



August 2023 E-News

Bitter - Sweet

*"There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in."*

-Leonard Cohen, "Anthem"

Dear *{{First Name}}*,

I became a fan of Susan Cain when she published her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. I felt heard in that book as she described what it is like to be an introvert in today's more extroverted world. Then along came her next book *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make us Whole*.

Once again I felt that Cain was naming something I often feel. I couldn't have put a name on that simultaneous feeling that life is both wonderful and heartbreaking. But when she writes "The bittersweet is also about the recognition that light and dark, birth and death—bitter and sweet—are forever paired," Cain helps me decompartmentalize those two things that I experience. Because my life has been both bitter and sweet. Some day if we end up in a small group at a Lumunos event, I'll tell you more about that. And you will tell me your story of light and darkness.

I also appreciate the way Susan Cain connects this sense of longing to our religious traditions and spiritual practices. She reminds us that these traditions have an emphasis on a longing for something better beyond this world. She quotes C.S. Lewis who wrote, "The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing—to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from—my country, the place where I ought to have been born." At its best, that is what my spiritual tradition has taught me, to be fully engaged in this world while holding the hope that there is more than what we can see in this moment. Like Lewis, I want to find the place where all this beauty came from.

Bittersweet feels to me like a Lumunos retreat. So how sweet it is then, that we get to

have an evening with Susan Cain.

I hope you can join us on August 15th for that conversation.

More event details can be found [here](#).



“Susan Cain has described
and validated my
existence once again.”

—GLENNON DOYLE



Sorrow and Longing: *Hallelujah*

My dad was onto Leonard Cohen way before his song *Hallelujah* became a staple of every singing competition show on TV or a topic in Susan Cain's book *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole*.

Anytime I was in the car with my dad as a teenager, Cohen's subterranean baritone whispered bleakly out of the speakers. I can't say I was a huge fan, but *Hallelujah* got me every time. I'd look out the window casually as if I wasn't trying to hold back tears.

As his memories and abilities faded in the haze of Alzheimer's Disease, my dad's love of music (and Leonard Cohen) never waned. During our visits, my brother and I would play my dad's favorite songs on our cell phones. My dad would hum quietly with tears in his eyes as we listened to *Hallelujah*. Somehow songs like this are more powerfully integrated into the brain than memory.

We didn't have a big memorial for my dad. It was just a small gathering of family, including my mom (aka my dad's ex-wife) and her husband Russ (my stepdad), who scattered my dad's ashes on top of picturesque Pitcher Mountain near his birthplace in New Hampshire.

My brother and I picked a spot and spread the ashes (trying to avoid any of the ridiculous movie tropes of ashes flying in our faces) in a pretty little spot behind a rock outcropping. And then, we heard:

*Now I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played, and it pleased the Lord
But you don't really care for music, do ya?*

It was not part of the plan for my stepdad to play *Hallelujah*, but somehow he knew. There really aren't words adequate to describe my experience of that moment.

The best I can do is to say that it was like feeling everything there is to feel – all at once – with the people I love the most. That's the power of *Bittersweet*.

Becca Perry-Hill, Lumunos Staff/Project Lead

Reflection Question

What would we be without our pain? How has your experience of suffering, hardship, injustice, longing, and hurt illuminated your sense of purpose?

Upcoming Events



Online Keynote Speaker **"Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole"**

A Lumunos Style Conversation with Bestselling Author Susan Cain
Facilitated by Doug Wysockey-Johnson
August 15th, 7-8pm ET

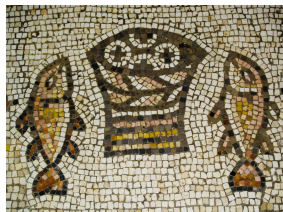
To learn more, click [here](#).



Everyday Mystics **"Meister Eckhart: Part II"**

Monthly drop-in series exploring the wisdom of the mystics and how that wisdom might help us in our spiritual journeys.
Facilitated by Dan Quinlan
September 20th, 7-8:30pm

To learn more, click [here](#).



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