

# COMFORT FOR THE GRIEVING HEART

## Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

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August 2015

### Loneliness

*Your absence has gone through me  
Like thread through a needle.  
Everything I do is stitched with its color.*  
W.S. Merwin, "Separation"

#### St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Team

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If you would like to be added to or removed from our mailing list, or if you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, please contact Dawn at (610) 997-7125.

The experience of grief can be a very lonely place. We miss the physical presence of our loved one, whether they gave us a hug and kiss every night or at each visit. We long for the time we used to spend together. Simple shared moments, such as going to the store or drinking coffee at the kitchen table, are sometimes the most profoundly missed.

It might feel lonely because we don't have many people nearby who seem to understand what we are going through. We feel lost and afraid but don't want to share those feelings. Maybe we wear a mask because we don't want others to feel uncomfortable around us. We want them to think we're okay.

So what can we do that might help? How do we manage through the nights in our empty house or the long weekends that no longer involve time with our loved one? Here are a few thoughts offered from members of our current grief and loss groups:

- \* *Take it one day at a time.* Sometimes life feels more manageable in smaller pieces. You could even focus on just one minute or one hour of the day.
- \* *Talk to people around you.* Try chatting up the checkout clerk in the grocery store or the waitress at the diner. Reach out and make a connection and see what happens.
- \* *Consider getting involved in volunteer or service work.* Giving of yourself can provide a break from your thoughts and feelings about your own situation. It will also get you out of the house.
- \* *Turn on the TV.* When the house is too quiet, the radio or TV can be comforting. Leaving a light on can also help to fill the space.
- \* *Take a moment to breathe and relax your body and mind.* Closing your eyes for a few minutes and focusing on your breathing can bring moments of peace.

Above all, be patient with your grief and know that you are relearning the landscape of your life, redefining who you are today without the presence of your loved one. Take very good care of yourself and treat yourself with kindness. And remember, if you are looking to share your story, we are only a phone call away.

### Welcome, Mindy Watson!

Mindy Watson has joined our team as a second bereavement coordinator and counselor. As a social worker, she has a background in providing clinical services and developing programs for children and families. Welcome, Mindy!

# Upcoming Events

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Sponsored by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

## Writing About Loss for an Audience of One Memoir Writing Workshop

In her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anne Lamott recalls writing about her best friend, Pammy, who died when Lamott was 38. She also talks about the book she wrote as her father was dying of brain cancer. She recounts the pleasure of being able to show Pammy and her father what she had written about them. "I wrote for an audience of one," Lamott says.

Lamott's words are important ones for anyone who wants to write about their memories of a beloved friend or family member. Most of us don't write about those we love while they are alive – unless we happen to keep a diary. After we lose them, we may want to use writing as a way to cope with our loss. We may want to chronicle the family stories or capture the unique way someone spoke or dressed. But we're intimidated by thoughts that we're "not a writer" or that what we write has to measure up to an imaginary standard.

At such moments, it's good to remember Lamott's words. In chronicling the lives of those we have lost, we are writing for an audience of one. For some, it may help to imagine we are writing for the person we mourn. In other cases, it may be enough to know that you are writing down the stories for yourself – because they are important memories for you.

"Writing can help you make sense of the world and give you direction and company and solace," Lamott said in a *New York Times* interview. But how do you begin? In October, St. Luke's Hospice will offer a 6-week memoir workshop to help you begin to write about your loss and the person you want to remember. For more information or to register, contact Christine at (610) 997-7132.

## Open Support Group

Perhaps you've thought about attending a group but weren't sure if it was for you. Maybe you've already participated in a group and are looking to reconnect to people who understand.

Please join us for an open, ongoing support group. We will meet on the first Friday of each month from 10-11am at St. Luke's Hospice House (2455 Black River Road, Bethlehem.) Our first meeting will be September 4th.

No registration is required, but you can contact Christine with any questions.

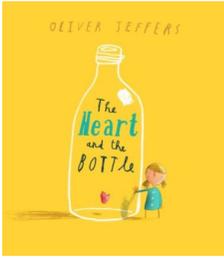
## Service of Remembrance

We gather periodically as family members of our patients and as a Hospice staff to remember those who have died. Our Services of Remembrance are inter-faith and are offered as a way in which we may take time to reflect, remember, and celebrate the lives and the legacies of those who have passed from ours. The names of the deceased will be read at these services unless we are notified that you prefer otherwise. Please bring your family and friends and join us for this time of remembrance.

**For patients served by our Bethlehem office and Hospice House and who died between March 1 and June 30, 2015**, the Service of Remembrance will be held on Sunday, August 16, 2015, at 3pm at Church of the Assumption, 4101 Old Bethlehem Pike, Bethlehem, PA, 18015.

# Resources and Reflections

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## The Heart and the Bottle

Oliver Jeffers

“She took delight in finding new things, until the day she found an empty chair.”

“Feeling unsure, the girl thought the best thing was to put her heart in a safe place. Just for the time being. So she put it in a bottle and hung it around her neck. And that seemed to fix things ...at first. Although in truth, nothing was the same.”

This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of a young girl who is faced with an empty chair, one that used to be filled with an adult who fueled her passion and curiosity for the world. She finds safety in putting her heart in a bottle, which eventually becomes heavy and awkward. Through the help of another child, one who is filled herself with passion and curiosity, the young girl’s heart is released from the bottle to again fully embrace the wonders of life.

## A Meditation on Grief

“Our Homes” by Brandy Gregory

Our homes are miles away, a distance so far, my feet cannot walk nor run to your door. There are enormous mountains and small foothills between our doors. The trees are vast and the flowers too many to smell. Rivers and lakes all in the way. Freeway and back roads all leading miles apart from our yards.

But our hearts are our real homes, and they are only a heartbeat away. There are no mountains, lakes, or trees between them. The road only leads right to our souls. So no matter what the miles might be, you are always right here in my home.

## What’s Your Grief?

[www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)



“To put it simply, this website is about grief.”

That probably sounds *oversimplified*, but grief is a complex, heavy, frustrating, scary, enormous...ahem, big topic. It starts with a death and envelopes everyone from family to friends, to friends of family and friends. Not only is grief an emotional, logistical, and existential nightmare, but it is taxing. It requires us to navigate a world without someone important, deal with complex feelings and emotions, and figure out ways to move forward when everything seems kind of bleak.

Specifically, our mission is to promote grief education, exploration, and expression in both practical and creative ways. We aim to provide the public with...

- Education that reaches beyond generalization
- Practical and specific suggestions for moving forward
- Modes of self-exploration and self-expression that suit all types of thinkers and doers
- Ways to honor and remember deceased loved ones.”

# Honoring the Journey

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## Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

This is a listing of free 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.

**Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley with St. Luke's** offers the Hope and Healing Series, a series of creative classes at St. Luke's Cancer Center-Anderson Campus, primarily in the Hope and Healing Room. Any person or loved one affected by cancer can register for this series. Programs offered include T'ai Chi, Drumming, Art of Healing Dance, Labyrinth, Jewelry Making, Journaling, Men's Group, Heart Rhythm Meditation, Yoga, and Creative Expression. Classes are open to anyone affected by cancer. Programs are free, but registration is required. Call 610-861-7555 or email [info@cancersupportglv.org](mailto:info@cancersupportglv.org) to register or for more information about classes, dates and times.

**The Compassionate Friends** offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling.

**TCF of Lehigh Valley** meets at Sacred Heart Hospital, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 421 Chew Street in Allentown. The group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month at 7pm. For more information, call 484-597-0240.

**TCF of Quakertown** meets at St. Luke's Hospital, ground floor, 1021 Park Ave in Quakertown in Taylor Conference Rooms A&B. This group is held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday each month from 7:30 – 9pm. For more information, call 215-536-0173.

**TCF of Easton** meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday each month from 7-9pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2115 Washington Blvd. in Easton. For more information call 610-866-5468.

**TCF of Carbon County** meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday each month from 6:30 – 8:30pm in the Palmerton Community Ambulance Association, 501 Delaware Ave in Palmerton. Please call 610-826-2938 for more information.

**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 info.

**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.

**Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress, and Life Transitions** offered by Wendy Littner Thomson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. First session offered for free to caregivers whose loved one recently received hospice services from St Luke's Hospice. For location, times, or more information, please call 610-730-1992.

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

**GriefShare Groups** are a faith-based, evangelical approach to grief and loss. GriefShare groups are provided at several locations in the Lehigh Valley. To find a location near you, please visit [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org).

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

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