

Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

October 2023

“Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity; the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.

— Earl Grollman

St. Luke's Hospice

Bereavement Team:

484-526-2499

PLEASE NOTE:

If you would like to be added or removed from our mailing list or prefer to receive an electronic copy, please contact us at 484-526-2499.

When we grieve the death of a loved one, holidays, anniversaries and other days often become painful triggers. Memories are the grieving mind's invitation to remember rather than to forget. We remember that it was one month or one year ago that our loved one was alive and that provides a context in which we can place an event that still seems unreal and unimaginable. The anniversary gives us another opportunity to revisit the death in order to believe the unbelievable and accept the unacceptable a little more fully.

As difficult dates loom on the horizon, we dread them, realizing that the tears we'd hoped were behind us will well up again, and the loneliness of missing the person will rise to the surface. It's tempting to think you can avoid these painful reminders and pretend it's a day like any other day.

We have a choice. We cannot escape the impact of these special days; these reminders of life and death are unavoidable. The only choice is whether we will control the grief or whether we will allow the grief to control us. Avoidance doesn't work well, because just when we least expect it, grief taps us on the shoulder and consumes us. We may even get through the actual day, but the grief attack will occur a day or so earlier, or a week or two later. Reconciling our loss is best accomplished by working at it, not by ignoring and hoping it will go away.

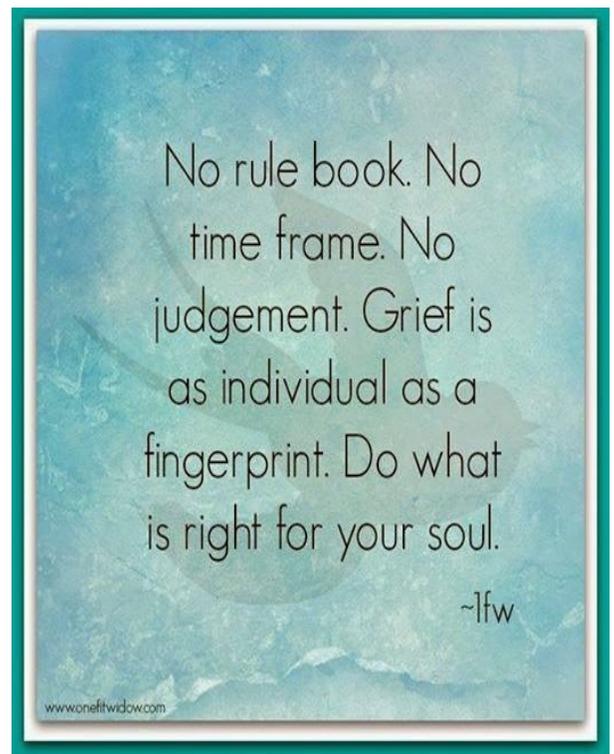
Anniversaries and special days allow us the opportunity to take inventory, to review some lessons learned and to plan ahead. Allow yourself to grieve, allow yourself to love and miss your loved one. Try to plan some coping strategies ahead of time. And if you are able to try to plan something that helps you continue to feel connected to your loved one.

And if nothing else, these days serve to remind us that we have made it thus far, and that in itself is worth celebrating.



How to Manage Tough Days

- **Depart from your usual activities.** Take the dreaded day off from work since there's no use pretending that this day is like any other day. Don't allow anyone to accuse you of "wallowing in your grief" by doing this. Taking time to mourn and remember is actually facing reality much more than avoiding it.
- **Choose the company you keep.** Don't assume that the best people to surround you are those with whom you've always spent that day. You may feel more comfortable
- **Don't wait for others to remember.** Your grief easily slips from the minds of even your closest friends and family. Take the initiative and call people when the dread of the day's approach first starts to trouble you. Cash in those "if there's anything I can do" offers. Be specific and tell people what you need – someone to drive you to the cemetery, to take you to lunch or to provide a shoulder for you to cry on.
- **Introduce ritual.** A memorial service, the lighting of a memorial candle or a mass said for the deceased can not only mark the day, but also be symbolic of your survival and determination.
- **Claim your memories.** Take out the photograph albums, scrapbooks, love letters and line up all the gifts and souvenirs you cherish. Call to mind the joys as well as the struggles that shaped the relationship with your loved one. Doing this can be painful at first, but memories have a wonderful way of softening as we work with them.
- **Do what is meaningful to you.** On a birthday, celebrate the person's life as well as commemorating their death. Do an activity that you would have enjoyed together. Or write a new obituary which contains all the memories you have of the person, their physical appearance, idiosyncrasies and qualities that you want to remember.
- **Re-read the cards and notes you received and the visitors book from the funeral.** These may remind you that in the most difficult days of your life, you were not alone, and that the people who cared then still care now, even though they may not be as vocal or forthcoming.
- **Take time to look forward.** While you grieve the past, celebrate today's joys. Count the blessings you have, and the people who are part of your life. Are there any of these relationships that could use some attention? Are there things that could be said to those who still support you?
- **Think big and think small.** Plan one thing you would like for the future, whether it's redecorating a room or planning a vacation. But also think small. Do something on this tough day for yourself. Buy a book you've been meaning to read, rearrange the living room furniture, go for a walk or take in a movie. Do something you would like to do for you!



Grief Support

Grief Support for You

St. Luke's Hospice abides by CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines for public gatherings during these challenging times. Here are support options we currently offer:

Individual support: Our bereavement counselors provide support and information through video and telephone counseling sessions. Contact information is on the front page of this newsletter.

Good Grief Workshops: These 90-minute workshops are offered virtually twice a month to provide you with a better understanding of what grief is, how it may affect you emotionally, physically, spiritually and psychologically, coping strategies and ways to reconcile the loss. For more information and to receive an invitation to join the meeting, call (484) 526-2499. You will be asked to download the Microsoft Teams app on your smart phone or computer. Workshop offerings include a daytime and an evening option each month:

Thursday, October 12th 2023, 1-2:30PM

Wednesday, October 25th 2023, 6-7:30PM

Thursday, November 2nd 2023, 1-2:30PM

Wednesday, November 15th 2023, 6-7:30PM

Video library: St. Luke's website includes a dozen short videos that provide information about the grieving and mourning process and ways to care for yourself after a loss. To view the videos, go to <https://www.slnh.org/vna> and click on the hospice heading. On the left side of the screen under the VNA heading, click on grief support. About halfway down this page, click onto the video library heading "Want to understand your grief?" Access the library by answering the question about your connection with St. Luke's Hospice (if any). Then view the videos from the comfort of your home.

Monthly Support Groups

Brodheads ville

The Brodheads ville group meets the third Monday of the month from 10:00 -11:30 am at the Western Pocono Community Library, 131 Pilgrim Way, Brodheads ville, 18322.

It provides space for participants to receive and provide support in a collaborative environment. It is facilitated by a grief counselor.

For more information, contact Alexandra at (484) 635-0662 and if the weather looks threatening, call (484) 526-2514 and listen for an update on this

Virtual

A new virtual group will begin meeting in November. It will be via Microsoft Teams the first Friday of every month from 10:00-11:30 am.

This group will provide a space for therapeutic and supportive conversation to process grief. Topics will vary based on attendance. It is facilitated by a grief counselor. For more information, contact Katie Ruf at (484) 225-9269 .

Luminaria Event

St. Luke's Hospice is pleased to invite you to our annual Luminaria Lighting on November 11, 2023. This special evening celebrates the light and love that lost loved ones have brought into our lives and our community. It is an opportunity to reflect, remember and celebrate the people in our lives, past and present that brighten our world. All proceeds from this event support the mission of St. Luke's Hospice to deliver compassionate, end-of-life care for patients, along with support and guidance for families navigating the grieving process. In honor of all who unselfishly served and protected our nation, we will have a special salute to all our veterans. Please join us to celebrate loved ones, their families, and their legacies. Registration is required. For more information or to register, please visit [slnh.org/](https://www.slnh.org/)

Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

Below is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Because of the pandemic and the need for physical distancing, many resources may only be offered virtually. Please contact our bereavement department at 484-526-2499 if you need additional support.

Adult Support Information

Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center offers bereavement support for LGBT people who have experienced loss. For more information, please visit their website at www.bradburysullivancenter.org or email at reilly@bradburysullivancenter.org.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing support for parents, grandparents and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling. Visit www.thecompassionatefriends.org. Enter your zip code to locate the local chapter and contact person near you.

Doylestown Hospital Hospice offers a variety of support groups and programs that change seasonally. Visit their website at www.doylestownhealth.org/hospital/services/bereavement or call 215-345-2079.

Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress and Life Transitions is currently being offered virtually by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Visit www.givinggriefavoice.com or call 610-730-1992. Be sure to indicate if your loved one was a St. Luke's Hospice patient.

Grand View Hospital Hospice offers groups and services that change seasonally. For more information, call 215-453-4210.

Grief Share is a faith-based support group offered throughout the Lehigh Valley. Visit their website at www.griefshare.org and enter your zip code to find the contact person and program near you.

OASIS Community Center offers a variety of support groups to those grieving a loss due to substance related causes. Therapist-led meetings are held in-person and virtually for bereaved parents and young adults (siblings, partners, friends, etc.). Groups for bereaved youth ages 7-17 and bereaved caregivers raising bereaved children are offered in-person. For dates and times, visit www.oasisbethlehem.org, call 484-747-6825 or email at rhonda@oasisbethlehem.org to register.

GRASP (Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing) currently offers two virtual evening meetings per month, plus an afternoon meeting at the Oasis Center. Call 484-788-9440 or Call/Email at nancyhowe@ymail.com or 484-788-9440 or Tim Howe at howet60@yahoo.com or (646-401-4455).

Lehigh Valley Health Network offers many groups and services for adults and children between the ages of 6-17. For more information, call 610-402-7481. For information about program offerings in the Pocono area, call 272-762-3826 or email Bryson.Boes@lvhn.org.

Suicide Loss: The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has excellent information on risk factors, statistics and education about suicide. Visit www.afsp.org and enter your zip code to find the chapter/contact person near you. All chapters are run by people who have experienced the suicide of a loved one.

Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley cancersupportglv.org

Find an individual therapist at: **Psychologytoday.com**

We encourage you to call the **number on the back of your insurance card** to find resources paid by your individual insurance plan.

Support Information in New Jersey

Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice offers support to those who are grieving the death of a loved one. For more information, call 973-948-2283 or visit www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement.