

Nancy Berns Ph.D.

EXTENDED SPEAKING BIOGRAPHY



Nancy Berns, Ph.D. is a professor of sociology at Drake University and author of *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us* and the popular TEDx talk *Beyond Closure*. Nancy travels around the country speaking to many community groups, conferences, organizations, corporations, schools, and churches. She is currently working on a new book about how people carry joy and grief together.

Since 2000, Nancy has been teaching at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Her classes cover grief, loss, death, listening, forgiveness, emotions, violence and restorative justice. Her interest in grief and death became intensely personal after their son was stillborn in 2001. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Ames, Iowa.

Nestled a few miles from a town of 300 people, Nancy grew up on her family's Nebraska farm. She graduated in 1992 with a B.A. in sociology from Doane College. While in college Nancy interned at the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln, Nebraska, including a volunteer stint on death row. In addition to prison, she also volunteered at two different rape and spouse abuse crisis centers.

After graduation from Doane, Nancy spent a year in Hamburg, Germany on a Fulbright scholarship observing how police handle social problems such as drug use and prostitution. From there, she pursued a Masters and Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Her dissertation research focused on media and popular understandings of domestic violence, which is the basis of her first book *Framing the Victim: Domestic Violence, Media and Social Problems* (Aldine de Gruyter 2004).

Her second book, *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us* (2011, Temple University Press), turns to a different set of social problems relating to closure, grief, and loss. *Closure* received the Charles Horton Cooley Award for best book of the year awarded by the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction and received an Honorable Mention Book Award for the Emotions section of the American Sociological Association.