The Process of Acceptance

“It’s as if the realness of what has happened waits around a corner. I don’t want to make the turn, yet I know I must. Slowly, I gather the courage to approach.”

from Understanding Your Grief by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

When something good happens in our lives, acceptance comes easily. We embrace it and celebrate. Others feel happy for us. But when the opposite occurs, when someone we love dies, we struggle with acceptance. We might say to ourselves, “It’s not fair!” or “It wasn’t supposed to happen.”

We might see acceptance as agreement or consent. But if we don’t agree or feel okay with what happened, acceptance might feel like a betrayal. We don’t want to believe it because our hearts are broken and the pain is overwhelming. It may feel unreal in certain moments, like a bad dream that we wish would end.

Acceptance is the beginning of our movement towards healing. We don’t have to be okay with what happened; we just need to acknowledge that it did happen. It is the place to start reconciling and integrating the loss into our lives.

Acceptance is very much a process, a task that we can embrace some days and not others. We might need the time and space to be angry or upset and not accept reality. We might choose denial in certain moments, holding on to the illusion of an earlier reality because it brings us comfort.

Be patient with yourself. Go slowly and take small steps. Talk about your loved one’s death and your own experiences with someone who understands. Each time you talk, it becomes a little more real. You don’t have to be okay with it, but you do need to honor it. Know that you are not alone and that there are places of comfort and support along the way.

Respectfully yours,
Christine

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Grief & Loss Support Group
Feb 12th – March 19th from 2 – 3:30pm (Thursdays in Bethlehem)

“The Psychology of Illness and the Art of Healing” with Dr. Bernie Siegel
April 22nd at 7:30pm
Grief and Loss Support Group

This is a 6 week support group for adults grieving the loss of someone significant in their lives. Our support group provides an opportunity to come together with others who have experienced the loss of a loved one to share stories, offer and receive support, and find hope and healing. A group can offer both peer support and education and information about the grief journey. It is important that participants are able to attend all 6 weeks. **Registration for the group is required.** There are no drop-ins permitted. Please note that the group is subject to be canceled if sufficient registration is not reached. Space is limited. Please call for more information.

Lehigh Valley Area
February 12th – March 19th, 2015 from 2 – 3:30pm.
St. Luke’s Bethlehem Education Center (Room 111), 801 Ostrum St., Bethlehem, PA.
Call Christine at (610) 997-7132 to register for this group.

Book Notes

*In Lieu of Flowers: A Conversation for the Living*
Nancy Cobb

“Our grief is the natural opening where the link between the living and the dead is forged, and once we are able to incorporate it into our hearts and souls, we understand that grief is an integral part of life. The celebration of the dead – recalling memories, personality traits, and quirky anecdotes that need to be heard and repeated – is not only key to sanity and survival, it keeps alive the essence of dear friends who once thrived among us. Grieving is as natural as breathing, for if we have lived and loved, surely we will grieve.”

Cobb writes that “death forces a grace period on all of us. The dying offer the living a final chance to be the best that they can be. We must take our cues from them, value the moments that lead up to and follow their departure, and work toward acceptance after they are gone. This is a vow as sacred as any we will make over the course of our lifetimes.”

*“What to Do In the Darkness”*
Marilyn Chandler McEntire

Go slowly
Consent to it
But don’t wallow in it
Know it as a place of germination
And growth
Remember the light
Take an outstretched hand if you find one
Exercise unused senses
Find the path by walking it
Practice trust
Watch for the dawn
Resources for Children

thestaredgriefproject.org
The Shared Grief Project was founded on one guiding principle: grieving children should not suffer in isolation. Through short videos featuring interviews with high-profile celebrities, the Shared Grief Project highlights the stories of individuals who have lost a parent or sibling at a young age and have gone on to live happy, healthy, and highly successful lives. The goal of the Shared Grief Project is twofold: first, to demonstrate to grieving children that they are not alone, and second, to provide inspiration and encouragement to these children by showing them how some of their role models have experienced grief in their own lives and sharing the lessons they have learned.

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children
Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

“There is a beginning and an ending for everything that is alive.
In between is living.
This is true for all living things.
For plants. For people. For birds. For fish. For trees. For animals.
Even for the tiniest insect.
It may be sad, but it is the way of all things, and it is true for everything that is alive.”

From the back cover:
Lifetimes is a moving book for children of all ages, even parents too. It explains life and death in a sensitive, caring, beautiful way. Lifetimes tells about beginnings. And about endings. And about living in between. It tells that dying is as much a part of living as being born. It helps us to remember. It helps us to understand.

Community Services

Stepping Stones for Children
This group, offered by the Lehigh Valley Health Network’s Grief Support Services, is a combination of education, activities, and support designed to help children ages 4 – 15 facilitate healthy grieving. Call (610) 969-0330 for scheduled meeting dates.

Camp Erin - Philadelphia
This is a weekend camp for grieving children and teens (ages 6 – 17) held in Montgomery County, PA from May 15 – 17, 2015. The camp, a partnership between The Moyer Foundation and Penn Wissahickon Hospice, combines traditional camp activities with grief education and support. Applications are accepted until all spaces are filled; it is recommended that families apply by March 1st. To obtain an application visit the website at www.pennmedicine.org/camperin, e-mail CampErinPhila@uphs.upenn.edu, or call 1-800-700-8807.
Adult Bereavement Services in the Community

This is a listing of additional bereavement resources in the area. If you have a need for something and don’t see it on this list, please call Christine at (610) 997-7132 for referrals to other services.

**GriefShare Groups** are a faith-based, evangelical approach to grief and loss. GriefShare groups are provided at various locations around the Lehigh Valley. To find a location near you, please visit www.griefshare.org.

**Free Spirits** is a group of more than 2 dozen older widows who go out to lunch once a month to keep active and offer support to each other—and to newer widows. Most are members of Church of the Manger UCC, Bethlehem. Call 610-866-8223 for more information.

**VNA/Hospice of Monroe County** offers a support group the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month at noon. Call 570-421-5390 for more information.

**Lehigh Valley Health Network** offers grief support services in the form of counseling, support groups, and workshops for adults, as well as a lunch club for women. For more information, please call 610-969-0330.

**Grand View Hospital Hospice** offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

**Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress, and Life Transitions and Grief Education and Counseling Groups** offered by Wendy Littner Thomson M.Ed., LPC, RYT. For locations, times, or more information please call 610-730-1992 or visit www.givinggriefavoice.com.

**The Compassionate Friends** offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling. To find a local chapter, visit the organization’s website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on “Chapter Locator.”

**Family Answers** holds a Survivors of Suicide support group at 402 North Fulton Street in Allentown, PA. This group is held the first and third Monday each month from 7-8pm. Call (610) 435-9651 for more information.

**Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley with St. Luke’s** offers the Hope and Healing Series. Call 610-861-7555 or email info@cancersupportglv.org for more information.

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**Become Part of a Dedicated Team**

St. Luke’s Hospice is actively seeking volunteers to serve and support hospice patients and families within the Lehigh Valley and Carbon county areas. Specially trained volunteers are an integral part of the St. Luke’s Hospice team.

Volunteers serve as a welcome friend to the family. They share their time and talents in many ways. Volunteers can visit with patients in their homes or in St. Luke’s inpatient Hospice House. They can also assist with administrative office duties and help at special events.

For more information or to join our next volunteer training session in Spring 2015, please call 610-997-7121.

*Applicants who have recently experienced the loss of a family member are asked to wait until they have completed a bereavement period of at least one year before applying to become a hospice volunteer.*

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**Thank you!**

We’d like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all of you who have made donations from your heart as a way of expressing your appreciation for our hospice bereavement services. It is an honor to companion you on your grief and life transition journeys. Your gifts ensure that this service continues to evolve in meaningful directions to meet the ongoing and growing needs of our families and our community.

Many of you ask for a telephone number for donation information.

You may contact the Development Office at 484-526-3067.

Again, heartfelt thanks.
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ILLNESS AND THE ART OF HEALING

Wednesday, April 22, 2015
7:30 pm
Doors open at 6:30 pm
Central Moravian Church
West Church & Main Streets
Bethlehem, PA

Join us for a motivational evening featuring internationally renowned speaker and author Dr. Bernie Siegel, who changed mainstream thinking with his 1978 book, Love, Medicine and Miracles. The book explores the powerful role the mind can play in fighting illness. Dr. Siegel’s writings continue to spark discussions about patient empowerment and the choice to live fully and die in peace. His philosophy continues to break new ground in the field of healing and living the message of kindness and love.

Motivational, inspirational and down-to-earth, Dr. Siegel’s approach is one of compassion, caring and love coupled with a wonderful sense of humor. His message of hope and love is extended to all who seek a whole person approach for living life fully each day.

General Admission tickets: $10/person
For more information or to purchase tickets:
1-866-STLUKES (785-8537) or
www.sluhn.org/littnerlectureseries

Presented by Friends of Hospice

Wendy Littner Thomson Counseling Services, LLC