

Laura Jaye Cramer Interview

Karen Wyatt: [00:00:00] Today I'm very happy to welcome my special guest, Laura Jaye Cramer. She is the founder of Waiting Room Publishing, an independent media company putting smart, human-centered print magazines into healthcare, senior living, and end of life waiting rooms across the United States. WRP publishes four titles, including Candlelight Magazine, a publication for end of life spaces like funeral homes, hospice care, and palliative care.

Before launching WRP, Laura spent over a decade in journalism and brand strategy. She is especially interested in how physical media creates connection in clinical [00:02:00] and end of life settings. You can learn more at her websites laurajayecramer.com and waitingroompublishing.com, and I'll leave links to both of those in the show notes.

So Laura, welcome, and thank you so much for joining me today.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Thank you so much. That's such a lovely introduction. Thank you for having me.

Karen Wyatt: I was really excited when I learned about Candlelight Magazine because in my experience at least, that's novel. I, have never seen a magazine that dealt with end of life issues, and it's such a great idea, and I can just picture it now in so many places.

And so I, really wanted to talk to you first about the magazine, and then we have a lot to share about, what inspired you to create the magazine after that, but...

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yes, absolutely. We have, m- more in common than I knew about for a while, and I'm really excited to talk with you about, about your own personal journey with [00:03:00] grief.

But, thank you so much for your kind words about Candlelight Magazine. It's, it's nice to hear that y- you think it's an interesting concept. I thought it was interesting as well, as we'll talk about when we dive more into my story. There was a period of my life where I was spending quite a lot of time in, in hospital settings and funeral homes, and I just, I knew that something like Candlelight Magazine was something that would've helped me so much.

And, and I also really believe that I'm the right person to do it. And so it's, it's... We've been around for about two years, and, each issue, I'm biased, but I, think is- each issue gets better and better, so I'm, happy and proud to talk about it.

Karen Wyatt: And I know you were already publishing other magazines, for seniors and for women over 60, and all of which are really excellent [00:04:00] topics.

And so I can't wait actually to see Candlelight Magazine and, actually hold it in my hands at some point. but I was thinking about the idea of what exists in waiting rooms because all of us who've been through any of these systems know you do spend a certain amount of time in a waiting room.

And oftentimes there are things on the table to read. But I, I-- it did occur to me, as you were saying, that when you're grieving, much of what's out there in the pop- Pop magazines and when the- common literature or the news even. It's not really what you need to read or want to read in those moments.

Laura Jaye Cramer: y- you know this so well. when you're deep in grief, and especially in those really early stages of grief and trauma, y- you, you do ... I, I, guess I can speak for myself. I felt like I was on another planet. And so [00:05:00] reading something like the news, which typically I, read every day, but reading the news felt

It, it didn't feel appropriate. I wasn't in the right head space to even take in information. and then, no disrespect to so many of these wonderful facilities that I was spending time in, but having my reading options be an old TV Guide or People Magazine. I was like, "Oh, man, this is not meeting me where I am right now."

And, gosh, wouldn't I love to have something that could, help me out. And also something physical that I could just get my hands on that felt grounding and, and able to speak to the moment that I was in. so that's been the goal. And there's, so much to cover, for grief especially because it's so different for everyone.

And [00:06:00] it's so complex, and there's always new science coming out. So it's, selfishly it's wonderful for me because I always have so much to think about. And hopefully for the reader, it's interesting because we do, for Candlelight Magazine, we do six issues And so in that way it's always new information.

It's always topical. It's always speaking to the particular season. Whereas a simple grief book might not be able to do all of that.

Karen Wyatt: That's such a good point. And it's ... This morning as I was preparing for our interview, I was thinking how grief itself in some ways, it's like being in an endless waiting room.

Yeah. always wondering, "When will my appointment with joy be? When will joy show up? Is it actually on it- on the way? Will that happen? Am I just ... Will I just be here in this waiting room the rest of my life?"

Laura Jaye Cramer: it ... I'm so glad you said that. I really liked that about the double meaning of my publishing company, Waiting Room, because, whether I'm speaking to [00:07:00] seniors or speaking to people dealing with, end of life or, death care workers, it does feel like a waiting room.

Like, limbo, like bardo, it's, a, fascinating period that we all do experience. And strangely, I, don't know that in the United States we're so prepared to talk about death, Which I know that you've covered in a number of your podcasts, but I'm specifically thinking about

You'll have to help me with the, title of your episode where you talk about your father's passing. yeah.

Karen Wyatt: It's, Surviving the Aftermath, Grief After a Suicide Death.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yes. Thank you you talked a lot in that episode about this strange period of your life that lasted years where you were just in this in between space, this waiting

I like the way you put it, this waiting room where you're like, [00:08:00] when do I get to experience joy again?" it's a very unique, experience that we all experience in different ways. and like I was saying, I don't know that, in the United States we're so prepared to talk about grief and how we deal with grief ourselves, or how we deal with those around us who are grieving.

it can be, really difficult and overwhelming, and the ... What I hear from so many people is they feel like they're not doing it the right way, which always breaks my heart because you d- you're going through so much, you don't need the added pressure of, "Oh, gosh, I feel like I'm not doing it the right way," is, it's, so much pressure to put on yourself at such a difficult period of time,

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. So very true. The ... And you and I share, we've been [00:09:00] referring to this- but we share the history of, grief after a suicide death. And maybe if you're comfortable sharing it, y- you could talk a little bit about your personal story, because I know that is what inspired you to start Candlelight Magazine.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah, absolutely. It is what inspired me to start Candlelight Magazine, and what we're referring to is your father died by suicide, you were saying 37 years ago.

my father also died by suicide in 2021, and, and I thought that would be just the hardest thing that I would ever go through in my life, and then three months later my brother also died by suicide.

So in the span of three months I lost- Half my family and, um, with my brother specifically, m- my best friend and, it's... [00:10:00] W- what I know, especially from working on Candlelight is grief is so hard, period. Grief is so hard. specifically with suicide, there's a level of complexity, and for me, really difficult conflicting emotions.

there's so much to work through. it's not just the fact that you don't get a clean goodbye, some, some closure, there's examining- As you talk about in your podcast, there's examining everything you've done up until that moment where you're just replaying things and trying to rewrite history and "How could I have gotten this right?"

And, and, so many other things. yes, long story short, that is [00:11:00] the, the shared history that we are referring to is the death by suicide of our fathers. And then also, I, my brother died by suicide.

Karen Wyatt: Oh. And there are just... honestly, there are no words really when we try to talk about it. I think that's what plagued me so much for so many years.

It's very hard to explain to anyone else who hasn't been through it what this type of death is like, including grief counselors. Yeah. And, I saw a psychologist for a while for therapy, but she honestly, she just... I just knew she doesn't really understand what I'm talking about. She doesn't know where I am and what I'm going through.

And I think that feeling of isolation and loneliness is, one of the most difficult parts about it.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah. it's so true, this idea of there are no words, and for me, that was so frustrating because I'm a writer. That's what I've been doing for the past decade plus, and it's my job to find [00:12:00] the words, and I really couldn't.

I really couldn't find the words. And the f- the feeling of isolation that you're speaking to, a- again, we have s- we have so much in common. I had, a very difficult time finding the right type of support, from medical professionals because it's, it is niche. I would be put in grief groups where people were talking about, how their, their dad had died and on his deathbed he was saying how much he wanted to be there and was so sad that he was gonna miss certain parts of this person's life.

And I just... It was such a, it was such a disorienting experience to be listening to a story like that and feel jealousy. just feeling like, "Oh, your dad wanted to... Your, your, people wanted to be here. [00:13:00] How... that sounds great. I would kill for that." and I didn't, I... Honestly, I didn't like that version of myself.

I didn't like feeling

petty like that. and that, that was another little... I guess that's, that ties into the I guess I'm not doing this correctly, where you just feel so many cl- conflicting emotions.

Karen Wyatt: Yes. This sense of abandonment- and betrayal in a way from someone that you loved so much, that you shared a loving relationship with.

Yeah. Being left, someone choosing to leave and to not engage anymore in your life, I think that a, it's, very hard to, recover from that because you can't ever have a conversation with that person to talk it through or work it out. You're l- you're on your own trying to process that and understand it.

Laura Jaye Cramer: [00:14:00] And I know, people say grief never goes away, and they're, totally right. And, I'll get these waves of every emotion under the sun. I d- I don't feel angry very often. That's not the primary emotion. That's probably not even top three. but I'll get w- spikes of anger sometimes, and I was thinking recently, m- my dog loves cucumbers.

And I, ga- he was eating a cucumber and making these really cute, crunch, crunch, noises. I took a video of it, and just out of habit I went to text it to my

dad, and he's been dead for five years. But I went just to text it to my dad, and I realized I couldn't and ...

out loud I went, "Oh, for fuck's sake."

I was just furious that I couldn't text [00:15:00] a cute video of my dog to my dad. I was thinking, who would wanna miss this? And I'm talking about my dog. I know that your daughter was born right around, I think it was four months before or four- months after your father died. Four months

Karen Wyatt: before, before my father died.

Laura Jaye Cramer: So that's, that's... How do you deal with that? y- it's, there are so many things where you wish your dad wanted to be around. And, let me be clear. I know that's not how mental illness works. It's not about wanting, but for the person experiencing it, feels like they don't want to be around me.

How do you, deal with that when there's a baby girl involved that feels- I don't know. I, don't... Again, there are no words. What is that like?

Karen Wyatt: it, it just amplifies the loss because there's so many things that will never happen, [00:16:00] connections that will never be made, and as you said, videos I can never share, cute stories that he'll, never hear.

It's the, the loss is enormous, and granted, those losses happen with any type of grief when the person isn't there. But it's the feeling that, but my loved one chose to not be here. That was their decision. It took me a long time to find grace for my dad- and compassion for him, and to just say, "I give you that choice.

I allow you that choice." "And I will live with the aftermath of it." But that, that, that was probably a real breakthrough moment when I was able to say that in a sense to my dad. "I'm, choosing to allow you that. I won't be angry. I won't blame you anymore for the choice you made."

Laura Jaye Cramer: This is really personal. Can I ask you, are you religious?

Karen Wyatt: I g- I grew up somewhat religious, but I left [00:17:00] church behind and I have my own spirituality.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah. I just asked because I was recently talking to a man who was, by the way, lovely. he was Catholic, and he was talking to me about his views on suicide, and obviously, so for context, I'm not religious.

there was such a difference in our views about suicide and I'm not saying- Catholicism is all one way, but there was... I noticed there was a real, difference between this idea of giving someone grace to make a, choice even if it's a choice that I hate the choice, but it- it's not my choice to make.

and, there was a real difference between, this individual who had a background where it was seen as a... W- I believe his words were moral [00:18:00] failing, and, it was, interesting and I was r- I was happy to have the conversation with him because I do think it's helpful to, if you have grown up in a certain, religion or community or just family who sees this as something that's a, a sin or something that they've done wrong, I, do like to say out loud the, just having the, alternate perspective that, I'm, I'm like you.

I'm the same way where I don't like the choice that was made. It's gonna be something that I personally will have to deal with for as long as I'm alive, but I don't- I don't think less of m- my brother, and I don't think less of my dad. And I don't... [00:19:00] I'm curious to hear how you are with this, but I try not to, and this is the hard part, I try not to wrap all of my memories up in the way that their lives ended.

That one's hard for me.

Karen Wyatt: Yes. I wanted to say v- around this idea that other people do make judgments and have judgments about suicide, and for a long time, I had a need to almost protect my father from that. And I wouldn't talk about it or tell people about it if I wasn't sure that they could receive my father's story with grace as I was trying to present it, because I w- I just couldn't allow anyone to judge him.

I needed to protect that. I guess I was protecting myself in that, regard as well. so that that was what I was aware of in the very beginning, and it took a long time before I finally could say, "You know what? Other [00:20:00] people can feel and think whatever they feel." Yeah. "And I think that doesn't affect my dad," that- Right

or me. I can allow them to have their, points of, view as well."

Laura Jaye Cramer: I think I was just curious about your experience because, it's so much easier said than done to get to that point of grace where you're, where you're able to accept a death by suicide, and I was just...

I guess I was curious on, how you got there. Just if it was something that came naturally to you, if it was something that you had to work on.

Karen Wyatt: I had to work on it. And, it took me about three years, but I ended up volunteering for hospice in the beginning. Oh, you did? Everything I'm doing now is because of, of- Yeah

trying to process this grief. And I was a family medicine doctor. and after about three years, I just felt like I'm not dealing with this the right way. I [00:21:00] keep burying my grief. I'm not really confronting it. I'm not accepting it very well. And I thought maybe it, it's because I don't know anything about grief.

I don't know anything about death. I'm a doctor, but I know nothing about death. Yeah. So I decided to start volunteering for hospice in order to just be with families and patients who were confronting death and grief and the end of life, 'cause I thought at least I'll have a chance to learn something when I'm there, and that was profound for me.

And I, ended up concluding, oh, this is where I was meant to be all along. This is the kind of medicine I was meant to practice, and I shifted my whole career to hospice, and that led to writing books and doing this podcast. And so it really changed everything for me. But all of that was this process of learning more, understanding more.

And then, I d- I did that podcast series about my dad's death 'cause I really did [00:22:00] intentionally go on a, a study of his life in a way. I asked my aunts and uncles, his siblings, for stories 'cause I realized there's so many parts of my dad's life I didn't know anything about.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah.

Karen Wyatt: And, including he was in World War II, and I knew nothing about that.

No. So I intentionally asked people who knew, stories that I'd never heard before, and started gathering the stories, and that ended up leading me to making that podcast episode about some of the things I uncovered that I learned

about him. And it all started to fall in place a little bit better. I understood him so much more.

I understood how much pain he carried within him. And he had no tools for dealing with it whatsoever, and that life had just handed him particularly difficult challenges. And I, saw how he, how hard he tried for so many years, for so long. And, [00:23:00] but I could see his pain, and that's what made the big difference for me.

That's when I could finally have so much grace and compassion for him, and thinking, "I would not have asked you to live in the pain that you were in a moment longer." "I grant you, you had a right to say, 'I'm done with this,' and I can allow for that."

Laura Jaye Cramer: it's very interesting you mention not having the tools to, cope, and that's something I think about all of the time, because It's, there's so many, there's so many factors that go into not having the tools.

It's, literally not having access to them or knowledge of them. it's the way that you were raised, either in your community and your family about [00:24:00] asking for help or admitting, admitting when something is... N- not admitting, but acknowledging something is going on and reaching out to, to either a friend or a doctor.

which is why, before we started recording, we were talking about "Oh, are you okay talking about anything? Are you okay talking about anything?" And, my response was, "I will talk about anything." because I, I, think it's really important. And the reason it's important is to help people find the right tools.

And I don't know where you are with this, but I have the same, I have the same illness that killed my dad and my brother. I have major depression, and it's something that I have to spend a lot of time and money and energy keeping in check. And I'm [00:25:00] happy to do that because I know what happens, when you don't.

But, that's not the ca- not everyone has such a drastic example, like a parent dying by suicide. and so I always, I- I'm always so fascinated by the ways that we can get help and support to people who really need it because there is this, A, there's a stigma around, mental health, and B, a lot of the options are expensive or, difficult.

So if I could just plug a little thing that we do in Candlelight Magazine. on the back cover of every issue we have crisis hotlines. And it's so interesting. In, in 2026 there are groups really for everything. So there's a general suicide crisis hotline. [00:26:00] there's a group for LGBTQ+ individuals, for indigenous people, for veterans, for teens.

There's... There, there is a lot of help available. It's just, it's h- it's so hard to find it and it's, hard to take care of yourself when you're deep in depression or grief or, what it, whatever it is, Yeah, it's so very true. And our society still holds mental illness, grieving, death and dying, those are still somewhat taboo subjects that people- are afraid to talk about. But it's so important. Even this conversation that you and I are willing to be vulnerable and to, and talk- about the greatest pain of our lives. But so that someone listening doesn't have to feel alone, will know, oh, other people have experienced this too.

Yeah.

Karen Wyatt: And, and I [00:27:00] think Candlelight Magazine, I think, probably does that for people too.

And I was gonna share a little story. It was in the podcast. But it was actually when I was sitting in the waiting room of the psychologist. I was trying to get help for grief- from probably the thing that helped me the most. I was in the waiting room, waiting for our appointment, and T- there was a Time magazine on the table, and this was a year after my father died.

And I was there- to say, "Why am I still grieving after one year?" Because I read books that said- Yeah, grief should go away in six months. Yeah. And I was still grieving. So what is going on? but the magazine, was actually a feature on death by gun in America. And they took w- it was, it stunned me.

It was Time magazine. They studied the day after my father's death, May 12th, 1989, the day after his death, all of the deaths by gun that took place on that day, whether they were [00:28:00] suicide, homicide, accidents. And it shocked me to see how many people had died by guns just the day after my dad, so I knew s- the same number of people died the day my dad died.

And what that said to me is, oh my goodness, there are all these families and all these people out there just like me today in this moment who are carrying this same kind of pain, who are dealing with the same kind of grief. And I think that was the first time I thought, "Oh, okay, I'm honestly not alone in this space.

I don't know any of them and I can't talk to them." "But I'm not alone." And for the first time, it- I felt like I was connected to other people. So I, that's where I really believe the value of just a simple magazine on a table in a waiting room- can change things.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah, and it's so interesting this idea that there i- humans, we're such community oriented beings.

There is this, [00:29:00] I don't know what it is. I said to you when we, before we started recording and we were just talking, I was telling you, "I'm so s- I'm so sorry you understand so deeply the pain that I've experienced." but it is, it's weirdly comforting to be able to meet you and talk to you and talk with someone who really understands because, Because it is such a specific thing.

Suicide is so specific, and death by, guns is so specific. and the element of community, especially around death, is very fascinating to me. I've always been pretty... I'm very introverted. I'm very quiet. I have a small but mighty group of friends that I, am close with. And, after both my dad and my brother died, it was the first time in my life where I was looking to, [00:30:00] to build very specific relationships, people who really understood that aspect of me.

I had my friends that I've been friends with for so many years and they quite simply didn't understand what I was going through, and frankly didn't know how to talk to me about it, and I didn't feel... Not from everyone. I had, a, tight group of friends who actually flew to Denver, where I was from and where I was for the funerals and all of that.

And I had a group of, I think, four friends who flew from around the country to, be with me and to take care of me. but I... And I can't overstate how grateful I am for that and how much I love, I love those people. however, I was just looking for such a specific type of community who I could talk to about this thing that I felt changed me [00:31:00] to my core.

I couldn't talk to the people who I had gone to, elementary school with and at... who I had grown up with who didn't know this, new version of me

Karen Wyatt: Oh, I remember that feeling so well. Yeah. like still being the persona of who I was before- always this before and after version of me before my dad died, and knowing there are people in my life who will never understand or even really meet the after version of me.

They only know me before, and I-

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah ...

Karen Wyatt: I can't even explain to them who I am now. And- and that was one breakthrough I had. In my grief, I remember always in the waiting room of grief, always thinking, "Someday I'm gonna go back to the before me. I'm gonna become the before me again. I'll go back there, and everything will feel just like it did."

That's what I was- Yeah ... waiting for until I woke up one day and s- and thought, [00:32:00] "Wait, this is like a cataclysmic life- event that has happened, and it is meant to change everything about me." "And what am I doing sitting here wanting to go backwards? It's changed everything, and I just have to accept it.

I just have to become the new me, the after me, and now do the best I can with this life I have now."

Laura Jaye Cramer: That is so true and so relatable, and I had the exact same conversation with one of my therapists where I was like, I used to be really fun," and, "Oh, I can't wait to be fun again." And, I remember the look on her face, ooh.

I, you'll be fun again. You'll have fun again. It's not going to be the same, and you're not going to fit. It's not like a puzzle piece where you just go directly back into your life. And, on a very basic level, we [00:33:00] outgrow friendships, and we outgrow relationships when there isn't this huge change.

And so expecting to exactly fit back where you were before after a huge change is m- perhaps not very reasonable. And part of that for me was understanding that something really major had happened. I, don't know if you felt the same way, but for me, I pride myself on being, like, a, a real tough cookie, and I can get through anything.

And I had to... This is gonna sound silly. I had to have a medical professional explain to me that this was a big deal, and that it was- Okay if I needed to take a break. I know from your story that you're the same way. Went right back into working, went right back into... [00:34:00] you had an, a newborn daughter.

I had a job. I had, my, my commitments, my bills, my, whatever it was. I had this life that I felt like I had to just do well because I had always done a good

job, whatever that means. I had always done a good job. I'd always been a productive person, and so I thought I could just jump right back into that, and it was really jarring when I couldn't.

And yeah, I literally had to have a doctor explain to me that something major had happened and I was different now.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. I That it was a breakthrough to me that I didn't understand that either until it came through to me, oh, I'm on a entirely new path now, and I can't even see the path ahead. I'm just gonna have to keep going- Right

and figure it out as I get there because it's like nothing else I've ever [00:35:00] experienced before.

I was thinking of one of the things that I remember doing over time was setting aside special times to deal with grief, because I was really busy. I had a medical practice and two kids and a marriage. But I remember setting aside, occasions or events or times when this is my grief time. Yeah.

And so that would really help me feel more functional the rest of the time. okay, it's all right if I ignore my grief right now and I'm just being- a doctor or a mom or whatever I'm doing, because I have my grief time set aside, and I will look at it, I'll journal about it, I'll work on it during that time.

That kind of helped me keep sanity in my life and- Yeah ... kept me from completely glossing over the grief and ignoring it. It ... 'Cause I still set aside times when I would look at it and process it and go back into it. [00:36:00]

Laura Jaye Cramer: That's such an interesting idea, because, because it does bubble up. all of the things that therapists say are true.

It does. If you don't ... So it's like a pressure cooker. If you don't let the steam off, then, it's ... The steam needs to be released. And so having a dedicated time, I think if that works for you. and particularly if you have a family and a career to keep together, having a dedicated time To at least address it is...

I think you were smarter than me. I thought I could just barrel through, like, the Kool-Aid Man walking through a wall, just like barreling through grief, like I could I- like I could just conquer anything. and perhaps I, would have benefited from, from having [00:37:00] a dedicated time to... You said, what, you would journal?

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. I did a lot of journaling, and that was- my, private space, almost like writing little letters to myself or- Yeah ... even just opening up those feelings inside and writing about it so that I wasn't completely stuffing everything away. Just letting it come to the surface.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Do you still do that? Do you still journal?

Karen Wyatt: I do it all the time. H- every day it's still really important to me to do it. And I will say, I will admit, over the years I came to realize that I did have anger at my dad, and it was the one thing I never wanted to feel angry at him. I didn't want to.

The loss, losing him was so painful, I thought how could I ever be angry at him? I, I, abhorred the thought that I was, that I had anger. I shoved it down the deepest it could possibly go. But I reached a point in my life where it's like there [00:38:00] is some anger there, and I need to let it out. And so I wrote him a letter and just said, "I'm mad at you because you...

Look at all these things you chose not to be here for, and I don't know why, and it hurt me, and I just need to tell you that." And that actually, I wrote that in my journal, and that actually was so very helpful. Yeah. Because as, as soon as I admitted, "Okay, I do have some anger," it became okay. It became okay.

of course, that's part of this whole tapestry of emotion- Yeah ... and complicated emotion that we feel. It's okay to have anger. It isn't wrong, and I don't have to apologize for it. And, so that was one of the things that was another little breakthrough for me, the day that I could see my own anger finally.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah. Why do you think you- We're so resistant to feeling anger

Karen Wyatt: Well, I j- I cherished my dad so much. He was one of my favorite people in the whole world, and I also... I had always seen his [00:39:00] sensitive side. I always knew, like, how caring he was, what a beautiful heart he had. And so I just felt like, how could I be angry at that?

he, his whole death was because of his sensitivity and his, and the pain that he had to carry. how could I ever feel that it's right to be angry at him when I understand what he felt? But at the same time, I'm a person too, and I had my pain, and so I had to allow myself that and that it's okay if I have angry feelings.

It doesn't change how much I love him. I could live with that.

Laura Jaye Cramer: That's interesting. I feel similarly about my brother who, like, when he was alive, I called him Baby Lamb because he was just the sweetest, he was so sensitive in a way that- Made it so much fun [00:40:00] to be his friend because he really saw things in the world, and where I I'm very like, go, go.

M- move, move," he was more, He was just, had a gent- it was like he, he could f- he could just feel everything at once. And, and for that reason, he is my favorite person to talk to. We s- we balanced each other out, where, I'm pretty direct and decisive, and he always had this, just beautiful way of looking at things.

and he, just beautiful in general. Just a beautiful person who I always felt like I wanted to... He was my baby lamb. I wanted to protect him. whereas my dad, we're the exact same person. He's, [00:41:00] has, dark sense of humor, q- quick wit, just, just like a, I understand my dad on a very deep level.

and I think for that reason, it's really easy for me to be mad at my dad and then get over it really quickly because that was the relationship that we had. we would test each other's boundaries, and then get over it and we're like, "Ha we just understood each other that way, whereas my brother sounds a bit more like your dad, where it's just, it's hard for me to- be mad at him now.

We got in exactly one fight in our entire life. It was hard for me to be mad at him when he was alive. and so I think maybe I'm realizing for the first time while you're saying it [00:42:00] that, it... I don't know why, but it is difficult for me to be mad at my brother. and for that reason, and a, so many reasons probably, it's harder for me to process my brother's death, whereas with my dad, because we're so similar, I understand, and it's very easy for me to see my dad's point of view.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, I, think it, it's really interesting. I, I... Recalling it, I think there was a sense of being angry at the world too in a way, that this world is so hard and life is so harsh that sometimes beautiful, sensitive people have a hard time surviving in the world the way it is right now, and that felt so unjust to me.

I, feel some anger at that, that our- Yeah ... these, our dear people come here, and we're not able to protect them [00:43:00] sometimes from the pain that's there.

Laura Jaye Cramer: That's a very, that's a very true statement, and I feel that way when I look at my niece or my nephews. I don't have children, so my, my children are my brother's children, them.

And I, I look at them, and I just, I want so badly for things to be lovely and easy for them. And in my family, just because of our wiring, there's a lot to keep track of with your mental health. And then beyond that, the world is just hard, and it's... it can seem, very overwhelming. And I can, understand why that would be-[00:44:00]

Karen Wyatt: Yeah Oh, like I feel, I see us, we're on this, we're on this journey. We may be at different places- different amounts of time that have passed, but, I, we just have this resonance between us because- of understanding the pain of a suicide loss. And I really sincerely do mean I hope that our conversation could be helpful to someone else.

Good. I would imagine there are people listening who have been in this place too, or are there right now, losing someone they love to suicide, and that I just hope it's helpful and that people don't feel as alone as perhaps you and I have felt at times in the past.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah. I, I wish I had m- found... I don't know.

I guess I, I just wish I had known you r- right when I was in the thick of it. It's, [00:45:00] I appreciate you having me as a guest so much. I think it's important to talk about.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, definitely. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Candlelight Magazine- Sure ... and what are some of the, the stories or articles like in the magazine that someone might find?

Laura Jaye Cramer: Sure. so because grief is so different for everyone, we do try and cover a wide range of topics in a range of ways in each issue. depending on where someone is in grief, they might want to read a reported feature on the latest studies about grief. What is going on in my head while I'm in this process?

What are ways that I can move forward? For some people, that's not helpful in the moment, and they might want to read a personal essay from someone experiencing grief, or poetry [00:46:00] around the idea of death and loss and grief. some people can't read at all when they're in the thick of it, and they might wanna flip through a photo essay.

so we, try and cover a fair amount in every issue. Some things are consistent. So for example, we have an advice column with a trauma and grief therapist named Michelle Smith, who's based out of, I believe, Oklahoma. She's certified in several states, but I think she's based in Oklahoma. She answers questions from our reader every month, and sh- she is fantastic.

She's whip-smart, s- so sensitive, and really sees people. So she does our advice column. And, and like I said, everything is based in, we take the reporting very seriously, so it's based in science when it's appropriate, and, and also just speaks to the human [00:47:00] nature of what it is that people are dealing with when- That's the focus of the piece.

And so six issues per year. and I will say Yes, available. You might see it around in funeral homes, hospice care, palliative care. but also all of the issues are available to read for free online. So anyone can read it. You don't have to be in those specific places. But, but I do, recommend it for a business who's in the end of life space.

I think, again, I'm biased, but the, the feedback has been very positive and I'm, really proud of it.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. I'm just imagining... I'm imagining, oh, if you do, you have a facility where people are coming for grief counseling or coming for hospice care, and you're wondering, "What do I put in the waiting room?"

Because that's hard, it's hard to find what feels appropriate. So many things just don't have [00:48:00] the right tone or, the, the right feel to them. And so I think this would be fantastic for people to know about. And can they just go to the website [Waiting, waitingroompublishing.com](http://Waitingroompublishing.com) to learn more?

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yes, absolutely.

Waitingroompublishing.com. And I'm not sure when this episode will air, h- but I know that we are trying to build out... This was tied to May was, m- Mental Health Awareness Month, and so tied to May we were working on getting free subscriptions to businesses. and that was specifically because we do have that list of resources on our back cover that is, We have a list of crisis hotlines that truly we just want as many eyeballs on that as possible. So if you're a business in the end of life space, there are a f- number of, free subscriptions and if you're interested you should just [00:49:00] email me. There's plenty of, there's, contact information on the website and if it's something that you would like for your facility but it's not in the budget right now, email me.

We'll figure it out. And if it is in the budget, then support a small business. but truly, I, think it's a valuable resource for, all visitors in those end of life spaces.

Karen Wyatt: Yes. Yes. I think so too. I, honestly, I think every doctor's office should have this in the waiting room because for one thing we, we have no idea sometimes as medical doctors how many people are actually grieving who are, they're in the office to see us for other things, but they're also grieving at the same time, and they don't even tell us that.

But for them to find something like, "Oh, this is me, this is talking about what I need," I think it's really powerful.

Laura Jaye Cramer: thank you so much. I really appreciate you saying that and I will, m- I'm gonna butcher a statistic [00:50:00] here, but I was just at a benefit for a wonderful facility in Denver, Colorado called Judy's House.

It's a- Family Bereavement Center. So they provide age-appropriate therapy to children who are, who are dealing with loss. And, at their, benefit the other day, they were saying that, I believe it was one in 11 children under the age of 18 will experience loss in their, in their childhood, and that there's a direct relation, between young suicide and bereavement. I believe it's the majority. maybe I... M- maybe don't quote me on this, but a, a large portion of children under the age of 18 who die by suicide, they have previously lost [00:51:00] people in their life. So it is something to keep an eye on.

I know we've been talking about our adult experiences, but particularly for children, it's important to keep an eye on. and so I... That's a long-winded way to say that I, appreciate the thought, and I agree. I think that this should be in, doctor's offices because it is, just important to touch on.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, it is so true. Grief is so universal, and it, touches everyone ultimately, and touches so many more people than we are even aware every day. I always... I love the quote I read somewhere. if you only knew how many people around you are actually grieving, and the people who seem like, that person's inconsiderate, how could they behave that way, they might be grieving.

And so if you knew that, you would have so much more compassion for everyone.

Laura Jaye Cramer: It's so true. It's, so true.

Karen Wyatt: It is. Yeah. [00:52:00] I'm, love the chance to share about the magazine, Can- Candlelight Magazine, and hoping that people will check out your website. And I want to subscribe online so I can read the digital version of it.

Yeah. but Laura, oh my goodness, what a chance to share with someone else who understands this, the survivor journey af- after a suicide death. it's a rare experience for me, and I'm really grateful that you were able and willing to be so vulnerable and to share so openly.

Laura Jaye Cramer: Yeah. I feel the exact same way, and thank you so much for your time today.

I really appreciate it.

Karen Wyatt: You're so very welcome. And thank you for, using your grief to create Candlelight Magazine and making something beautiful out of what has been shattering for your life. And, you're helping everyone.

Laura Jaye Cramer: That, means a lot to me. Yeah. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Karen Wyatt: You're very welcome