

Lessons In Love

Christine's fight with Parkinson's disease starting in 2019 and decline due to cancer in 2023 provided a lesson about life like no other. Her final weeks of in-home hospice were filled with much love and celebration.

Hospice

I am now acquainted with the existence and importance of Hospice Services. Hospice nurse Gabby Jimenez teaches her peers and the rest of us ways to find comfort and peace of mind for the dying patient, family and friends.

<https://www.thehospiceheart.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/thehospiceheart.net>

I have attended classes featuring improvised rituals that result in reconciliation of estranged family members, forgiveness, and grief support.

I relate it all to what I have learned from 40 years of passionate involvement with psychology and neurology aimed at living well, free from conflict. I experience that Gabby's presentation, tools and techniques are delightful and effective, aiming at the same objective.

In a session on Forgiveness I found myself thinking back 100 years and more to what my mother told me about abuse my father endured as a child. I thought of people I want to forgive and things I regret—things for which I forgive myself.

Mandala

In a recent session on Grief Support Gabby gave us individual homework. She asked us to collect objects such as leaves, flowers, stones ... in a park or on the beach and arrange the objects into a Mandala to honor the memory of a loved one. She encouraged us to stay with the Mandala to reflect on our relationship with the deceased. We might then leave the Mandala for others to see and to slowly turn back to nature.

Here are two examples from Gabby's blogs.



I decided to make my Mandala at home in my living room using objects relating to Christine to honor her and our life together—a life filled with love.

I have found myself reflecting on love in the past year. Love in my childhood, love with Christine, love in the future.

Love in my childhood

My parents, Sigvard and Greta, experienced serious grief from his parents Jakob and Augusta (Gus). They also experienced heaps of love and support from Jakob's older brother Gösta and his wife Esther. Two brothers married to two sisters. What a difference! Gösta is my godfather. His picture hangs on my wall. I met him once—when I was baptized. My mother told me that he lifted me up high and I laughed.

My parents ended up having six children. They both had full-time jobs and did everything they could to provide well for the family. They did indeed, and I think that speaks volumes about commitment, love and collaboration.

When I was in my middle teens I would sit at my mother's bedside. She would tell me stories about relatives—jealousy, hypocrisy, and abuse that had gone before and some still unfolding. I knew many of the players and could understand background in some cases. I think that sharing her perspective was a loving thing for her to do. It influenced core values that are still part of me.

Love with Christine

Christine and I met Midsummers Day 1960. I had just graduated with the Swedish Studentexamen, equivalent to the French baccalaureate. She had a year left to go. I served in the Swedish army stationed in Gothenburg, our hometown. I had Wednesday evenings and Sundays off. I could ride a tram all the way from my barracks to the block where my family lived. Christine made sure she did all of her homework so she had Wednesday evenings free. She made the effort to get across town to visit my parents large apartment every single Wednesday evening. On Sundays we might borrow my dad's car and go somewhere. All Friendship and Quality Time getting to know each other. Clearly, making the effort that she did, she chose me! She would remind me that it was 4 months into our friendship that I blurted out "I love you". She also told me that she didn't believe me at the time. I think we were both uncertain, shy and rather innocent.

Christine graduated the following May. By June she would go off to GCI (Phys Ed University) in Stockholm, across the country, for two years. I was entering engineering school in town for four years. She proposed!!! I suggested that we should stay friends and stay in contact.

Commitment

My aunt Lisa turned 50 in late September. I drove my mom to Stockholm for the party and we stopped at the Stockholm Stadium to have Christine join us. When I saw her I realized what a fool I was, so I proposed. Hugs and kisses followed. I count that day as the day we became a couple. Formal engagement six months later and marriage two and a half years later are legal milestones. Christine never let me forget that 2 weeks after our magnificent wedding I told her that marriage is just a legal agreement.

Christine and I said many times that Friendship, Quality Time, and Resolving Conflict are key to love and a happy marriage. I now think that Commitment and Respect must be mentioned in the same breath. When you are committed, you never question the relationship itself. You deal with and resolve conflict. You don't let conflict fester in your relationship. Conflict, big and small, is inevitable. Resolving it is a must. That's what commitment is for. When you routinely resolve conflict, life becomes pleasant, time together is what you look forward to. Love flourishes.

Until death do us part

Cousin Georgia visited while Christine was fading. Her perspective helped Christine gain peace of mind with a conflicted memory relating to her father's will.

Later, relating to her husband Christian's passing 30 years ago, Georgia remarked to me that it takes time for a spouse to realize that death is final.

I feel at peace with the finality of Christine's passing. I feel nothing but warm loving feelings when I put together a puzzle such as this Mandala which represents our loving life together, or when I read the CaringBridge blog Karin wrote.

Love in the future.

I find myself full of love, wanting to love again, and surrounded by love. Family, friends and colleagues near and far, some of my neighbors... I look forward to another 15 to 20 years of healthy life and have no doubt they will be full of love.

Dag, Christmas 2024



Notes for our grandchildren

Table cloth

From Klässbol's linen weaving, gift from Christine's parents on her 50th birthday.

Bridal Crown, center

Necklace by Sven-Erik Högberg, beloved Gothenburg silver smith.

Originally held upright by silver wire to a silver ring. Polished bowls provide a sparkling effect.

Here mounted to the ring with a strip of paper and tape.

Necklaces, bracelet, pendants

By Högberg successors Anette Rydén och Marie Magnusson,

Our daughters and granddaughters all have chains and pendants like these.

We commissioned the heart shaped amethyst pendant for our 50th anniversary.

Gold Rose brooch

Made from Christine's mormor Sigrid's rings. Christine's sister Ragnhild had it done.

Yellow / red roses

represent Christine's bridal bouquet.

Dag's baptism porridge bowl

with Dag's engagement ring.

Christine's baptism porridge bowl

and egg cup with Christine's engagement ring, wedding ring, 10th anniversary diamond ring and a Högberg successors gold ring with a blue sapphire.

Lisa's baptism napkin ring.

Karin's baptism napkin ring.

Christine's passports

representing dual cultural heritages.

Drivers licence and auto license plate

representing Christine's independence.

Nefertiti,

the world's most beautiful bust, a souvenir from Christine's stay in Berlin when Karin was there with Stanford at the time the Berlin wall fell. Christine had a big poster of Nefertiti by her workplace all the years we worked together at home.

Zebra, by Anna.

The central character for Christine's delightful 80th birthday. The theme for gifts was "Don't give me a zebra", a humorous song by Povel Ramel, beloved Swedish cabaret entertainer.

Christine's Story Worth memoirs book.

Initiated and produced by Karin.

Picture by Rob Holbrook.

Golden (50th) wedding anniversary 2014.

Family picture in Lisa's back yard.

Organized by Karin and Lisa Christmas 2022.