



Grief *in* Progress

EPISODE 6: Gratitude Tour: From Sea to Shining Sea

Listeners note: Some episodes of this podcast include descriptions of violence, sudden death, and other traumatic experiences. We do not recommend this podcast for young listeners.

Juliann Ashcraft: Doing something for somebody in a tangible way when they're grieving is so valuable, because I could not tell you who said, "Hey, I'm sorry for your loss"—but I can always look back and I can see who wrote it to me and that's important. And so, I think if there's a takeaway for people, it's to make it tangible. I just had an onslaught at the beginning, and that was when I started realizing this was bigger than me.

Alison Law: Fire hero family member Juliann Ashcraft says concrete expressions of sympathy that she received from close friends and total strangers played a pivotal role in helping her find meaning in the loss of her husband, Andrew. Depending on where you are in your journey, grief experts say it may help to practice gratitude, to seek evidence that people are there for you, and that life has more to offer than the raw pain you experience immediately after a loved one's death. In the season finale of the *Grief in Progress* podcast, we'll tell you how an outpouring of human kindness paved the way for one family to heal and creatively process their grief. Juliann Ashcraft first met the man who would become her husband when they were both kids.

Juliann Ashcraft: I was born and raised in Prescott, Arizona. Andrew was actually born in California and then he moved with his family to Arizona before grade school. So he and I went to different elementary schools in the same town.

Alison Law: Their paths crossed occasionally—like when Andrew skateboarded with Juliann's stepbrother in middle school, or when he got extra credit for videotaping Juliann's volleyball games.

Juliann Ashcraft: So he and I didn't date when we were kids, we just knew of each other. And Andrew, what he would probably not like me to tell you, he was very small. He was a lot shorter than I was. And so I remember thinking he was adorable, but more like pinch-your-cheeks adorable. I tried to set him up with my friends that were tiny, but we didn't date in high school. In fact, we graduated together in 2003 and it just so happened that at the time we were living only blocks from one another.

And that was unbeknownst to me. I was in my childhood home, so he knew where I was at. So anyway, he said, "why don't we meet halfway?" And so we met, walked halfway—and I think we spent the next two months straight

together. I mean, sleeping under the stars, talking about all sorts of life dreams, just really growing in this way that I think almost frightened the both of us because we were so young and starry-eyed and with life in front of us. And I think that could have very well been a “forever after” right there. So we both kind of parted quickly.

Alison Law: Juliann left for an internship in Florida and Andrew went on the road with a touring band. The two ran into each other when they were home for the holidays in 2005.

Juliann Ashcraft: And I just remember this feeling of electricity, of going right back to where we left off. And it was just this undeniable force that had brought us together. We circled back to it and so that's why our courting went really quickly. I mean, we again were kind of inseparable. This was December. He proposed to me in March of 2006, and we were married July 22nd of 2006. So, kind of a crash course in courting. But I think part of that is that we knew everything about each other from when we were little. So, you didn't have to familiarize yourself with their upbringing or their town, all of that stuff we already knew.

Alison Law: The couple enjoyed spending time outdoors, hiking and kayaking together. They married in a small ceremony in Juliann's dad's backyard.

Juliann Ashcraft: Shortly after he and I got married, he was rappelling off a dam in Prescott with my brother and some friends and was swinging on a rope through waterfalls across the dam, and by the time it got to be his turn, the rope was really slippery. And so, he ended up falling 30 feet onto boulders and he shattered his foot and ankle resulting in a major surgery with plates and screws.

Alison Law: The accident served as a wakeup call. As Andrew healed, he contemplated a career change. He wanted a job that would pair his love of the outdoors with a boyhood dream of becoming a firefighter.

Juliann Ashcraft: He always had a passion for fire—always. And so, to kind of marry those two things, being a Hot Shot wildland firefighter is all of that. You go to a fire for an isolated period of time, weeks on end out in nature, and it kind of has both of those components. So, in his mind, he wanted to be a part of the local Hot Shot crew, the Granite Mountain Hot Shots, but it was an elite group. It was a high order to be able to be a part of it and you have to be in peak physical condition. And of course, Andrew was not only not in peak physical condition, he was severely wounded.

Alison Law: Hot Shots are highly trained and skilled wildland firefighters, often dispatched by federal agencies such as the US Forest Service or National Park Service. They confront the worst, most dangerous fronts of active wildfires. The Granite Mountain Hot Shots were part of the Prescott Fire Department. Andrew made an odds-defying recovery, training for more than two years to become a Hot Shot.

Juliann Ashcraft: Eventually in 2010, they hired him on as a Hot Shot, as a crew member—and he did really well. I mean, that first year he was awarded Rookie of the Year because he just was so ready and so passionate. What is it like to be married to a firefighter? I will say there's really beautiful parts to it and then there's really big struggles. I really think it's important to highlight the fact that it is hard. It's hard to be pregnant and nursing and raising toddlers when your husband's absent. I think it's hard for the person who's gone, the worker. I think it's hard for them to not be a part of it as well. I think he felt like he missed out.

I think we had a lot of times that our marriage suffered because of just lack of communication that wasn't available. I mean, these men, when they go on these fires—different than a structural firefighter—they don't always have even cell service. So, there could be times they're gone for 17 days fighting a fire and you can't communicate with them at all, all the while having children. And that can really cause a strain.

Alison Law: Juliann and Andrew had four children together. They also found themselves embedded in their second wildland firefighter family.

Juliann Ashcraft: There is such a beautiful camaraderie and family component to it. These men were gone, but when they were home, they were present. And every weekend throughout the fire season that they were home, they would have crew barbecues, where all the families were involved. And we have big barbecues, and these men would play with all the kids. It was as if we are one large family, which was really quite extraordinary.

The children and I would take cookies to the fire station on a weekly basis if they were there. And it was funny to watch these guys—and every time we'd pull up, they knew we had cookies. They would just start piling in the doors of our car, [ravaging] for the cookies. I remember I have a vision of Travis Turbyfill, just shoving cookies in his pockets/pants so that he could eat them later. It was like, "If I don't get them now, someone else will get them." They kind of revert to childlike behavior—but the kids and I loved to do that because really your family grows exponentially when you're part of a fire service.

And that's really...that's a real truth that I think people say, "the brotherhood"—but it actually is true. They lived by this motto *esse quam videri*, which means to be rather than to *seem* to be because it was important. And Andrew would talk about that. He said, "Look, if I'm a part of this crew, we're told we're not just supposed to be good on the fire, but we're supposed to be good people. So I'm supposed to open doors for people, pushing shopping carts for people, help provide care to someone in need." That was a big deal to them.

And I feel like there really was not a good appreciation or sense of who they were in our town until 2013, prior to the Yarnell Hill Fire. They fought a fire called the Doce Fire there in Arizona. And it was actually threatening our hometown. The fire was creeping in right to our neighborhoods. And so, people

in our town could see—quite literally—the flames. And I remember parking up on hillsides with my kids and just watching and showing them, “This is your dad, he’s working and we can see,” because sometimes they were so far away. And we would just watch them work this fire and people would see them literally save their homes—just right before their home, they would stop the fire from getting to them.

And I think slowly people started thinking, oh my gosh, these are the heroes out there doing this work we didn't even know we needed—because generally, they put the fire out before you know it exists. So, they've saved you and they've saved homes, but you never know it. And they would have it no other way. They don't want the accolades, the praise. They love just being outside and they are happy to fly under the radar. But that particular fire, I started to see it. And it was a different circumstance for these guys. They would come back to their buggies and their work trucks after fighting the fire all day and there would be flowers and cookies and cards, and all the fences around town started to have signs that said, “Thank you, Granite Mountain Hot Shots; thank you for saving our homes.”

They'd never received that kind of praise before, that kind of appreciation. And so I love that they had that moment of just pure love for them and appreciation, which just—that literally was the fire that they fought up until the night before they left for Yarnell, and of course they never came home from that fire.

He came home late on July, or excuse me, June 29th of 2013 from 17 days on the Doce Fire. And that is when they tap out and they are...you work these 17 days and then you go home, and you have a couple of rest days and then you're ready to go again. So, it was a unique circumstance, but he came home that night late, and he said that he had to report again the next morning at 5:00 AM, which was not well received, as you can imagine, from me.

Alison Law:

While Andrew and the rest of the Hot Shots had been fighting the Doce Fire, lightning struck and ignited multiple wildfires in a drought-ridden area of Yarnell, Arizona—about 30 miles southwest of Prescott. Winds picked up and fire spread to almost 500 acres of land. Authorities in Yarnell requested the Granite Mountain Hot Shots.

Juliann Ashcraft:

I had asked him to stay home. Of course, he listened and politely declined. He's going to work, right? That's what they do. I think he probably also felt eager to be home and rest, but none of those men would ever turn down a call. So, it was June 30th, 2013. I remember him going into our oldest child's bedroom, my son Ryder, and he said some things to Ryder that day that I think probably weren't unique to that day, but they have a huge impact today. He said, and Ryder was only—he had just turned six—and he said, “Ryder, when I'm gone, you're the man of the house and take care of your mom.” So of course, that, in Andrew's mind, meant for a very isolated period of time while he's on a fire. But that was the last words he ever spoke to my son—which, to this day, Ryder has

that as almost this badge: “I am the man of the house, I will take care of you, Mom.”

It was 4:30 in the morning. He gave me a kiss goodbye and he left, and I texted with him periodically throughout that day. He let me know they were headed to Yarnell, which is a town just 30 minutes from our hometown. Again, that's not very common to have it be so close, which ended up being a great blessing. I was texting Andrew saying how outrageous the storm was. I remember him saying, “We could really use some rain over here.” And then he texted me in bold caps, “I LOVE YOU JULIANN,” which wasn't necessarily out of the ordinary, but it seemed like there was an emphasis. I don't know now if that means he was getting frightened and it was getting hairy up there or if it was because he knew I was frustrated the night before, that I didn't want him to go. But that moment's really special to me because it's like really the last text that I got was a bold proclamation of his love for me, which is a gift.

So, it's late in the day, we're kind of relaxing and we turn on a movie. I'm watching a movie with the kids, some animated show, and a girlfriend of mine stopped by, which was uncommon for her. She just said, “I just felt like I should come by and say hi.” And that ended up being really important in our story because I keep myself pretty disconnected in the world on purpose. I don't have any social media, I've never had any. I feel pretty passionate about that, about circling my wagons real tight. And so, if I am not tuned in, I could be very well oblivious to things happening. Well, she started to get messages to turn on the news because things had started to—they became public, the news started to spread and we'd had no idea, we're watching cartoons. And so then she says, “Turn on the TV to the news.” So, I do. And right there across my living room TV: “19 Granite Mountain Hot Shots dead. One survivor.”

I don't really remember much. I remember a gut punch. I remember thinking that that just can't be, because these men—if they knew these men, they could walk right through a fire. These men were larger than life. Couldn't wrap my head around it. Andrew always landed on his feet. And I remember him looking up to these other guys on his crew as almost Greek gods. So, if he could do it, they could certainly do it. So, I couldn't really process that anything could happen to them. But at the same time, the way that I felt in that moment, I knew my life was forever changed. I didn't understand it, but it felt real. I just was pacing, I just remember pacing back and forth, back and forth, calling anyone I could that I thought might have an answer and said, “Do you see the news?” at the time; these other wives.

And it was interesting, their reaction. I remember getting a hold of one and she goes, “Oh, you know how they get it wrong sometimes and they maybe have lost communication with them. And so let's just wait, no reason to get panicky.” So then I'm thinking, “What is happening? Am I overreacting? Are they underreacting?” And so there was this period of time of complete unknown—other than I knew something was terribly wrong.

All the while I am watching on my TV, the actual fire that claimed my husband's life. I just could watch it. And I kept watching it burn. It's almost like you're watching this killer and nothing you can do about it. And it's playing out right before your eyes. And finally, I started to get phone calls back from the other family members who now were panicked themselves.

Interestingly enough, my house started to fill with people as if I was at Andrew's funeral already. But I didn't even have notice that he'd passed, but people were getting the news and I think they just came over. It was late that evening, several hours later, when two police cars arrived at my house. And I just, I don't remember what they said. I just remember kind of collapsing. Each of my children was being held by a different uncle or friend, which is a huge blessing—but I just crumbled there on the floor. And I remember being—I don't know if even inconsolable is the word—but there wasn't anything I needed to hear. And that was what was unique for me. Usually, words are kind of where I turn to for solace and I didn't want to hear anything. They talked to all of us and then they kind of shuttled us to the middle school, the same middle school where Andrew and I skated, the same middle school where he videoed my volleyball games.

They put us all together in a room, the band room where Andrew played the trumpet for the marching band. And I'm sitting in there with all these memories and then it hits me as I look around the room. All of my friends are crying the same as me, and I just realized, oh my gosh, I had just lost my husband—but I also just lost my entire community. Every single person I would have asked to speak at Andrew's funeral was gone. Every single person that would've come and notified me of his passing was gone. And you just start to feel your world crumbling. They had medical examiners asking for dental records. And all of a sudden, you just hear gasps of people—because what are you even talking about? I'll tell you what my husband looks like. You can't even fathom what they're suggesting.

People just collapsing on the floor. You have them telling us, "Well, it's a crime scene. It's a crime scene, so your loved one—their body needs to lay there for whatever extended period of time so that they can do their investigation." I was really troubled as a wife, that my husband's body was just laying on the ground and I could do nothing. And all the while you want there to be a proper investigation—I just remember feeling like he needs dinner and he needs a blanket and he needs to be warm, and—irrational thoughts for someone that's passed away, but completely in place with what I would normally do on any given day.

Immediately my life was no longer my own. We had a media circus waiting for us outside. I was in shock, and then I was asked to answer all sorts of questions from the press, questions I hadn't even formulated yet. Well, I don't have answers. I don't even have questions. I honestly have no clue, but you're asked to stare in front of a camera and make some sort of proclamation about your emotions that you haven't even wrestled with yet.

Alison Law: In the days and weeks that followed, Juliann and the rest of the community learned that the outrageous storm that she mentioned earlier created a fast-moving blaze that overran the Hot Shots. The crew began deploying their fire shelters in a bowl-like area of the canyon when they realized they could not escape or stop the fires advance. But the shelters could not protect them from direct flames and temperatures exceeding 2,000 degrees. The Yarnell Hill Fire killed 19 members of the Granite Mountain Hot Shots, making it one of the deadliest fires in US history. Only one crew member, posted as a lookout, survived. The rough terrain—also a contributing factor in the fire deaths—hampered investigation and recovery efforts.

Juliann Ashcraft: When they were finally able to be moved from that location, one of the Hot Shots, Wade Parker—his dad, Danny Parker, was part of the fire service in the same town. And so very few people of course were allowed up there. But Danny Parker was able to go up there and they had all of our loved ones bagged and then flag-draped—and obviously sustained injuries beyond recognition. So, Danny Parker, a loving father, he told me one time, he said, “I did not have any way to know which one was Wade. So I carried every single one of those boys like they were my son.” And in that moment, I thought, man, like—he was okay, he was cared for. And that's been the case from that moment forward, like I said, with the fire service.

They don't leave any stone unturned when it comes to honoring your loved ones. And that was a big deal because I was immature in my thinking. I'd never been through anything like this before. When Andrew died, he was only 29 years old. I was 28 years old, and our children were 6, 4, 2, and 1—so, just babies. And so it was nice that there were people that were wise and that were experienced, that were able to do things that—now I look back—and really mattered, that I would have been in no place to be able to do myself at that time. The second they allowed us to go back there on the scene, I took my kids with me. Perhaps controversial, I don't know. Some people did some people didn't—and I felt this huge need to show them if he had any way to come home to you, he would have. He did not choose this over you. He did not succumb and just give up, and that became massively important.

Alison Law: Also vital where the small gestures and tokens of kindness that started showing up.

Juliann Ashcraft: I was really eternally blessed by the things that people did for me, the needs that they met, that I didn't even know that I had. People that had already walked similar shoes and could see these things coming that I would have never seen coming. Funeral clothes for my children. I couldn't even get out into town because of the media circus. I had never even been able to consider buying funeral clothes and they were delivered to my home. Same with meals, childcare. I had a brother who shielded me from the media. He took my phone and would kind of go through and shift through the things that maybe this was important, you should look at it or don't even waste your time here.

People that would do my grocery shopping for me. I learned that every single person has talents that can be used to bless lives. It doesn't matter what it is, it's your willingness or your creativity. I had people, a dear friend of our family that washed all of our shoes after the funeral. We went to go eat and it had been really muddy and rainy. Everyone took their shoes off outside of the church and he and his family sat and washed every single pair of shoes for the people that were in the funeral. Those things mattered in a way that was different than saying, "Hey, I'm sorry for your loss."

Alison Law: Jenny Woodall, grief specialist with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, offers this advice for those wishing to support grieving families.

Jenny Woodall: Find out what's needed and then provide it. It's also fine to let people know what kinds of things you can offer. "I am not the right person for your meal train. That's not my strength, but I'm happy to do research, I could take care of children." I think you need to know what your skill set is and offer from that list. What are you good at? What can you bring to this moment?

Juliann Ashcraft: There were people from all around the world that did really amazing gestures for my family. We received quilts, stuffed animals, cards, donations, letters of empathy—and their own life stories that they would just open and share with us. And I kind of read through them in waves, as I felt either really high and I was really ready to look into it or really low and needed maybe something that would pick me up. Kind of read them in waves. I remember keeping the bulk of them set aside and I kind of got into them around the holidays. In times where the silence was deafening, I remember really kind of picking through them during that time. And even ones that I had read before I re-read, because I wasn't as foggy anymore, which is something I highly recommend too. Doing something for somebody in a tangible way when they're grieving is so valuable because we may think it doesn't matter, it's this way or that way, whether I say it to them or write it down for them, it's the same.

But when you're grieving, I could not tell you who said, "Hey, I'm sorry for your loss"—but I can always look back and I can see who wrote it to me and that's important. And so, I think if there's a takeaway for people, it's to make it tangible. I just had an onslaught at the beginning and that was when I started realizing this was bigger than me. And I read through these cards of people: "I'm praying for you, I'm thinking of you, you always have a home here in fill-in-the-blank, town. You can always come stay with us." People offering all sorts of things that they might be able to do. We had people that made pens out of the wood that was cut by Andrew at his final moments and made ballpoint pens that my kids can have.

We had people that donated their shirts from the fire line that dolls could be made out of, so our kids could hold on to. Really creative, meaningful, purposeful ways that people were saying, "Hey, this is hard, but you are loved and it will be okay." And that just fueled and ignited an entirely different person

than I'd been before. And again, it was such a blessing to be able to just be taken out of grief and transplanted into purpose. I was so driven in that moment to just funnel this energy towards my kids.

Alison Law: That energy of gratefulness sparked Juliann's creativity.

Juliann Ashcraft: Just this idea came about and it hit me all at once, that I need to go meet these people. So, I started to research. I started to go through all these boxes, and I found at least one person or a family or organization in all of the 50 states that had done something kind for my family in any capacity. And then bought an old bus and we just moved into it, and we lived on it for a year. It had eight beds and a kitchen and a little bathroom—an old tour bus. And we went on the road and we went to...and we just knocked on their door.

Alison Law: Calling themselves the Be Better Brigade, Juliann and her children spent much of 2015 traveling to all 50 states, meeting and thanking the people who reached out to them after Andrew's death. "Be better" is a family motto. Andrew wanted to remind himself to be better instead of bitter and issued the same call to action to his wife and kids. He even presented the family with white plastic Be Better wrist bands, and vowed to wear his every day.

Juliann Ashcraft: When Andrew died, a lot of damage happened to things that usually aren't damageable—metal melting, things snapping or blowing up. It was just an inferno. But two things that I got back: in the most beautiful way, I was presented his wedding ring. An honor guard member had slipped it off his finger and brought it to me. He got down on one knee and he presented it to me and just tears flowed, because that was the first tangible evidence I had that he was even gone. The second thing that I got was that Be Better band, a tiny silicone band that really had no business surviving a fire of that capacity. It was intact. It was clearly burned, so you could see that it had been there. He died with it on, which is a promise—I can show my kids he made and kept promises, and it became hugely impactful in the fact that I think it was a little gift or a little reminder or a blessing from God, call it what you will, of *you* have a choice to make.

Alison Law: Juliann documented her family's gratitude tour on a corresponding Be Better Brigade blog.

Juliann Ashcraft: The trip was really the goal. The blog was just a by-product to try and get people to have an awareness. I wanted to really highlight these amazing people and highlight some good in our world. And I think if that comes from a voice of somebody who they would expect is probably broken—that may move the needle for some people. That may make them think, "Wow, I maybe I can pick myself up from something here and focus on the silver lining." And that's why we started to write.

Jenny Woodall: Verbal and written expression, just talking about or writing about your experience—whether that's just to get the emotions out or to get some clarity around where do I go next—I think it's very powerful to share your story in your own words and sort of make it real by putting it down on paper.

Juliann Ashcraft: So writing for me is my way of—my whole life has been this way—my way of processing, my way of retaining, my way of focusing. Really, the written word is my love language. I'm like a pen and paper girl, sometimes a typewriter, but old school, and tangible is really important to me. So, there's something about writing. I tap into a deeper layer of my soul. I learn about myself. I feel like it really solidifies my experiences if I try and write them down. But I will say, I find that I write more often when I'm sad, because it's an outlet. So, when things are going and I'm chugging along, I very rarely...I'm not one of those people that's good about keeping a gratitude journal or writing down these funny memories with my kids. I just live those, I'm just in it. And then things get really hairy and messy and scary, and I'm like, I'm going to write about this.

Jenny Woodall: One of the things about grief is that we don't tend to change when things are going well. And so, grief becomes a time of a lot of change and a lot of opportunity, although we don't tend to think of it in a positive light.

Alison Law: At the end of the Be Better tour, Juliann and her family moved to Minnesota. As she and her children began settling into their new home and routine, she was struck by a void.

Juliann Ashcraft: Like whoa, on the bus that's all new for everybody. There's no expectation. But then when you have a household, it's like: there's usually a dad here and there's no longer a dad here. And I started to see that my kids could use some help with that and myself as well. But I think I was more aware of their needs. And so, when I saw these signs for them, I thought they needed a grief community that was different than I could provide them because never lost a dad. I can't relate. The NFFF showed up in a big way. I mean, right away. First of all, they don't put you on display. So, you don't ever feel like you have to perform, which was a huge issue for a long time for me. They let you be who you are, where you are, but they'll partner you with people that get it—and make these connections that can go beyond just a weekend where you visit something that the NFFF has going on.

And they tap into so many variations of life. They'll have support groups for really obscure walks of life that fit people's needs and you can kind of pick and choose. For my family, every summer the kids now go to a Comfort Zone Camp. They're surrounded by other children whose dads died in the line of duty as firefighters, they're in similar age groups. So, my youngest son Choice, for instance, who never knew his dad, has a different kind of grief because he feels, I think, almost embarrassed at times that he doesn't know him. And here he is circled with all these kids that are like, I never knew my dad. And he starts to feel like, oh, okay, other people get it. Or all the way up through being a

daughter of losing a dad or my oldest who does have memories. And they put them with people that get it.

And every time that they leave that camp over the summer, they walk taller, they remember their dad better because people talk about him, and they talk about him by name and that's okay. It's not faux pas, people kind of walk on eggshells around you in the real world: "Gosh, I don't want to talk. Don't talk about dads when that kid's here." It's like, wait, no—we *want* to talk about our dad. Please ask me about my dad. You find that they just get it.

Jenny Woodall: You hear people at our events a lot saying things like, "Well, you know, you get it. You understand, I don't have to explain it to you." And it can be hard to be out there in the world having to explain it to everybody or having to decide who you're going to explain your grief to.

Juliann Ashcraft: I have found that too, I've gone to the spouses retreats. I've gone to grief workshops, wellness conferences, holiday tree lighting celebrations.

Alison Law: At the Foundation's 2019 Holiday Tree Lighting service, Juliann delivered a moving speech about her family's gratitude tour.

Juliann Ashcraft: When I gave that speech, I kind of walked through the story of just kind of the mess of where I was and then opening those boxes, and I shared kind of my trip. And the overall summary was: *gratitude saved me*. Gratitude rescued me from my grief and people's kind acts shifted my perspective. The way I would define grief: it's just a journey that you never understand, you never complete, you never asked for it—yet it's often the prerequisite for resiliency and grit and empathy. It's the process of working through all the emotions of a sudden catastrophic change.

Jenny Woodall: We can't always find meaning or make sense of a death. There's just no way. It's not a logical thing. Sometimes bad things happen and people die. But I think to continue living, we have to find meaning in life—and after someone has died, that life looks different.

Juliann Ashcraft: And I think I wouldn't have added to my definition of grief until more recently that grief is a gift. It is a really big gift, and it's not because it feels good, and it's not because you want it—it's because it is an eye-opener. It is an absolute direct vision into the human condition that you can't have unless you lose everything.

Jenny Woodall: Loss is not good. I would never describe it that way. But what comes in the wake of loss—growth, clarity, finding new purpose—I think people do best when they can make meaning and find purpose after the loss of a loved one. And that's very individual, it's very personal, and they have to find it for themselves.

Juliann Ashcraft: And that doesn't mean grief doesn't happen. And when it does and it comes creeping up in a way that takes my breath away, I acknowledge it. I'm honest

about that: “Hey, this hurts, and this is really an awful time.” And in those moments, I can tap into people at the National Fallen Firefighters and say I need a little bit of extra help. I'm struggling with this thing. It doesn't make me any less grateful. I'm grateful that they're there.

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Alison Law:

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