Marrone, et al. (1999) sharing their thoughts on the death and bereavement of a loved one. I found great comfort in the model of bereavement, which is one of the few models that include growth as the final phase within an existential realm.

The process of dying does not favor anyone.  
It visits men and women, black and white, good and bad.  
The process of dying does not practice prejudice  
of any kind.

Death erases meaning.  
 Yet without death there can be no meaning.  
 Try to grasp hold of death,  
 and you will see there is nothing to grasp.  
 The process of dying has a hold on you. (Grollman, 1974, p. 32)

The following were newly purchased books in my personal library  
 which I reviewed for this research study:

1. The Nature of Grief--The Evolution and Psychology of Reactions to Loss (Archer, 1999). This author focuses on evolutionary psychology, ethnology, and psychology to consider grief from two perspectives: first as a process which shares certain common features, and second as something that is variable under different circumstances. John Bowlby is referenced within this book to expand on his idea of commonality of grief reactions among different people and under different circumstances through his attachment theory, which was inspired by ethnological research. Most importantly, Archer (1999) examines variations in grief, explaining it as "a natural human reaction, since it is a universal feature of human existence irrespective to culture, although the form and intensity its expression takes varies considerably" (p. 110). Although Archer focuses more on the biological forces of the grief process and it was very interesting reading, his material did not provide much insight into my own research.

2. Losing a Parent--Passage to a New Way of Living (Kennedy, 1991). Kennedy started writing her book 6 months after her own father's death. In the beginning, she was writing for her own healing; however, it was her family, friends, and clients seeking new ideas and perspectives on their own grief that helped her most. Her family, friends, and clients are the ones who encouraged her to continue writing for the "larger audience," the public. Kennedy used many of her own clients' stories within her book as research. I was drawn to this book because of her own heuristic inquiry of the death of a parent to allow her to heal and expand her awareness.

Kennedy (1991) states in her book, "My studies of the near-death experience have shown me that a close brush with death can, despite its trauma, launch the survivor on a journey that radically transforms his or her life, and his or her view of death" (p. xiii). A poem included in Kennedy's writings was one she heard in a lecture given by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who dedicated her life to teaching new attitudes toward death and dying. This was written by a man after his father's death:

When you love give it everything you've got and when you've reached your limit give it more. And forget the pain of it because if you face your death it is only the love you have given and received which will count and all the rest--the accomplishments, the struggles, the fights--will be forgotten in your reflection. And if you have loved well then it will have been worth it and the thrill of it will last you through the end. And if you have not, death

will always come too soon and be too terrible to face. (Kennedy, 1991, p. 5)

Kennedy (1991) explains that humans pass through several stages on their journey into healing and transformation, from grief, shock, descent, and emergence. Some move instantly into the second stage, with shock often being the first response. The mind and body react with a feeling of numbness due to the inability to absorb the news of the death that has just occurred. For most people, shock serves as a protector for the transition into the next stage. Next, the loss can overcome the human, filling them with anguish, longing, relief, anger, depression, numbness, despair, aching, guilt, confusion, and pain. These feelings can be overwhelming, coming once or in waves, but they are usually followed by peace and calmness.

Kennedy (1991) states, "When grieving for a parent, it is possible to feel both abandoned and released, terrified and exhilarated. Faced with a grief that is not reasonable, rational, consistent, or predictable, the mind struggles for understanding" (p. 11). As the human struggles through the pain, deep within, their grief silently works, ripping down old structures, bringing up unresolved issues, followed by many questions.

Their old visions of the world are shattered, and one by one the old beliefs are challenged: beliefs that their parents are immortal, that they can protect them, and that they can always return home. Suddenly, their own death is right around the corner and they question: Are they



next in line? Life feels fragile and unpredictable. The world they had once known breaks down. (Kennedy, 1991, p. 12)

I realized through my extensive review of literature that Elizabeth Kubler-Ross is referenced by many authors. She has devoted most of her life to studying death, dying, and working with the terminally ill. Kubler-Ross (1969) developed her own stages of grief and dying, including denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She explained about sharing the knowledge of these stages in her book, On Death and Dying, where she stated, "It is hoped that it will encourage others not to shy away from the 'hopelessly' sick, but to get closer to them, as they can help them much during their final hours" (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 37).

Kubler-Ross (1975) explained, "Facing death means facing the ultimate question of the meaning of life, if we really want to live we must have the courage to recognize that life is ultimately very short, and that everything we do counts" (p. 126). Her statement reminded me of a quote that I had read in the book, Don't Take My Grief Away. Manning (1984) quoted an unknown author as saying, "There is one test for whether or not your purpose is done. If you are alive, it is not finished" (p. 110).

Joan Halifax, who has been working with individuals suffering from life threatening illnesses since 1970, suggested during an interview that Buddhism has much to offer western culture in their vision of death, which

is not finality. It emphasizes "the importance of seeing and realizing the impermanent nature of the phenomenal world... When we pass through the gateway of death we may experience awakening, freedom, true liberation" (Kubler-Ross, 1975, p. 70). In the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, death is part of the cycle with rebirth and the only way to escape this cycle and find true liberation is through dissolution of all desires. This requires cultivating a disciplined body and mind, which takes many lifetimes.

Every life is different, just as every death is different. The experience that one endures during their life is unique, just as their death is unique to them and their loved ones. Everyone experiences the process of their own death and the process of the death of a loved one in a unique way. The world is profoundly huge and encompasses hundreds of different cultures and religions. Each of them provides a different perspective, place in their life, and experience of death. Some cultures view death as an extreme honor, while other cultures experience death as horrid for every soul that it touches.

I absorbed much while exploring Nuland's (1993) national best seller, How We Die, and was overwhelmed by the realization that poets, journalists, and authors often write about death but rarely see it. Nuland stated that we only see death once or twice in our lifetime in situations where we are deeply entangled in its emotional significance. He also stated

that very few of us actually witness the deaths of those we love; unlike years ago, very few people now die in their homes.

There has always been great mystery about whether a quick, painless death or a long, painful death is the preferred ending. Which is easier on the family? Which is easier on the person who is passing on? I feel that when a loved one experiences a terminal illness, the family has the opportunity to tell them everything they want the person to know. Although watching the suffering is extremely painful, these moments of heart-to-heart sharing ultimately enrich both the loved one who is passing on and the individual going through the grieving process.

No matter what initiates one into grief, the news of a terminal illness, death, or traumatic event years later may trigger a delayed or denied grief. One will pass through several stages on the journey to healing and transformation: shock, descent, and emergence. Some move through the stages in different orders, but most often one first experiences the stage of shock. Usually, one is unable to comprehend the news of death that has just occurred; the mind and body respond with a numbness. Life becomes dreamlike and foggy. Edges are blurred and feelings dull as we ease into confronting the reality of the loss. For many, shock is needed for a protected transition into the often overwhelming next stage.

I can remember very vividly when the doctors at U of M Hospital took our family into a room to reveal the prognosis of Pete's brain tumor. Disbelief and horror took over our faces. Every single one of us was in shock; we could not believe what we had just heard. I remember my body feeling funny, and life felt like a dream. I was obviously experiencing shock at that very tender moment.

As the shock starts to wear off, one is flooded with feelings and experiences. The loss overcomes one, filling them with anguish, longing, relief, anger, bargaining, depression, despair, guilt, confusion, and numbness. The feelings often come and go and can be very intense at times, pushing one into an unstable essence. One never knows what to expect since conflicting feelings often come in overwhelming waves. The mind struggles to fit the experience into some sort of mold, which often makes the person feel that they have completely lost control of themselves.

The grief process is working through the conscious and unconscious, breaking down old structures, churning old and new experiences, ultimately bringing about questions and challenging new and old beliefs and faith. During this long middle stage, one starts to feel the temptation to put the grief behind them and live a normal life, but one will never be the same. Their life will never return to the normality that they once knew. They have

had a life-changing experience that will challenge them and help them grow, transforming them in one way or another.

One cannot flee the grief process, no matter how fast one runs. If one realized the great significance that the grief process shines on one's life, they would stop running and accept the great challenge. If one decides to accept the challenge and lesson, the forces and growth can go to work for the magnificent opportunity for transformation. It initiates great changes in attitudes and perspectives.

I can remember when I made the decision to embrace grief and take the challenge. I immersed myself in reading about the experience of death, spiritualism, and angels. I was illuminated. I suddenly began to have a new perspective on life and realized that experience was what life was all about. I was to learn and grow from each new experience, whether good or bad, a struggle, or the second time around. Suddenly, I began to see the world through new eyes, with new appreciation for everything and everyone--for life itself.

This is how my study differs from the ones that I researched in my literature review. My study embraces the personal spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one. There have been some qualitative studies

done on similar experiences, but they have been researched phenomenologically. I have researched my phenomenon heuristically.

Most of the books that I researched for my literature review are focused only on the grief process, including the stages, coping, and grieving loss. My study takes grief to the core of meaning, finding the lesson and the spiritual awakening that illuminates from grieving the loss of a loved one.

Schneider (1984) states, "It is easy to walk to freedom. For grieving to lead to growth, our life must come back together" (p. 199). Reformulating loss energizes us. We are likely to recognize the potential in our lives for growth, challenge, and self-discipline. We let go of searching for a place where loss will no longer touch our lives. We can shift from a person-centered existence to a transpersonal one.

"The awe-inspiring nature of wisdom is the result of the kind of spiritual transformation that Einstein describes" (Schneider, 1984, p. 263). It is a joyful and freeing feeling to consume the full cycle of transformation, bringing one closer to sense the mystical. Awakenings and transformation are restorations of the human spirit. Schneider (1984) quotes Einstein:

The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the power of all true science. (Those) to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe (are) as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself in the highest wisdom and most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can

comprehend only in their most primitive form--this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness. (p. 56)

Many aspects of grief have been reviewed. Now, I will proceed with the review of literature on the spiritual experience and awakening.

Spiritual experiences, which range from lifelong questioning to being overtaken or gripped by the divine or the awesome, reveal two basic characteristics (Klass, 1995). First, the person encounters or merges with that which is formerly understood as not self or other. Whether occurring in normal waking consciousness or in an altered state of consciousness (e.g., a dream, daydream, fantasy, meditation, prayer), the experience involves a partial dissolution with ego boundaries "so the individual feels at one with another person, with the divine, or with the environment" (Klass, 1995, p. 244).

Individuals have reported experiences of undifferentiated unity, transcendence of space and time, a sense of sacredness characterized by awe, ineffability resulting in difficulty in communicating about the experience, and deeply felt positive emotions (Tageson, 1982). Second, the person becomes aware of a higher power, a higher intelligence, purpose, or order in the universe outside the person's control but to which the person may conform his or her life. Individuals report experiences of cognitive upheaval; questioning of their assumptions about life; experiences of states of insight

into the depths of truth unplumbed by the intellect; paradoxical experiences, such as being reborn through death; and positive changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors connected to a new spiritual awareness (Klass, 1995; Marrone, et al., 1999; Tageson, 1982).

At some point in the person's spiritual experience, "the person feels his or her life is more authentic, more meaningful, the person's thinking is 'set straight' or true, and his or her actions towards others are right and true" (Klass, 1995, p. 244). The spiritual awareness/awakening may take many forms, including religion, as a link or bond to an understanding of God, as a higher power; philosophy, as a dedication to a cause such as humanity or relief of human suffering; and a spiritual conception of the self as a link in the chain of evolution, leading to a more centered state of being (Marrone, et al., 1999; Tageson, 1982).

I will end my journey of reviewing literature with the mystical expression of The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran (1923):

Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would ask now of Death.  
 And he said:  
 You would know the secret of death.  
 But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?  
 The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil  
 the mystery of light.  
 If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide  
 unto the body of life.  
 For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.



## Chapter IV

### Research Model

Heuristic research is the process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis (Moustakas, 1990). My own life experiences led me to choose the heuristic research style.

Throughout my life, I have searched for meaning within personal experience, whether it was to understand an experience fully or just to learn from the experience. Patton (1985) suggests that with either method we choose, heuristic or phenomenology, we are studying the meaning, not the numbers as in quantitative research. We are experiencing and learning through our own personal discoveries and those of others. There is much to learn from ourselves and others; everyone's experience is unique. This brings life, passion, heart, and soul to a study.

Rogers (1961) summarized the essential qualities of discovery in terms of openness to one's own experiences, trust in one's self-awareness and understanding, an internal locus of evaluation, and a willingness to enter into a process rooted in the self. I was and am open to my own experiences. This helped me narrow down my question to "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one."

I have experienced many different situations in life where I have moved through the process of grief. Each time, it has been uniquely attached to an experience. My thesis question focuses primarily on spiritual awakening and the grief process that encompasses the death of a loved one. Using the heuristic style of research complements and helps me to process, while providing a greater understanding of my question.

There are six phases of heuristic research that guide unfolding investigations and comprise the basic research design (Moustakas, 1990). In the beginning, Initial Engagement, each researcher has a topic, theme, problem, or question that burns deep within them causing a desire to search and learn. The topic, theme, problem, or question is always a personal experience that creates great change, distress, unresolved feelings and understanding, or has formed the person in some personal way.

During initial engagement, the researcher invites him or herself into self-dialogue, an inner search to discover whatever is burning within. Through this process, one's own autobiography emerges along with concern for social issues. While everyone's personal experience is unique, many have similar experiences with themes that may complement each other. Reflected upon collectively, one can discover understanding of the chosen topic.

The researcher also invites him or herself into the mysterious realms of tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, and focusing. Polanyi (1983) stated that all knowledge consists or is rooted in acts of comprehension that are made possible through tacit knowing:

We can know more than we can tell... when we know a person's face, and we can recognize it among a million. Yet we usually cannot tell how we recognize a face we know... this knowledge cannot be put into words. (p. 4)

"The bridge between the explicit and the tacit is the realm of the between, or the intuitive" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Intuition comes from within; the more one is open and aware of his or her own intuition, a more advanced perspective will emerge. "Without the intuitive capacity to form patterns, relationships, and inferences, essential material for scientific knowledge is denied or lost" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23).

Within the realm of indwelling, "one turns inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension for the nature of meaning of a quality or theme of human experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24). Focusing is another key process in heuristics which allows the researcher to adhere to a process of inner attention, a staying with, a way of encompassing the inner meanings of an experience. Moustakas (1990) states: "Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena--whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing,

self-searching, or dialogue with others--its medium or base is the internal reference" (p. 26).

I had an experience of initial engagement 4 years ago after the death of my stepfather. I had a burning desire to enter fully into the theme of spiritual awareness, intuition, and angels. I was not aware at that time of heuristic research, but I had experiences that caused me to desire knowledge, understanding, and clarification of my own experiences. I decided then that I must learn to surrender and trust my intuition, fully, to become immersed in the subject.

As one flows into the next process of heuristic research, Immersion, one becomes completely engrossed in the question. The question is lived in waking, sleeping, and even dream states (Moustakas, 1990). The immersion process allows the person to become intimate and live as one with his or her question. This allows one to engage in conversations, to become aware of signs, feel intuitive response, and sustain focus and concentration on the question. Primary concepts for facilitating the immersion process include spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension--knowing more than we can tell (Moustakas, 1990).

Initially, I entered the flow of immersion concerning my thesis topic which revolves around death and grief. I lived the theme for many weeks. I thought about the theme in waking, sleeping, and dream states. I attended a funeral and submerged myself in books, poetry, and journal writings about the theme. Finally, I achieved an intimate relationship with the question. There was not a day that went by that I did not think or write about my question, yearning for more information and understanding. Immersing myself in the question helped me to focus and concentrate, and allowed my energy to flow, intuitively, within the topic.

Then the time came when a break was needed. This is a part of the process referred to as Incubation. Although one retreats from intense focus on the question, there is great growth occurring. It is similar to the incident where one is looking intensively for lost car keys but cannot find them anywhere. As soon as the searching stops, the mindset changes and the keys seem to appear!

During the incubation stage, one relaxes and turns away from the question. Emerging from intense immersion, latent themes suddenly come to surface. The period of incubation allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness (Moustakas, 1990). I know within

my own experiences of incubation that I had moments of new awareness while taking a drive, a walk, and during meditation. Ideas and awareness came to surface for me while I relaxed alone and had my mind on something completely irrelevant to the new knowledge that intuitively surfaced.

During incubation, one becomes more open and receptive to intuition, allowing the process of Illumination to occur naturally. Illumination is similar to a cartoon where the character realizes something and their head lights up like a lightbulb. Moustakas (1990) states that illumination is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question. New meanings and awareness are forthcoming within illumination. Themes that may have not been understood become clear. The researcher is now able to reflect and decode the mystery of some hidden meanings and themes. The feelings of illumination are confidence and true understanding. "In illumination, it is just such missed, misunderstood, or distorted realities that make their appearance and add something essential to the truth of an experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30).

Once the process of illumination is experienced, the researcher enters into the process of Explication. The experience of explication is similar to illumination, but it is more in depth. During explication, the fresh meanings

awakened in the consciousness are examined to better understand the layers of meaning. In the explication process, the heuristic researcher utilizes focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure to recognize the unique and distinctive meanings of an experience while depending upon internal frames of reference (Moustakas, 1990). Thus, a more complete picture is brought into focus. Additional angles, textures, and features are formed; corrections are made and the dominant themes are present. The researcher is now physically and emotionally ready to put everything together into a whole experience.

The final process, Creative Synthesis, now occurs naturally. During creative synthesis, the researcher is intimately familiar with all of the data and its major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as a whole (Moustakas, 1990). The creative synthesis can only be achieved through the intuitive and tacit dimensions. The researcher is now on the challenged path to put the core themes into a creative synthesis, which can be narrative text with examples or a poem, drawing, painting, or a creative story. To achieve creative synthesis, the researcher must enter solitude and fully trust the intuitive and tacit dimension. This can be achieved through meditation, walking, jogging,

horseback riding, yoga, or any other relaxing activity which allows the researcher time alone to reflect.

Once one has lived through the lengthy heuristic inquiry, one shall never see the world in the same way again. One has lived, felt, and passionately searched out the experience of the question. Moustakas (1990) states, "Heuristic research processes include moments of meaning, understanding, and discovery that the researcher will hold and savor. Feelings, thoughts, ideas, and images that have been awakened will return again and again" (p. 55). The heuristic process can be rewarding, exciting, fulfilling, life-changing, and can help the researcher grow personally in the "search for unity in hidden likenesses" (Bronkowski, 1965, p. 13). "Heuristic inquiry reveals the meaning of a personal experience through soul searching, communicating with this process transpires 'knowledge is generate' that will lend itself to a deeper search within myself to understand and integrate the meanings of my experience" (Moustakas, 1985, pp. 40-41).

In the next chapter, I will discuss the process and procedures of heuristic methodology that I used in researching my question: "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one?"



## Chapter V

### Methods and Procedures

In this chapter, I will describe how I applied the heuristic research model in order to bring illumination to my research question. For this, I relied heavily on the methods and procedures of Moustakas (1990). The three parts of my research were:

1. Methods and procedures for preparing to obtain material from co-researchers. "Co-researchers are people who share the particular experience in depth, including situations, events, conversations, relationships, feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 38). The researcher immerses him or herself in the co-researcher's experience and lives it. The themes then become clear. Moustakas (1990) further stated:

A typical way of gathering material is through interviews that often take the form of dialogues with oneself and one's research participants. Ordinarily, such an "interview" is not ruled by the clock but by inner experiential time. In dialogue, one is encouraged to permit ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold and be expressed naturally. One completes the quest when one has an opportunity to tell one's story to a point of natural closing. (p. 39)

2. Methods and procedures for obtaining material from co-researchers.
3. Methods and procedures for obtaining material through self-search.

### Collecting Data from Co-Researchers

I followed the methods of preparation for heuristic research of Moustakas (1990). First, I developed a set of instructions that informed potential co-researchers of the nature of the research design, its purpose and process, and what was expected of them. I included a vivid account of my personal experience. I also constructed a way of apprising co-researchers of the importance of immersion, concentration, and respite in connection with their experience of the phenomenon being researched (Moustakas, 1990). A cover letter with definitions of the wording used in my question was provided as well as guiding questions to help facilitate their personal exploration of the phenomenon (see Appendix A).

Next, I developed a set of criteria for selection of participants; for example: age, sex, socioeconomic and educational factors, ability to articulate the experience, cooperation, interest, willingness to make the commitment, enthusiasm, and degree of involvement. I was hoping to interview a variety of friends and family, which is exactly what unfolded during this study. I feel that the interviews ran smoothly partly because my co-researchers and I had some sort of personal relationship and/or connection. They felt very comfortable expressing their feelings and experience due to established trust. This research focused on a deep

emotional topic, and I believe the element of trust which we shared was the base upon which my co-researchers were able to open up and give themselves fully to this process.

I then developed a contract which included time commitments, place, confidentiality, informed consent, opportunities for feedback, permission to tape record, permission to use the data being gathered in a thesis, dissertation, and/or other publication, and verification of findings. The co-researchers were able to read and sign the contract before the interviewing process (see Appendix B). Interviews were then scheduled at mutually convenient times and places, allowing enough time for co-researchers to review the information packet and reflect and process their own experience related to my research question.

I considered ways of creating an atmosphere or climate that encouraged trust, openness, and self-disclosure. I made arrangements to interview my co-researchers in a space where they felt the most comfortable. Each co-researcher was allowed to choose where the interview took place, and interviews were conducted at my house, the co-researcher's house, a bookstore, coffee shop, outside in nature, among other places. However, most of my co-researchers chose to be interviewed in their own house where they felt secure and comforted by their personal space. I feel that giving the

co-researchers the choice of where the interview would take place helped to make them feel more comfortable, which created space for self-disclosure and allowed the process to unfold naturally.

Meditation and other relaxation techniques were used to facilitate a sense of comfort and well-being during the interview process. Walters (1996) in his book, Superconscious: A Guide to Meditation, provides the following meditation, which was used at the beginning of each interview:

Meditation on the Moonrise

It is evening.

Mentally watch the moonrise on a boundless lake

Ripples lap against ripples

In endless counterpoint of restless rhythms.

Now here, now there--see, a few crests have joined.

And the ripples proudly swell, becoming waves.

But how fleeting their pride!

Watch: see how the waves reach upward,

But soon dip to form humble thoughts!

Bobbing, the waters tell us:

"All is change."

Bright moonshapes dance upon the water.

Like laughing children

They run gaily on a lambent ripple,

Or pause breathlessly, in shining triumph

On a wave crest,

Ere sinking again in darkness

To wait for new life on another rise.

Here, too, the fickle moon-shapes say:

"All is change."

Now see your mind contained

In these boundless, dark waters.

The surface ripples are your restless thoughts--  
Conscious and Subconscious--  
Your emotions and feelings,  
Dancing, playing,  
Rising hopefully,  
Or sinking in discouragement,  
Proud one minute,  
Humbled the next.  
Here, too, the waters tell you:  
"All is change."

But the moonlight above,  
Caught imperfectly on the water's surface,  
Remains ever calm, serene, unchanging.  
This is the light of Spirit.  
We reflect it so fleetingly, so distortedly,  
In our restless minds!

Now feel that the calm sky  
has formed a single, radiant drop  
Of liquid peace.  
This drop falls, striking the water.  
Ripples of peace spread outward in all directions,  
soothing the dancing rhythm of your thoughts.  
Wave on wave of peace spreads over you  
Until, slowly, your mind reveals not a ripple.  
Far, far out into the boundless night  
No quiver of movement to disturb your calm!  
And everywhere the moonlight on the water shines--  
Almost as motionless as in the sky above.

Gaze upward;  
Release your mind from its watery heaviness.  
You are now the sky!  
Moon-rays of your peace spread quietly over the heavens,  
Their calm light reaching out to infinity.  
You have no boundaries,  
No physical or mental weight,  
No need to worry, to struggle and compete.  
You are the endless sky!

With the cool moonbeams of your calmness  
 You have claimed the universe, and made it your own.  
 You and the endless light divine  
 Are one at last! (pp. 214-216)

During the first couple of seconds of that meditation, I lit a special white candle. I felt that the energy the candle released and accepted would be helpful when it was time to immerse myself in the data. I also lit incense which burned of lavender. I feel that the meditation, candle, and incense helped generate a calm and relaxing atmosphere. Near the end of the interview, I allowed the co-researcher some time and space, if needed, to process additional aspects of their experience. At the end of the interview, I used the following short meditation by Walters (1996):

Concentrate at the point between your eyebrows. Visualize a tunnel of golden light. Mentally enter that tunnel, and feel yourself surrounded by a glorious sense of happiness and freedom. As you move through the tunnel, feel yourself bathed by the light until all worldly thoughts disappear.

After soaring through the tunnel, visualize before you a curtain of deep violet-blue light. Pass through that curtain into another tunnel of deep violet-blue light. Feel the light surrounding you. Slowly, the tunnel walls disappear in blue light. Expand your consciousness into that light--into infinite freedom and bliss. Now there is no tunnel. There is only the all-encompassing blueness and bliss of infinity.

At last, visualize before you a silvery-white, five-pointed star of light. Mentally spread out your arms and legs, assuming with your body the shape of that star. Give yourself to it in body, mind, and soul as you surrender every thought, every feeling to absolute, existing bliss.

Immersing myself within this extremely deep, emotional, enlightening topic has had an effect once again on my life. I have recaptured emotional and intellectual memories throughout this process which has profoundly affected the way I live, experience, and cherish every waking moment once again. I have experienced tremendous growth within the realms of patience, love, and understanding. Now, I am learning to let things go. I have been doing much work on not wasting any minute of my life--not one breath. I enjoy both personal encounters and time spent alone once again.

I made the choice to live in the house where my stepfather took his last breath. Sometimes I just sit in the room where the hospital bed was and let my mind wander into a realm of memories, spiritual talks I have had with him, the sadness, the joy, and death itself. I feel that living in the house has caused many different emotions, intuitive and spiritual experiences to surface. I feel that my thesis is more alive for having typed it that house. The interviews and many conversations which transpired have brought life to my thesis question. My own experiences as well as immersion in and the reliving of the experiences of my co-researchers have resulted in tremendous personal growth.

Bliss cascades gently over you, like a waterfall of mist, filling your heart with ineffable peace. (p. 153)

After receiving final approval for my proposal, I sent an information packet to each potential co-researcher. The packet included a cover letter stating my thesis question and clarification of the terms that I used in my question, a copy of the participant-release contract to be signed by all study participants, a list of dates available to conduct interviews, and a vignette of a personal experience related to the study.

I also used my own experience in my data. Through journaling and self-dialogue, I answered the same questions I asked my co-researchers. Additionally, I incorporated discussions I had with other people in my journaling and retrieved themes from my own experience. I had already collected a large amount of self-dialogue through journaling, along with information obtained in conversations I had with friends, family members, and the public in general. A lot of my own self-dialogue came from intuition and tacit knowing, which is a process that I trust implicitly and rely on in this lifetime. This was the second, and most likely not the last time, that I have immersed myself within the realm of spiritual awakenings, death, and the grief process. I used both my current and past experiences within my immersion into this deep, enlightening area of research.



My experiences have been so meaningful and full of life and transformation up to this point. I have had many new awarenesses and cherish them within my mind, body, and soul.

In the following chapter, I will discuss how the data was handled and from co-researchers.

## Chapter VI

### Handling and Presentation of Data

This chapter will explain how I handled the data that I collected from my co-researchers and myself. Within this chapter, I explored and identified the themes that presented themselves in the data. When the time came to handle the data, I used Moustakas' 8-step approach (1990, pp. 51-52).

My first step was to gather data from each co-researcher, including an interview, poetry, journal entries, and any other soul work they were willing to contribute. Gathering all of this data was challenging and enlightening. I met new people and shared much emotion, heart, and soul with them. I felt honored that my co-researchers shared so much with me. All that has been contributed truly talked to my soul and deeply resonated with me.

For step two, I immersed myself in the data representing the experience of each co-researcher as well as my own personal experience until I felt that I had a comprehensive understanding of each individual experience. I accomplished this by first lighting the candle that was used in the interview. I then proceeded to listen to the taped interview and allowed myself to be taken back to the emotions that were expressed within the sacred space my co-researchers and I had shared. I completely immersed

myself within their experience, making it my own. This prepared me for the next step.

During step three, I completely set aside the data in order to allow myself sacred space for incubation, out of which new thoughts and perspectives would emerge. At first, this was extremely challenging because thoughts and emotions were still filling my days. I deliberately changed my focus, and started to plan my wedding. Suddenly, I was in incubation and engaged in other things in my life. Planning my wedding brought much joy and excitement in my life. I was able to satisfy creative urges, relax, and have some great times! After a few weeks, and with a refreshed spirit, it was time to renew myself with each experience and allow new ideas and thoughts to emerge. It was truly amazing. Themes, thoughts, and realizations started to show themselves.

The fourth step brought me back to my co-researchers' original data. While I immersed myself within each co-researcher's original data, I looked for anything that I might have overlooked the first time and anything that was nonessential or did not resonate with any of the themes that were revealed. I found this part of the data analysis the easiest, since this time all of the themes had been revealed. I was emotional and excited. Everything

was coming together smoothly. I felt a great sense of accomplishment and had confidence in my work.

I repeated the above steps for each of my co-researchers during step five. My purpose was to develop a depiction of each co-researcher's experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one.

In step six, I looked at individual descriptions through immersion and incubation. I internalized the themes and experiences, which enabled a depiction of all of the co-researchers' material to be created. The pure essence of the experiences was captured through the use of taped interviews, poetry, journal entries, and other materials.

Wrapping up step seven allowed me to develop an individual portrait, using the material I gathered throughout the interview process. The co-researcher I chose to use as a portrait was exciting. Her experience best reflected the themes and caught the pure essence of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one. She shared with me journal entries, published poetry about the experience, and a truly spiritual outlook on the entire topic. Her material brought me to tears, gave me goosebumps, and comforted me as well. I looked forward to writing and sharing her portrait within my thesis.

Step eight was my favorite step! Here, I had the opportunity to rely on my intuition and imagination to create the finale, the creative synthesis. I let my intuition and imagination create an enchanting story to illuminate the themes, experiences, and my entire journey of the experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one.

I will now introduce my co-researchers, whose names have been costumed at their request. Themes that are supported by the experiences of my co-researchers and myself will then be presented.

The 11 co-researchers I interviewed ranged in age from 24 to 60 years old. Their experiences were all extremely unique and similar in the same sense.

Ariel is a 24-year-old female who is working towards a degree in education. She lost her mom to breast cancer 2 years ago.

Raphael, a 36-year-old male, is a math teacher at a Catholic school. He has lost many of his loved ones within the past few years and still has a hard time sharing his experiences.

Daniel is a 30-year-old male who is married and has three children. He lost his father 8 years ago. A lot of emotion came out while he shared his experience. Daniel stated that he had never really talked to anyone about his experience.

Sylvia, a 60-year-old female, has lost many loved ones throughout the years. She feels she has experienced and learned much, especially from the deaths of individuals with whom she had been very close.

Dharma is a 52-year-old female. She is an elementary school principal. Dharma lost her soulmate (husband) 5 years ago. She has had many metaphysical experiences and lives a very spiritual life.

Venus, a 24-year-old female, lost her grandfather a year ago. He lived overseas, and she had not seen him in years. However, Venus felt very close to her grandfather and, despite the distance between them, woke up from a sound sleep at the time of his death.

Gabriel is a 25-year-old male who has lost many loved ones in the past. He also came very close to death himself, but miraculously lived through the accident. Gabriel believes that loved ones of his who have passed on watch over him continuously.

Eve, a 28-year-old female, experienced the loss of her mother 4 years ago. She has had a hard time dealing with her loss. Eve stated that her life has been changed; she has learned a lot through this experience.

I could not use the material from the last 3 co-researchers because their themes were completely different and did not offer the depth of the first 8 co-researchers.

Throughout my entire experience of processing the data through immersion and incubation, there were seven themes that kept presenting themselves. Initially, I was afraid that themes would not emerge. It was amazing how they revealed themselves--almost in bold highlighted letters!

The themes are as followed:

1. Anger
2. Loss of Faith
3. Loss of Trust in the Future
4. Dreams/Spirituality
5. Making Death a Friend
6. Belief in Fate
7. New Outlook on Life

### Anger

As I reviewed the data, this theme came up in many different ways. I realized that anger was common within the grief process and was directed either at the person that passed or God. I also realized that people do not look deeper into the anger to find out that it is manifesting from their own fear. It is easier and more comfortable to direct anger than deal with the underlying fear. As the individual comes to the end of this part of the grieving process, the fear subsides and the anger fades.

Ariel

I was so angry that I was not going to have my mom here for my college graduation and also my wedding. I felt abandoned. I mean, I know it was not her fault, but I was angry at the fact that she was leaving me. It just did not seem fair to me.

Raphael

It seems like every time I have lost one of my loved ones, even though I do not want to be mad. I always end right back at feeling angry first. I just do not understand sometimes, and it feels like I have lost so many loved ones while others have not lost nearly as many. No wonder I always end up back at being angry. Is that normal? It does always go away, the anger that is.

Daniel

I remember when I was a little boy, my father was hardly ever home because he had to take care of the family business. I was always mad because the other kids got to play ball with their dad and I never even saw mine. He left before I got up in the morning, and came home after I had gone to bed. He was only home on Sundays. When he died, I was mad again, like all that anger surfaced. I felt cheated.

Sylvia

I do not know why I always feel angry when someone leaves my life from dying, maybe because I am getting older and facing death myself. I guess I just feel lonely.

Dharma

I was so mad when my husband was diagnosed with a brain tumor. I was expecting to spend the rest of our lives together. It just did not seem fair. We were soulmates, and I wanted him in physical form.



Eve

I was holding all of my feelings inside of me about my mom dying and then I started having major anxiety attacks. I was rushed to the hospital, and then it was recommended that I see a therapist to help me deal with all of the anger that I was holding deep inside of me.

Gabriel

I just can't believe it sometimes, that I have lost my grandparents. They did not even get to see any great grandchildren. I often wonder why they had to go so soon. I just wish they could have lived a little longer, I know sometimes that's just the way it is, but who said life is fair?

Venus

I have just been so mad at everyone since my mom has died. I feel like crap because I am always so mad. Does this feeling ever go away? I always ask myself that question. Every time a holiday comes along, especially Mother's Day, I feel so sad, mad, and lonely. I feel like my husband has to put up with so much, then I feel guilty. I guess I am just a bundle of mixed emotions.

Jennifer

I was so mad when my stepdad was diagnosed. We were such a great family unit and had so much fun. I just could not understand, why us? Why him? It just wasn't fair. I have had a lot of mixed feelings lately, especially with planning my wedding. I wanted him to give me away.

When I look back at the whole experience I was only angry for a little while. . . I remember wondering why the good people got taken early.

Loss of Faith

Four of the 8 co-researchers expressed loss of faith within the experience that they shared with me. This loss in faith manifested because

these co-researchers were still angry and could not understand why God would take their loved ones from them when they felt they still needed them.

### Ariel

I just felt lost. I did not know if I had faith in God anymore. Where did my mom go? Was she just in the ground or was she in Heaven? Is there a Heaven? I always believed in God and Heaven. I never doubted it, not once. But if there is a God, then why did he take my mom before I graduated and before she got to see me get married?

Why didn't any of my prayers get answered?

### Daniel

I don't know, I prayed everyday that my dad would just spend some time with me when I was younger, but I hardly ever saw him. When he died, I felt like I didn't even know him. Did he believe in God? Did he believe in Heaven? Should I? Do I? Yes, I do, but it took some time and understanding. I am a stronger person now, I guess.

### Venus

I just keep asking God "Why?" and he never gives me an answer.

### Jennifer

I was mad at God and lost faith for a little while, but then I experienced some miracles and learned from my mom that God does not take away the people we love to punish us; it is just their time. He needs them, and we need both of them to learn and grow.

### Loss of Trust in the Future

Dealing with the unknown and putting our faith in fate and destiny can be very challenging. I could see this within some of my co-researcher's

experiences. They did not know what to expect in their future. I sensed some fear and a loss of trust in their own future caused by losing ones that they love. There may even have been some fear of living on without their loved one.

### Ariel

I kept wondering what was next, how I was going to deal with graduating. I ended up taking a year off of school because I wasn't sure if I could handle it. I was afraid that I would just start crying in the middle of class and everyone would think I was crazy or couldn't handle school.

I started to pull away from my dad because I was afraid to lose him. I didn't know if he was next. I wondered when he would die as well. I started to have a lot of nervous feelings about getting close to anyone, because I was afraid to lose them.

### Raphael

I always wondered how everyone would react at holidays. Should we celebrate the holiday or not? Would it feel better or worse? I just never knew how to handle the situation because I wasn't sure how anyone else would react. I never wanted to step on any toes.

After my mom died, I started to worry that my dad would start dating. I would get sick to my stomach just thinking about him on a date or possibly getting married again. He hasn't yet. I don't know why I used to worry about the future so much.

### Daniel

I don't know why I always thought my relationship with dad would be different as we got older. I was always thinking everything would be different in the future. Boy was I wrong, because he's gone now.

### Dharma

Peter and I did not know what might lie ahead for us, so we vowed to love each other then, and forever.

### Venus

I always am afraid to look into the future, because I am afraid that my dad might pass away and then I wouldn't have parents anymore. They would both be gone. I always worry about when my father might pass away.

### Dreams/Spirituality

This is one of my favorite themes. There is much data dealing with dreams, which fascinates me and resonates deeply with me. I am a very active dreamer, and it seems that my co-researchers were all very active dreamers as well. All 8 co-researchers spoke of dreams that included religious, ritualistic, spiritual, and their loved ones as a metaphysical experience. The dreams seemed to be very real. They appeared to give hope and help to resolve issues and questions surrounding the death of their loved one.

### Ariel

I was sleeping a few nights after the death when I had a dream that my mom was walking around the house. She walked in my room, then in the kitchen, she continued to just walk around the house, but not say a word to me. She would just look at me, like she saw right through me, like I was not there. I felt sad, and then I woke up and felt as though someone was sitting on my bed. I don't know if it was her, but I sure felt comforted.

### Raphael

I've had lots of dreams that don't really seem like dreams, like they're real. I once had this dream that I was driving down the highway in this older style car and got a flat tire. Then all of a sudden my dad drove up looking very healthy and young and kept saying, "Son, you left home and never came back, but one day soon I will be back for you." The dream kind of freaked me out because I thought that I might die soon. But after thinking about it a lot, I realized that there was so much more to the dream, and my dad was trying to let me know that there is more to it--life and afterlife, that is.

### Daniel

As time passed after my dad died, I was having trouble remembering his face and his voice. As I was growing up, my father was always at the family business so I didn't see him much anyway. I started to have anxiety and get upset that I couldn't remember stuff about my dad. I couldn't even dream about him. Then one night I finally had a dream. Well, I think it was a dream; I woke up at the end. I don't know. Anyway, I dreamt of my dad, and then I opened my eyes and this really bright light was hovering towards me, and it looked like my dad's face. Like a big blob of energy. From that day on, I could remember his face and his voice. I felt much better about everything. I was finally unstuck thanks to my dad helping me. He is like my angel.

While Daniel was sharing this with me, he got extremely emotional.

He explained to me that I was the first person he has ever told about this supernatural experience.

### Sylvia

When my mom died, she was 98 years old. I was the closest to her out of all of our family. Well, I used to take care of her because she was blind. I had a dream that her and I were walking in a beautiful garden and she kept saying, "Look how beautiful the colors of these flowers are. It is so nice that I can see again. I can see all the beauty in life. I want you to see the beauty while you are still here. Appreciate life more. Live some." I feel that she was

trying to give me a message to live life to the fullest and not take everything for granted. So, now I try to do just that--live a little more.

### Dharma

The dream or experience was illuminating for me. It answered my question about his whereabouts. The bed began to vibrate. I heard whirling noises, like an engine from a craft, and a great red light descended upon me. Peter came to me as an angel. He told me, "It is everything you said it would be, only more. I am far away another planet. It is Paradise."

### Eve

My grief process has been horrible. I have been so depressed for so long, and every time I cry, I feel like my mom is watching me. I feel like someone is in the room with me. I always feel a little better when I feel like she is with me, but it is still really hard.

### Gabriel

I always think about the ones I have lost, and sometimes I talk to them or dream of them. I know they are always around me, because the love you have for them is never lost. I know they watch over me every step of the way.

### Jennifer

After immersing myself in the thesis topic for this entire year, I have had many dreams surrounding death. I had them before, but never so many. I have had dreams where loved ones give me messages, people are dying, and loved ones come to just spend time with me. I always talk to Pete, especially on sunny days when the wind blows. I feel him all around us. I now live in the house that he died in and sometimes I can feel his presence, and sometimes I just sit in the sun room that his hospital bed was in and I can sense him and even smell him. You know how people have a certain scent? Well, sometimes I can smell his. I know he watches over us.

### Making Death a Friend

This theme showed up in the data of 4 co-researchers as well as my own self-search. Making death a friend is not easy. There are bad feelings surrounding death, until you can accept it as a natural life process. However, a time comes when you accept death, and you understand that without death there cannot be life. It is natural, a beautiful new beginning for the person who has passed and the people who have lost their loved one. Many lessons are learned and significant realizations about life come out of a death.

#### Raphael

It seems awkward to think of my own death, but I know one day I will die and I am not afraid because I have had so many loved ones already pass on. I have faith that there is something more. There must be. Why would God make us, then have us experience so much, learn so much, and then not have anything after being here? I am just not afraid--not that I would do anything to speed it up, but I know I can't escape it. Even if I could, I wouldn't want to.

#### Dharma

The night Peter died is emblazed in my mind and on my soul. As he struggled with his last earthly breaths, I told him, "Peter be still. Let it go. You can go." I had obviously accepted death and knew he would be in a better place. Death did scare him, and from his bravery, it does not scare me.

#### Sylvia

I am getting to that age that a lot of my friends are passing on and I know one day soon I will also pass on. I am just satisfied with knowing I will see all my loved ones again. I can't say I am afraid. As I get older, I am more excited to be at peace.

### Gabriel

I guess I feel too young to really feel so comfortable with death. I remember when I was in 4th grade, there was kindergartner who had cancer. They used to pull her around in a wagon. She always looked so happy. I was always interested in her and never felt scared like most of the other kids. They never made me feel uncomfortable. I remember one day they announced over the speaker that she had passed away, and I was happy for her because I knew she was smiling.

### Jennifer

Before this year, I never thought of death as a friend--until I was really immersed and had to face my own fears about dying. I had many conversations with my supervisor on this topic and realized death is a passage of life. It is very special and nothing to fear. I also realized to live life to the fullest, because you can't run from death. Kind of like that movie "Meet Joe Black," death was lingering. As long as there is life, there will be death. I also found out that some people can be alive physically, but be dead in many other ways.

### Belief in Fate

This was another theme that surfaced in the experience of all of my co-researchers as well as my own. I feel that belief in fate and destiny allows you to just be in the world. It gives you space to find meaning in life and not stress about the little things while bringing clarity to the big things. I find that I always say, "Well, it was just meant to be" or "I had to go through that to learn this." Believing in fate gives you strength to walk your path and continue on your journey in life. Listening to my co-researchers' experiences and feeling their belief in fate and destiny helped me to believe and trust in it even more. It gave me peace of mind and nourished my soul.



### Ariel

When my mom died, I had this realization that I would see her again. It is our destiny. We were so close and had, and still have, so much love between us. Our life is fated. I feel my mom passed so I can learn a life lesson. It is my fate. I am still searching and finding some answers in visions and dreams that I have. This is why I believe in fate and destiny. My mom did too.

### Raphael

I have feelings that I experienced with loved ones when I revisit places we spent time together. I can feel their presence. Sometimes I even have visions that some of my loved ones telling me that we will see each other again. There is spirit, and I just believe that all of us walk the path and learn what we are supposed to learn from different things that happen in our lives. Whether we think it is horrible or great, it is still a life lesson.

### Daniel

I know now why I was born to my father. I was destined to learn how to be a good father. I never got to spend enough time with him, and then when I could, I lost him. I was fated to learn that I need to spend time with my children. I can't spend every waking hour at work. To me, my family is the most important. I am not sure I would feel this way if I had not lost my father.

### Sylvia

When I met my husband, I knew he was my soulmate. We just connected. I always believed in fate and strongly believe that when it is your time to go, it is your time to go, whether you're driving down the road, sleeping, or just watching TV. It is already written like a story.

### Dharma

One morning, as Peter lay paralyzed in his hospital bed in the sunroom, a butterfly flew in through the screen door. It flew around his bed and landed on his chest. It rested there for several seconds, then flew out the door as I held it open. I went to his side with amazement on my face. Peter

said, "It won't be long, now." "Sunday, Sunday," he whispered. He knew his fate. He did die that Sunday.

### Eve

Everything just happens for one reason or another. I don't know why yet, but it just does. That is what gets me through the loss of my mom.

### Gabriel

Everything seems so confusing--life, death--but as long as I believe in some higher power, it seems okay. There has to be some truth in fate and destiny. Otherwise, how do we end up with our parents, or friends, or husbands? We seem so connected. There has to be something to it.

I think (long pause)--yeah, I know there is something to it.

### Venus

It is really hard for me to talk about this, probably because it opens so many wounds. I wanted to see my grandpa again, but it just wasn't in the stars. I guess I just have to wait.

### Jennifer

A smile comes to my face when I think about fate and destiny. I have always been drawn to the mysteries of life. I believe that we each have a book written about us in the "life library." We have a path we are supposed to journey. Sometimes, we veer off the path, but something miraculous happens and we're right back on the right path. In my journey so far, I have learned to have trust in my intuition, my destiny, and my fate. Life seems so magical when I surrender. There is a feeling of synchronicity when I surrender to my destiny. It brings a smile to face.

### New Outlook on Life

This last theme is very important. It was so refreshing for me to experience the new outlooks on life described by my co-researchers. I felt

happy for them; they really believed in life lessons. They seemed to have changed their outlook, which now allows them to really appreciate life and love.

### Ariel

I have really learned to appreciate the time that I spend with my family, friends, and even strangers. Life is just too short to not enjoy the time I have here on Earth. I still get sad and miss my mom, but I can still talk to her. Before this happened to me, I would of thought someone was crazy if they were talking to someone who died. But I know now that it is okay, and I probably wouldn't get through the day if I didn't talk to my mom.

### Raphael

My life has turned out great. I am happy with it and with the people in my life. Sometimes things happen in life, and you can let it take over you or you can roll with the punches and try and get something out of it. I have learned so much through the years and feel blessed for the lessons I have been given. Life can be so hard, but I just try to get through it by living it up.

### Daniel

Oh, I am so different now then I ever thought I would be. When I was younger, I didn't want to get married and have children. All I wanted to do is open businesses make a lot of money and have fun. Now, my family is so important to me. I feel like I am more religious and feel a lot of love by giving and receiving it. The money doesn't even matter. I guess I didn't want to end up like my dad; I learned from him how to be a good dad and husband. I may not have learned that if he hadn't died. I guess it was a blessing in disguise, because it helped me work through a lot of pain I had bottled up.

### Sylvia

Once you get to be my age, you really learn to appreciate each day, each breath, every smile. I think I have always been that way, but after

everything I have seen and gone through I feel closer to God than I ever have.

### Dharma

I have always been spiritual. However, my spirituality deepened with this total experience. I learned acceptance and gratitude for all that exists on this plane and the next. My reality now includes in afterlife and angels.

### Eve

I have learned many things, but I am still having a hard time dealing with the loss of my mother. I know once I start feeling better and working through things more, I will have some answers and feel better and have a new view on life. For now, it is kind of grim, but I still have my faith.

### Gabriel

I have tried to pass on what I have learned so far. Although I have only lived 25 years, I have experienced a lot of loss. I feel lucky that I am more carefree. Sometimes I wonder if I would be different if I had not lost so many. My life would be so different. I guess that is why I look at life the way I do, and it is all right. I guess I am less stressed than other people I know. They are always competing and stressing about the tedious things in their life, when I don't.

### Venus

I am starting to love life again. It seemed so draining when I lost my grandfather. I felt so much guilt. Wow, I have even felt guilt while sharing all of this with you. I am looking forward to the day that I feel completely normal again, whatever that is. I feel different, so I must be changing. Who knows?

### Jennifer

I changed so much from losing Pete. I never really appreciated what I had. Watching him die made me learn to appreciate life. Even though it seemed like such a disastrous time in my life, it brought much awareness to the surface and helped me to learn what is truly important in life. My thesis

has always helped me to grow even more. I feel more spiritual , love, and kindness.

The co-researcher I chose to use as a portrait was Dharma. Her experience captured the pure essence of spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one. The following is a complete portrait of Dharma's experience, including a poem that she wrote about her soulmate who moved on.

Dharma is a 52-year-old mother of one. She lost her husband 5 years ago to a brain tumor. She was by his side through the entire death process and states that she feels blessed to have experienced the entire process.

Being with Peter was paradise, even in his "dying days." His illnesses from a brain tumor, his suffering, pain, and subsequent death became my life. My mission was to help him cope with his fate, but it was transformational for me as well. I changed. Having been partnered with Peter through this mutual challenge provided a spiritual growth experience for the both of us.

Peter's prognosis was grave. In our desperation to find hope, we clung to every possible new and innovative treatment and to each other. We prayed. We focused upon the present and dreamed of a miracle cure. Every day was a package to unwrap—a gift from God. We traveled, attended operas, surrounded ourselves with friends and family, and we loved.

Peter and I did not know what might lie ahead of us, so we vowed to love each other then, and forever. I never stopped loving him, even though I have gone on to a new life. He is always with me; like an angel, guiding me through life. He is responsible for many good happenings in my world.

I have always been spiritual. However, my spirituality deepened with this total experience. I learned acceptance and gratitude for all that exists on this plane and the next. My reality now includes in afterlife and angels. In my thinking, Peter still exists on some plane and in some form. I have seen and felt many signs.

Peter Matti was a much loved man. He is still loved. That can never change. For when material things cease to be, such as physical bodies, love survives. Love transcends the here and now for all who knew this man named Peter. This I learned through my grief process.

The grief process, for me, began with the diagnosis of terminal illness. First, we cried. That was my first loss--the loss of oblivious trust in the future and the notion that we would grow old together. That trust was gone. However, I learned a new type of trust. It was the trust that love is eternal. It survives this reality and material world in which we reside.

Peter and I exchanged roles many times during his final 18 months of life. I became his protector and guardian. After his death, he became mine, providing me with the strength to continue without him by my side in a physical sense. Instead, he is with me always in a spiritual sense--like an angel.

The suffering that Peter endured is painful for me to recall. It hurts to revisit that torturous time for him. No man should be dealt such an ending. In spite of the physical pain, beauty enveloped our last days together. Signs were there, even then.

One morning as he lay paralyzed in his hospital bed in the sunroom, a butterfly flew in through the screen door. It flew around his bed and landed on his chest. It rested there for several seconds, then flew through the door as I held it open. I went to his side with amazement on my face. Peter said, "It won't be long, now." "Sunday, Sunday," he whispered. He did die that Sunday.

The night Peter died is emblazed in my mind and on my soul. As he struggled with his last Earthly breaths, I told him, "Peter, be still. Let it go. You can go." His face softened, and he let it go. I was much relieved for him to be released from his pain and hoped he was

journeying far from this place of suffering. I phoned my daughter to tell her it was done. She rushed to our sides. I kept Peter with me until the hearse came. I carried his beautiful black suit out to go with them and asked the driver if he would let me see him. He unzipped the bag, and I kissed him for the last time.

Many times, Peter had expressed his fear. His brother had died 2 years previously of a brain tumor. This intensified the fear since Peter knew what the dying process involved. He used to say the Rosary to calm himself. In his final days, he could not remember the words. I found him crying over this. I told him, "Just hold on to the Rosary. God knows what is in your heart." He questioned if he would be in Heaven and what it would be like. He asked if I thought it would be a place with angels and if he would see his diseased brother. I told him that it would be everything he dreamed it would be.

I suppose I had worked through many of the ascribed stages of grief by the time Peter died--shock, denial, and anger at our fate. By this time, I was at the stage of acceptance. I felt that I had been privileged to be his wife and friend and to help him through his final ending days. Yes, he was my best friend and the center of my life.

My emotions were very strong. I longed to receive a sign from him that he still existed. I asked God, "Where is Peter Matti?" One night while sleeping, I received what I believe to be the answer. I awoke, or I experienced an audio, visual, and kinesthetic dream or hallucination.

The dream or experience was illuminating for me. It answered my question about his whereabouts. The bed began to vibrate. I heard whirling noises, like an engine from a craft, and a great red light descended upon me. Peter came to me as an angel. He told me, "It (Heaven) is everything you said it would be, only more. I am far away on another planet. It is paradise. We will come back for you, someday."

This experience did not frighten me. It calmed me. At the same time, I was ecstatic. I felt that he had communicated with me from his new locale. We were merely separated by different dimensions and

experiences. I also wondered if Heaven really was on another heavenly body in perhaps another solar system. I will know, someday.

The experience of watching Peter's final seconds of life, combined with this metaphysical experience, caused me to reflect through poetry. I wrote the poem, "Peter's Paradise."

### Peter's Paradise

Peter be still  
Let it go  
See the light  
You will know.

Bright blazing red  
It has come  
Journey far  
Day is done.

Such quietude  
It is nice  
Love and Peace  
Paradise.

Peter be still  
Time is near  
Close your eyes  
Rest my dear.

Open the skies  
Take him in  
Hold him tight  
It is right.

I continue to write poetry to reflect on my experiences and to express my feelings about life and the impact others have had upon me. Poems are like love. Once created, they live on, beyond the author's existence. I will continue on my journey along with my heavenly guide, an angel. Peter is my angel. I believe in angels.



Dharma's experience that she shared with me touched my soul, especially since she is my mother, my teacher, and my guide on this Earth. Some of what she shared with me, I had not previously known. Her experience touched me so deeply that I wept for her and myself. It gave me strength to continue on with my thesis work. I once again felt her grief and my own in the same sense. I now have a deeper understanding of the special love that her and Pete shared and feel my thesis question has been answered. I feel as though a chapter in life can be closed, but never forgotten. I feel a deeper understanding and appreciation for everyday life.

In the fall (my favorite season) when I started working on my thesis question, I was nervous, excited, and scared to work with death. I was completely immersed in the topic of death, which made me feel uncomfortable at first. Soon, however, I started to feel closer to death, making it my friend. I realized how much I had learned about life, and I began to get excited, knowing that I was going to learn even more. I was on a search for meaning, the meaning of life. That is what death prompted me to seek. I am very happy that I continued to learn because I now feel like a different person. I have grown so much that it brings tears to my eyes. I have realized how important life is, and how important every second is that I spend with human beings and my angels. I am not afraid of death anymore.

It is my friend, and helps me to live my life to the fullest by giving and receiving unconditional love wherever I go.

Now that summer is right around the corner, I feel lighter. My spirit is once again free and able to be more creative, synthesizing everything that I have learned this year in my search for the essence of the experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one or, condensed, what is the meaning of life?

### Creative Synthesis

There once was a young girl who had everything she possibly could ever want in life. She thought that she knew everything she could possibly know about life, love, happiness, and kindness, until one day her father passed away. Suddenly, she realized that all the money in the world could not bring her father back and could not make her happy anymore. She started to feel extremely angry, which caused her to be mean to her friends and family. So much anger was inside of her that she could not see all of the love in her life. She did not enjoy anything anymore. Materially, she had it all--clothes, horses, a big house, jewelry, and all the spending money she needed--but nothing made her happy, and she did not understand why.

One night while she was sleeping, she heard someone calling her name. She ignored the dreamlike summons, and fell back to sleep. Then, she

started to dream about angels who told her that they were going to help her through her grief process. They also told her that some beautiful changes were right around the corner, if she would just open her heart and eyes.

When this girl woke up the next morning, she felt a little better. She thought about the dream and began to feel a little more optimistic about life. The dream prompted her to start reading about angels, and she learned a lot. She then decided to read some other books on intuition, death, and life. Soon, she realized that death is the most important life lesson that is given, and she started to look at her father's death as a gift. Her whole outlook on life began to change. She experienced more happiness and felt blessed to have been given such an important life lesson so early on her journey in life.

On a regular basis, this young girl would talk to her angels, often asking them for guidance to help her walk her path and find her own meaning and purpose in life. She also made a commitment to fulfill her mission in life, the mission she felt that has been given to her by God.

Her name was Suzy, and as Suzy grew up she became more aware of the spirituality in her life. She spread unconditional love to anyone and everyone. Suzy continued to seek the truth, the meaning of life, and through her journey, she felt closer to God. She now believes in angels, intuition, fate, destiny, a spiritual realm, and God. Early in life, Suzy was given the

chance to learn that there is more to life than materialistic things and, most importantly, she found meaning in life. She learned to be truly happy by learning from the lessons that present themselves. Whether they seem bad or good at the time, life's lessons are always presented for the right reason at the right time. Suzy learned that there is so much meaning to life and without death there cannot be life. She learned to live her life with every breath.

In the next chapter, I will present the implications and applications of this study.

## Chapter VII

### Implications and Applications

In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of understanding and living the process of grief in the death of a loved one and the enlightenment of a spiritual awakening. How my research could be used to significantly help psychologists, educators, and other professionals, as well as society as a whole, will be explored.

Every human being has to come to terms with the fact that one day they also will lose a loved one to death, whether it be a child or adult. Death and loss are experienced by every individual uniquely. The way they cope, grieve, and grow personally contribute to their unique experience.

Within the realm of education, I have become knowledgeable of this life experience and now completely understand the themes that presented themselves through my own self-search and the data revealed to me by my co-researchers. It is my hope to develop a unique and more effective way to help children grieve, cope with the loss of a loved one, and plant the seeds of awakening using the creative synthesis gleaned from this research. I remain open to the limitless possibilities. Hopefully, a story, game, or workbook will present itself through my creative realm. This research might be used as a foundation to develop a new way to educate people of all ages on death,

loss, and awakening. I feel that the research will be beneficial to all professions and people in the world because the topic does not exclude anyone from the experience.

Within the realm of clinical psychology, my research will be beneficial to colleagues and myself. I have added what I learned about this topic to my existing experience, and use this knowledge to help my clients within therapy. I plan to develop a group grief process that will be beneficial to my clients as well as others. I hope to one day write a book on the topic that will have a significant impact within clinical psychology.

Clinical psychologists may rely upon the themes: Anger, Loss of Faith, Loss of Trust in the Future, Dreams/Spirituality, Making Death a Friend, Belief in Fate, and New Outlook on Life to originate a treatment plan for someone experiencing the loss of a loved one. First, the therapist may make the client aware that these are common themes and normal to the grief process. Secondly, the therapist may allow the client to verbalize feelings connected to these themes. Thirdly, the therapist may assist the client in viewing the loss as a means of developing a new outlook on life and thus achieving acceptance and personal growth.

In the realm of society, I again stress the fact that no one is exempt from death, loss, grief, and spiritual awakening. Hopefully, through my

research and future writings, society can look at the experience through new eyes--take the experience and learn from it. While this is a process in life that no one escapes, it brings significant knowledge that can enrich one's life.

Through my research, I learned much about the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one. My life has been enriched through the profound experiences of my co-researchers, for which I am extremely grateful.

## References

- Archer, J. (1999). The nature of grief. New York: Routledge.
- Batton, M., & Oltjenbouns, K. A. (1999). Adolescent sibling bereavement as a catalyst for spiritual development: A model for understanding. Death Studies, 23(6), 529-547.
- Brent, A., Brent, D., & Brent, G. (1998). Spirituality, resilience, and narrative: Coping with parental death. Families in Society, 79, 615.
- Bronkowski, J. (1965). Science and human values. New York: Harper & Row.
- Buhler, C., & Allen, M. (1978). Introduction to humanistic psychology. San Francisco: Brooks/Cole.
- Chaplin, P. J. (1975). Dictionary of psychology. New York: Dell.
- Clark, P. (1999). Notes on suffering, death and Native American spirituality. Death Studies, 23(6), 441-462.
- Doka, K., & Morgan, J. (1993). The spirit returns. New York: Baywood.
- Dorland's medical dictionary. (1995). Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.
- Gibran, K. (1923). The prophet. New York: Alfred A. Knoph.
- Grollman, E. A. (1974). Concerning death: A practical guide for the living. Boston: Beacon Press.



Grollman, E. (1977). Living when a loved one has died. New York: Beacon Press.

Henard, D. (1998). The relationship between spirituality and the grief experience. DIA , 59(07A), 2361.

John, R. (1998). Spiritual warrior. New York: Peace Theological Seminary and College of Philosophy.

Jourard, S. M. (1971). The transparent self. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Kapleau, P. (1989). The three pillars of Zen. New York: Doubleday.

Kennedy, A. (1991). Losing a parent: Passage to a new way of living. San Francisco: Harper.

Klass, P. (1995). Spiritual aspects of the resolution of grief In H. Wass & R. A. Neimeyer (Eds.), Dying: Facing the facts (pp. 243-268). Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). On death and dying. New York: MacMillan.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1975). Death: The final stage of growth. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1981). Living with death and dying. New York: MacMillan.

Lifton, M. (1975). Living and dying. New York: Praeger.

Mahony, M., & Graci, G. (1999). The meanings and correlates of spirituality: Suggestions from an exploratory survey of experts. Death Studies, 23(6), 521-528.

Manning, D. (1984). Don't take my grief away. New York: Insight Books.

Marrone, R., Klass, P., Schwartzberg, S., & Halgin, M. (1999). Dying, mourning and spirituality: A psychological perspective. Death Studies, 23(6), 495-520.

McGoldrick, M., & Walsh, F. (1991). Living beyond loss: Death in the family. New York: Norton.

Moustakas, C. (1981). Rhythms, rituals, and relationships. Detroit, MI: Harlo Press.

Moustakas, C. (1990). Heuristic research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Nuland, S. (1993). How we die. New York: First Vintage Books.

Othner, J. (1997). Angels: Friends in high places. New York: Horizon Books.

Parkes, C. M. (1978). Bereavement studies of grief in adult life. New York: International University Press.

Patton, M. (1985). Qualitative evaluation methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Pearson, L. (Ed.). (1969). Death and dying: Current issues in the treatment of the dying person. New York: Case Western University Press.

Peck, M. (1978). The road less traveled. New York: Touchstone Books.

Peck, M. (1993). Further along the road less traveled. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Polanyi, M. (1983). The tacit dimension. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Riley, I. (1999). Transformation: Through the process of bereavement and the use of the spirit. DAI, 60(05B), 2364-80.

Rogers, C. (1961). On becoming a person. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Roger, J. (1998). Spiritual warrior: The act of spiritual living. Los Angeles: Mandeville Press.

Rowe, D. (1982). The construction of life and death. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Schneider, J. (1984). Finding my way. New York: Seasons Press.

Schwartzberg, S. (1991). Grief and the search for meaning: Exploring the assumptive worlds of bereaved college students. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 10, 270-288.

Schwartzberg, S., & Halgin, M. (1991). Treating grieving clients: The importance of cognitive professional psychology. Research and Practice, 22(3), 240-246.

Shrag, C. (1969). Experience and being. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Tageson, C. W. (1982). Humanistic psychology: A synthesis. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.

Tatelbaum, J. (1980). The courage to grieve: Creating living, recovery, and growth through grief. New York: Lippincott & Crowell.

Van Praagh, J. (1999). Talking to heaven. New York: Spiritual Horizons.

Verity, A. W. (Ed.). (1923). Macbeth. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Walters, J. (1996). Superconsciousness: A guide to mediation. New York: Warner Books.

Walters, J. (2000). Death--who's decision? Euthanasia and the terminally ill. Journal of Medical Ethics, 26(2), 121-126.

Webster's new collegiate dictionary (2nd ed.). (1961). New York: Simon & Schuster.

## Appendix A

## Letter to Co-Researcher

January 11, 2000

Dear Co-Researcher Candidate:

I am sending this letter to inform and familiarize you with the thesis question that I am in the process of researching for my masters degree in psychology. The question is: "What is the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one?" When I speak of "spiritual awakening," I am referring to any type of personal growth, transformation, spiritual experience, and/or enlightenment. When I speak of "loved one," I am referring to a family member or friend.

I am aware that you have experienced spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one and am interested in learning about your experience with this. What was the process of your awakening from grieving and how has it changed and enhanced your understanding of life?

The research procedure that I have chosen to use is the heuristic model, which is based on my own personal experience and similar experiences of co-researchers. The procedure includes an in-depth interview, which will last approximately 2 hours. Also, I would like for you to begin to rediscover your experience through journaling and self-thought about your actual experience with spiritual awakening from grieving your loss. I am extremely interested in learning about your feelings, ideas, challenges, struggles, growth, awakening, enlightenment, and the entire experience with the grief process.

If you are interested in my research question and would like to include yourself on a journey through a healing process, please contact me by March 15, 2000 at (734) 776-2594. I am looking forward to our meeting. Through sharing, we will both experience more growth and understanding!

Sincerely,

## Appendix B

## Participation-Release Agreement

I agree to participate in this research on the experience of spiritual awakening from grieving the loss of a loved one as described by Jennifer Granader. I understand the purpose and nature of the study and am participating voluntarily. I hereby grant permission to Jennifer Granader to tape record my interview, and to use any data collected to be used in the preparation of a master's thesis or other publication. I have been assured that my name will not be used.

---

Participant

---

Researcher

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

1. What is your experience of a spiritual awakening from grieving the death of a loved one?
2. How has this experienced affected you?