

# ***LifeWays North America***

## ***NEWSLETTER***

### ***Summer 2021***

## ***Theme: Grieving and Rebuilding***

### ***Greetings from Cynthia!***



Dear Friend,

In preparing my welcome letter, I went back to our Winter newsletter to review the theme which was Hope. Then, placed it next to our current theme which is Grieving and Rebuilding. I realized how deeply these two themes are connected. Even on a personal level, I realized how this was true in my own biography in recent years when my husband almost died, then did not die, then was left with certain infirmities that have required new ways of being in his body and being present in this life. Hope, Grieving and Rebuilding show up in all of our biographies if we

live long enough!

In reading our current articles, I found myself deeply moved and inspired by each author's story. So much gratitude to each of you! Salma, for opening your home and sharing your children and your inspiring roots and routes with us – so beautiful to read how you met the challenges of this year; Veronica, for inviting Miss Mouse to come back to our newsletter and show us the profound importance of human touch and connection for the children and for the adults; Kelly, for offering a story of tenacity and surety in holding to what you knew to be true for your community rather than practices that could have dramatically impacted the quality and meaning in your program; Tracey (and Rob) for sharing the heart-rending story of deciding to close The Garden School – every paragraph, interspersed with the beauty wisdom of poets (such as the quote I shared above), moistened my eyes and tendered my heart - we hold you close and are here to support you in whatever next steps arise; and dear Yael, what an amazing journey you and your Kulanu families have taken - we are thrilled that you continue to stand as one of our Representative sites and also that you will be contributing to our blog this year, sharing how you

and the children celebrate various festivals.

When I swing back round to hope in relationship to grieving and rebuilding, something in Salma's article really resonated with my experience with my grandchildren. She writes, "... I found a strange desire to create play; to immerse myself in make-believe. I wondered if this was something, not unlike the virus, that was highly contagious." Early in the shutdown, my two local Littles (4 and 6 at the time) created a whole community and ever-evolving story called Bunnyland comprised of their collection of stuffed animals. To this day (15 months later), this play community has definitely impacted all of us adults (parents and grandparents) as we hear the latest adventures. April 2022 will be the two-year anniversary of Bunnyland, and I have been called upon to crochet matching tabards for each of the characters for their celebration! Their father saw this make-believe community as a way his children channeled their grief (at missing schoolmates) into something fulfilling and joyful (with a fair measure of drama!).

We are featuring two books below. After we chose our newsletter theme, I saw that our friend Shea Darian's new book is about grief. Many of you have read Shea's other books, and I can only imagine that this one will resonate with the needs of our time. Thank you also, to Pamela for writing a review of Susan Perrow's new book of stories on grief and loss.

As always, we welcome all of you to join us in our various [online courses](#) and are excited that we are also starting to be together in-person again with our student communities. Please continue to check out our website for new start-up trainings and other courses. And let us know what other topics you would like for us to explore with you.

Thank you, Michaeleen and all of our contributors, for another wonderful newsletter!

With warm affection,

***Cynthia***

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## ***Contributions from the LifeWays Community***

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***Strengthening Roots and Finding Routes during  
Quarantine***

by, Salma Al-saquaf



We sat in a circle out in the wild, surrounded by the traces of nature. Pine pins sprinkled on the ground, wet leaves in all the monotone colours traced with the dampness of late winter, a scenic cornucopia throwing forth the earth's abundance, as it does in every season. Reciting the alphabet in their sing-song voice, the children giggled with excitement as we began our finger-play. With a daily rhythm of yoga, painting,

storytelling, and a lot of open play, the children looked forward to the adventures of a new day.

Later on, in the afternoon, mud & sand in small hands, a sprinkling of flowers & leaves, mixed with water, gave the best ingredients for fun! Mud kitchen fun! Muffins, pizzas, cakes, and cups of coffee filled the menu of course. I can't deny or confirm that mud or sand was not eaten that day.

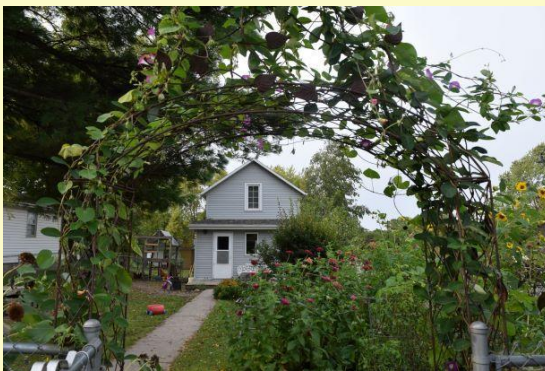
As they prepared to leave for the day, I knew each child took some part of their day with them. For some it was the tenderness of being surrounded by friends. For others, it was playing with their favorite blocks, or trains, or singing French songs. And for a few, the yummy snack consumed just after our nature walk was just right.

One of the most nurturing things we can offer to the children in our lives is rhythm. I lived and breathed this very principle as I spent my days with young children in my playschool. But just like that our neat, somewhat predictable days spent learning with friends was a thing of the past. What came next has been a story that is still being written...[READ MORE](#)

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## *Little House Reflections ~ Summer 2021*

by, Veronica Oliva-Clour



My reality of the life and rhythm I had created in my small Waldorf early childhood business was changing due to the pandemic journey that we were all experiencing last year. My attendance was dwindling until I eventually closed my doors for three months. Without my daily rhythm, the good and purposeful work, a source of income with stability, and the little ones who brought a sense of wonder and joy each morning, I was left

questioning where to begin and even how to find the will and courage to dream again. Life was shifting for everyone, some adapted with cheerfulness at having more time available for their own quests and explorations, while others withdrew and observed this unusual worldwide event. There is a richness of stories of how people adapted, shifted, accepted, transformed, denied, or hid under this quilt of life at these times. Each in our own particular and unique ways, we made choices of how to live.

I wondered how I could continue to find meaning and connections. How could I find hope in a garden without children? Somewhere along the way, I realized that I had a choice. I could go into despair or go more deeply. It would be a struggle, but I decided not to give up on my business, but to persevere. It was with the help of an encounter with a friend that I accepted the journey that I was on and met the challenge. That friend was Miss Mouse, and she lives at Little House. This was how I found hope in a time of anguish.

## ***Nothing Could Have Prepared Us For What We Witnessed in 2020***

by, Kelly Hodgkin



Dearest LifeWays Community,

Eleven years ago, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, my youngest daughter, Taylor Hodgkin, and I opened our Northern California LifeWays program, BeeLoved Farm, with just 1 student. Today, we have over 60 children enrolled for Fall, 2021, with many waiting. Although our program is essentially the same as it was 11 years ago, we have seen a lot of changes in the families throughout the past decade and those changes were magnified at the onset of last year's pandemic. "Nothing could have prepared us for what we witnessed in 2020."

Like everyone else, our school closed on that fateful Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> in March of 2020. I could not have predicted the fall-out that occurred and, admittedly, I was absolutely behind the curve with regard to the seriousness of the matter. As things began to unfold, I realized how desperate the families were for some sort of lifeline. The families wanted support. We refunded ALL tuitions, I delivered or mailed crafts to every home, sent post cards to each child, posted YouTube videos on how to bake bread and cook our Kindergarten snacks, performed puppet shows via YouTube, sent music files of seasonal circles, emailed stories, hosted parent-support Zoom calls, and several other "distant" deeds to support families. But this was not the kind of support these families needed. What I came to realize was that the best support we could provide the families in our community was to reopen our Center. So, in May of 2020, in the eye of the storm, we reopened our program with a caveat that it would be...[READ MORE](#)

## ***The Garden School, Lifeways in Marin, year of the Pandemic ~ 2021***

by, Tracey Harrington



We made it through a pandemic lockdown in March of 2020 and re-opened in the fall of 2020 with a group of 8 Lifeways families in our tenth year in San Rafael. With very strict Covid protocols, screening, hygiene, washable everything, and with the help of WECAN hub, a healthy community agreement was formed with our families. We opened our Garden School in September with the plan to be outdoors as much as possible. The parent handbook said, "Be prepared for

closures due to Covid, wildfires, air quality alerts, or (electric utility) black outs".

Despite all of this, we had an exceptionally joyful year with the children! Hand

washing with peppermint castile soap and our good morning verse was a delight. We sang to each child this song each morning before their snack and everything became simple and more full as the year went on.

***"Good morning dear children and sweet be your day  
may angels surround you, their silent watch keep,  
good day, good day, good morning, good day."***

This was to remind us of our invisible connections as we entrusted our lives into safe keeping each day. After the long winter we began to feel that we had passed through uncharted territory, a kind of initiation, and we were still here, with joy in our hearts, to be with these children. They had experienced a year of being in a healthy community, carried by the Lifeways rhythms, our love and their play. Most of them were not concerned with the word corona. They lived in the present where childhood is alive and well, despite...[READ MORE](#)

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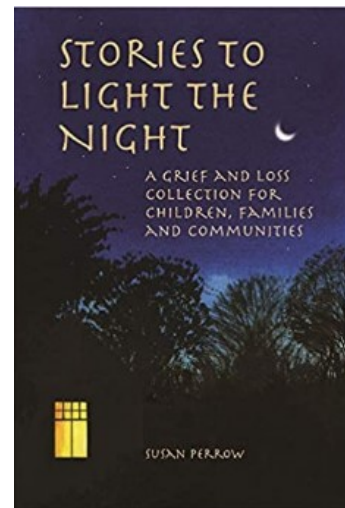
## **Stories to Light the Night (Perrow), A Book Review**

by Pamela Perkins

*"In the circle of life, we dance and flow; in the circle  
of life, we come and go."*

- from Donna and Scruff p. 132

Grief, loss and change are inevitable life experiences that take many forms, some more obvious than others. The effects can be short term or devastating, and linger for weeks, or even last for a lifetime. The acute, intense initial feelings that well up in the wake of death, tragedy and upheaval, can be confusing and complicated to process, especially when we must also face the challenge of helping and consoling the children in our lives. We may feel uncertain about what to say or do, as we struggle to cope with our own stresses and responses as well. When a profound change occurs, we do not "just move on", we need to find healthy ways to honor and transform our experiences, so that we can move forward in our lives.



Much has been written about coping with loss from a clinical, professional perspective. Yet, deep within our souls and hearts, we long for...[READ MORE](#)

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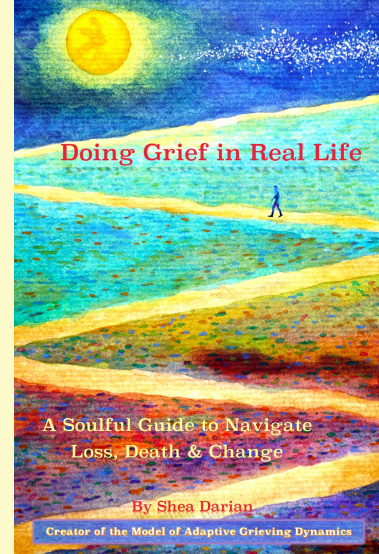
## ***Doing Grief in Real Life: A Soulful Guide to Navigate Passages of Loss, Death & Change*** by Shea Darian

You see it everywhere these days: Grief woven into the fabric of our lives along with death, divorce, illness, political struggles, social ills, family dysfunction, and all kinds of loss-related changes.

Doing Grief in Real Life is a personable, story-rich, family-friendly guide; it offers an enlightening, engaging, and uplifting perspective on grief that introduces [Shea Darian's Model of Adaptive Grieving Dynamics](#) (Illness, Crisis & Loss, 2014) – a new way to think about and engage grief so that grieving and healing become one and the same.

During each stage of development, we humans acquire phenomenal capacities to heal grief more fully as we mature. Thus, grievers of all ages from the newly born to the eldest of the elders can make valuable contributions to a family's healing journey.

*Doing Grief in Real Life* guides you to learn the dance between self-healing and healing alongside loved ones of all ages, so healing becomes more (oh, so much more) than the victory of one. This is how healing expands exponentially. This is how healing changes the world – one person, one relationship, one family at a time.



Read *Doing Grief in Real Life* and become your own best grief expert.

Coming this fall. Reserve your copy here: [Doing Grief in Real Life](#).



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## *Featured LifeWays Representative*

*Rebuilding  
KULANU Playgarden  
in Sebastapol, CA*



**KULANU** (Hebrew meaning "All of Us") brings together nature-based Jewish tradition, festival observance, and Zen mindfulness practice, into an outdoor Waldorf Lifeways environment in Sebastopol, California. When I started KULANU in the summer of 2013, my vision was to help nourish a year-round experience of growing in community together--for young children and their families. (See [Lifeways Summer Newsletter 2016 - Featured Lifeways Representative Program](#).) While KULANU Playgarden blends the spaciousness and loving attention of a daycare program with the engaged, creative play of an outdoor Waldorf preschool, it is really more like hanging out at grandma's country home and, also, being part of a sangha on a mindfulness retreat each day.

Last March, with the coming of the pandemic I decided to close down KULANU. I thought it would be for a few weeks or so, and I welcomed the much-needed break from a program that had grown beyond what felt sustainable for me. At that point, we had 14 families and four assistants, all with different schedules! We were open year-round, four full days/week, with eight children/day--families could choose to have their children come two, three or four days each week, paying various rates. I also made it possible for some young children who were new to KULANU to just come half days for the first months, and for

a couple of family friends to just bring their children one day/week. It was like playing Sudoku juggling everyone's schedules and slots available!

Ages ranged from infants to kindergarteners and, to accommodate everyone's needs, I had one assistant in the morning (who was here 8am-1pm to help with setting up for the day and stayed through helping the children settle in for nap time), and another who was here 11am-5pm (who helped prepare lunch and stayed to help clean up at the end of the day after the children were picked up). And these shifts alternated on different days between three different people. In addition, another assistant came from 1-3pm to engage the older children who weren't napping in some outdoor adventure or nature-based crafting. As much as I loved all of the children and their families, and all of the assistants I was blessed to work with, the complexity of coordinating everyone's schedules, needs and personalities had become quite an endeavor!

As the weeks of sheltering in place turned into months, I wondered if I would ever re-open at all. At age 65, I reflected on what the path forward could be for me in terms of my work and sharing my gifts in the world at this stage of life. After considerable reflection, meditation, and several extended group conversations via Zoom with the KULANU parents who were interested in having their children continue on together in some revised form, I very tentatively...[READ MORE](#)

Want to know more? Follow [KULANU PLAYGARDEN](#) on Facebook!

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***Yael Raff Peskin*** completed her Waldorf Foundation training through Rudolf Steiner College in 1993, and did her Lifeways Training in Hawai'i in 2012-2013. In 1993, Yael was also ordained into Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing where she was given the Dharma name Tenderness of the Heart. In 2017, Yael was the San Francisco Bay Area's recipient of the [Grinspoon Award for Excellence in Jewish Education](#). She is the mother of three adult children and the grandmother to one of the most delightful people she has ever met!

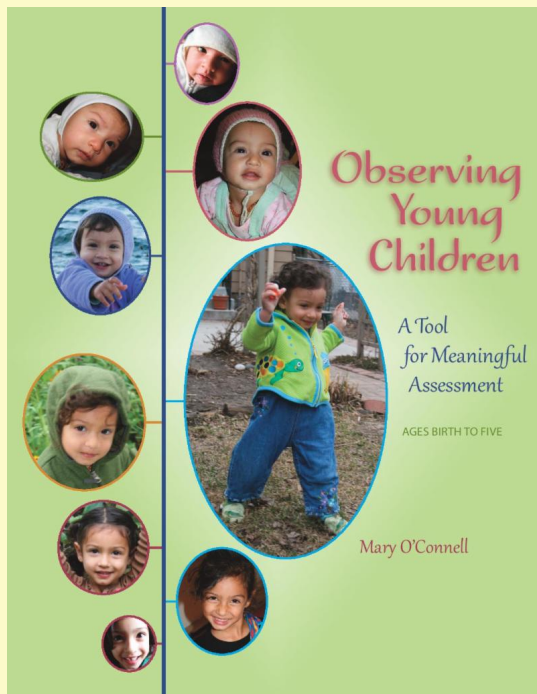
KULANU Playgarden

1100 West Sexton Road, Sebastopol, California 95472

707.829.8341,

## News from the LifeWays Community

### State of Minnesota joins Wisconsin and APPROVES *Observing Young Children for Accreditation!*



LifeWays offers a big THANK YOU to Veronica Oliva-Clour who helped get **Observing Young Children** by Mary O'Connell approved by the state of Minnesota.

Veronica wrote to us to share the good news, and said, *'I am so very pleased and excited that Waldorf methods can be part our MN state Parent Aware accreditation system. Having the choices we need, as educators, to follow our philosophy and curricula based on genuine child directed play and open ended activities filled with heart, patience and wisdom is so necessary in this ever increasing hardened world for little ones.'*

Do you work in an early childhood program in Minnesota? Using *Observing Young Children* as a tool for observation and assessment meets the criteria for Parent Aware Accreditation!

Do you work in an early childhood program in Wisconsin? *Observing Young Children* has been approved by YoungStar accreditation for use at LifeWays Milwaukee, and you can petition for your program to use it as well!

Do you work in an early childhood program elsewhere in the U.S.? **Submit *Observing Young Children* to your state's rating system for approval!** Be sure to let them know it has already been approved in two states. Let us know how we can support you in getting it approved in your state.

Do you want to know more about how to use this tool effectively? Watch for "**Learning to Observe Children**" online course -- returning soon!

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## *Welcome: NEW LifeWays Representative Programs*

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Would you like to see your program in this WELCOME section of our next newsletter? Learn more [HERE](#)



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more!

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Questions? Ideas? Comments?

Share them with your editor:

Michaeleen Hinc  
[MichaeleenH@LifeWaysNorthAmerica.org](mailto:MichaeleenH@LifeWaysNorthAmerica.org)

LifeWays graduate, Class of 2000



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