



# *How To Know A Person*

Chapter 12: How Were You Shaped by Your Sufferings?

# David Brooks asks: What do we do when we get bad news?

- ▶ Uses example of husband telling wife he has pancreatic cancer.
- ▶ Their response:
- ▶ Theme party nights with friends, reading poetry, long conversations
- ▶ At the end, their lives were stripped down to essentials: “There were many times when we felt blessed. It was as though certain death had granted us an extra life.”



C.S. Lewis:  
Grief is not a  
state but a  
process



# Trauma survivors may assimilate or accommodate...

- ▶ **Assimilate:** put what happened into existing models

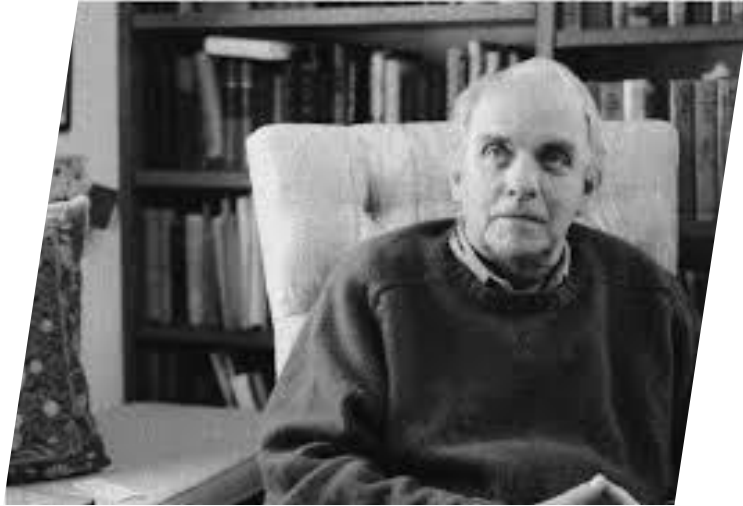
“I survived brain cancer, I’m going to keep chugging along.”

- ▶ **Accommodate:** create new models. “This changes who I am. This changes how I want to spend the rest of my days.” Must rethink the fundamentals of who you are, what the world holds, what kind of God allows this to happen.

## How to know someone?

According to Brooks, “to know someone well, you have to know who they were before they suffered their losses and how they remade their whole outlook after them.”

“Experience is not what happens to you—it’s what you do with what happens to you.”



Two examples:

**Frederick Buechner**, novelist.  
Suicide of his father.  
What was his mother's reaction?  
Was it right or wrong? Or both...  
How did it affect his life?



**Rabbi Harold Kushner**, author of  
*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.  
Loss of his 14-year-old son  
How did it affect his life?



How can we help each other?  
How have you been shaped by suffering?



Barbara Blake Kemp