

# Francis Weller on Grief: A Companion for the Soul <sup>1</sup>

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## A Reflection and Journaling Guide Inspired by *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*

This guide draws from Francis Weller's writings and teachings about grief and loss, especially his book *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*. It is designed for personal reflection, council circles, or small-group use — to help us honor grief as sacred work, open the heart, and deepen compassion for self and the world.

### 1. The Wild Nature of Grief

"Grief is not a feeling that visits us occasionally. It is a full-bodied visitation from the wilds of our psyche. It comes not to punish us, but to initiate us into the fullness of our humanity."

Reflection:

Grief is not something to fix but to enter. What has grief taught you about love, humility, or what matters most?

### 2. The Five Gates of Grief

Francis Weller describes five 'gates' through which grief enters our lives:

1. Everything we love, we will lose.
2. The places that never received love.
3. The sorrows of the world.
4. What we expected but did not receive.
5. Ancestral grief.

Reflection:

Which of these gates have opened for you in your life? What losses or unlived parts of you are calling for attention?

### 3. The Sacred Work of Grief

"Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning. Their kinship reminds us that there is no love that does not contain loss and no loss that is not a reminder of the love we carry."

Reflection:

How has grief deepened your compassion? In what ways has it revealed the depth of your love?

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, this Grief Reflection Guide was created using ChatGPT, October 2025.

#### **4. The Need for Community and Ritual**

“Grief has always been communal. Our tears belong to everyone. We were never meant to carry sorrow alone.”

Reflection:

Who are the people or spaces where you can bring your grief? How might you help others feel less alone in theirs?

#### **5. Grief as Deep Activism**

“To witness the world with open eyes is to grieve for what has been lost. The world is dying of sorrow denied.”

Reflection:

What parts of the world’s pain touch you most deeply? How might your grief become a source of service or healing?

#### **6. Grief and Gratitude**

“The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other, and to be stretched large by them.”

Reflection:

Where do you feel both grief and gratitude in your life today? How might these two emotions work together to soften your heart?

#### **7. Initiation Through Grief**

“Every loss is an initiation into a new way of being. When we surrender to the descent, we meet the holy ground of transformation.”

Reflection:

What loss or challenge has changed you in a lasting way? How might you honor that as an initiation into deeper wisdom?

#### **A Blessing for the Journey**

May your tears be honored as sacred waters.

May your heart stay soft and open.

May grief teach you what love truly means.

May you find companions who can hold your sorrow.

And may every loss lead you closer to the soul of the world.

“Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible.” — Francis Weller