

The **Circle**
OF LIFE

***A Journey Through Grief
to Understanding***

JOANNE AARONSON



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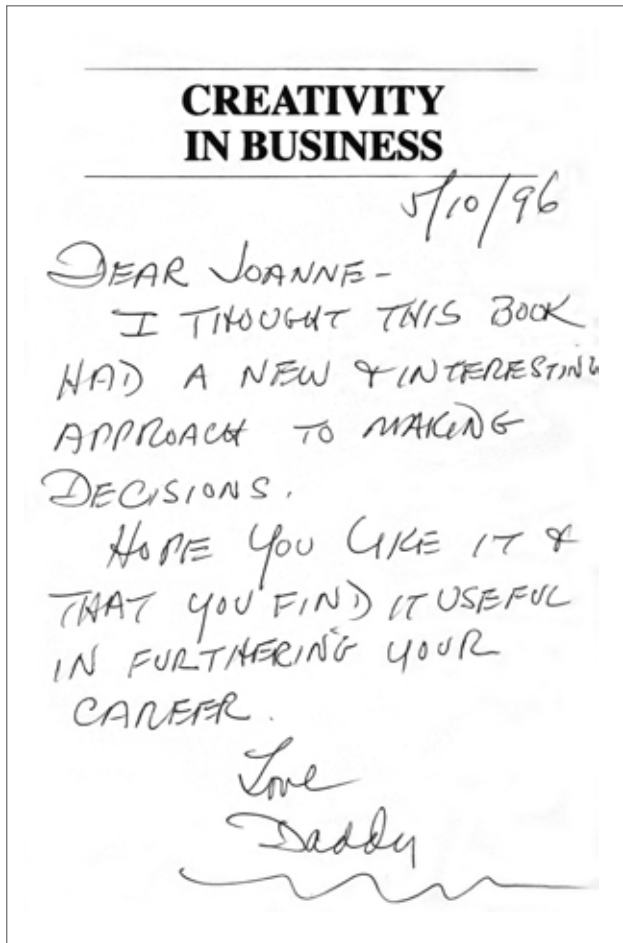
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my father.

Daddy, how did you know to give me the book, 'Creativity in Business' ten years before I decided to develop my workshop on Enlightened Leadership, featuring creativity as the key topic? Did we share an intuitive connection, which I am only now beginning to comprehend? I found the book in my drawer a few months ago and read the inscription you wrote in 1996:



Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Preface	v
PART I The Trigger	1
1 The Accident	3
2 Reactions	14
3 My Parents' Life Together	25
4 Warning Signs	35
5 Daddy's Condition	40
6 Adjustments	48
7 Messages	59
8 The End	74
PART II In the Midst	83
9 Guidance	85
10 Relieving the Pain	95
11 Beginnings and Endings	104
12 Inspiration	108
PART III Journey Through Grief	113
13 A New Reality	115
14 Reaching Out	126
15 Grief Begins to Subside	133
16 The Decision to Live	148
17 My Lessons Continue	157

18	Light at the End of the Tunnel	162
19	Completing Another Circle of Life	170
	About the Author	183
	Historical References	185
	Suggested Reading	189
	Other Sources of Information	191
	Bibliography	193
	Endnotes	195

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Next, I want to thank my mother, Lorraine, who maintained her strength of character, despite being crushed after the loss of the only man she ever really loved. Her journey through grief to understanding mirrored my own journey of personal development.

As I experienced the death of a loved one and moved forward to recount it, others came along to assist me. In particular, my friend, Mary Hockman, provided comments on developing the conceptual organization of my manuscript.

Early on, Paula Amann, author of *Journeys to a Jewish Life: Inspiring Stories from the Spiritual Journeys of American Jews*, provided advice for the first draft. After meeting Paula at a Barnes and Noble book signing, I took the opportunity to ask her questions. She was kind enough to give me some pointers, which I quickly put to use in producing the second draft of my manuscript.

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the phone, Michelle Lusson (also known as DD), CCWH's founder, believed in my destiny to share my spiritual gifts as an old soul; she would later come to dub me *Star Teacher*. I wish to thank all these people for their individual and collective role in assisting me to awaken to my inner light and spread knowledge and wisdom for others to see. Without them, this book would not have been possible.

Preface

Even as a child, I was fascinated by the mystical dimension of life. I joined the Rosicrucian's¹ at age fifteen and performed the ceremonial activities provided in the readings mailed to me during those youthful years. Although I was raised according to the Jewish faith, I held a belief that all religions were based on a common premise: that there is a God or central divine figure, perhaps with another name and that as souls we are created in his or her image to understand our life lessons until we are perfect. Being perfect means we are able to give and receive love unconditionally, and eventually return spiritually to the one God.

Since most of us are not able to achieve this perfection in one lifetime, we are given a number of years to get it right. According to the Kabbalah, the Jewish book of mysticism, the figure is 6,000 years. Yes, the soul is given 6,000 years to learn to love and be loved. Needless to say, having multiple lifetimes to learn our lessons is part of this overarching belief system. Integral to this philosophy in the Chabad tradition is that the soul continues on after death.

According to my Jewish upbringing, on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, God assesses how one has performed during the previous year. Our fate for the coming year is sealed in *The Book of Life*, ten days later on Yom Kippur. We are taught *The Book of Life* contains all information about the person and their deeds, thoughts, and actions, which would be the basis for God's decision.

As concerns personal development, one must delve into their lessons for this lifetime in order to (1) understand them, (2) work with them, and (3) to eventually satisfy them. Only then will the learning process be finished. Much like a graduation from earth school, the lessons must be comprehended,

each in turn, so that the soul can continue on in its development with other lessons until all are complete.

Once perfection is attained, the soul is freed not only from this lifetime, but also from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, typically referred to as *reincarnation*. Regardless of how much of this philosophy you believe, accept, or refute, we are here for a reason and working with our life lessons is part of our destiny! The circle of life is just another way to describe our journey through the maze of life lessons within repeating lifetimes until they are no longer required. (*Note: See Historical References*)

This book is the result of a calling to share the story of my father's demise and the first year of my mother's bereavement so others might find encouragement, comfort, and hope. As my story unfolds, the reader will come to know I did not have a close relationship with my father throughout my life; however, that changed as he approached death and passed it. Yes, we are closer now in many ways. During this whole period of discovery, he conveyed messages meant to console my mother, and support my own inner journey as well, through the circle of life.

Without her knowledge, I captured the essence of my mother's initial shock, grief, eventual acceptance, and movement back into balance. Although I acted as her personal life coach during this difficult time of emotional readjustment, in many ways I learned from her as much as the proverbial teacher learns from his student.

This inspirational memoir captures the related spiritual experiences surrounding my father's death and those that accompanied my mother's journey through her grief to the understanding that there was more to live for, and it is meant to encourage understanding that:

- ♦ Death is not the end. As we leave our bodies behind, it is merely a veil our souls pass through as we prepare for our next life.

- ♦ We all live and die, and then live again, until we have learned our lessons and no longer need to return.
- ♦ Working within this physical plane of existence, there is a God capable of providing daily guidance.
- ♦ Comfort lies in knowing that our loved ones live on in another form and that at times it is possible to communicate with them.

From the standpoint of losing a loved one, knowing there is a circle of life brings reassurance. This knowledge provides a stronghold for the grieving person if he or she believes the soul of their departed one lives on, though in a form no longer visible.

Perhaps by reading my story other people will begin to understand, believe, accept, and in times of difficulty, find comfort and hope in these thoughts.

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