



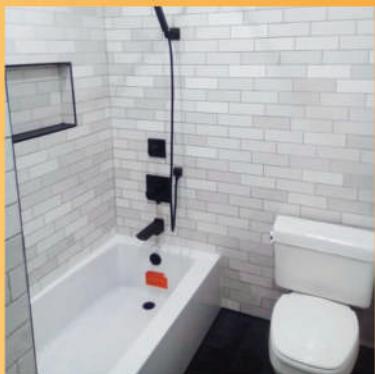
DEC • JAN
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*Helping
OTHERS Heal*

Amy Davis
DIAMOND HEART THERAPY



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CYNTHIA FODOR'S GREAT GETAWAYS WHY WOMEN TRAVEL SOLO



Cynthia Fodor

We are sitting on the balcony of our cruise ship that just pulled into Kusadası, Turkey, overlooking cliffs and white walls of homes on the Aegean Sea. Four single women on our Holiday Vacations tour wouldn't miss this magical Mediterranean tour for the world. Marsha of Ames has traveled without a companion and loves it.

"I love seeing new places and I don't have someone to travel with so I decided to go on my own. You meet all kinds of different new people you would never meet otherwise."

She says there's always a little trepidation at first. She goes on group tours where everyone is welcoming. Everyone looks out for each other. The tour guides walk you through every step and haul your luggage right to your room.

"I don't mind having a room to myself. I sleep better if I'm on my own," Marsha says.

SAVOR NEW EXPERIENCES

Travel awakens your mind and stirs your sense of curiosity. It helps you to understand other cultures and see your own life with fresh eyes. When you are by yourself, you can delight in the moment without distractions.

MAKE NEW FRIENDS

Joyce of Webster City has been flying solo for 10 years to make new friends and see the world.

"I just love traveling by myself. I'm single and never married. I do enjoy meeting new people." She never feels lonely or alone. "I always have someone to eat with or someone who invites me to do something when there's free time."

STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Joyce has experienced Egypt, Kenya, Iceland, Canada and the National Parks. She books one adventure every year.

Being a cancer survivor, it's more of a challenge. "It helps me to push myself and my oncologist encouraged me to do it. So I did it!"

CLIMB TO NEW HEIGHTS

After recently undergoing radiation, on our trip, Joyce pushed herself to climb part of a mountain in Delphi, Greece. At the top, she raised her hands to the sky in joy and yelled, "I did it!"

There's nothing like feeling the rush of an extraordinary travel experience, with a friend or alone. Joyce and Marsha's advice to other single women: try new things, see new places. "Get up and go! JUST DO IT!" *

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- PROVIDING EDUCATION AND TOOLS TO HELP WOMEN GROW THEIR BUSINESSES
- EMPOWERING WOMEN TO FOLLOW THEIR PASSIONS AND TO FIND THEIR BLISS



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Healthy Mind & Body 8

Let Love Lead the Way

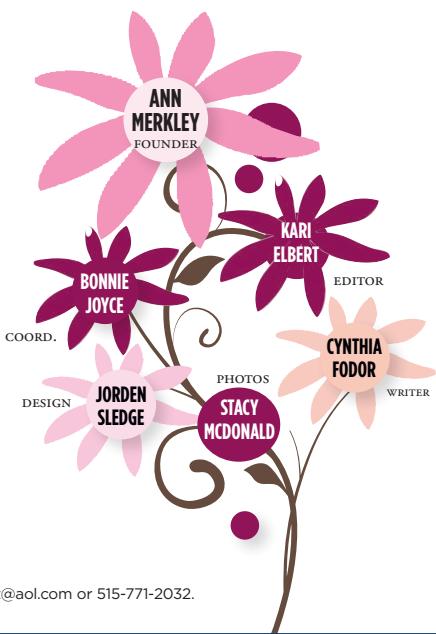
BY AMY DAVIS • *Diamond Heart Therapy and Counseling*



Family Law 12

Grandparents Effectively Have No Rights When it Comes to custody in Most Cases

BY TARA HOFBAUER • *Shindler, Anderson, Goplerud & Weese P.C.*





Ann Merkley

heads to handle.

I've learned a lot over the years by working with estate, tax, and long-term care specialists. I've also helped a lot of my clients deal with the estates of their parents. I find that a lot of them don't know the specifics of their parents' plans or their parents have told them that everything was in order when there were items missing.

Most parents don't want to leave a complicated mess to their children when they pass. I always say that the greatest gift they can leave you is to have all their plans in order.

Here is a list of items to discuss with your parents to be sure their financial plans are in order

1. LEGAL DOCUMENTS

- Last Will and Testament** - This serves as the instruction "handbook" to the probate court, however, most parents don't want their estates to go through the probate process due the added cost, time and public record.

- Revocable Living Trust** - Parents often choose to use a Revocable Living Trust to avoid having their estates go through the probate court process. In Iowa, real estate (homes, farms, rentals, lake homes, timeshares, etc.) often can't be passed on to their beneficiaries unless their deed is inside a trust. A common misconception is that their Last Will and Testament will help avoid the probate process and it is the exact opposite.

- Updated Beneficiary Designations** - Clients/parents are often unaware that a beneficiary form will often "trump" what is listed in a Will or Trust. It's important to review your beneficiary forms for all your assets. You may wish to name both a primary and contingent beneficiaries on the forms in case a beneficiary pre-deceases you. I also suggest keeping copies of all beneficiary forms in case of a dispute.

- Beneficiary Designations on All assets** - Clients/parents are unaware that every financial asset needs a beneficiary designation on it. A list of common missed items are – Bank accounts, CD's, mutual funds, individual stock certificates, brokerage accounts, savings bonds, safe deposit items, etc. It only takes one asset to possibly cause the entire estate to go through the probate process.

- Financial and Healthcare Powers of Attorney** - These documents allow someone to handle financial decisions and medical decisions in case you are unable to due to being incapacitated. They should be shared with the individuals named in the documents. I personally carry my own

ARE YOUR PARENTS' ESTATE PLANNING, TAX PLANNING, AND LONG-TERM CARE STRATEGIES IN ORDER?

When working with our clients and their financial planning, we often find that they don't know if their parents' planning is in order. I often refer to their parents as a "bucket over their heads"...it will eventually be coming down on their

healthcare power of attorney with me in case of an accident. I also gave my family, doctor and hospital copies as well.

- A list of all assets, logins and passwords** - These are not legal documents but will save you countless hours trying to hunt them down.

2. TAX PLANNING

I became very aware of how important tax planning is when one of my clients received a large taxable asset (IRA) from his parents and had to share approx. 60% or \$600,000 of it with the government. This can often be avoided through proper strategic tax planning. We work very closely with tax specialists to minimize any tax consequences to beneficiaries.

3. LONG TERM CARE STRATEGIES

There are many different options that can be chosen to pay for any needed healthcare needs as we age. They range from using your own investments, long-term care insurance/hybrid products all the up to specialized trust planning.

Handling a parent's care can be a very stressful time.... especially if you don't know their wishes or what their plan is.

I ask my clients three basic questions -

- Where do you want to receive your care?**
- Who do you want to provide your care?**
- How will you pay for your care?**

There are many other items to consider but this will get you started. My job is to be sure your assets go to who you want, when you want and how you want. I want to honor your and your parents' wishes. In conclusion, a well-planned estate plan is the biggest gift you can leave your loved ones. *

For a complimentary estate plan consultation, please contact Merkley Wealth Associates at 515-259-3571 or jodi.steger@ceterafs.com. You may also see our website [www.merkleywealth.com](http://merkleywealth.com) for more information.

Ann Merkley, Registered Representative

6911 Vista Drive, West Des Moines, IA 50226

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Rita Henry

RITA HENRY: *Because of Amy*

What does it take to truly feel empowered? To be free? To stop letting other people/society/the patriarchy control your life?

It takes courage to face, process, and heal everything from the past that you don't have peace with today. (The things that make your heart race, your skin crawl, your stomach roil, and your mind run a million miles an hour in the opposite direction.)

Because while we're taught to avoid pain at all costs, pain is the key to living an empowered joy-filled life that's truly yours. Pain shows you exactly what's coming up to be healed.

Don't believe me? Rita Henry experienced what is arguably one of the worst things a person can possibly go through: her daughter Amy died in her arms at 9 days old. And yet, Rita would say that Amy's life and death were an absolute gift. They were an invitation to show the f*ck up and really live.

When Rita did her work to heal (not just from the heart-shattering loss of Amy, but from being raised by a raging asshole, from being sexually assaulted at 10 years old, and from everything in between), her life changed. She stopped living with misunderstandings, traumas, and filters she hadn't even known where there. She no longer carried the lie that she was going to be abandoned and rejected if she didn't lose herself to the wants and needs of everyone around her.

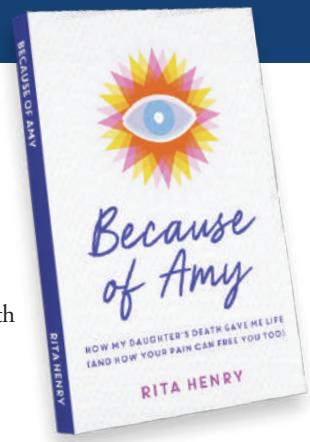
Because of Amy, Rita couldn't stay stuck in the patterns she'd gotten used to. Because of Amy, she did her work to confront all the ways she'd (innocently and ignorantly) re-created the childhood "normal" she'd

spent so long running from. Because of Amy, she was finally (finally, FINALLY) able to make a new choice.

Rita wrote all about it in her new book *Because of Amy: How My Daughter's Death Gave Me Life (And How Your Pain Can Free You Too)*. It's raw. It's vulnerable. And it's proof that no matter what you've been through, you can do your work and heal.

If you're courageous enough to dive in, on the other side of facing the pain is a life you can't possibly imagine right now. Rita's book will not only show you how she navigated that journey for herself, but it creates the perfect space for you to start unpacking and navigating your own.

You deserve to free yourself from the pain, but the only way through is through. Grab your copy of *Because of Amy* today (and the free companion resources that go with it) so you don't have to go through it alone. *



Rita Henry
Intuitive Guide and Healer

Rita Henry is an Intuitive Guide and Healer who helps people release pain from their past because she's faced her own. From sexual assault to the death of her 9-day-old daughter, Rita's gotten her ass kicked by life and now helps others heal theirs. With compassion, Love, and Truth, Rita holds space for you to make energetic shifts that quiet the chaos within, heal your troubled past, and create a life you fricken' love.

Book: <https://ritahenry.com/the-book>

FREE Companion Resources: <https://resources.ritahenry.com/because-ofamy>

Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FTW7DFBK>



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Helping OTHERS Heal

By Cynthia Fodor

"WHAT YOU SEEK IS SEEKING YOU. WHEN YOU HAVE THE DESIRE, WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY, THE TEACHER WILL APPEAR. WE ARE ALL CONNECTED." -AMY DAVIS

Sometimes, you just need someone to listen. When you meet Amy Davis, you feel her warmth and easily want to share your thoughts and feelings. You sense you're with someone who understands. She gets you because she's been there. Amy has an understanding born out of her own real life experiences.

"Sometimes people struggle with being who they are, being authentic. Peeling away the layers, unlearning and relearning, that's a lot of what life is," she says.

Amy listens, objectively without judgment.

"This is a safe place. A lot of people hold things inside. I see the relief they feel when they speak their truth. A lot of times people are scared they will be judged," Amy explains.

"I see their potential that they can't see in themselves. All the stuff they experience in their life, when they can release that and somebody says, 'You're OK with who you are. How do you want your life to look? What steps do you need to take to get there?' A lot of times, we have these blocks. We're scared of moving forward."

As a Clinical Social Worker and Therapist, Amy understands each person has their own story. She knows because she has HER OWN story. It was through her own struggles in life that she found her

purpose in life. She grew up with instability with a mother who struggled with mental health issues.

"She struggled her whole life. She was on and off substances. We moved around a lot. I wasn't safe," Amy shares.

After her mother's suicide in 2011, Amy knew she needed help and joined a support group for survivors of suicide loss. Shattered and lost, she learned she wasn't alone. She felt motivated to make a difference.

"I don't want anyone else to experience what I did. I wanted to make an impact on the world. After many months of heartache and asking 'why me?' I received an answer back of 'why not me?' I signed up for school the next day."

The single mother of two daughters went back to school for seven years, earning her Bachelor's Degree at Grandview University and her Master's Degree from the University of Iowa. She specializes in grief counseling and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She is also President of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention here in Iowa.

Advocating at our state and national capitols to help make changes in mental health laws, providing mental health support at survivor of suicide loss events, and publicly speaking of her loss while offering hope are ways that Amy gives back. She

co-hosted the First Annual Diamonds & Donations Gala for Free Mental Health Care alongside Foster's Voice, Suicide Awareness. The event raised \$26,000 for free mental health care in Central Iowa.

Amy named her practice Diamond Heart Therapy. "The reason is that we all go through stuff just like diamonds. Carbon has to go through pressure in difficult times. A lot of it is having resilience and bouncing back, saying the pain is awful, the fear is debilitating but I can work through this."

Her advice is to seek help if you're struggling. Amy is teaching others that life goes on and you can find good in the worst situation. She has found the silver lining in her own dark cloud.

"I have empathy for anyone who struggles. Stephen Covey said, 'Seek first to understand and then to be understood.' I had to learn to understand myself first. A mom's job is to teach and my mom taught me invaluable lessons," Amy says through tears. "Not in the way that was gentle and sweet, but her hard lessons changed my life."

Her mother taught her life lessons in the only way she knew how. The events that caused Amy Davis the most pain have led her to a path of purpose.

"My mother lives on through me and I honor her now. She is in my heart and that never dies. Grief is love disguised as pain."

Amy is now full of joy, listening, helping others smile again, as they find their way through the ups and downs of life. She knows, "In the midst of all that sorrow, we can still have peace, joy and love." *



Amy Davis, MSW, LISW

Owner/Clinical Director of
Diamond Heart Therapy

email: amy.davis@diamondhearttherapy.com

website: www.diamondhearttherapy.com

phone: 515-850-2894





**Susan
Sutton-Ludwig**

*Guided by Purpose,
Grounded in Service:*

MEET SUSAN SUTTON-LUDWIG

Raised in southern Iowa, I grew up in a home where hand-me-downs were a way of life, crockpot dinners often featured pheasant from dad's road hunts, and "chicken" was sometimes our pet rabbit. What many might call poor by today's standards, I now cherish as a childhood full of grit, resourcefulness, and deep family values.

I graduated from Urbandale High School, and while pregnant with my first child, earned my Associate of Science degree from DMACC. Later, I pursued certifications as a Certified Medical Assistant, Limited X-Ray Tech, and Phlebotomy Technician. While I loved working in the medical field, I chose to stay home with my children—shifting to home daycare by day and running a paper route at 3 a.m. by night, sometimes selling shoes at Von Maur on weekends. Work has never intimidated me—I've always run toward it.

In 2004, I became a licensed real estate agent in Iowa and have never looked back. Real estate quickly became my passion and calling. Helping clients navigate one of life's biggest transitions—buying or selling a home—is not just a job for me, it's a privilege. Home is where our stories unfold, where we raise children, share meals, and build lifelong memories. I feel honored to be a small part of that journey for the families I serve.

Over the years, I've come to understand the quiet strength and deep wisdom women bring to their homes, families, and careers. It took me time to discover my own power, but now I lead with it daily—fueled by love, faith, and a service-driven heart. I've built my business on relationships, trust, and tireless work ethic. Whether it's helping buyers find their perfect home or guiding sellers through their next chapter, I approach every transaction with empathy, honesty, and expertise.

My greatest "why" is my family. I'm a proud mother of five—three biological and two stepchildren—ages 25 to 35. I'm also incredibly blessed to work alongside my husband, Bill Ludwig, as my partner in both life and real estate. What began as Sutton Real Estate evolved into the Ludwig Real Estate Team, and together, we've built a reputation in the Des Moines metro for integrity, results, and heart.

I specialize in resale homes, new construction, remodels, and acreages, offering my clients not only expert guidance but also design insight and finishing touches that turn houses into homes. *

Susan Sutton-Ludwig
Real Estate Agent – Des Moines Metro | Ankeny, Iowa
Ludwig Real Estate/Remax Concepts

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Debra L. Sears



The friendships and business relationships that have been forged over the past 46 years are my greatest reward. I love what I do and the people that have trusted me with their finances, health, life and disability insurance. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

As you prepare for the year end and the position that you want to be in going into the New Year, I encourage you to pay attention to the Federal timelines and what that means to you.

Individuals Over Age 65

You can join, switch or drop a Medicare Supplement, a Medicare Advantage plan (Medicare Part C) or a Prescription Drug Plan (Medicare Part D) during these defined times:

Initial Enrollment Period – when you first become eligible for Medicare you can join a plan. This could be aging into Medicare or retiring from an employer group past your 65th birthday;

Open Enrollment Period – October 15 – December 7 each year you can make changes to your choice for Medicare supplement, Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug Plan, effective January 1st.

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period – January 1 through March 31 each year if you are enrolled in an Advantage Plan you may switch to a different plan or back to Original Medicare. You can only make one change during this period.

Individuals Under Age 65

We assess your current coverage and the options that you may have. We address your needs, wants, concerns and budget. We will offer you many options to compare and help you determine which choice you may want to consider. Whether you turned 26 and are aging off of a parents plan, between jobs, divorcing or are self-employed we are here to help.

Employers/Employees

This is a great time to re-evaluate the employee benefits. Benefits can set you apart from your competition. We consider what you currently have as compared to your industry, how much do you as employers contribute to those plans and what fits your budget. Many times details have been overlooked or unattended to that can have a dramatic difference on your bottom line. This can add to your ability to attract and retain current and future employees. Stability in your workforce is key to your ability to compete. Investing in your greatest asset – your employees – will increase your profitability. It is essential that the employer be compliant and that is what a seasoned and dedicated agent will ensure.

We offer many companies, products and services to a vast population of people in different times of their lives. We make things easy for anyone to understand so you feel comfortable with the decisions that you make. There is no such thing as a silly question. Health insurance is complex and yet extremely important. The enrollment process can

be a very smooth experience for the employer and the employees. We will conduct complimentary employee meetings so everyone can ask questions and gain a better understanding of the benefits the employer is offering. The agent plays a significant role in suggesting benefits that will fit your budget and keep you competitive in the marketplace, enabling you to attract and retain quality employees. I spend as much time as needed to ensure your comfort level has been met and exceeded with relentless service.

The products and services that we offer are a broad menu, but here are a few that are most important.

- Overall benefit strategy
- Focus on priority of benefits offered, health, dental, vision, disability, life, IRAs
- Assistance with COBRA and State Continuation – employer responsibilities
- Annual plan review and marketing analysis
- HDHP and HSA maximization
- Disability both Long Term and Short Term
- Life Insurance
- Compliance
- Medicare transition for employees
- 401(k)/IRA rollovers

I want to thank all current and past clients for the endless referrals that you continue to send my way. The professional confidence that you have places in me is the ultimate compliment. We wish you the very best of good health, much laughter and lots of love throughout the holiday season and next year! *

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Lily Hou

How Yoga Fixed Me - Haley Stomp

PART I

I was carried out of the boat, unable to look down at my damaged legs. I knew it was bad; the pain was intense, but the shock of what happened was an emotional earthquake. Ten minutes prior, I had been floating

in the lake, in awe of how I could see my hands and legs clearly under the glassy water and grateful for being in such a beautiful place. Everything about the moments before is a beautiful memory of peace. Peace about making it through seven months of 2020. Peace about spending time in northern Wisconsin with our friends and into someone else's bubble. We left our COVID cabin fever at home for a new, wonderful kind of cabin fever.

I am not an experienced water skier. Nor am I an adventurous sort when it comes to water sports. I prefer sports that require my body to move or lift things and not much else – running, volleyball, yoga, aerobics, weightlifting. I am, however, not afraid to try things and take risks. This is how I found myself water skiing for the second time in my life.

I got up on skis successfully a couple of times for a brief ride, and honestly, that was enough for me. After my second ride, I was back in the starting position. Unsure what was next as the boat crew moved around, I loosened my grip on the handle while I floated on my back, knees bent, a soft breeze on my face.

Then it happened. The boat roared forward, dragging the rope and handle between my legs at sonic speed. The handle grabbed my legs

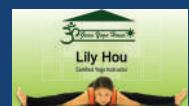
mid-thigh. Locked into my fascia with force, I was pulled forward in the water. Within a matter of seconds, the plastic handle on the rope rolled up my legs and propelled over my knees, and the ride of my life was over. With searing pain, my imagination was running through its long list of bad outcomes. I was too scared to look at my legs.

Fast forward a week. Back home, after several days in bed with ice packs, pillows, and ibuprofen, I accepted that I would eventually recover with no physical restrictions. I walked gingerly, in pain, with every step. There was a giant abstract art installation in the form of rainbow bruises on the front and back of my legs. Rope burns were tattooed into my thighs, and divots bisected the fascia on my legs – one big dip carved into each thigh. For the most part, it looked worse than it felt.

Two different doctors assured me nothing was broken. The sports medicine doctor suggested I do yoga to help stretch and build strength in my quad muscles as part of the healing process. Little did he know that yoga would do much more than that for me. *

**SEE PART II IN THE FEB/MAR 2026
WOW CONNECT DSM ISSUE**

Lily Hou has owned Green Yoga House (greenyogahouse.com) since 2003. She began her practice in the mid-1990s and quickly discovered the transforming benefits of yoga for her rheumatoid arthritis. She has received training by some renowned yoga masters on various styles. As a certified yoga instructor, Lily is known to teach with an eclectic blend of many styles and uses her extensive knowledge of body alignments and exercise safety in designing her classes to meet individual needs. She approaches her mostly private classes with enthusiasm, compassion and respect for each client. Lily has a Bachelor's Degree in English and a Master's Degree in American Literature. She frequently speaks on yoga and wellness. She is also passionate about her fun jewelry business, "Lily Hand Made," greenyogahouse.com • 515-991-6266



Amy Davis

Let LOVE Lead the WAY

“I’m a beautiful day in the neighborhood, won’t you be my neighbor?” Mr. Rogers sings this tune as he enters his home from his day at the office. He removes his business jacket as he replaces it with one of his iconic sweaters. This simple, natural act lets the audience know that he is ready to take them on a journey of learning and discovery.

Being a therapist is removing my own personal jacket, replacing it with my clients as we walk an hour long journey of self-discovery, pain, insight, and reflection. I leave my story at the door, with all of the lessons I have learned as gifts of wisdom that are not spoken, but mirrored back to my clients as a familiarity in my eyes. My office is a sacred space, oftentimes the first place many clients have felt safe enough to share something that may have been weighing them down for decades. I help them remember who they are, as they take their heavy jackets of protection off, allowing their vulnerability to show me their scars of hurt and pain. I too, have many scars from hurt and pain. They do not know this, as this is their time to feel seen and heard, not mine. My insight, optimism, and genuine concern for them is not from a place of naivety, rather deep, immense longing for connection. As I help them let go of what is not theirs and reclaim what is, I in turn discover more of myself. What my clients may not know is that although I am a guide for their healing, with each conversation, I am also healing. I too have a longing in my heart and soul to be seen, heard, understood and felt. I recognize their pain as my own. We are all humans trying to get through this life as unscathed as possible. In order to attain peace, we must remove the masks we hide behind to show others that we are not okay. Healing means we must be truthful with not only ourselves, but those around us. True freedom is authenticity and awareness that life is painfully beautiful.

Sometimes life sucks, it’s hard to navigate, and we need help. THIS is the gift of therapy.

As I hold the pain of losing my mom, I in turn, carry the wisdom of appreciating beauty every moment I can. I promised her that day that I would, “do something with her dying by suicide, that she didn’t die for nothing”. I needed to understand, know, search for clues and find answers. In turn, I found myself. Part of me also died with her the night she took her life. The part that held the fear of showing who I am to the world. Being a therapist is more than a job to me, it is a gift I share from my heart, a heart that did not harden with life, but rather opened up to the possibility of letting love lead the way. *

Let's Connect!

Diamond Heart Therapy and Counseling

FACEBOOK - @Diamond Heart Therapy and Counseling

INSTAGRAM - @diamondheart_therapy

TIKTOK - @diamondhearttherapy

YOUTUBE - @diamondhearttherapy

LINKEDIN - @AmyDavis,MSW,LISW

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY - Amy Marie Davis, MSW, LISW

Diamond Heart Therapy Annual Foster Cares Fund Gala

FACEBOOK - Diamond Heart Therapy Annual Foster Cares Fund Gala

INSTAGRAM - @diamondsanddonations

DONATE - <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/2nd-annual-diamonds-and-donation-gala>

Amy Davis, MSW, LISW

Amy is a mom, wife, Clinical Social Worker, advocate for mental health, public speaker, and soon to be published author. Since losing her mom to suicide in late 2011, Amy began her journey of healing with the understanding that it was up to her to heal and change generational wounds. This meant seven years of advanced education as a single mom, showing herself and her daughters, that they could do anything they set their hearts and minds to. Amy now is married and has a beautiful blended family with four amazing children, who are all on their own path of self-discovery.

Web: diamondhearttherapy.com

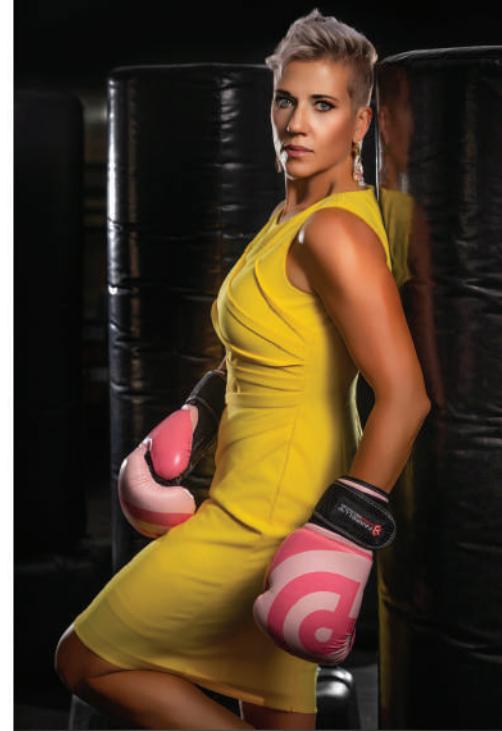
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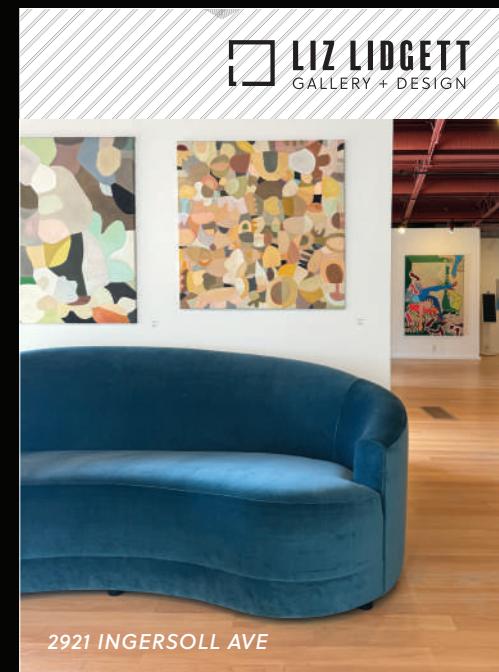
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Tara Hofbauer

Grandparents EFFECTIVELY HAVE NO RIGHTS WHEN IT COMES TO custody IN MOST CASES

Occasionally, I will hear from a grandparent—usually a grandmother—whose close relationship with her grandchildren has been threatened by a severed relationship with the children's parents. This desperate grandmother will inquire about "grandparents' rights."

In Iowa, grandparents have very little rights when it comes to visitation with their grandchildren. Both grandparents and great-grandparents may petition the court for grandchild or great-grandchild visitation when that grandparent or great-grandparent's child or grandchild who is the parent of the children in question has died. To put it simply, if the grandparent or great-grandparent's own child or grandchild is still living, the grandparent visitation right does not exist. If the grandparent in question has met this initial threshold question, then the next question for the court is whether a fit parent's decision to deny grandparent visitation is in the children's best interests.

A court may grant the grandparent or great-grandparent visitation if they find all of the following:

- It is in the best interests of the children in question;
- The grandparent has a substantial relationship with the children;
- The living parent's judgment is so impaired that granting the visitation outweighs any effect on the parent-child relationship.

How does a grandparent prove that the living parent's judgment is thusly impaired? By proving any of the following:

- Neglect of the children;
- Abuse of the children;
- Violence toward the children;
- Indifference or absence of feeling toward the children;
- Shown an unwillingness or inability to promote the emotional and physical well-being of the children;
- Substance use disorder;
- Certain mental illness diagnoses.

The best interests standard is replete throughout the Iowa Code and case law when it comes to family law in Iowa. The best interests of the child can be determined using factors such as the children's relationships with other close family members compared to that of the relationship with the grandparent; the geographical location of the grandparent in relation to the children; the children's and parent's available time for grandparent visitation; the age of the children, the wishes and concerns of the children, the health and safety of the children; criminal histories of the grandparent, the wishes and concerns of the parent and anything else that may help a court determine what is in the best interests of the children.

So when I get a call from a grandparent who wants to discuss their rights to seeing their grandchildren, I feel a mixture of sadness and helplessness—as in Iowa, grandparents effectively have no rights. *

Tara L. Hofbauer - Shareholder

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I earned my law degree from Drake University Law School (J.D. with honors, 2006) after studying English and Rhetorical Studies at Iowa State University (B.S. with distinction, 2004). One of the most rewarding experiences of my education was attending an intensive foreign language program at the Universidad Internacional in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. Before joining Shindler, Anderson, Goplerud & Weese, P.C. in 2012, I was a prosecutor and served on the Board of Directors at Child Abuse Prevention Services. With experience in Family Law, Juvenile Law, Custody, Child Support and more, I am not merely striving for results; I am striving for your peace of mind. When the final ruling is delivered, you will know that I have scoured every inch of the case because I believe in being the most prepared lawyer in the courtroom—every time. I am determined never to look back on a case and wonder if I've done enough. You deserve the best preparation and representation so that you can set yourself up for a brighter future.

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