

# Once Upon a Starry, Starry Night

## Finding Your Purpose

By Nan Zastrow



What do people do when they can't sleep? I don't have that answer, but I do know that diversions can help. Recently, Gary and I decided to break the string of my sleepless nights with a diversion. At about 12:30—1:00 a.m., we drove to a remote spot to observe the star showers that the meteorologist was talking about on the news. (Specifically, Perseid meteor shower- August 2021) Sitting in the dark, peaceful quietness of the universe and focusing on something so much bigger than us was beyond therapeutic.

The first night, we weren't sure what we were really looking for. I counted 7 shooting stars and thought for sure this was what we were supposed to see. On the second night Gary saw a "mist of stars" and a few "shooters." Though neither of us could be sure if we were seeing what we thought we were, the majestic, tranquility was all we needed to "believe" that we were witnessing a beautiful phenomenon. According to a recent article I read, when we look up, we only see about 6000 stars within our galaxy which is a fraction of all the stars in the universe. But the rest are too far away for us to see. One would think we were observing multiple galaxies of starry brilliance. Things aren't always what they seem.

Like many things in life, things aren't always what we see...or believe! In today's techno/wizard world, it's hard to distinguish what's real and what's not. Movies are a good example of another realm of wizardly that challenges our assumptive minds with its computer-generated imagery. Politics, news, and even social media have found ways to cleverly portray their version of the story. Even throughout the pandemic, we watched people on television perform on a stage suggesting they were all in the same room, shoulder to shoulder, and later discovered with a split screen they could be miles away from each other. Isn't our world amazing!

In grief, things aren't always what they seem either. I remember those early days of grief and thinking "I'll never be normal again." Pain and hurt, whether internal or external, has a way of tarnishing one's attitude. Our life that seemed to be moving along smoothly suddenly seemed to lose its purpose and meaning. We put on the "happy face" to get us through the day. People believed "we were over it." They thought now we would be just like we used to be. But grief doesn't work like that. We changed. Our priorities changed. Our world view changed. We tried to camouflage our grief with courage. Things aren't always what they seem.

Grief is tenacious and has a way of interrupting every part of our lives. Our world becomes much more vulnerable. As we emerge from the fog, we wander in oblivion and try to make sense of this new reality. Suddenly we realize that having meaning and purpose is a big deal. We spent our lives, up to that moment, searching for the right passion that gave us the desire to get up in the morning and face the day. Grief has a way of resetting the "best-laid plans".

I am convinced that the ultimate reward of the grief experience or journey is getting in touch with yourself and discovering what really makes you tick. I read that purpose can be equal to this:

- "If you get up in the morning and you smile and/or encourage someone who is having a bad day, you have a purpose.
- If you go out of your way to help a neighbor or remember a friend who is hurting, you have a purpose.
- If you spend quality time with someone loved, you have purpose."

I like this description of meaning and purpose. It suggests that no one remains a "speck" in the universe or an unnamed star. If we set our internal compass to true north, we will be driven by what we are willing to give to others. Each of us holds the ability to give someone more such as encouragement, compassion, and joy in the present moment of life. Each of us can make the choices that allow us to go on living after loss.

Like that night observing the star showers, we are not always sure that what we are seeing is what we are meant to see. God's path for us may not be quite as obvious and brilliant that it outshines anything we may have pre-determined our path to meaning and purpose should be. If we just have the patience to take each step and trust that the way will be shown, it will be. You don't have to look for your meaning and purpose. It will truly find you...once upon a starry, starry night.

About the Author

Nan Zastrow

Wings was created as a ministry of hope by Nan and Gary Zastrow after the death of their son, Chad Zastrow. On April 16, 1993, Chad died as a result of suicide. Nan is the author of five books, a quarterly online grief eLetter and dozens of articles published in various resources. Since 2003, Nan regularly publishes articles in Grief Digest Magazine. Visit the website at: [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org) or the Wings Facebook page.