

# Supporting Donors Who've Lost a Loved One

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# Why?

- Donors have choices
- New funds, endowed funds
- Soft skills are important
- Increased trust

HOW DOES PHILANTHROPY PROVIDE MEANING?

# Finding meaning

- “A central feature of grieving is the attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss.”
  - Neimeyer “Meaning in Bereavement”
- Three themes
  - Create something that looks like loved one
  - Mitigate loss for others
  - Co-destiny

# Tina's experience

- *“Within an hour of Spenser dying, my husband, Chris, and I decided to establish the Spenser Flowers Memorial Scholarship Fund. I knew that we would receive life insurance proceeds, and believed that Spenser would like the idea of kids from our church receiving a scholarship to help with higher education costs. Spenser was a very active participant in our church's youth programs, and he told me just a few weeks before he died that he was his best when with that group of friends. We were careful to design the parameters for the annual scholarship to “look” like Spenser – he was very smart, but not the top of the class. He didn't qualify for financial assistance, and he very well may have ended up attending a trade school, in lieu of a traditional academic university.”*
- *“Making such a quick decision about this scholarship program provided some light/hope during a very dark time in our lives. It was good for us to be able to communicate immediately that we were establishing a scholarship in Spenser's memory. This may have served as a way for us to ensure in those very early days that Spenser would not be forgotten.”*

# Tina's experience

- ***“The idea of Spenser’s Voice came a few weeks later...many friends and family members donated money to us. So we wanted to find a way to make that money work – to help families experiencing the agonies of trying to help a loved one struggling with addiction and to support agencies assisting young people struggling with addiction. Spenser wanted to go to a treatment program that focused on people his own age and had differentiated policies and programming for young people. In selecting agencies to receive grants, we give priority to groups offering programs in which I think Spenser may have participated. Like Hope 4 or Onala Club. We’ve been working with Hope 4 almost since its inception, and it’s been gratifying to see the organization and their programs/number of participants grow. Hope 4 is making a difference in its community, and in turn, we believe our efforts to honor and remember Spenser truly are helping others address this horrific disease.”***

# TRANSITIONS

# Grief

- “Break in attachment” Amy Florian
- “Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end or change of a familiar pattern of behavior” Grief Recovery Method
- “Keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret. A cause or occasion or keen distress or sorrow.” Dictionary.com
- Positive and negative transitions



WHAT KINDS OF TRANSITIONS HAVE YOU  
EXPERIENCED THAT HAVE RESULTED IN GRIEF?

WHAT PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS HAVE  
YOU OBSERVED?

# How does grief manifest?

- Emotional
- Physical

# Science behind grief

- Dispel mystery and restore a sense of control
- Dissociation – protective mechanism
  - Triggered when brain reaches maximum capacity to process input
- Stress response mechanism
  - Activates hypothalamus (fight-or-flight response)
  - Adrenaline and cortisol released to sound the alarm
  - Brain centers are hyperfunctional and sensitized to the next threat
- Sleep
  - Excessive activation of sleep-related brain centers, including the amygdala
  - Vicious cycle – activation of brain centers of arousal cause insomnia and insomnia prologs stress-related arousal

# How grief affects your brain



# HOW TO SUPPORT DONORS

# Things to Say

- “I can’t imagine what this is like for you. Would you like to tell me what happened or what you’re experiencing right now?”
- Say the name
- Say “died”, “death”, “died by suicide”, “cancer”, etc.
- “How are you today?”

# Things to do

- More touch points
- Condolence and Anniversary cards
- Acknowledge mistakes
- Ritual



# Checking In

- It's not about you
- “What do you wish I knew about your needs right now?”
- When in doubt, ask

**LISTENING**

# How to Listen

- Scientific American – Most People Stink at Listening!
  - 50% of adults are not able to sit through a ten-minute oral presentation and later, to describe the content. 48 hours later, fully 75% of listeners can't recall the subject matter.
  - The human brain has the capacity to digest as much as 400 words per minute of information. Even if a fast speaker talks at around 125 words per minute,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your brain could be doing something else.
  - Little children are better listeners than adults. Their brains are less developed, so there are much more likely to be completely engrossed in a topic. Adults, with extra brain power, are more easily distracted.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/plateau-effect-digital-gadget-distraction-attention/>

# Short Silences Listening Lab

“Listening...involves a certain surrender, a willingness to sit with what one does not already know...Listening requires us to stretch a little beyond what we know, expect or want.”

-Diana Senechal

Listening Exercise

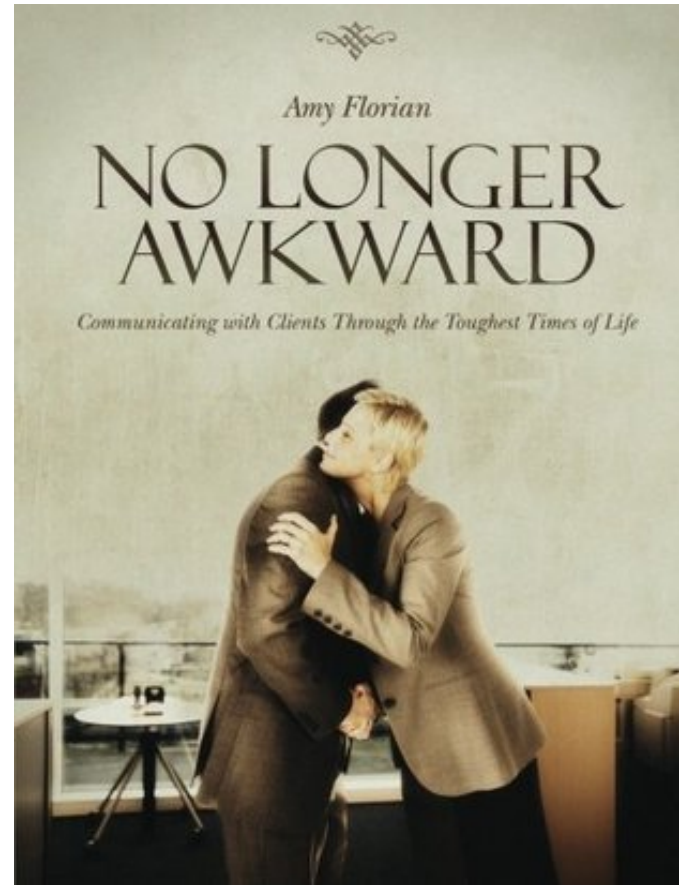
Tell me something about yourself that might surprise me.

Story Corps Lesson: The Power of Active Listening

# Resources

Amy Florian

*No Longer Awkward*



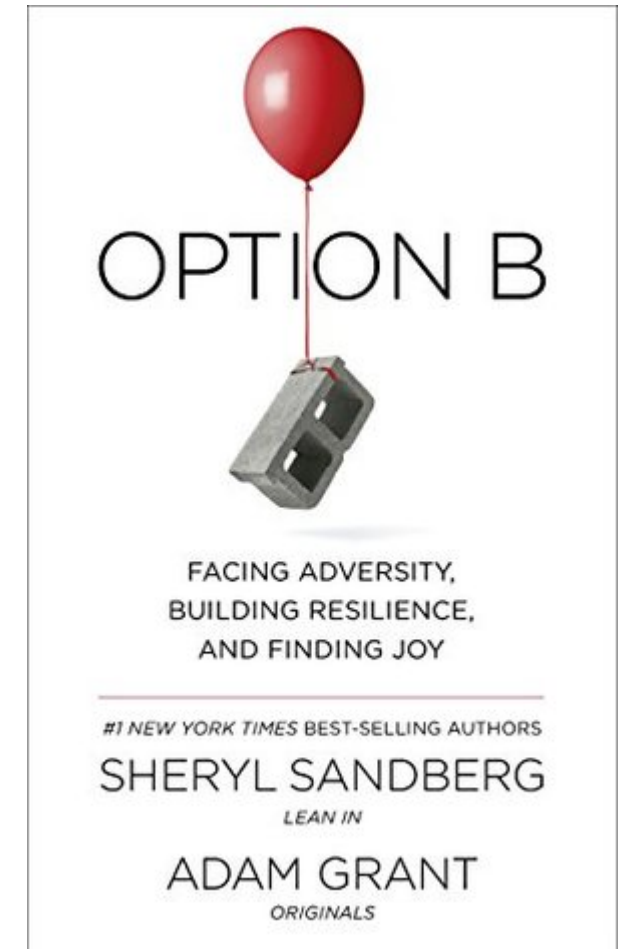
Megan Devine

*It's OK That You're Not OK*



Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant

*Option B*



# Closing

- What will you do differently?
- What was new for you?
- Q&A

# THE POWER TO START TODAY

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