

Welcome to *Dishing It Up with Dad*. Unlike the other chapters in the book, this one is a compilation of questions that I have been asked by those who read the book before publication. I love being asked questions, and I feel they add an added dimension to the book.

In the foreword, you mention that mediumship changed your perspective on death. Can you say more about that?

I was introduced to mediumship by a friend who had lost her husband prematurely. She contacted a world-renowned psychic medium, Thomas John, and was blown away by the information that she received. A medium acts as the conduit, or bridge, between those who are deceased, usually simply referred to as ‘dead people,’ to those who are still living. It is important that the medium obtain at least three pieces of evidence that confirms the person on the other side. Otherwise, the practice can be generalized and apply to most anyone, thus making room for false practitioners. After my mom died, I scheduled a reading with Thomas John and was similarly captivated by what he shared. Admittedly, I was quite skeptical at first. I wondered if his assistant was looking up information on my social media sites to bring forth information. But, when he brought forth things that were not publicly documented and that had happened within the surrounding twenty-four hours of the reading, I knew there was something to it. My understanding and acceptance of the practice changed entirely when I took a course to learn how to do mediumship. It did take practice with lots of trial and error, but, in time, I found myself able to receive accurate and significant messages for others, including people who I had never met before nor knew anything about other than their name. The biggest trick for me is to trust the information I receive. The information comes fast, like in a dream. Time spent pondering it or questioning it is not helpful. The medium must trust what is being sent, either through a visual

(clairvoyance), a sound (clairaudience), a smell, a taste (clairgustance), a body sensation (clairsentience), or a knowing (claircognizance). This practice has shown me, whether I am receiving a reading or giving one, that people on the other side can, indeed, communicate with us. Most people who have lost a loved one find this to be incredibly comforting. It provides a way to stay connected in real time. In readings with my parents, for example, they strongly encouraged me to write, with suggestions around the stories my dad had left behind. In this way, they continue to play a role in my life.

Having connected with my parents in this way seems to foster a continued relationship with them. For example, the first time I visited their grave site after the initial burial, I sat on a blanket in front of their tombstone and simply talked with them. I expressed a lot of gratitude for them and all that they did for me, as well as sharing about and requesting guidance with current issues. At the end of my time, I added, "Feel free to send me signs. That's always fun." With that, I got into my truck, Big Red, a 2006 Ford F-150 that Dad passed onto me, and headed out of the cemetery. I got to my second stoplight before making a left onto El Camino. I was headed to See's Candies to pick up some Irish potatoes for St. Patrick's Day. At the third stoplight, I happened to glance at the license plate on the car in front of me, not something I tend to do. It read "BERTA ❤️ U." What??!? I couldn't believe it, except for the fact that I could. My mom's name was Alberta, but everyone called her Bert. I suppose one could write it off as coincidence, but not me. Given that I had just asked for signs, was on my way to See's, the shop that was connected to the corporate building where my dad worked for nearly fifty years, and that my mom's name was Bert, definitely not a common name, and used in a way that expressed love to me in that moment, well...

Given that you connect with your parents with mediumship, do your parents know your brother's diagnosis and understand why he behaved the way he did?

I imagine that they do. After my father died, I would have ideally lived in my parents' house with my brother James, since I had recently sold my home of nearly twenty-five years in order to purchase a new home which wasn't completed yet. However, as mentioned in the book, my brother was unpredictable, and I didn't feel safe around him. As such, two days after my father passed, I started to live as a nomad and did so for ten months, staying with thirteen different friends for various amounts of time, in hotels, and even in the back of my truck in various parks. During this time, James was arrested for bothering neighbors. He would have been released the next day if it weren't for the fact that he couldn't understand the judge's directions on how to proceed. As such, he continued to stay in jail for nearly seven months! While his imprisonment was heart-breaking, it was also a blessing in disguise because we were legally required to sell my parents' house within three months, but I could not get James to cooperate. So, while he was imprisoned, I managed the sale of the house while traveling here and there. We finally succeeded in deeming him 'not competent to stand trial,' and he was released to a mental health hospital. This was a positive step forward, but, in my opinion, the staff didn't want to deal with him and so released him to a homeless shelter. This was a huge mistake because he wandered the very next day and ended up in the emergency room for what I figured was a heart attack based on the bill I received long afterwards. Of course, I had no idea this had happened at the time because I could not reach him at that point. Where was he? Was he dead or alive? All I could do was pray that he was okay and that I would somehow learn of his whereabouts.

Several months later, I was finishing lunch with a friend. We were gathering our things to leave when he said, “Oh! I almost forgot. Have you heard anything about your brother?”

“No. Not a thing,” I answered. That’s when my phone rang. It was a 415 area code. Usually, I don’t take calls from numbers that I don’t recognize.

“I better answer it. It could be about my brother.” And, sure enough, it was! After the social worker established that I was James’ sister, I sat back down and pulled out a pen to take notes on the back of my receipt. My friend sat back down, too. I didn’t know what the social worker had to share, but was relieved to know that my brother was alive and being cared for at a private mental health hospital in San Francisco. She told me that he had a CT scan a few days earlier and that he was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia. Alas - after years, even decades, we had a diagnosis. As she explained the diagnosis to me, everything began to make sense: why he didn’t respond to my dad and me when we spoke to him; why he ate so much junk food; why he couldn’t remember our conversations with the attorney; and so much more.

“How long has he been there?” I asked.

“He was admitted in mid-December.” That was about six weeks ago.

“How did you find me?” I asked with great curiosity.

“I googled James’ name, found your dad’s obituary, saw your name and then found your beautiful website with the telephone number.”

“How come it took so long for someone to reach out to me?”

“We didn’t know if he had any family. He didn’t have any identification when he came in and couldn’t tell us anything other than his name.”

I had accepted that response, but later realized that it still didn’t answer the question. I then realized that it was probably because this particular woman, whom I consider an angel in this

story, hadn't been involved in his case until his diagnosis. I asked her about that when we next talked and she said that that was, indeed, the case.

"If it wasn't for you, I might still not know of his condition or location."

"Yes," she agreed. "We get John Doe's all the time."

"Well, I am deeply grateful that you did get involved in his case because it changes everything." Throughout the remainder of his months at that hospital, until we found a dementia care facility for him to reside in, I encouraged her to share this story with the other staff members so that more family members can find their loved ones. It still boggles my mind that no one else had thought to google his name.

I had filled the back of my lunch receipt with notes and signaled for my friend to ask for some paper for me to write on. The waitress delivered and I began to fill three pages with notes.

I thanked my friend for staying with me during the call and we both acknowledged the mysterious workings of the divine. I promptly began my two hour drive home so that I would arrive in time for a zoom call for my mediumship training. What happened next addresses the question about whether or not I feel my deceased parents are aware of my brother's condition.

I walked in the door and immediately turned on my laptop. It was a day in which the teacher, Thomas John, international psychic medium, was to do readings for those of us in the class who hadn't yet received one. People from the other side present themselves to him and then, based on at least three evidential signs, the attendees state whether or not they are connected to that person.

"I have a grandmother. Her name is Ethel," he opened.

"That's my grandmother," I quickly interjected.

“She says that your relationship with your brother is changing. That you will be taking more responsibility for him.”

That was a profound statement because I had begun a process during my brother’s first month of being imprisoned to find a conservator to handle his affairs since I knew that I would not be able to do so in a way that felt safe. But once I received the news that he was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia, I knew that he would never be a free independent man again. Though overwhelmingly sad, my feeling of being unsafe vanished and I immediately knew that I would be his conservator. This felt good to me because I wanted to be the one to care for him and to handle our family’s finances. As such, Thomas’ sharing of what was coming through was incredibly validating.

“I have a Gerald,” he continued.

“That’s my uncle,” I responded. “My mom’s brother.”

“There’s also a woman who says she’s had her own issues with dementia.” This, too, was a remarkable message because I hadn’t said anything about my brother having been diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia. During a mediumship reading, it is best if the sitter, the person receiving the reading, does not share anything unless specifically asked.

“Well, that’s probably my mother,” I said.

I gathered from that information that my brother’s diagnosis, which is genetically determined, likely stemmed from my maternal family line.

It was an incredibly palpable four hours since I had sat in the restaurant and received the call about my brother. To have received so much confirmation and reassurance of the process via the mediumship so soon afterwards was mind boggling, to say the least. Mind boggling isn’t really

the best term, as I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that spirit does exactly that type of thing. I felt deeply grateful that my ancestors came through to reassure me of my brother's process.

And, yes - that call affirmed that my parents do, indeed, know of my brother's situation.

While my father did not show up in the mediumship reading, I also know, from previous psychic mediumship readings, that my parents are together on the other side. I am glad to know that they know what is going on. It feels supportive to know that they are aware of what I am going through to help James and that they are available to help me to make decisions along the way.

Did your Dad ask you for your stories?

No. Many of them he knew simply by being my father and us having had a positive trusting relationship throughout my life. I was very fortunate that I always felt I could go to him with tough decisions, like whether or not to pursue an education in nutrition, whether or not to homeschool the boys, and how to handle issues around the divorce. And, he really didn't need to ask me for stories because I am a natural storyteller. I can pretty much tell a story in relation to any topic, and did so a lot with him. That all said, I certainly have many stories that just didn't feel right to share with my father.

Did he ever ask you how he was as a parent?

Not really. I trust he knew, especially because I would often tell him, in both spoken words and in holiday and birthday cards, that I felt like the luckiest girl in the world to have him as my father. I expressed my appreciation for how he worked through his unstable early years to provide such a stable life for my brother and me, and for how he got his drinking under control despite having a history of alcoholism in the family.

In regard to my brother, he would say, from time to time, that he was sure he didn't do everything 'right' as a father. Without a diagnosis, there was really no way that we could have understood why my brother behaved the way he did. I tried to reassure my dad that my brother's challenges had little, if anything, to do with his parenting.



Right after your dad passed, did you immediately feel a great loss, or were you relieved he got to leave with dignity and be with his wife?

The latter. I felt a deep sense of relief that he passed the way he had wanted, with peace, dignity, and grace. We had talked quite a lot about his options, and I respected his decision. It honestly could not have been more beautiful, given the circumstances. I guided him through every step of the way, from visiting potential grave sites to procuring the medicine and even helping him to write his own obituary, both of us wanting it to read the way that he would want. And, as he laid on the bed, awaiting his final departure, I had a sense that he was thinking about meeting my mom, as opposed to revisiting anything from his past.

After helping him transition, my biggest relief came when I had successfully arranged for him to be buried, along with my mom, at Golden Gate National Cemetery, where his mother and Max were also buried. That's where he wanted to be. I could not promise that I would succeed in that effort, but was overjoyed at being able to come through for him. I know he must be so very grateful! I was also pleased to provide him with a beautiful Celebration of Life at the Foster City Recreation Center, where he had enjoyed countless events, outdoor church services, and had a brick in his name for his time in the U.S. Navy.

Did you feel life was surreal?

Yes, mostly because there were so many other things going on at the same time: my mother's death, my aunt's death, our adorable Norfolk Terrier's death, both of my children experiencing psychotic breaks, a divorce in process, my brother's undiagnosed illness, buying a new home and moving to another state. Oh, and yes, the Covid chaos, which, frankly, was the least of my problems at that time.

I understand now, for myself, that all of this was, in part, a response to my clear intention to pursue my work as a shaman. It's a 'be careful what you ask for' type situation. Those years presented me with a 'dark night of the soul' that required tremendous commitment to what I was being called to do, willingness to depend upon spirit for guidance, ability to respond to life as gracefully as possible under extreme circumstances, and to keep the faith.

What are the greatest wisdoms you received from your dad?

I really hold onto the awareness that he gave thought, or at least pause, before speaking. Everyone thought of my dad as being such a 'nice' man. He didn't hurt people's feelings with unthoughtful reactive words or actions. I feel he lived by the Biblical wisdom of 'Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger' (James 1:19 ESV) and 'Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble (Proverbs 21:23). He also listened well, without responding to another person's story with one of his own. He was present to whatever was in front of him. I imagine he learned how to do that through the often surprising circumstances he experienced as a child and young man.

I also hold dear his example of high level commitment to his physical well-being. He was impressively disciplined, a quality that I imagine began during his time in the Navy. Things like swimming every day on his lunch break to support his cardiovascular health, taking his JuicePlus+ whether at home or traveling, recording his blood pressure and heart rate every morning, and praying every night before bed are just a few examples of the routine he kept.

Overall, I feel my dad imparted wisdom to value life itself. To respect nature, both its magnificence and its power to harm; to take care of business so as not to get entangled in

difficult situations unnecessarily; to do unto others as you would have them do unto you; to be grateful for the good in one's life, especially family and friends.

Did your sons, Eric and Matthew, offer you great comfort during the last four years of your dad's life? I sense Don did. What was your greatest source of comfort?

Yes. Don was a tremendous source of emotional comfort, being a good listener and offering encouragement when I needed it. He allowed for my tears and exhaustion, while providing me with fun times to keep my spirit lifted. He certainly helped me with a lot of practical matters, especially after my father passed, like preparing the house for sale.

And, yes. I was greatly comforted by my children, most simply through the fact that they are my greatest joy. I can't say that I leaned on them for help during those difficult years, as I wanted them to focus on stabilizing and building their young adult lives. They had been through so much themselves that I didn't want to burden them unnecessarily with things that took them away from their education and jobs and such. Of course, I kept them posted on all that was happening, and they both always offered up sincere appreciation for both my father and the efforts I was making to help him. They showed up to dinners and outings with my dad and me in which my dad shared stories about his life and the boys updated us on their lives.

I suppose the greatest comfort comes in knowing that they are extensions of my father and, so, my father lives on for me through them. I make a conscious effort to keep my parents' memory alive by continuing to speak of my parents, their qualities and stories. I don't want death to be so uncomfortable that the deceased are forgotten, or that the pain of loss outweighs the beauty of their lives lived. I know this was very important to my mom as she did her best to keep

our heritage present. My children seem comfortable with our continued conversations about their ancestors and will easily mention them as appropriate references to conversation.

Much of the support I received during those latter years came from our wide circle of friends in Foster City, most of whom we had first met through St. Luke's Church. They loved my parents dearly, and my brother and I, too. I could call on them most anytime in a moment of need. There was one time in 2019, for example, that I could not get a hold of my dad. It was 2 PM and he wasn't answering the home phone, nor his cell phone. I didn't know where he was, but guessed that he might have taken himself to the movie theater. Finally, around 8:00 p.m., I called a neighbor to see if he would be willing to go look for my dad since I wasn't in the area at the time to go look for him myself. The neighbor, along with two others, readily agreed to do so. Sure enough, they found my dad, sitting in his car. He had gotten stuck in the parking garage because the gate wouldn't open to let him out. I laugh now, realizing this is a flashback of sorts to when he and Frantz helped the woman who was stuck in the parking garage in San Francisco! He returned home, safe and sound.

The neighbors also invited my dad over or out to dinner now and then, which he always enjoyed. When my dad didn't have the ability to go to the men's Bible study early in the morning, they shifted the time and showed up at our house for the meeting instead. It is also important to add that while my brother presented additional challenges, it was also a tremendous comfort to me when I'd be out of the area, to know that he was almost always in the house with my dad. Aside from moving heavy objects that my dad couldn't, taking out the garbage, and helping with computer issues, if my dad fell or had some sort of significant health issue, my brother would call me. If my brother wasn't there, I would have felt much less secure about being away for even short periods of time.

Interestingly, my Dad was my greatest human source of comfort. If I was uneasy about something, I could tell him about it. In doing so, he'd help me resolve the issue or provide assurance that everything would be okay. We were a great team! We both managed things with great precision and detail, communicating clearly throughout it all, up until the very end. There were few surprises. Here is a sampling of his phone messages to me that I keep so that I can hear his voice now and then. You'll find that they were mostly logistical, often about how long to heat up a dish that I had prepared. He needed a lot of hand-holding when it came to food. I was happy to take his hand in mine.

9/24 Hi Lisa. It's Dad. I'm fixing dinner and I just want to ask you real quick - and you don't have to call me back if you don't want to, or if it's too late, but this container you gave me with the beans and the vegetables, I think you said just to reheat it for a short period - I can't remember how long. Anyways, I'll figure it out. Thank you. Bye.

9/16 I still haven't quite figured out what to do with the potatoes, so please give me a call when you get an opportunity. Thank you. Bye.

8/3/2021 Hi Lisa. It's Dad. I have to keep asking you this. (Gasp.) That food in the round bowls. Um, if I have that, like for dinner, do I heat it at all? (Gasp.) Or just uncover it and eat it? I can't remember... if I have to heat it at all. Can't remember. (Gasp.) Call me when you get a chance. (Gasp.) Okay. Thank you.

8/10/2021 Hi Lisa. (Gasp). It's Dad. Uh, and it's 7 o'clock. James and I (gasp) just got back from (gasp) his ride that he took me on (gasp) to San Francisco (gasp) and, uh, so we went (gasp) around San Francisco, (gasp) and now we're back. (Gasp.) Okay? Give me a (gasp) call when you (gasp) get a chance. Talk to you later. (Gasp). Bye.

The above was my last recorded message from Dad.

All that said, it was my unwavering faith that gave me the greatest and most reliable comfort. There were plenty of times when I got down on my knees to pray. And, more importantly, I didn't just pray at those most excruciating times. I prayed daily, throughout the day. I wrote in my gratitude journal most every day, without fail, even amongst the busiest of days. Sometimes it'd be in the backyard while Dad took a nap, or in the waiting room before Dad's doctor's appointment, or at a restaurant awaiting my meal. Giving gratitude, even and especially, during challenging times has been a reliable way for me to keep perspective on life and to appreciate even the smallest glimpses of beauty and goodness.

Do you feel anything was left unsaid or not shared between you and your dad?

On an emotional level, I felt we were complete. As for specific answers to questions, I really can't think of anything I would need or want him to have known that he didn't already. Nor that he would need to share with me that he hadn't already. I made a conscious effort to ask such questions when I could. Here is a conversation to add to the mix as an example of how I did my best to ask more questions of my dad as he neared death:

Dad and I sat down in the living room to watch Wheel of Fortune.

"Is it loud enough?" I asked.

“Don’t worry about me,” he answered. Set the volume where you want it. I just adjust with my hearing aids.”

“Okay. When did you start having hearing trouble, anyways?” I asked, wanting to know as many details about him as I could.

“It really began when I was in Navy boot camp. It wasn’t a walk in the park, but it wasn’t anything that most guys couldn’t handle either. The first day they shaved all the hair off our heads, issued us a seabag full of navy clothes, and assigned us to a recruitment company. I don’t really remember, but I think there were about fifty to seventy-five guys in each company.

“After about six weeks, they gave us a Saturday off and we all went over to our company commander’s house and drank beer all afternoon. Then we left his house and went to downtown San Diego. That was a mistake because about six of us would end up in a tattoo parlor and we all got tattoos. Mine was a girl on my left shoulder. Twenty-five years later, it cost me a lot of money to have it removed.”

He didn’t have to remind me of that, as I distinctly remember the mermaid tattoo that he would jokingly say was my mom.

“In week seven of boot camp, they put us on a bus to the Marine Rifle range at Camp Pendleton. We were out there all day shooting M-1 rifles. They were loud and it was 1956, so the Navy didn’t even think about protecting our ears from the noise. No ear plugs, nothing. When we got back to the base, I couldn’t hear anything for two days! I am sure I got permanent hearing damage from that day which caused me hearing problems as I got older.”

In my dad’s journal writings, he refers to the time when he left for Minneapolis with his father. It was a situation in which, by today’s standards, he would have been considered kidnapped. He wrote, as shared in the book, that his parents figured his mother would take care

of his sister, but that they didn't know what to do with him, and so sent him to a boarding school. In hindsight, I would have asked my dad why his mother couldn't have taken care of both him *and* his sister? It wasn't that my dad was a difficult child; he wasn't. Maybe taking care of a toddler was more than enough for a single mother at that time. I'm not really sure. So, I imagine, I imagine more questions like that will come up for me over time. If they are burning questions, I will likely use mediumship and my dreams to help get answers. But, I also accept that it's okay to not have all the answers. Life is a mystery and, in many cases, for good reason.

Did the process of writing this book help you to gain closure on your dad's death?

I think that it did further my letting go process, but mostly it felt like a beautifully significant way to honor him. The best part was that I felt we were writing the book together. In that sense, it actually made me feel closer to him than it did putting closure on the relationship. I could hear his voice as I entered his journal writings into the computer. When I was stuck on where to take a particular conversation, I would imagine us together and hear the conversation play out. I find it amusing that I often find myself referring to the book as 'Dad's book,' even though I am the author. At the time of this writing, the book had not even been published. As such, I feel he and I still have a shared journey ahead of us.

FRENCH ONION SOUP

Makes 6 2-cup servings

Who doesn't love French Onion Soup? In my efforts to reduce the saturated fat in this timeless dish, I substituted butter with vegan spread and Gruyere cheese with a plant-based

cheese. Neither my dinner guess nor I could detect any difference in these adaptations, including the cheeses, once part of the overall creation.

4 tablespoons unsalted vegan butter

2 pounds yellow onions

2 teaspoons sugar

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1/2 cup dry sherry

6 cups mushroom broth, homemade or boxed

2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme leaves, or 1/4 teaspoon dried

Salt, to taste

Black pepper, freshly ground, to taste

6 - 1/4" slices sourdough (see page 26 of *Dishing It Up with Dad*)

8 ounces (about 3 cups) vegan cheese, grated on the large holes of a box grater

Directions

1. Slice onions into one quarter inch half circles.
2. Melt the vegan butter in a large Dutch oven or in a heavy pot on medium – low heat.
3. Add the onions, spreading them out in a thin layer, as much as possible.
4. Sprinkle with the sugar.
5. Cook for about one hour, until the onions are soft and begin to caramelize, giving them a golden brown color. Don't rush this process. Cooking onions for a long time over very

low heat mellows their flavor. And don't stir too often, just enough to keep from sticking to the bottom of the pot, as they need to sit in order to caramelize.

6. Sprinkle the flour over the onions, stirring to coat.
7. Add the Sherry, mushroom stock, and thyme.
8. Bring to a simmer. Cook, partly covered, for about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
9. Preheat the broiler. Lightly toast the bread under the broiler, then set aside.
10. Label the soup into six ovenproof bowls, then place onto a baking pan. Place one slice of toasted sourdough on each bowl of soup. Sprinkle 1/2 cup grated cheese over the bread in each bowl. Place under the broiler until the cheese is melted and turns slightly brown around the edges.
11. Serve and enjoy!

Note: Can be kept in the refrigerator for up to two days, or frozen for up to three months. Love that!!!