

# WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DARKNESS

Mary's mother died in 2010,  
Mary's 60-year-old husband David died in 2012,  
and Mary's 8-year-old grandson died in 2013.

BY MARY POTTERY KENYON, adapted from the book,  
*Grief Diaries: Poetry and Prose & More*  
ISBN: 978-1-944328-55-9

---

## Self care articles for the bereaved

From the award-winning  
Grief Diaries book series



An iCare Aftercare resource  
International Grief Institute

INTERNATIONALGRIEFINSTITUTE.COM

---

I keep going over that day in my mind. How could I not know it was our last day on earth together?

My husband seemed in good spirits, though weak. He had apologized for taking so long to get dressed and making us late to his doctor appointment. I assured him it was fine, that he would just have to learn to allow more time.

I heated up the low-sodium soup I had made for his lunch, and he mentioned having some ice cream later, but was planning on taking a nap when our son Matthew and I left for Dubuque, for a workshop that was planned months ago.

I vividly remember walking through the door of the house Monday night, having enjoyed a wonderful workshop. I looked at David sitting in his recliner and he just beamed.

"Good workshop?" he asked. "It looks like it went well."

I leaned over to give him a big hug, and then sat and talked with him for a while, telling him how much I enjoyed talking with our son Matt in the van. I told him about stopping at the bookstore to drop off some flyers for a workshop I planned to conduct in May.

We were both really tired, and didn't talk a lot. I didn't even ask if he'd had his ice cream. I even forgot to give him his medicine. Emily saw him take it later.

She tells me I gave him another hug before I went up to bed, but I don't actually remember that. Did I kiss him? I recall telling him I hoped he would come back to bed soon because I missed him. I know I told him how glad I was that now I would have nearly two weeks before my next presentation and I could have some down time to write some essays and spend the rest of my time taking care of him.

I never got that chance.

How could I have sat on the couch the next morning, within arms-reach of him, and not know?

---

Blissfully unaware, I sat there drinking  
coffee and writing a letter.

---

The television was on when I came downstairs, and he looked asleep. Until I leaned over him to shake him awake, I had no idea my beloved was gone.

I'm wearing his wedding ring behind my own so mine doesn't slide off.

I hug one of his shirts at night. Emily wears one to bed. The other two girls fall asleep holding his shirts. I've slept in our bed only once since that day, and then for only part of the night.

I cried through the entire Mass on Sunday and have yet to set foot in the grocery store.

I only eat when my daughter sets a plate of warmed-up roast beef from the funeral dinner in front of me, and then I don't want to stop.

This morning I clipped his watch around my wrist and wore it all day. I want to wear it to bed.

I miss him, I miss him, I miss him!

---

My heart hurts so much, I am  
certain it will break with the pain.

---

I went to the doctor to see if there was something I could take to stop the anxiety and panic attacks I was experiencing every evening.

"It won't take away the sadness," he said as he handed me a prescription.

Just two weeks ago, while he lay recuperating from stent surgery in the hospital, my husband asked, "How do you do that?"

Startled, I stopped writing. Was he hurt that I was writing while he was in a hospital bed?

"I'm sorry. I need to work on my column."

"No, I mean how can you write like that? You sit there and all these words come out of you. I love that."

"It's what I do. I write," I replied.

---

Now, amidst the pain, the words  
feel stilted, the pain too raw.

---

The first thing I wrote was my husband's obituary, my fingers heavy with grief. The obituary was a labor of love.

Next, I picked up a hardcover journal I had personalized with our picture on the front. "Grow old along with me," I'd had inscribed under our photo.

The morning after David's death, I filled several pages of that journal with thanksgiving. Yes, words of thanks for the man who had been a part of my life for thirty-four years, for the family who surrounded me, for the cancer that could have taken him but didn't, instead rejuvenating our marriage. Every morning I write disjointed sentences, observations of grief, questions, and most importantly, the prayers.

"Dear Lord, thank you for bringing me comfort in the way of family and friends. I ask you, Lord, to take some of this pain from me."

"Dear Lord, thank you for letting me have David as long as I had him. Thank you, especially, for what I think of as our bonus years, the 5.5 years since his cancer. Those years were the best years of our marriage and we truly cherished each other in a way that I wish everyone could have. I have known true love. Thank you for taking David in a gentle way. Thank you, too, for the eight children left behind, the adult children who are a tremendous comfort to me, and the younger ones who keep me focused on our future."

I write. It's what I do.