

Caring Thoughts

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Messages to Heaven



I thought that for a change I would add a bit of what I help people deal with on a daily basis since it is so closely related to what my husband, Corey, does for a living. I am a licensed

counselor in private practice and deal with all different kinds of psychological issues and problems. One main struggle for individuals I see is grief. The saddest fact of life is that everyone loses people and that we all have to deal with serious grief at some point in our lives.

In order to help people deal with grief I assist them in the navigation process of the five stages of grief which are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally, acceptance. When a loved one dies, the immediate reaction is very important to deal with. However, people often fall into depression after services have concluded, dinners have stopped and relatives have flown home. Another important time is the first anniversary of your lost loved one's birthday, first holiday, or the anniversary of their death.



I have an activity for families to engage in during this time called "Messages to Heaven". I have families first pick their crew. This includes whomever shares in the special relationship with their lost loved one. For

example: this could be a father and his children grieving the loss of their mother. The group should be small and comfortable in order to grieve together. Then they need to pick a time and place. Pick a place that was special to your loved one. This could be a baseball field, the beach, a favorite spot in the country, or your own backyard. After you have the crew, time, and place buy some helium balloons and sharpie markers. On the day of the activity let everyone know that they can write whatever they want on their balloon to send a message to their loved one in heaven. Take your time, write your messages together and when everyone is finished let the balloons go together.

This activity is so helpful because it not only helps in the grief process but it also brings families together.

Sincerely,

Arianne Scheller-Strauch, PhD., LPC

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Elephants Grieve Like Us

Grief is apparent in humans but also among other species in the animal kingdom. We all experience feelings of attachment and loss, even animals. The following are excerpts from an article by James Honeyborne that illustrate the love and loss of a baby elephant for its mother. This was sad but is a powerful tool to help us recognize the reality of grief.

Following are excerpts from an article by James Honeyborne:

"The pictures of a baby elephant in Borneo, nudging and nuzzling the body of its dead mother in obvious distress and bewilderment, cannot fail to move us.

Allegations that up to ten pygmy elephants were poisoned, perhaps by local farmers, are upsetting — perhaps because elephant emotions seem so like our own, so heartbreakingly close to human sorrow and grief. Any scientist knows how dangerous it is to project human feelings on to an animal, to force them into human moulds or 'anthropomorphise' them, but it's equally dangerous to ignore a wealth of scientific data based on decades of observation in the wild.

We may never know exactly what goes on inside the mind of an elephant, but it would be arrogant of us to assume we are the only species capable of feeling loss and grief.

I have been filming animals in the wild for more than 20 years, and that has often meant being around elephants: they live across a huge range of habitats. But mass poaching has put them into terrible decline — around 40,000 elephants a year are killed by poachers and, according to some estimates, since the Sixties the population has been culled from 3.5 million to just 250,000. I am certain that the behaviour I have witnessed so often stems from real emotion. Understanding it is the biggest challenge for a wildlife cameraman. We have to get inside the heads of the animals, see how they are reacting and predict what they will do next, or we won't get the shots we need.

Perhaps the most dramatic and emotional sequence happened in our current BBC1 series, Africa, narrated by David Attenborough. We filmed an elephant mother's desperate attempts to keep her calf alive during the worst drought in 50 years in Kenya.

These animals were not dying of thirst: they were starving. Some volcanic springs were still flowing, so the animals could get water; what they couldn't get were nutrients.

By that time, the drought was well into its second year and mother and baby were trying to survive on dry twigs.

There was no hay in Kenya, there was a sense of utter helplessness, and we felt the most important thing was to document what was happening. Cameraman Mark Deeble had been following the family for days. He saw that the mother stayed with her baby and felt she was distressed, trying to lift up the dead body and move it with her feet, before standing over the prone calf for about an hour, seeming to come to terms with the situation.

Whether you were actually there or watching events unfold on the screen, it was impossible to keep your emotions separate from what you were seeing. The mother's bereavement transmitted itself so strongly. In a more benign environment, an elephant might mourn for longer. I have heard of animals staying beside the bodies of dead friends for three days and nights, refusing to move.

This mother didn't do that, possibly because she had been exposed to a lot of death around her.

Fifteen thousand head of game died in that reserve during the drought. More than 400 elephants perished, including 60 per cent of all the matriarchs — a herd's female leader.

It was a terrible time for that population, and I think death had become familiar to them. You could draw a parallel with humans in wartime. The mother had to move on for her own survival.

We couldn't save her baby, but we felt it was essential to put its death in context: Africa is infamous for its droughts and famines, and yet we very rarely see

how seriously that affects its wildlife.

Scientists have observed extraordinary displays of emotion from elephants. When one tame animal called Abu died at a safari outfit in Botswana, his keepers brought the other elephants to say 'goodbye'.

One female, Cathy, was seen crying from both eyes, tears streaming down her face.

That doesn't mean elephants know what death is. They can't anticipate death in the way we can or imagine it as an abstract concept. Their grief is different: it's simply about loss.

Dr Kate Evans, of the Elephants For Africa research foundation, has told me that on several occasions she has watched grieving elephants exhibit almost a sense of puzzlement.

They pick up, hold and examine bones, balancing a jawbone on their tusks or putting it in their mouths, as if they are saying to their dead friend: 'Is that you?'

Perhaps the discredited myth of the elephant's graveyard, a secret place where the animals supposedly went to die, had its origins in the fact that elephants interact with their dead.

Dr Evans has observed mourning among wild elephants that she knew well. On one occasion, a young bull came across three skulls. He ignored the first two, but paid particular attention to the third skull, from an elephant he had been friendly with. In Kate's words, he seemed to know who the skull belonged to."

To read the full article please visit: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2270977/Elephants-really-grieve-like-They-shed-tears-try-bury-dead-leading-wildlife-film-maker-reveals-animals-like-us.html>

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As a fifth generation funeral services provider, Corey Strauch has developed a passion for helping people experience the calm and dignity of knowing that their future is decided and that it will happen exactly as they desire. Over the years of working with generations of clients, Corey has made it his life's work to help people to be informed, to be prepared, and to feel secure with end of life cremation decisions. He is a licensed funeral director in Pennsylvania and has garnered 21 years of experience in the funeral and cremation industry.

Allow him to assist you in reviewing your options and to set a sturdy and secure plan for your cremation decisions. To learn more about Corey and his business, call **844-906-0263** or visit his website at www.PennsylvaniaCremationServices.com to find out what your options are and to request a free consultation (valued at \$195) in order to learn how you can gain the confidence of knowing that your affordable plans for cremation are securely set.

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