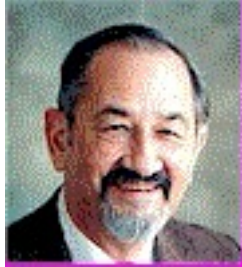


## **Peter K. Gerlach**



**January 27, 1938 – October 22, 2015**

A compassionate, generous, emotionally intelligent, gifted therapist and researcher has passed from this world.

Pete Gerlach graduated from Stanford University with a degree in engineering. He lived in the Chicago area for most of his adult life. Several years of his career were spent in engineering and business. He later recognized that his true interest was in helping people with low nurturance childhoods like his own, heal and attain a healthy sense of self and wholeness. He earned his Masters in Social Work, and continued to take classes, to study inner family systems with Dick Schwartz and develop his own expertise in Personality Parts Work as well as remarriage and blended families.

Pete co-founded the nonprofit Stepfamily Association of Illinois, Inc. (SAI) with interested others in 1981. Shortly after that, he was invited to join the Board of Directors of the Stepfamily Association of America (SAA) by its founders, Drs. John and Emily Visher. He later served on the SAA Advisory Council, and was invited to rejoin the Board in March 2002 by President Marjorie Engel, PhD.

After SAA passed its mission to the National Stepfamily Resource Center (NSRC), Pete became a member of their Stepfamily Experts Council.

Pete took over 3,000 calls on the Stepfamily inFormation "warm-line." He moderated the "Stepfamily Issues" chat at Divorcenet.com for two years, and answered over 500 online step-parenting questions at AllExperts.com He rejoined AllExperts.com 2008 as an expert in effective communication, childhood-trauma recovery, marriage, and counseling.

Pete was diagnosed with Inclusion Body Myocitis (IBM), a progressive muscle wasting disorder in 2000. At the time, Pete lived alone in an apartment in Oak Park, IL. As his disease progressed, he got around in his motorized wheel chair, saw clients in his living room and ordered everything he needed online - groceries, clothes, etc. Eight years ago, he knew he could not continue without assistance. We found a nursing care facility for him in Oregon that was closer to his sister and his nieces. He was much relieved to be in a place where he was surrounded by people who could assist him in tasks of everyday living.

He had a private room and we set up a desk, files and bookshelves he could access from his wheel chair. Although no longer able to see clients in person, he worked on his web site, trying to make it easy for a lay person to understand the concepts of Personality Parts Work. He hoped people who discovered it would find the techniques of working with "Parts" and all of the other lessons and articles he wrote helpful.

Then he set out to record video lessons on Youtube (180 videos), another way for people to locate his resources and get help. People from all over the world began to discover and find value in his videos, his books and his web site (sfhelp.org). They began to call him for appointments for

therapy. From his wheel chair in a nursing care facility, his appointments were conducted by phone/skype.

Pete was gleeful that he could reach so many more people than he ever did in private practice or in his hundreds of classes/retreats. Never did he imagine that he could not only carry on, but expand his impact through his work after his body became so reliant on help for basic physical needs.

As you might think, there were many periods of time that he suffered from frustration, anxiety and serious depression. Never once did his desire to help people stop. He felt that as long as he was making a difference in a way he believed had meaning and value, life was worth living. *He never let his physical condition define him.*

As the years went on, his body continued to deteriorate. It was to the point that he could only be in his chair for short periods each day. He needed the help of a mechanical lift (and people) to get him transferred back and forth from bed to wheel chair. He continued to provide therapy 7 days a week until days before his death. *What is so amazing was that to Pete, each and every one of the people he was helping was worth keeping on living for.* That continued until his body could not support life anymore.

Pete had a mission<sup>1</sup>... and bit by bit he shared what he was learning, practicing with clients and refining. It wasn't until his life appeared to be for all practical purposes over, that Pete made his largest impact by utilizing the tools that had evolved as he physically diminished. The internet made his contributions to help sites, his web site, his youtube

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<sup>1</sup> **“My life purpose** is to educate and motivate other people to protect future generations and break the toxic [wounds + unawareness] cycle that is crippling many persons, families, and our society.” Peter K. Gerlach

instructional videos and his Facebook possible in spreading his knowledge and belief in the power of each of us to learn and heal.

by Break the Cycle Admin

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**A small sampling of quotes from some of Pete's clients from around the globe after learning of his death:**

It is quite possible Pete saved my life. I found him online at an impossibly difficult time. I have steadily learned to apply his methods and the help both through conversations, his writings and videos had given me guidance to my inner strength and his sureness and capacity for love opened my own again.

His contribution to humanity may not be valued like others who promote themselves but his power to empower others is there for all time.

I am forever in his debt and proud to be so.

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Whilst I'm indifferent to reassurances of life after death, it is apparent that even the slightest action today will influence generations upon generations - and I strongly believe Pete's website and work has 'sown the seeds' in an immeasurable way.

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As one poster quoted directly from Pete - "Shifting one

grain of sand will gradually change the course of the river".

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I watched your videos and visited your website. Thank you for giving free help, Surely God can bless you because you saved my life. I didn't know what was wrong with me. I am a grown wounded child. I would not have ever known unless I listened to your material and read the information you provided.

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Pete's site is pure gold. Federal legislation should be enacted to force it to be presented on breaks during the Super Bowl.

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