

# Supportive Guide For Trauma and Grief

Know that you are not alone in your  
journey to move forward.

By

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*A Husbands Journey Through Journaling To Heal The Loss Of His Spouse*

# Introduction

“A belief is not merely an idea the mind possesses; it is an idea that possesses the mind.”

Robert Bolton

Beliefs empower our core values and principles and offer direction for our choices. They are based on the perceptions of external stimuli or memory, the mental impressions contributing to our reality. They mingle with our emotions, and the memory part of the brain receives information from our five senses. This affects the mind, body, and spirit more than other structures in the brain. Sensory input is analyzed from the environment and then directed to the brain's frontal area behind the forehead and between the temples. Where our thinking, analyzing-decision making, short-term memory, and planning occur. We then become consciously aware and can catalog this information as part of our beliefs.

For example, you get a ticket for a train; all the seats are assigned by car. You walk the long aisle, going from car to car. When you arrive at the assigned train car, it houses sheep, goats, and ducks. There is a stall marked with your ticket number. How does that make you feel? If you're a city dweller, you are probably mortified. If you are a country person who likes animals and grew up on a farm, you would feel at home—two distinct realities because of previous experience using the process of thinking called executive function. We link the city person to tea and crumpets or the country person to drinking black coffee from a porcelain mug and dunking day-old herb bread.

We have choices: to be stuck in emotional disquiet with a feeling of lack (negative emotion). Or we can choose to change our thoughts through positive, uplifting language. Embracing this can shift our behavior and change our beliefs. Over time, this will change the reactive behavior to forethought and responsiveness.

Parts of this guide fell under the transformation umbrella and developed over several years. It continues to be a work in progress to convey supportive words for solace, guidance, and hope. This is not a should-do guide; it is more about

exploring emotional disquiet and discovering some level of good in the upheaval of personal chaos.

***“Life is a process, and it serves no purpose if you’re in limbo, stuck between two worlds.”***

The most important lesson of my journey is that receiving is just as important as giving. As individuals, we don’t afford ourselves the same vassal. With both feet, we jump into the dark rabbit hole of isolation because of previous trauma and present prompts.

According to the laws of attraction, I felt and experienced every element of lack after my wife passed. I lived my negativity of despair from one situation to the next. Overwhelmed, I was a rudderless ship attempting to find direction in the confusing sea of emotional disquiet. Asking myself; What do I do? What do I say?

I am now blessed to work and bring out the best in others to achieve their goals in health and well-being. The following is the basis for my transformative guide in moving forward in the Yin and Yang of disquiet and chaos and to achieve emotional prosperity.

## **Getting to the balance**

The problem(s) is/are

- Vulnerability to the emptiness without the physical presence of our spouse with no grief counseling specific to the loss, it is generic.
- Moving forward is a journey many of us stumble over without the support of family, friends, or counseling.

There are more than these, and everyone is different. Finding or recognizing our emotional disquiet from grief or trauma is the reason for this transformative guide.

There are positive outcomes:

- To feel connected.
- To know you are not alone.

- To learn acceptance through forgiveness and acknowledging your grieving. What does this mean? A profound, complete inner shift. A transformation of the learned negativity piled on the emotion of loss.
- Embrace the pain and levels of grief and mourning and write about them in a journal.

It means work, hard work at an activity of allowance. Through writing, you can embrace and begin acceptance. The deeper sensations of loss are digestible in moments of emotional comfort or relinquishment. Experiencing the oscillation from one emotion to another exemplifies the ebb and flow of daily life. The effect of societal imprinting can shut our emotional stability down. When layers of trauma grip our mind, spirit, and body, they leave a person physically and emotionally vulnerable.

Sharing my personal experience...letting another person know they are not alone; though we each travel a different path, it doesn't need to be a solitary journey. Move forward at a comfortable pace for peace of mind and purpose.

### **The following are vital steps...**

- Start a journal and note any emotion that comes to mind...doodle using crayons. Draw stick figures or write your name; these can set the mind up for quiet moments of recollection. It took me a while, but I got it.
- Speak outwardly to yourself using positive vocabulary or sentences, addressing yourself in the third person. More commonly known as self-speak. You can start with the negative ego first and replace the statement with a positive one. Also, note the area of the body reacting to the emotion or memory. There is a direct link between body parts related to negative emotions and illness. The following link will provide information about how the emotions we carry and express impact our health and well-being.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5585554/#:~>

Use positive mental dialogue during meditation, prayer, or quiet time. This sets up happy hormone release as a natural anti-depressant for the mind and body.

- The past does not reflect the present; though memory can be a culprit for emotional lack, those mental images don't have to crush our spirit for life or define who we are. They brought what I encountered and embraced as part of

who I am forward and into the present moment. They can do the same for you or a loved one.

I discovered these during my attempts to sail to Bermuda. My fits and starts and writing in my journal triggered my loss and depressive behavior. Two years after Judith died, I received a package from an unknown source during Christmas. It was a CD by motivational speaker Randy Gage. It brought what I encountered and embraced as part of my grief forward and into the present moment. I never found who or where the package came from, but it was a life vest for my emotions instead of embracing the anchor that dragged me into the depths. It guided me to find spiritual peace and direction.

As an author, I am writing about my experiences and sharing how good can come from the impact of trauma and grief. To shift core values toward reinforcing beliefs that make and fill life with purpose. For myself, determination, faith, and perseverance helped me to find purpose in positive statements using a vocabulary of uplifting and reinforcing content.

### **Some examples:**

Authentic, Balance, Compassion, Creativity, Growth, Happiness, Honesty  
Inner harmony

Optimism, Perseverance, Resiliency, Self-respect, Stability, Spirituality,

Wise, Peace, Curiosity, Determination, Trustworthy, Fun,

Justice, Kindness, Love, Loyalty

Using words like am, can, deserve, filled with, blessed, empowered, and dependent (this is not a negative word) shows vulnerability to our creators' gifts of spiritual substance and faith. All can support life with emotional prosperity and harmony, with positive ideas and intentions. God wants only the best for us based on our faith and belief in our birthright. If we ask with faith and the belief to be of service, it will come to pass as ethereal moments of thought and ideas.

### **Some neuroscience to consider:**

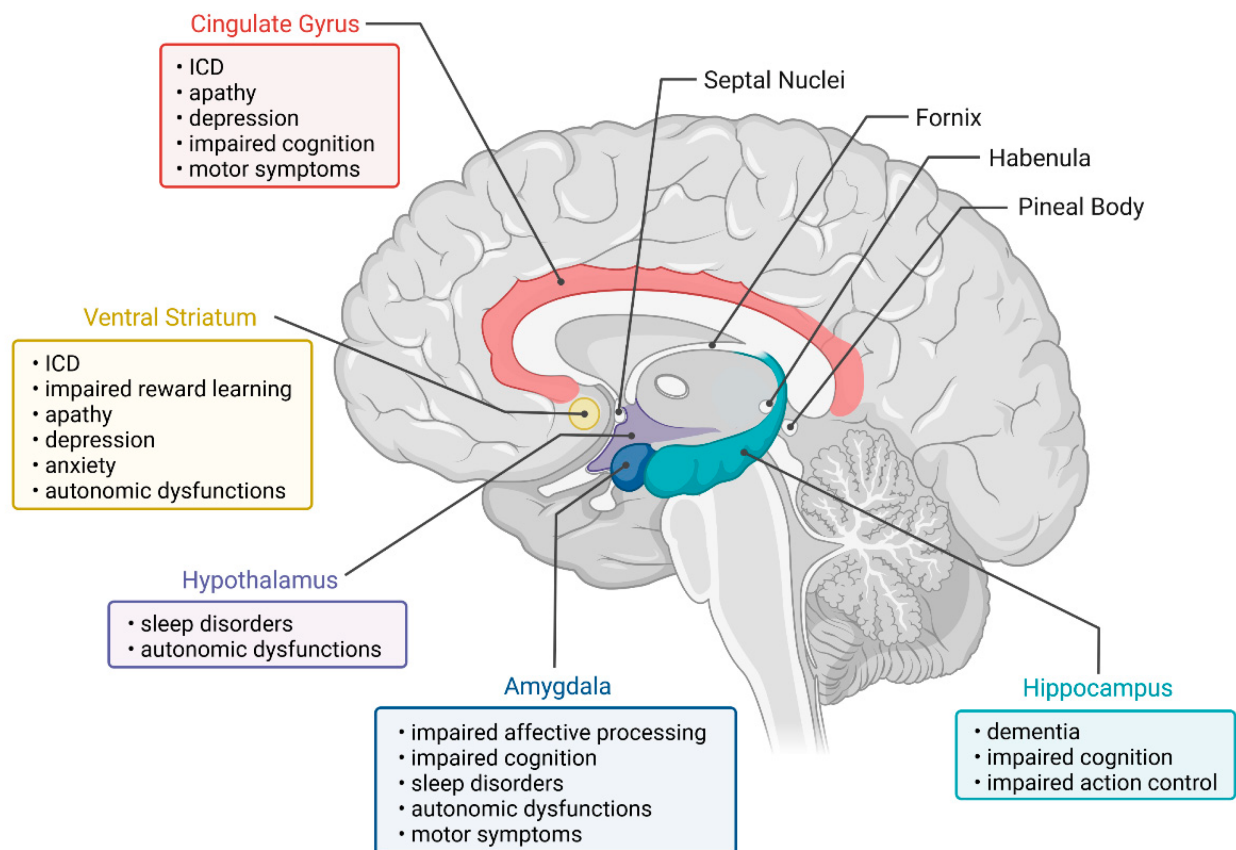
The brain is a vital organ; the most important function is one of reference. What do I mean by this? When you go to the reference section of a library, you have a plethora of information in one place. Your brain acts as a reference library, offering

a card catalog of stored memory. The body and nervous system all connect to this mainframe of emotional storage.

The brain is a mirror image of itself, with two main lobes communicating with the body through neurons or pathways. These act like electrical wires carrying chemical information to and from the brain and the rest of the body.

Some structures regulate emotion from external and internal conditions and are responsible for the immediate reaction or response being positive or negative. It is specific to decision-making, along with the ability to regulate emotion.

Granted, this information can be confusing because of the vocabulary or terms. The important thing is that brain areas are linked to emotion and how emotion can influence our actions and health.



A response requires forethought, whereas a reaction is an immediate decision with an emotionally charged memory of what caused it. This exists in various conditions, such as Autism, PTSD, and other situations of dysfunction or trauma. We store this emotional memory within the nervous system and code it for emotions of anger, fear, confusion, sadness, and others.

The nervous system recognizes and tags feelings of emotion such as pleasure, anxiety, anger, and fear. It acts as a gatekeeper for the reaction. As well as the ones already stored in the brain. Adrenaline (Epinephrine) is a chemical that increases blood pressure and heart rate in conditions of fight-flight.

Our childhood experiences are memory triggers, buttons, or prompts for physical or emotional trauma. They can stack up over time and become overwhelming, adding to the experiences of living as an adult. This may differ from one individual to the next. But any trauma is an experience with lasting pain and anguish.

According to the National Institute on Health (NIH), the death of a loved one ranks very high on the trauma scale. Yet the mind changes the level of some experiences and reduces how reactive they are to our emotions over time. Does that mean they go away? No. Can they be transformed into positive intentions and understanding? Absolutely.

Write these suggestions in your journal, and say them aloud. You will affect the health of your body and mind. Make up your own or search the internet for guidance. After writing them in the journal, follow up with what you will do, why you do it, and how doing a specific thing helps to resolve the goal of positive intention and purpose.

Just a note. Putting post-it notes everywhere means nothing but added clutter to clean up—taking action toward what is on a post-it note tips the scale towards making a shift. So, reading them doesn't always get you where you want or desire to be emotionally.

I am healthy in thought, action, and deed.  
My dreams support my optimistic expectations.  
I respect who I am.  
I create my happiness through positive intention.  
I fill my heart and mind with thoughtfulness.  
My negative fear, pain, sorrow, and grief are diminished by optimism, positive intention, and hopeful purpose.

Visualize the feeling and experience associated with the affirmations you are repeating. How long do affirmations take to work? According to some research, it could take about “22 days” to notice a change in well-being. Happiness activates several brain areas to release feel-good hormones, which can act as natural anti-depressants. In some research models, the results can blend into daily awareness and show benefits and positive habits around 66 days.

Leading up to this timetable, using meditation/ prayer is helpful in the rewiring of the brain through the release of feel-good hormones, such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. These form a chemical tag in the brain to become a memory, which occurs in different brain areas.

The subconscious mind, which makes up over 90% of the brain, doesn't distinguish between real and imaginary. So, if you want to change a habit? Some schools of thought say; Get a new one. Meditation/prayer, affirmations, and positive self-speak create a biochemical blowtorch in brain pathways. Changes areas affected by negative (habit) into positive, feel-good (habits) with improved well-being, an overall boost in spirit, and minimizing the impact of stress. The following resource provides additional information about the subconscious mind and health.

<https://mindbasedhealing.org/subconscious-mind/>

Repeating sounds and ideas with positive intentions changes the negative patterns into positive ones. Writing, speaking, and visualizing positive statements impact the subconscious mind. I had a coach who told us before every practice and every game. 'What you do in practice, you will do in the game. Mess up in practice; you will sit on the bench until you get it right, then I know you will do it in the game and be successful.'

So, fill the void with practice, and good habits will have no choice but to be expressions of success. Overcoming the negative self-speak illuminates areas in brain centers for reward and pleasure. Using mindfulness technique allows us to view a situation in question with perspective.

- When writing in a journal, think about your emotional pain associated with trauma and create a vocabulary to shift the pain to self-forgiveness. If any words are descriptively negative, look for positive comments to offset the negative. Work at the shift you desire to see in yourself. Forget the PostIt notes. The journal is your lifeline to self-awareness and inner shifts.

- What thoughts or feelings come to the surface?

- When you think about trauma, loss, and grief, can you put a scale on the emotion (1-5)? Five is acceptance and positive efforts, and one is the lowest of lows from the loss.



- What would or did you write in the journal?
- Was the question easy? Recovery (moving forward) of your loss hasn't met your expectations, and you aren't ready to record anything in your journal.
- What are you feeling in the pit of your stomach? If you aren't ready to offer self-forgiveness or can't?
- Do you have immediate reactions to non-forgiveness? What are they?

Things a husband or spouse can choose to embrace... from Breast Cancer or any traumatic loss.

My journaling journey began with these three words: What? Why? How? What things did I think?

What worked to gain acceptance?

Why did I think or need to learn them? Why did I succumb to a trauma?

How can I turn my back on negativity and embrace positivity? How can I move forward with dignity and supportive emotion? How can I find peace, joy, and happiness moving forward?

The following are excerpts from my journal entries. I edited some elements, but they are close to the original texts:

- I wrote, sketched, used crayons, and tapped the tabletop.
- I screamed, hit the tabletop of my studio, and sanded wood to a toothpick in moments of emotional turmoil and anger.
- Did I mention screaming?
- I implemented meditation where positive words replace the mantra. I also prayed. A lot!
- I walked in the woods or sat by the shore. The presence of waves and the subtle echoes of a forest provided the perfect white noise.
- I read more.
- I created a list of shifts in my weaknesses and my strengths.

These are an example of exploration questions:

The first question or statement.

Let's use the word "thinking."

What...are you thinking? A problem, a fear, an auspicious moment?

Why...are you thinking? Because it popped into my head. It created a sense of anxiety and fear of future negative outcomes.

### **How... are you thinking?**

This is tough. Are you using your mind and emotions or holding something inside, acting as a trigger (prompt)? Explain how the feeling is recorded in your body in a couple of sentences. i.e., the pit of your stomach, shoulder pain, headaches, nausea. All these and more relate to specific organs and the nervous system's connection to them from memory.

These two innocuous "W's" can guide a person in understanding the reactive language of words. It was one of those moments an idea came to me without thinking. The universe sent a pulse of energy, a thought, into the core of my mind—a place filled with joy, harmonious blessings, and gratitude. It touched my soul on an ethereal level—a gift from the ethers.

So, through a brief pause, silence, meditation, or prayer, the gate for Spiritual Substance will open, and you will receive the blessings of the creator you deserve, but only if you ask. Remember those wasted Post-it notes? They are waste, but only if you don't ask.

The following are action steps or choices of activities to aid in moving forward—the personal care for quieting the chaos of emotions from trauma.

### **Self-compassion**

The personal care and concern necessary for elevating oneself in times of stress or trauma. Trauma is the umbrella word for challenges faced in daily living.

The use of a journal in this exercise is your partner. A single piece of paper is fine if your journal is not handy. When I started my journey, a small spiral flip pad was easy to carry around and jot thoughts I could look at later and absorb on my own time.

According to the dictionary. Strengths can be defined as

• the degree of intensity of a feeling or belief: • the emotional or mental qualities necessary in dealing with situations or events that are distressing or difficult: a good or beneficial quality or attribute of a person or thing perceived as a source of mental or emotional strength.

#### Lobe function in brain:

**Frontal lobe** is responsible for judgement and receives data from sensory and high level cognitive processing (decision making) areas. Assesses and orients a person to place, time, or situations via precise thought, social control or the suppression of emotion.

**Parietal lobe** is the (somatosensory cortex). Integrating sensory input from the Thalamus for touch, joint and tendon (proprioception), as well as pressure, temperature and nociceptive pain.

**Occipital lobe** which houses the (visual cortex) integrates color, spatial perception and cross functions with parietal and temporal lobes with visual information.

**Temporal lobe** or (auditory cortex) houses the deeper Limbic system and is receptive to language (understanding) and speech. The limbic components comprise memory association, the cataloguing of emotion and organization of sensory input.

**Cerebellum** more commonly known as the (little brain) integrates information relative to balance, smooth movement and posture.

**Brain stem** is in control of involuntary life sustaining functions.

The **Medulla Oblongata** impacts heart rate, breathing and blood pressure.

The **Reticular formation** contributes to arousal, attention, sleep, wakefulness and reflexes.

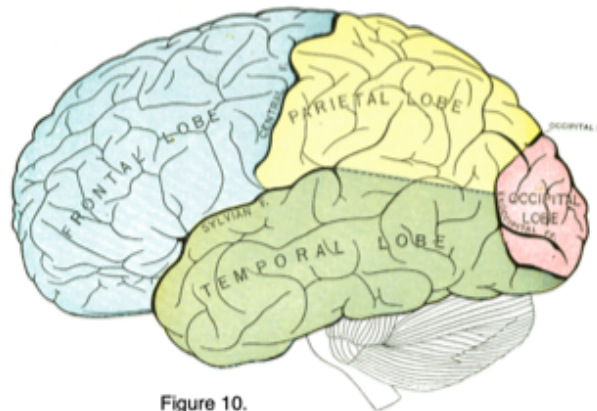


Figure 10.  
Lobes of brain  
Gray's Anatomy; 20th Edition, 1918

There are other kinds of strengths, such as skills or talents. Some are learned through training or experience; others are innate and characterized as being or having a genetic predisposition.

We all have certain strengths and are not always aware of them. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the death of a spouse ranks third on the bereavement scale. Will you easily overcome this trauma or succumb to the loss of individual strength of character and slide or jump into the rabbit hole of grief with both feet?

I can attest that my strength of character was drained from me quickly. My well-being and unhappiness accompanied my decline, reflecting a negative shift in my core values that reinforced lowered self-esteem and depression. Any tools to improve awareness can only benefit a person's self-esteem and regain personal strength in core values.

This is the reasoning behind using the WHAT, WHY, and HOW format approach to embrace the positive and negative elements as the YIN and YANG of balancing the chaos caused by the emotional disquiet of trauma, any trauma.

This portion begins with the WHAT, WHY, and HOW tools in evaluating and setting goals for respecting yourself in a manner you deserve. This WHAT, WHY, and HOW will provide uniformity of approach and create a journalling habit to address any issue with a concise system. After a while, this will become a mental process your mind will use to card catalog the incidents or stimuli that flip the switch on negative memories.

- \* The WHAT describes the emotion or situation of challenge

- \* The WHY is your ability to assess the overall or specific impact the emotion has created., your reaction.

- \* The HOW is your personal statement of steps or the goal you establish in formulating a path toward self-compassion. The how of resolve.

I have used the concept or Chinese principles of Yin and Yang in my books and articles regarding EMOTIONAL PROSPERITY and the influence NEGATIVE and POSITIVE words have on the emotional components of a person's mind, body, and spirit. The trilogy of humanness and energy expression we all share with the spiritual substance of God. This, of course, is different for everyone in different parts of the world. Personally, from my perspective, the spiritual substance of our universal creator is energy.

In the space below, write a specific experience you encountered that caused a shift in your emotions in a reactive way. Two or three sentences are all you need.

**Ex:** I am angry over my spouse's illness and death. I feel small and insignificant. Plus, I became physically ill from the pressure of being a constant caregiver and lashed out at GOD with such anger that spit came from my mouth.

### **The WHAT:**

\* **YIN** is anything based on primal negative or covert defensive actions of your choice to motivate, bolster, and protect yourself.

\* **YANG** is anything positive with overt compassion, relaxation, and giving of peaceful intention.

EX.

**YIN:** The memory of childhood negative actions or control for no reason. Feelings of being insignificant or blamed and shamed.

**YANG:** My personal care was isolation by walking, meditating on peaceful scenes, or the ocean waves gently rolling onto the shore.

### **The WHY:**

\* **YIN** is your reason to connect the dots to the memory of similar feelings or reactions in your past that relate to the emotion as the prompt or stimulus.

\* **YANG** is the reason for the act according to your personal assessment of the stimulus

EX.

**YIN:** Why do I have such deep anger and negative reactions to my spouse's death?

**YANG:** Why should I embrace or confront these feelings when all they do is make me feel worse?

### **The HOW:**

\* **YIN** is your choice of action or words to protect your sense of self. It is the covert actions.

- \* **YANG** is meditation, walking, listening to Classical music, or any style that does not activate heightened emotion or reactive behavior. It is the overt positive activity of mindful actions.

EX.

**YIN:** I will not cower. I will find something to bolster my self-esteem.

**YANG:** I create positive words or phrases to repeat in my mind. Take me out of the situation by walking and accepting what I think about the problem. This can defuse the heat of the situation.

### **WHAT:**

\* **YIN:** WHAT do I do to check and protect myself from feelings of low self-esteem or negative emotions about my behavior? Ie. MY loss or anger towards my spouse for dying and leaving me?

\* **YANG:** WHAT acts of compassion can I do to lower my reactive or negative behavior about myself? Meditation/prayer, quiet time by the shore, or walk in the woods.

### **WHY:**

\* **YIN:** WHY do I react to this negative stimulus? Is there a link to old memories of similar emotion?

\* **YANG:** Write a positive statement to reinforce an uplifting feeling and positive level of intention.

### **HOW:**

\* **YIN:** How do the negative feelings interfere with my daily actions in living?

\* **YANG:** Think of protective actions or phrases to counter or motivate you over the negative emotion of the cause.

## **Actions of Personal Care**

- Create quiet time and stick to it.
- Do meditation in a specific space. If you don't have one, create a refuge for your mind.
- Allow the feelings and emotions you write in your journal to have their space apart from yourself, as they do not define you.
- Draw, doodle, or color in your journal. It is a place for creative innocence besides your emotional disquiet.
- Write things you're grateful for in your life. Speak them out loud; this audible activity can be a positive reinforcer for subconscious change and mindful purpose.

## **Actions to bolster your emotions**

- Take a walk.
- Do 20 minutes of mild exercise to get your heart rate up. It will bolster your well-being.
- Go for a bike ride to nowhere in particular.
- Go hiking, camping, or backpacking and spend some time in nature.

## **Actions for spiritual uplifting**

- Make time for meditation/prayer.
- A random act of kindness. Using my acronym for HABIT-Healthy Attitude can change Behavior and Initiate acts of daily Thoughtfulness—HABIT
- Tithe to a charity of your choosing.
- Find an opportunity to use your time and talent for things that energize you and build community with others.

All the actions listed above are opportunities to improve the self and show negative learned emotions like shame and blaming of the self out the back door.



Embracing all you are without evaluating or comparing yourself to others regardless of how people perceive you—defines a healthy connection with the self.

Taking steps to embrace positive change without self-blame or shame is a method to initiate positive behavior. Remember, Good thoughts in = good thoughts out.

#### Final thought

Remembering moments of laughter, joy, and happiness is imperative for maintaining a healthy attitude that changes your behavior and can initiate levels of thoughtfulness toward yourself. A new HABIT is born.

*“You never know how far-reaching something you may think, say, or do will affect the lives of others, even millions.”* BJ Palmer

*“It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”* Anonymous

Light a single candle for yourself to find the door in the darkness of emotional disquiet. You are releasing your inner spirit for purpose and light.

Blessing in health...