

TENETS OF COMPANIONING THE BEREAVED

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.



Grief is not an illness; it is the natural and necessary sequel to love. Unlike the medical model of grief care, the companioning model does not seek to treat or cure but rather bear witness, learn, and accompany. Grievers are the experts of their own experience. Companions offer a safe space, an open heart, affirmation, and hope.

Companioning is about
being present to another person's pain;
it is not about taking away the pain.

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.

Companioning is about
honoring the spirit; it is not
about focusing on the intellect.

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 these struggles.

Companioning is about
walking alongside;
it is not about leading.

Companioning is about
discovering the gifts of sacred
silence; it is not about filling up
every moment with words.

Companioning is about
being still; it is not about
frantic movement forward.

Companioning is about
respecting disorder and confusion;
it is not about imposing
order and logic.

Companioning is about
learning from others;
it is not about teaching them.

Companioning is about
compassionate curiosity;
it is not about expertise.



About the Author

Dr. Alan Wolfelt is an author and educator on the topic of healing in grief. He is a member of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) Board of Advisors and he serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition. He is also on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt has written many compassionate, best-selling books designed to help people mourn well so they can continue to love and live well, including *Healing Your Grieving Heart After A Military Death*, co-authored with TAPS. Visit taps.org and centerforloss.com to learn more about the natural and necessary process of grief and mourning.