

# Bridges of Resilience: Navigating Grief, Gratitude, and the Symphony of Healing

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## **FIRST PLACE – NONFICTION**

The night echoed with EMS sirens, a prelude to tragedy. "Your Great Grandma, Telitha, died," my mother's words shattered my world. Days unfolded like scenes in a surreal movie, unpredictable twists of grief. Another wave of devastating news followed, "Your Grandma has terminal breast cancer."

Life became a film on fast forward, scenes changing abruptly. Amidst the chaos, a revelation emerged—a beacon of light cutting through darkness. The departure of Great Grandma in 2019 shattered illusions. Memories flooded my mind—running into her open arms, seeking comfort. Her teachings on faith and strength prompted introspection.

Then came Grandma, Audrey Sumner, wrestling with terminal breast cancer. Despite the pain, she imparted lessons of unwavering faith. These remarkable women left a lasting mark, teaching the true value of gratitude. In the imminent loss, every experience served a purpose. The impending farewell to Grandma became a motivation for maturity and a call to extend compassion.

As I faced the inevitable farewell, I embraced their teachings. Their legacies ingrained a profound gratitude for life's fleeting moments. The hardships became stepping stones toward a more mature version of myself.

In the tapestry of loss, threads of gratitude were woven, building bridges to wellness. The pain of goodbyes transformed into a celebration of impact. With each tear shed, a seed of strength sprouted, nurturing hope. The echoes of wisdom reminded us that in adversity, we have the power to choose our response—to build bridges over the fierce waters of grief.

The relentless passage of time did not diminish the ache of loss but carved space for growth. Through the journey of grief, I discovered resilience, a force that could withstand storms and emerge stronger.

As the seasons changed, so did the contours of grief. The bridge to wellness extended beyond

personal boundaries, reaching others grappling with their grief. In shared stories and tears, the universality of pain and the strength from collective healing emerged.

The nights, once filled with sirens, became quieter. The scars of loss remained, part of the intricate architecture of my being. Each scar told a story, a testament to battles fought and victories of resilience.

And so, the bridge to wellness stood strong, built with bricks of gratitude, mortar of resilience, and arches of shared humanity. It spanned depths of sorrow, connecting realms of pain to shores of healing. In life's ongoing melody, a new rhythm emerged—one harmonizing with echoes of love, the cadence of acceptance, and the melody of hope.