# *Character and . . .*

# Inevitability

**Volume 10 / 2024**

Wendt Character Initiative

UNIVERSITY *of* DUBUQUE

## Editors

Annalee R. Ward, Executive Editor
Mary K. Bryant, Managing Editor

*The faculty essays presented here emerge from a semester-long process of reading and writing together in an environment of critique and review. Nevertheless, this invited journal of essays represents the authors' views and not necessarily the views of the Wendt Center for Character Education or the University of Dubuque.*

## Contact Information

## Copyright Notice

# Attention and Digital Mourning

Daniel P. Fleming

## Abstract

*Mourning is the human response to inevitable loss that, if done well, reintegrates the bereaved's life into a new way of being that acknowledges the continuation of life while not minimizing or ignoring the pain of loss. The virtue of intentional attentiveness is essential for the mourner as well as those who accompany them in order to mourn well. The internet has given rise to new opportunities for mourning that have been beneficial for many, especially those who are isolated or cannot mourn in person. At the same time, the driving motivations—to sell attention—behind much of the internet interferes with healing and effective mourning. However, with intentional efforts to infuse attention into our use of the internet, we can practice good mourning even in the digital space.*

I woke up Monday, December 6, 2021, to a text message from Dad: my sister's boyfriend, Steven, had not made it home from a weekend with her. Internet sleuthing found a fatal single-car accident with the right type of car at approximately the time he would have been passing the spot. The county coroner said it was not Steven. Three hours later we found out it was him. His car had swerved off the road, hit a tree, and burned.

Mom and Dad flew to Columbia, South Carolina, to be with Christina, my sister, the same day. The rest of us mourned with Christina at a distance, through the wonder of the internet. We were able to text, talk, video-chat, and watch the funeral from a distance. The internet helped a family scattered across Dubuque, Seattle, and Frankfurt to be attentive to Christina's mourning in Columbia.

The internet brought my family together in ways that were impossible in previous generations. Nearly 66 years earlier, on January 8, 1956, another unexpected death occurred. Pete Fleming, Grandpa's brother, was speared

to death on a remote river-sandbar in the Ecuadorian jungle with four other men. He was 27. Olive, his wife, along with the other wives, waited a few miles away for a planned radio contact at 4:30 that never came. A military expedition finally found their bodies a week later.

At the time, my grandpa was living halfway around the world in South Africa. It took several days for a five-word telegram to arrive: "Pete missing. Letter to follow" (This is according to Aunt Lois, who saw it as a child. The original has been lost.). Grandpa had no phone calls, texts, or video-chats, and could not participate in the funeral. The only people he had to mourn with were Grandma, his children, and Grandma's sister, who happened to be visiting.

From 1956 to 2021, the inevitability of mourning has not changed. However, mourning, encompassing the actions that express and deal with inevitable loss, and the expectations we have around mourning have radically changed. An entirely new digital world has been created and has invaded all aspects of life: work, personal, social, and financial. But humans have not changed so quickly. A person is still a person, and a person in mourning still requires the same character traits from those around them: appropriate attentiveness.



*Newspaper article about the loss of my Uncle Pete*

Mourning requires attentiveness because of the confluence of emotion and cultural expectations in mourning. Attentiveness is the character trait of paying attention—probably what parents tell their children most, aside from "sit down and be quiet!" Attentiveness calls for more than being present physically; it includes emotions, mind, will, consciousness—in short, being

present as a whole person. Though it sounds like mindfulness, attentiveness is always other-focused, whereas mindfulness is self-focused. Attentiveness is offering a gift to the person before me.[1]

Mourning with Christina, online at first and in person later when she visited for Christmas, showed me the importance of attentiveness during mourning for everyone involved. Christina attended to her memories, feelings, and dashed hopes of a future with Steven. Her mourning changed from moment to moment, which meant that my family and I needed to be attentive to what she needed and what was appropriate at that time. Being attentive is the key character trait needed to mourn well, while the internet—a particularly inattentive place—encroaches ever more onto mourning.

## Attentive to Mourning

Mourning is a universal and inevitable human experience because loss is inevitable. Everybody dies. The internet may have changed the places and expressions of mourning, but everyone has or will mourn a loss at some point in their lives. They may not mourn well—mourning is complex and difficult—but everyone will mourn.

*Mourning is a universal and inevitable human experience.*

Mourning is multidimensional, having emotional, social, behavioral, and physical aspects.[2] Emotions stemming from loss such as grief, shock, pain, anxiety, anger, guilt, and others ground mourning. However, mourning is also expressed through intentional actions such as memorializing, remembering, crying, and sharing. Not all of grief's physical effects are intentional—they may leak out as mental fog, loneliness, being overwhelmed, exhausted, agitated, not eating, not sleeping, and the like. A good mourning process is grounded in its embodied effects to provide help to the mourner so they can accept the reality of the loss, work through the anguish, readjust to a new environment, and reinvest in their life while maintaining a connection to the deceased.[3]

### Anguish and Acceptance

Anguish over loss—or sometimes over socially unacceptable reactions to loss—and the need to accept loss is where all mourning begins. Death causes multiple losses: the loss of a future, the loss of memory, and the loss of part of the bereaved's sense of self. Death blows in like a hurricane,

shredding all lives in its path, and requires attentive rebuilding. Enabling the bereaved to attend to their pain and move through it to accept these losses is mourning's first goal. In this sense, mourning is natural. It is part of the cycle of life and death experienced by every living thing.[4]

Thoughtless action is insufficient for processing loss and grief—the mourner needs to be attentive to themselves and their loss. Like driving on autopilot, inattentive mourning may not lead to the intended destination. Paying attention to the actions of mourning is backed up by research as a helpful activity. As Alexander Burrell and Lucy Selman argue in their article on funeral impacts on grievers, "the benefit of after-death rituals including funerals depends on the ability of the bereaved to shape those rituals and say goodbye in a way which is meaningful for them."[5] Shaping rituals means paying attention to them and to the mourner's emotional and physical well-being in order to bring the mental and physical worlds into alignment.

Perhaps the deepest loss experienced in death is a loss of the bereaved's sense of self. Humans are highly relational beings and losing a part of our relationship network disrupts our sense of who we are. Good mourning begins to heal the rip in our social and personal fabric left by a loss. Journaling about the sudden mountain-climbing death of his 25-year-old son, philosopher and theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff says, "We have to live around the gap. Pull one [person] out, and everything changes."[6]

Teens are particularly susceptible to the disruption grief introduces to their self-image because they are in a fragile stage of development.[7] Everyone got a taste of the kind of isolation home-bound people—like the elderly—experience through the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole world was collectively isolated online—except for the dying who were hospitalized alone. For teens, however, the combination of isolation, grief, and harm to their self-image led to a "grief pandemic" following the COVID-19 medical pandemic.[8] Being forced to attend to who they are and rebuild their self-image around a bleeding wound at



*Isolation in the inattentive world online*

such a young age is a large ask for teens who are most comfortable in the inattentive world of the internet.

Mourners should be attentive to their inner and outer worlds. But those around them, mourning with the bereaved, also need to pay attention as they cross the distance to be with the bereaved, whose world has just had a jagged gap ripped in it. It is impossible to know what is going on inside others' heads, which adds to the challenge faced by those gathering lovingly around the bereaved.


*Coming alongside the bereaved*

Isolation is one of the chief threats to a mourner's wellbeing. Grief on its own is severely isolating as it takes over every aspect of the bereaved's life. When the bereaved is physically isolated, like everyone was in the pandemic or the bedridden are, mourning can be stunted by a lack of interpersonal interaction. Responsibility to avoid isolation, in this case, falls on those mourning with the bereaved. Understanding cries of a broken heart from a distance through printed words is difficult. Grief, which gives rise to moments of mourning, can come from unexpected directions that surprise the mourner, not to mention those who are trying to faithfully attend to their mourning loved ones. As Julie Lythcott-Haims, reflecting on the path she took after her dad's death, observes in her essay on grief:

> I picture grief as a vat full of tears hidden behind an opaque wall. All we can see on our side of the wall is the spigot. Circumstances loosen the spigot and our tears flow, then we tighten it again to get on with our lives as custom and bosses demand. But things remind us of our loved one—a song, a milestone, a photo, an expanse of sky—and we loosen and tighten, loosen and tighten, over months, years, even decades. None of us know how big the vat is. How vast the grief.[9]

Surprises and unexpected moments of mourning make attentiveness much more difficult. Paying attention to the multi-faceted anguish of loss leads to a deeper view of mourning than the popular five-stages model. Psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross introduced the five stages of mourning—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—in her 1970 book, *On Death and Dying.* Her work is a powerful exploration of the psychological

aspects of death and mourning.[10] However, popular views of the five stages have reduced all mourning to one "essentialist"[11] recipe or path that every bereaved person limps down, missing the social impact, trauma-recovery, and relationship rebuilding we have to do when we have lost a loved one.

### Readjustment and Reinvestment

While mourning involves processing natural emotions borne out of the anguish of loss, mourning is also relational and social.[12] The bereaved must adjust to a new reality—a reality with a gaping hole in it. Society, culture, and religion all define what is "normal" and, from that definition, they shape the categories, acceptable practices, and taboos of mourning. Lythcott-Haim's quotation above highlighted how "custom and bosses" are often at odds with working out grief.[13] Wolterstorff expands on the gap his son left in his life: "We don't just each have a gap inside us, but together a gap among us. We have to live differently with each other."[14] Not only are we learning to live in new ways around the gap, but we are doing that in context of a society that puts its expectations on us. Learning to navigate a particular society's demands and limitations on mourning[15] while still mourning and moving towards readjustment and reinvestment is an act of attentiveness by the mourner. Mourning means being in a particular place in the world. It means paying attention to the world around us that extends the mourner's attention to anguish and acceptance.

Reality for the bereaved has forever changed, requiring adjustment and reinvention of themselves as their social circle rebuilds around the loss. Mourning in both private and public worlds is part of the healing process and must be attended to. One study has shown that expressing mourning by posting online reduces the anxiety of the bereaved.[16] There is also evidence that shows that private grieving, out of the public eye and even alone, is essential for the mourner's emotional wellbeing.[17] The evidence for public and private mourning is not contradictory but complementary, as there is a time for mourning with others and a time for mourning alone.

*There is a time for mourning with others and a time for mourning alone.*

There is a time and place for mourning together, but attentiveness to the mourner should reveal when they need to mourn privately—when they are not able to engage in relationship or when those mourning with them are thinking more of themselves than of the mourner they are supposedly

attending to. Wolterstorff summed up the benefits and dangers those mourning with the bereaved provide:

> Some people are gifted with words of wisdom. . . . Some blurted out strange, inept things. That's OK too. . . . And if you can't think of anything at all to say . . . just embrace. . . . Some say nothing because they find the topic too painful . . . So they put on a brave face and lid their feelings . . . that adds new pain to the sorrow of their suffering friends.[18]

Mourning in an attentive community is healing even when imperfect. Yet mourning without attention to self and the other person wounds deeply.

Hope remains. Attentiveness can be learned in everyday life and applied to mourning. Practiced attentiveness becomes a habit, even a virtue, as ingrained in people as throwing the football in a spiral is to an NFL quarterback. In other words: attentiveness practice can start today. At its simplest, attentiveness as a virtue means to "look and listen,"[19] to be present as a whole person, not just a physical lump of meat. Learning to look and listen with all our senses is simple but difficult—simple because the instructions are minimal; difficult because it is a fight against nature, desire, and the momentum of the internet, as well as the nature of humans.

## Digital Mourning

Mourning and culture are dance partners, weaving meaning into each other and giving form and beauty to our vision of the world. Facing death and finding meaning in response shapes our self-perception. Yet that same self-understanding forms the categories that shape our understanding of good and acceptable mourning practices. Some grieving men withdraw from society because their model for manhood is ever stoic and reserved.

Teens in mourning drift to social media in mourning because they are comfortable there. Thus, transitioning online for mourning makes sense. Mourning has always happened partially at a distance—flowers, cards, and letters used to be mailed.[20] Now, when most people are already comfortable communicating and socializing online, the internet



*Mourning at a distance*

is a natural place to turn for mourning, especially at a distance,[21] though in its present form it has a complex relationship with mourning because it demolishes our attentiveness.

### Current Trends

The internet has always been about communication that shrinks space and time. The internet has repeatedly transformed the speed, power, and reach of communication. And our digital lives are not done changing. Developments in artificial intelligence have enabled communication with bots that can simulate deceased relatives, so called "grief bots," or programs that become AI girlfriends, with the attendant mourning when a particular digital-girlfriend-service goes offline—or dies.[22] Each of these communication revolutions has appeared as if by magic, with little attention paid to the effects on users until much later.

The internet's entrance into mourning has been a grass-roots transformation more than a systematic hostile takeover—no Illuminati-funded plan here. The transition has been broad, affecting end-of-life technology, expanding options for memorialization and tributes, supporting complex responses for mourning in different subgroups, and necessitating new strategies for record-keeping and dealing with digital assets. New opportunities to practice mourning online have arisen with blogging, videos, photos, visualization, poetry, grafting, film-making, dialoging with the deceased, and personal reflection, as we connect with others, pass the time, and transition through various stages of grief.[23]

The internet takes the human propensity for inattentive mourning and escalates the problem by selling attention to the highest bidder. When attention is the business model, users must be prevented from spending attention other places—including mourning. Social media companies strategically show posts and comments about mourning to keep a user engaged, not to help them mourn well. Their goal is to move the user along at a pace that maximizes the amount of money the company can make by showing advertisements without the user leaving. Taking attentiveness and shaping it solely for someone else's profit is not beneficial to mourning.

*The internet takes the human propensity for inattentive mourning and escalates the problem by selling attention to the highest bidder.*

Social media sites are the most visible places of digital mourning because of their ubiquity, but they are also sites that encourage the most inattentive mourning. The algorithms driving social media arrange posts on a user's feed at varying times, including reminders of a lost loved one that are auto-generated—"Say happy birthday to Joe!"—as well as those created by other mourners.[24] The algorithm will sandwich heartfelt posts mourning loss between the basest self-promotion, political rants, and memes, making no distinction. The algorithm's goal is to take as much of its users' attention as possible so it can sell more advertisements. Even so, these reminders of loss may be opportunities to mourn, to remember a friend, to process, or they might be uncomfortable and creepy—bringing up unwanted memories— or simply out of place. Tech reporter Brett Williams observes that ``Grief is an emotion that feels out of place on social media, where most people painstakingly curate the most appealing versions of themselves.''[25] Social media's inward focus crowds out the attention that mourners need to give to their grief and receive from those accompanying them.

In fact, the more emotionally and relationally distant a person is from the loss, the more inattentive they are to online mourning. A study in Spain showed that those most closely related to the deceased found comfort in online mourning, while those who were more distant viewed the same activities as superficial and disturbing.[26] People closest to the loss tend to be the most focused on the loss and mourn the most deeply. Their own mourning enables them to see the depth of others' expressions online and enables them to be more attentive and mourn with their friends or family.

Social media may be the most visible venue of mourning, but other venues may be more conducive to digital mourning. Private messages through iMessage, Signal, or old-school text-messaging are used to express and listen to mourners. Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube and other streaming services let people participate in funeral services who could not otherwise make it.



*Streaming funerals*

Using a streaming service became extremely popular with the public[27] during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a majority of funeral homes offering streamed services.[28] My uncle and sister attended Grandpa's funeral online in 2021 because of travel and life restrictions. They didn't just hear us but were even able to participate by sharing their

own memories and eulogies. The internet enabled them to express their mourning and hear ours, joining a family separated by almost a dozen time zones into one shared experience!

Clearly, the mixing of a wide variety of content on social media is not exclusively bad news for mourning. First, it extends the range of possible mourning actions and interactions. As Neil Postman has stated, each new medium, including social media, which was unimaginable in his day, opens "a new orientation for thought, for expression, for sensibility."[29] The internet, including social media, has opened up vast new horizons of creativity and self-expression in part because it is different than speech, writing, radio, television, or any other media. For example, Instagram's photo-orientation may lead to using humor to mourn by remembering your grandma's

photographic quirks or other aspects that would be taboo during a funeral. Or X/ Twitter's original 140-character limit brought out the creativity of brevity, which can be seen in the tributes to the death of Robin Williams.[30]



*Remembering a grandma's humor on social media*

Second, some sites are recognizing and making space for mourning-specific activities. Facebook and Instagram allow turning accounts into memorials. These memorials freeze the contents of a deceased person's profile while still allowing others to visit, tag, and talk to the memorial publicly. The deceased's thoughts, opinions, photos, and other artifacts are preserved—a double-edged sword. Preservation allows mourners to return to an unchanging version of the deceased, which may help them remember and mourn the person as they saw themselves.

On the flip side, those posts do not age and change with the mourner, which may be harmful to their continued mourning. They do not reinterpret themselves as the bereaved grow and change, which is essential for mourning.[31] While previous generations have dealt with journals, letters, and other artifacts, they are not present to the mourner in the way social media is. Those artifacts must be intentionally brought out and reviewed.

On the internet, the social media companies' algorithms decide when to show the mourner old memories. Agency is taken away from the mourner. Unfortunately there is no clear-cut plan for mourning; what helps some people mourn well can be damaging to others.

There are also specifically built tools focused on mourning. Sites for mourners to share their stories while they go through grief and reflect on their journey as they grow and change, like Option B, Here to Help, Grief Stories, and Caring Bridge, are out of the public eye but fill an important role in our mourning by providing a carefully managed community of support. Some researchers are concerned that such sites may turn into grief ghettos, where mourners feed on each others' negative emotions without growth and change, but overall the effects seem more positive.[32] Caring Bridge is built specifically to help people walking through a major medical event to tell their story. Those stories do not always end with recovery and families can turn the page into a memorial space for digital gathering, mourning, and remembering.

### Far-Reaching Impacts

Having moved many mourning practices online, modern culture is creating the aforementioned ``digital artifacts'' of mourning—an entirely new category of "stuff" the bereaved are left to clean up. Mourning has always created artifacts, the bits of ourselves left behind in words and objects such as tombstones, letters, monuments, stories of grieving, and the like. In the digital realm, each interaction creates a digital artifact. A future archaeologist may comb back through digital artifacts of mourning—if

*Modern culture is creating "digital artifacts" of mourning—an entirely new category of "stuff" the bereaved are left to clean up.*

they survive—to learn about the current moment, just as archaeologists today study the artifacts of mourning from societies long dead to gain insight into their lives. What they will find is a mess of social media, digital tools, and specifically built sites, all generating intertwined and overlapping artifacts.

Dealing with all the artifacts the deceased left behind is an often hidden and private aspect of mourning. Cleaning out a house, handling finances, and dealing with a will are now supplemented by cleaning up the online debris of life. This includes the visible elements of a dead person's social

media profiles as well as their information on government websites, email, online banking, and all the other aspects of the life they carried out online, not to mention the often-memed "clear my browser history, bro!" Online clutter impacts mourning in two major ways. First, the decisions require shifting attention, which can interrupt mourning. How long to hang on to the bereaved's artifacts and when to let go is a deeply charged question made ever more difficult by the public nature of the internet.[33] Second, sorting through the more private side of digital life can be seen as an invasion of privacy[34] and may be affected by corporate policy, law, and regulation.[35]



*Dealing with a loved one's digital artifacts*

On the other hand, when loss is public, as in the death of an individual like Kobe Bryant all the way up to a society-wide event like war, mourning is also public, which means that emotions can become contagious, spreading quickly through society and generating the potential to deeply change social and cultural expectations and taboos. When those emotions can be poured out in a widely read, open-access forum like the internet today, major social norms can be drastically altered. Steffen Steinert has cataloged how times of mourning, like after 9/11, the downing of flight MH307 (a flight that disappeared in 2014 with no trace), and the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks was expressed online as deep anger and sadness, while Hurricane Sandy in 2012 saw an online epidemic of fear.[36]

Attending to these society-wide crisis moments and their earth-shaking acts of corporate mourning raises unique challenges for the mourners and those mourning with them. Emotionally charged groups, especially once a critical mass is reached to make the reaction self-sustaining, often respond with mockery and disregard for those who try to raise concerns. Being attentive requires recognizing the powerful force that a mob becomes, whether for good or ill.

When George Floyd's murder was shared on social media, it kicked off nation-wide mourning that resulted in a summer of protest whose effects are still felt today. True grass-roots public online mourning can be cathartic if it is done properly. But many times powerful agents like social

*Attending to society-wide moments of crisis*

media companies, mediators of digital mourning, capture mourning and twist it into capitalistic productivity, nationalism, advertisement sales, or some other agenda, which negates the healing effects of the mourning.[37] Attending to these society-wide crisis moments as they unfold in all of their internet-boosted speed and their earth-shaking acts of corporate mourning means attending to a crowd of individuals, with their unique mourning responses, who are behaving as a single mob directing mourning in a particular emotional and behavioral direction.

## Infusing Attention

Removing distractions is only the first step on the path to attentive online mourning. We also need to develop attentiveness as mourners and accompaniers. In Japanese, the word *kizukai*, meaning "reading others' needs," captures the essence of attentiveness.[38] Such reading, hearing, and understanding of others' needs affirms the validity and importance of the beneficiary. In mourning, attentiveness affirms the reality of mourning and opens space for engaging grief head-on in safe community.

Consider the depth of attentiveness demonstrated on the page dedicated to Emily Johanna Hoffman.[39] She was in a car accident on February 9, 2023, which left her on life support for eight days, going through multiple surgeries, until she died on February 17. Her sister continues to maintain the blog as a place to mourn significant dates like Emily's birthday or several different anniversaries associated with her death. The comments, pictures, posts, and tributes are moving as Emily's friends deal with trauma, death, and the continuing march of life without their loved one.

Good mourning, dealing with the emotions of grief and reality of loss, like Emily's family has done on Caring Bridge, has not been the norm. Even before the internet, with its penchant for inattentiveness, invaded mourning, people did not like to be attentive to grief. The funeral industry equated good mourning with big purchases: "the fancy coffin is what they would have wanted." People would show up to mourn not to accompany the bereaved in their loss but—consciously or unconsciously—to satisfy

themselves, put on a good show, or be the center of attention. The internet may have revolutionized mourning, but human mourners are still the same: fighting to attend to what is important during the most emotionally charged time of life.

Attending to others' mourning online means missing out on many non-verbal cues or altering behavior because of the discomfort people experience talking to a screen.[40] Combining the lack of cues with emotional distance and the inattentiveness of the internet results in a very big obstacle in the way of mourning. That obstacle is not insurmountable if we focus our attention on mourning with the bereaved.

At best, the internet is a mixed bag when it comes to mourning. Many interactions are helpful and healing in the wide variety of places they happen. Even in the face of social media's monetization of attention, people are fighting back and giving their attention to mourning. Some are carefully and thoughtfully posting and commenting despite the attention-selling banality of social media. Others are carving out separate sites like Caring Bridge. These efforts show the power of attending to mourning so as to mourn well, whether in person or digitally.

> *The internet may have revolutionized mourning, but human mourners are still the same: fighting to attend to what is important during the most emotionally charged time of life.*

## Conclusion

Mourning attentively is difficult. As our world spins through a digital space that breeds inattention, developing attentiveness is key to unlocking the healing and reintegrating effects of mourning. Mourners need to attend to their anguished emotional state caused by the gaping wound ripped in their lives by death while also reinvesting and readjusting to that new reality. Those who come alongside and accompany them need to know how to attend to the mourner, as well as pay attention to their own more distant anguish, loss, and reinvestment as they, too, grieve.

Making a conscious choice to recapture attention, to become attentive, to be the sort of person who gives the gift of attention to others is possible. Attentiveness is learnable. A person trained to be attentive in the day-to-day will fall back on that habit—that virtue—in mourning as readily as teens fall

back on the forums they are comfortable with. A world populated by the attentive will be a place where mourning and accompanying mourners bring healing from anguish and readjustment into a new reality for the bereaved.

---

*Daniel Fleming is an Assistant Professor of Computer Studies specializing in Cybersecurity. He is also a trained theologian (Ph.D.) and bioethicist (M.A.). Daniel loves studying and teaching about the interaction of people and computers. He works towards helping society and especially the church recognize the benefits and dangers of modern technology.*

## Image Credits

p.63: clipping from *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*, January 11, 1956, https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/exhibits/Ecuador1956/04.2%20Secular%20Press%2001.htm

p.65: Image of girl on phone by Anestiev via Pixabay.com

p. 66: "Man and Woman Encouraging Male Patient" by freepik via Freepik.com

p. 68: Image of card by Gerd Altmann via Pixabay.com

p. 70: Image of video call by Tina Koehler via Pixabay.com

p. 71: Instagram post from Williams, "After a Death in My Family, I Now Understand."

p. 73: Image of man working with laptop by Nataliya Vaitkevich via Pexels.com

p. 74: "Protests against Police Violence in Minneapolis, Minnesota" by Fibonacci Blue via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0, lightened and cropped

## Notes

1. For more on attention and character, see Adam Smith's essay, "Discomfort, Attention, and Character," in volume 5 of this journal.
2. Beaunoyer et al., "Grieving in the Digital Era."
3. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*.
4. Bennett, "How Animals Grieve."
5. Burrell and Selman, "How Do Funeral Practices Impact Bereaved Relatives"
6. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 99.
7. Weinstock et al., "It's Complicated."
8. Weinstock et al.
9. Lythcott-Haims, "I Picture Grief as a Vat Full of Tears."
10. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*.
11. Neimeyer, Prigerson, and Davies, "Mourning and Meaning."
12. Walter, *Death in the Modern World*.

13. Lythcott-Haims, "I Picture Grief as a Vat Full of Tears."

14. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 99.

15. For example, in Italy, digital announcements of death and condolence responses are accepted, but other online expressions of grief are still taboo. Regardless, a variety of mourning-related actions have appeared online as people organically communicate their bereavement. See Pasquali, Bartoletti, and Giannini, "'You're Just Playing the Victim.'"

16. Blower and Sharman, "To Grieve or Not to Grieve (Online)?"

17. She et al., "Living Memory Home."

18. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 34.

19. Baehr, *Deep in Thought*, 40, 195.

20. Morehouse and Crandall, "Virtual Grief."

21. Weinstock et al., "It's Complicated."

22. Dawson, "What Happens When Your AI Girlfriend Dies?"

23. Ellis Gray, *The Diversity of Mourning Practices*.

24. Brubaker, Hayes, and Dourish, "Beyond the Grave."

25. Williams, "After a Death in My Family, I Now Understand."

26. Kuznetsova and Ronzhyn, "Exploring Attitudes to Online Grieving."

27. Norris and Sofka, "Death, the Internet and COVID-19."

28. Downs, "Funeral Webcasting."

29. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 10.

30. I particularly liked the Academy's "Genie, you're free." See other examples in Wilson, "Robin Williams: Online Tribues" and Polowy, "Robin Williams Tributes."

31. Brubaker, Hayes, and Dourish, "Beyond the Grave."

32. Christensen et al., "Bereaved Parents' Online Grief Communities."

33. Sas et al., "Futures of Digital Death."

34. Kasket, "Access to the Digital Self."

35. Norris and Sofka, "Death, the Internet and COVID-19."

36. Steinert, "Corona and Value Change."

37. Granek, "Mourning Sickness."

38. Fukushima, "A Cross-Generational and Cross-Cultural Study," 550.

39. Hoffman, "Emily's Site."

40. Di Carlo et al., "Telepsychiatry."

## Bibliography

Baehr, Jason S. *Deep in Thought: A Practical Guide to Teaching for Intellectual Virtues*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2021.

Beaunoyer, Elisabeth, Lisandro Hiracheta Torres, Lenn Maessen, and Matthieu J. Guitton. "Grieving in the Digital Era: Mapping Online Support for Grief and Bereavement." *Patient Education and Counseling* 103, no. 12 (December 2020): 2515–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2020.06.013.

Bennett, Karissa. "How Animals Grieve." CSU James L. Voss Veterinary Teaching Hospital: Animal Health, August 20, 2020. https://vetmedbiosci.colostate.edu/vth/animal-health/how-animals-grieve/.

Blower, Jessica, and Rachael Sharman. "To Grieve or Not to Grieve (Online)? Interactions with Deceased Facebook Friends." *Death Studies* 45, no. 3 (March 16, 2021): 167–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2019.1626937.

Brubaker, Jed R., Gillian R. Hayes, and Paul Dourish. "Beyond the Grave: Facebook as a Site for the Expansion of Death and Mourning." *The Information Society* 29, no. 3 (May 2013): 152–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2013.777300.

Burrell, Alexander, and Lucy E. Selman. "How Do Funeral Practices Impact Bereaved Relatives' Mental Health, Grief and Bereavement? A Mixed Methods Review with Implications for COVID-19." *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 85, no. 2 (June 2022): 345–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222820941296.

Christensen, Dorthe Refslund, Ylva Hård Af Segerstad, Dick Kasperowski, and Kjetil Sandvik. "Bereaved Parents' Online Grief Communities: De-Tabooing Practices or Relation-Building Grief-Ghettos?" *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 61, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 58–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2016.1273929.

Dawson, Brit. "What Happens When Your AI Girlfriend Dies?" *Dazed Digital*, November 28, 2023. https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/61432/1/what-happens-when-your-ai-girlfriend-dies-replika-forever-voices-soulmate.

Di Carlo, Francesco, Antonella Sociali, Elena Picutti, Mauro Pettorruso, Federica Vellante, Valeria Verrastro, Giovanni Martinotti, and Massimo Di Giannantonio. "Telepsychiatry and Other Cutting-edge Technologies in COVID-19 Pandemic: Bridging the Distance in Mental Health Assistance." *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 75, no. 1 (January 2021): ijcp.13716. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcp.13716.

Downs, Chase. "Funeral Webcasting: Is It Right for Your Funeral Home?" *Gather*, July 22, 2023. https://gather.app/blog/funeral-webcasting-for-funeral-homes/.

Ellis Gray, Selina. "The Diversity of Mourning Practices." Presented at Digital Futures 2012, Aberdeen, 2012. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262102954_The_Diversity_of_Mourning_Practices.

Fukushima, Saeko. "A Cross-Generational and Cross-Cultural Study on Demonstration of Attentiveness." *Pragmatics* 21, no. 4 (July 6, 2011): 549–71. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.21.4.03fuk.

Granek, Leeat. "Mourning Sickness: The Politicizations of Grief." *Review of General Psychology* 18, no. 2 (June 2014): 61–68. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000001.

Hoffman, Beth. "Emily's Site." *Caring Bridge*, 2023. https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/emilycrew/journal.

Kasket, Elaine. "Access to the Digital Self in Life and Death: Privacy in the Context of Posthumously Persistent Facebook Profiles." *SCRIPTed* 10, no. 1 (April 15, 2013): 7–18. https://doi.org/10.2966/scrip.100113.7.

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy, and Their Own Families*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

Kuznetsova, E., and Alexander Ronzhyn. "Exploring Attitudes to Online Grieving on Facebook through Survey Research" *Webology* 13, no. 1 (June 2016): 1-15. https://www.webology.org/2016/v13n1/a144.pdf.

Lythcott-Haims, Julie. "I Picture Grief as a Vat Full of Tears Hidden behind an Opaque Wall." *Option B Stories*, April 2017. https://optionb.org/stories/i-picture-grief-as-a-vat-full-of-tears-hidden-behind-an-opaque-wall-skrkbkpx.

Morehouse, Kristina J., and Heather M. Crandall. "Virtual Grief." *Communication Research Trends* 33, no. 1 (March 2014): 26+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A366082107/AONE?u=anon~9106ba68&sid=googleScholar&xid=7b3c606a.

Neimeyer, Robert A., Holly G. Prigerson, and Betty Davies. "Mourning and Meaning." *American Behavioral Scientist* 46, no. 2 (October 2002): 235–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/000276402236676.

Norris, James, and Carla J. Sofka. "Death, the Internet and COVID-19 - Insights from the Digital Death Survey." Presented at 17th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care, October 2021. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18362.31688.

Pasquali, Francesca, Roberta Bartoletti, and Lorenzo Giannini. "'You're Just Playing the Victim': Online Grieving and the Non-Use of Social Media in Italy." *Social Media + Society* 8, no. 4 (October 2022): 205630512211387. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221138757.

Polowy, Kevin. "Robin Williams Tributes Pour in on What Would Have Been Late Comedian's 69th Birthday." Yahoo Entertainment, July 21, 2020. https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/robin-williams-tributes-memories-69th-birthday-233204241.html.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. 20th anniversary ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

Sas, Corina, Miriam Schreiter, Monika Büscher, Fiorenza Gamba, and Alina Coman. "Futures of Digital Death: Past, Present and Charting Emerging Research Agenda."

*Death Studies* 43, no. 7 (August 9, 2019): 407–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481 187.2019.1647643.

She, Wan-Jou, Panote Siriaraya, Chee Siang Ang, and Holly Gwen Prigerson. "Living Memory Home: Understanding Continuing Bond in the Digital Age through Backstage Grieving." In *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–14. Yokohama, Japan: ACM, 2021. https://doi. org/10.1145/3411764.3445336.

Smith, Adam Benjamin. "Discomfort, Attention, and Character." *Character and . . . Discomfort* 5 (2019): 27–45. https://www.dbq.edu/Wendt/Publications/ CharacterandJournal/CharacterandDiscomfort/.

Steinert, Steffen. "Corona and Value Change. The Role of Social Media and Emotional Contagion." *Ethics and Information Technology* 23, no. S1 (November 2021): 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-020-09545-z.

Walter, Tony. *Death in the Modern World*. London: Sage, 2020.

Weinstock, Louis, Dunja Dunda, Hannah Harrington, and Hannah Nelson. "It's Complicated—Adolescent Grief in the Time of Covid-19." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 12 (February 23, 2021): 638940. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.638940.

Williams, Brett. "After a Death in My Family, I Now Understand Why We Use Social Media to Mourn." *Mashable*, September 27, 2017. https://mashable.com/article/ social-media-grief-mourning.

Wilson, Mara. "Robin Williams: Online Tributes to Man Who 'Gave so Much to so Many People.'" *The Guardian*, August 12, 2014, sec. Culture. https://www. theguardian.com/film/2014/aug/12/robin-williams-death-online-tributes.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

Worden, J. William. *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*. 5th ed. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2018.