

COMPANIONING PHILOSOPHY

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I continue to advocate in my writings and teachings that caregivers to the bereaved (i.e. “to be torn apart” or “to have special needs”) should “companion” not “treat” people in grief. I appreciate the support and enthusiasm many of you have given me as I teach this philosophy throughout North America. For those of you not familiar with “companioning,” I invite you to consider the philosophy that undergirds my work with bereaved people as well as my writings. I believe in “companioning” the bereaved instead of “treating” them.

I have taken liberties with the noun “companion” and made it into the verb “companioning” because it so well captures the type of counseling relationship I support. Actually, the word companion, when broken down into its original Latin roots, means *com* for “with” and *pan* for “bread.” Someone you would share a meal with – a friend, an equal.

*Companioning is about honoring the spirit,
It is not about focusing on the intellect.*

*Companioning is about curiosity;
It is not about expertise.*

*Companioning is about learning from others;
It is not about teaching them.*

*Companioning is about walking alongside;
It is not about leading or being led.*

*Companioning is about being still;
It is not about frantic movement forward.*

*Companioning is about discovering the gifts of sacred silence;
It is not about filling every painful moment with talk.*

*Companioning is about listening with the heart;
It is not about analyzing with the head.*

*Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others;
It is not about judging or directing those struggles.*

*Companioning is about being present to another person’s pain;
It is not about taking away or relieving the pain.*

*Companioning is about respecting disorder or confusion;
It is not about imposing order and logic.*

*Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being;
It is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.*