

# WandaVision

## WHAT IS GRIEF, IF NOT LOVE PERSEVERING?

**Jonathan Williams**

Child Grief Specialist, Highmark Caring Place

**WARNING:** The following contains spoilers and/or possible spoilers for Marvel's *WandaVision* on Disney+.

“I’m a twin. I had a brother. His name was Pietro.” As Wanda Maximoff shares a piece of her journey with a friend, we are shown a tiny glimpse into her grief and pain. In *WandaVision* (a continuation of the Marvel stories), we are given the next chapter in the life of a woman who has suffered incredible loss. As a little girl her parents were killed in an explosion. Her brother (mentioned above) died while saving a child during a fight with Ultron. And most recently Vision, the person she had loved with all her heart, died at the hands of Thanos.

In an attempt to cope with her significant losses, Wanda takes over a small town in New Jersey and creates her own utopia. She wills an alternate reality into existence, one where Vision is alive and the two have a family together. Through a series of generational sitcoms, we are shown their perfect life, where everything is resolved before the

end credits roll. Wanda is able to use her powers to control everyone in Westview, blanketing them with the overwhelming weight of her grief. And anyone that attempts to disrupt her idyllic story faces consequences.

Though done in a supernatural way, the show confronts a most difficult truth... accepting the reality of death. Wanda is willing to do anything in order to alleviate that pain in her life. The hole left by so many deaths has kept her from feeling whole. In that way this larger than life superhero is very much like everyone else. Lost. Angry. Sad. Broken. Devastated. Alone. But healing begins by acknowledging what has happened and allowing support from those around you. While it may not be the Avengers, those who walk with you in grief are every step a hero.

One of those heroes who walks alongside Wanda is Monica Rambeau. Like so many Monica has her own grief story. As a child she mourned the apparent death of a family friend. Later she turned to ash following the Snap and returned five years after to discover that her mother had died of cancer.

Because of her journey Monica can really see Wanda, not as a threat or a villain but as someone who is dealing with profound grief. And because of their shared connection she is one of the few that Wanda allows into her new made-for-TV life (at least for a short spell).

That ability to see and be seen is so important. Those who experience grief can often feel like they are the only ones, with no one anywhere in the world (or universe) who will understand the depths of their pain. But the reality is that so many have dealt with death while so few are willing to talk about it because of the feelings it stirs. Finding it difficult to talk about death causes many to suffer in silence, unaware that others are suffering right next to them. But there is support to be found, a light in even the darkest of times. The joy of remembering cherished memories. The grace that comes from forgiving past mistakes. And the ways we continue to honor those who died by the ways we choose to live. We connect with Wanda because even in the extraordinary ways she is handling her grief, we can see ourselves wanting to do the same. And in those moments we also see pieces of ourselves in Wanda, feeling her pain and our own.

During a later chapter it is discovered that Agnes (a character who has appeared all along to be a friend to Wanda) is really a woman with her own abilities and wicked ways named Agatha Harkness. The reveal of this character may allow some to dismiss Wanda's actions as not her own, suspecting that some evil force was using her as a pawn in a villainous plan. This *must* be why she would do this. Or, maybe a lifetime of trauma that has repeatedly compounded Wanda's losses gives far more than enough

of an explanation to understand her motivations.

In perhaps the most poignant moment of the entire series we are shown a flashback of a conversation between Vision and Wanda following the death of her brother. Vision attempts to talk with Wanda on a human level, which at times proves challenging for him. As an android, experiencing grief and loss is an unknown to Vision. But somehow, he finds a way to connect.



WANDA, I DON'T PRESUME TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FEELING BUT I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW SHOULD YOU WISH TO TELL ME, SHOULD IT BRING SOME COMFORT TO YOU...

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT TALKING ABOUT IT WOULD BRING ME COMFORT?



OH... WELL... SEE... I READ THAT...

THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD BRING ME COMFORT IS SEEING HIM AGAIN.



AWKWARD SILENCE...

SORRY, I'M SO TIRED. IT'S JUST LIKE THIS WAVE WASHING OVER ME AGAIN AND AGAIN IT KNOCKS ME DOWN AND WHEN I TRY TO STAND UP, IT JUST COMES FOR ME AGAIN. AND I CAN'T... IT'S JUST GOING TO DROWN ME.



NO, NO IT WON'T.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?



WELL, BECAUSE IT CAN'T ALL BE SORROW, CAN IT? I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE SO I DON'T FEEL THE LACK. IT'S ALL I'VE EVER KNOWN. I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED LOSS BECAUSE I'VE NEVER HAD A LOVED ONE TO LOSE. BUT WHAT IS GRIEF, IF NOT LOVE PERSEVERING?



With that final question Vision also provided the answer. Grief is absolutely the notion of love persevering. People grieve because they love. That is the binding thread that ties those two things inseparably together. At the core of Wanda's actions was love... love for her parents, love for Pietro, love for Vision. It was that overwhelming love that literally consumed her and an entire town in the process. And ultimately it is that love and the sum total of all of her experiences (even the painful ones) that shapes the person she becomes. Though shattered with grief, Wanda discovered a path to put those pieces back together in a new and meaningful way. She broke down those real and emotional barriers that allowed herself to be seen once again. And by the actual end credits she had discovered the single most important thing... *hope*.

In retrospect creating an alternate reality in a small New Jersey town may not be ideal, so here are a few activities to support you and your family as you continue to travel your grief journey.

- [DRAWINGS](#)
- [GRIEF BRIDGES](#)
- [LETTERS TO THE FUTURE YOU](#)
- [MEMORY BOXES](#)
- [WISH WANDS](#)

Remember that even when you feel isolated in your grief there are people ready to assemble and support you. Please visit [www.highmarkcaringplace.com](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com) for information and resources.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Jonathan has been a fan of superheroes since he was a boy, when Christopher Reeve made him believe that a man can fly. His ongoing passion for the Marvel Universe is often an asset when working with kids as a Child Grief Specialist and School Services Coordinator at the Highmark Caring Place in Erie, PA. Jonathan watched *WandaVision* every week with his family and believes it to be one of the most accurate depictions of grief that has ever been created.

---

## **ABOUT THE HIGHMARK CARING PLACE**

Founded in 1996, the Highmark Caring Place provides support to grieving children and families in Pittsburgh, Erie, Harrisburg, and Warrendale, Pennsylvania.

Thousands of community members are helped by the Highmark Caring Place each year at no cost through peer support programs, and education, consultation, and referral services.