

Suggested Topics of Discussion for Claire Willis, co-author of *Opening to Grief*

Claire Willis is a clinical social worker who has worked in the fields of oncology and bereavement for more than 20 years. Claire is a co-founder of the Boston nonprofit Facing Cancer Together and has led bereavement, end-of-life, support, and therapeutic writing groups. She taught Spiritual Resources for Healing the Mind, Body, and Soul at Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts. Claire maintains a private practice in Brookline, MA. As a lay Buddhist chaplain ordained by Joan Halifax at Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, she focuses on contemplative practices for end-of-life care. Claire is also an experienced yoga teacher and the author of two books, *Lasting Words: A Guide to Finding Meaning Toward the Close of Life* and her new book, *Opening to Grief: Finding Your Way from Loss to Peace*, which she co-authored with Marnie Crawford Samuelson.

1. What do you mean when you use the word *grief*?
2. How does grief manifest in our lives?
3. Are the stages of grief the same as the stages of death, as suggested in the seminal work of Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross?
4. Is there a grief timetable or path so people know what to expect?
5. What would you say to someone who says that they will never get over losing someone they loved?
6. Sometimes we run into people who do not think a pet is as important in our lives as a family member. When a beloved pet dies, people dismiss our grief and sadness as over doing it. What can you say to people who've had that experience?
7. What advice do you give to people who ask, "Will it always feel this painful?"
8. What are some of the ways you suggest people be with their grief?
9. When you are grieving, how does spending time in nature help?
10. You mention that some people who are grieving find solace in writing in a journal. How does this help?
11. In *Opening to Grief*, you explore how making things helps some people heal after a profound loss. If you are not an experienced artist, how do you begin?
12. How does someone know if they need professional help with their grief? How do you know whether you are depressed?
13. In the Covid pandemic many people report remembering losses from long ago. Why would these memories be arising now?