

The article below was written following the tragic death of Michael Doherty, a high school senior in our community. His best friend, Evan Wiendczak, who was driving the car, lived and was charged with homicide for reckless driving. The accident occurred early on a Sunday evening, five minutes from where the boys lived.

Refining Our Life Purpose Through A Tragedy or Crisis

Transitions: The Gifts of Change

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By Gail Kauranen Jones



*In deepest sympathy for the families, friends and acquaintances of
Michael Doherty and Evan Wiendczak*

“The people who have described their healing process to me have many beliefs and attitudes in common. First and perhaps most elemental among them is the realization that it was essential to give up the need to know why things happened as they did...Giving up the need to know why something happened to you will definitely count among the most rigorous personal challenges of your life.”

--Caroline Myss, author of *Defy Gravity, Healing Beyond the Bounds of Reason.*

Two families' lives have been altered forever after the tragic death of Michael Doherty, shaking our community and schools to the core as it has been many times before when a young, promising life has been cut short.

Like many others who heard the tragic news Sunday evening, I stopped to take a pulse on my own life, counting my many blessings. But this time, gratitude wasn't enough to lift my heavy heart. As a parent also of a high school senior, I spent hours attempting to walk in the shoes of the Doherty and Wiendczak families, wondering how they would cope and move forward.

As a coach who has guided many through transitions of grief, I kept asking silently what I could possibly say that would honor the lives of these families differently than the words that will be said at the funeral.

This is what came to me, to share with our Tri-Town communities:

We all have a life purpose, a reason for being here. Purpose isn't always about what we do. Often it's a way of being, sharing a kindness or expressing joy.

Some are born knowing their gifts and talents while others spend years trying to discover their calling. Many people stumble upon their unique mission in the most accidental of ways.

In younger years, purpose may have involved finding a career that supports a family, while those facing retirement may be longing to downsize or move to a beachside home, surrounded by nature and reflection.

Today, though, I don't think for any of us in the Tri-Town communities our purpose is about how we make a living or where we're going to live.

Our calling in this moment is larger than that.

Our purpose is to love and send love to the Doherty and Wiendcazk families. You can take your love one step further into action, this very minute, and for a few minutes every day thereafter, through the power of prayer. Whether you're religious or not makes no difference. Silently, sending a blessing in your own words to these families is enough to make a difference. Stop now, at this sentence, and pray for all who have been touched by this tragedy. Or tonight, light a candle, and ask for these families to be guided back to peace.

Citing numerous examples in witnessing people heal through terminal illnesses or some other life crisis, Caroline Myss, the best-selling author in the above quoted book, says: "I realize now that the collective sharing of prayer and opening to the experience of channeling grace had created a unified field of grace, generating a mystical atmosphere ripe for the experience of healing. A field of grace emerges when people come together in prayer or for acts of good intention, such as helping others after disaster."

Not only can we as a community empower these families to heal, we can each choose to refine our life purpose to send love and prayer to others daily. We don't need another tragedy to choose love as a way of being.

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