



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

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Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

July 2016

## Stages, Steps and Tasks...

**St. Luke's Hospice**

**484-526-2499**

### **Bereavement Team:**

**Mindy Watson, MSW**

Bereavement Coordinator and  
Counselor

*Mindy.Watson@slubn.org*

(484) 526-2314

**Suzann Ditzel, MSW**

Bereavement Coordinator and  
Counselor

*Suzann.Ditzel@slubn.org*

(484) 526-2514

**Nan Sell-Parry, LCSW**

Family Services Manager

**Rev. Anne G. Huey**

Spiritual Services Manager



**Dawn Cavanaugh**

Bereavement Assistant

*Dawn.Cavanaugh@slubn.org*

(484) 526-2499

**If you would like to be added  
to or removed from our mail-  
ing list, or if you would pre-  
fer to receive an electronic  
copy, please contact Dawn at  
484-526-2499.**

“Grief is not linear. It’s not a slow progression forward towards healing, it’s a zigzag, a terrible back-and-forth from devastated to okay until finally there are more okay patches and fewer devastated ones. The mind can’t handle emotions like grief and terror for any sustained period of time, so it takes some downtime”.

Beautiful Lies: A Novel by Lisa Unger

When I studied social work in college, we were taught Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s stages of grief as the primary model to use in assisting individuals in the grief process. Even if you have never studied social work or psychology, there is a good chance that you have heard about the stages of grief, and the model’s notion that there is a predictable and methodical pattern that everyone goes through while grieving. First you were in shock, then you were in denial, and so on and so forth.

The major problem with this thinking is that grief is not a prescriptive process. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross later clarified that her intent was not to tell someone how to grieve, or what to feel, but rather to use the ‘stages’ as a way to help normalize a not-normal time. She meant to give comfort, not confinement. Although she explained that the stages were not meant to imply that there is a right or wrong way to grieve, her model was quickly and extensively established as the ‘model’ for grieving. Even if her intent was not to prescribe, it turned into exactly that. With this came the notion that if you didn’t progress through the stages correctly, you were failing at grief. As if you already didn’t feel lousy enough already, now you were failing!!

And this is where we sometimes get tripped up, thinking we aren’t progressing through stages or completing our grief tasks. We self-diagnose, self-criticize and kick ourselves when we are down for thinking we aren’t doing it ‘right’, when in fact, doing it ‘right’ may simply mean doing it in our own way. As Megan Devine wrote in her Huffington Post piece, “To do grief well depends solely on individual experience. It means listening to your own reality. It means acknowledging pain and love and loss. It means allowing the truth of these things the space to exist without any artificial tethers or stages or requirements”.

As time has progressed, many more grief models have come forward. There is space for them all, even Kubler-Ross’s, and each has their own merits as well as critics. Death and the mess it creates afterwards is painful, and difficult, and exhausting. It is so easy to see why we crave some sort of clear cut remedy – stages, tasks, roadmaps, steps – so that the pain lessens and we are ‘healed’. But, our grief is our own, and individual to not only who we are, but also to the person whom we have loved and lost. At some point, we need to own it as our own unique process, and respect it for what it deserves. Our grief is a testament to the love we shared with someone important in our life, and to minimize it by comparing it to *any* model can devalue the significance of your loss. Your loss is yours, and while models and theories and perspectives have their place in professional treatment, refraining from comparing your loss frees you to honor your loved one without boundaries.

Even Kubler-Ross, in her last days of her life, shared, “I am more than these five stages. And so are you.”

*-Mindy*

## Grief and Loss Support Group

Our 6 week Grief and Loss Support Group starts in August 2016. This group is for adults grieving the loss of someone significant in their lives and provides an opportunity to come together with others who have experienced the loss of a loved one. The group guides participants in understanding the uniqueness of their grief. Please note that this is not a therapeutic group; this group provides support, resources and education on the healing process. The group will meet on Wednesdays from August 17, 2016 through September 21, 2016 from 3:30 to 5:00 pm at St. Luke's Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 (building is located in front of Priscilla Payne Hurd annex of the hospital). **Registration is required:** Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org or call (484) 526-2514



## 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 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**, who died between **March 1, 2016 and June 30, 2016** the Service of Remembrance will be held on **Sunday, August 14 at 3 pm** at Church of the Assumption, 4101 Old Bethlehem Pike, Bethlehem, PA 18015, (610) 867-7424. **Please RSVP to Anne Huey** at (484)526-2835 or Anne.Huey@sluhn.org

## Memoir Writing Workshop

Most of us don't write about those we love while they are alive – unless we happen to keep a diary. After we lose someone, we may want to use writing as a way to cope with our loss. We may want to chronicle family stories or capture the unique way someone spoke or dressed. We may want to try writing as a way to document our life shared with our loved one. This guided workshop will assist you in turning your memories into manuscripts.

American novelist and non-fiction writer Ann Lamott shared in a *New York Times* interview, "Writing can help you make sense of the world and give you direction and company and solace." Please join us for a 6-week workshop on Monday evenings, **September 26, 2016 through October 31, 2016 from 6:00-8:00 pm**. We will meet at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 (building is located in front of Priscilla Payne Hurd annex of the hospital). Because of the nature of this workshop, we ask that participants be at least six months beyond the date of their loss. **Registration is required:** Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org or call (484) 526-2314

## Newly Bereaved Workshop

This workshop is for those who have a lost a loved one within the past 1-3 months and will provide education on the first few weeks and months of grief following a death. We will cover understanding common grief reactions, coping strategies, self-care throughout the grief process and beyond, and the uniqueness of your grief experience. These workshops will be offered on a bi-monthly basis. We will be meet on Wednesday, July 20, 2016 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm The Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 (building is located in front of Priscilla Payne Hurd annex of the hospital). **Registration is required:** Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org or 484-526-2514.

### Featured Website:

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

It was by pure chance that I found this website after finalizing the details of our upcoming Memoir Writing Workshop and adding it into the newsletter. Aftertalk is a website that provides online grief support through grief blogs, inspirational quotes, and interactive writing tools to help stay connected with a loved one. Aftertalk is a site designed to provide a secure place where you can write to and share with your deceased loved one, in ways both comforting and healing, in complete privacy. One aspect of the site is Private Conversations, which is space where you can write to your loved one, and save your writing for as long as you wish. If you are unsure of how to get started, the site offers prompts to start you on your writing journey. You can also create a space where your invited family and friends can write and share together. In the AfterTalk Blog, you can find recent posts that share insight on dealing with many different forms of grief. There is also a Resource Center, with books, DVDs and grief counseling resources, along with information related financial, insurance and estate planning.



“Grief may be a thing we all have in common, but it looks different on everyone. It isn't just death we have to grieve. It's life. It's loss. It's change”.

Grey's Anatomy

### Open /Drop-in Support Groups



We offer 3 Open Groups to help meet the ongoing needs of bereaved individuals. Open Groups are supportive in nature and new members are welcome to join at any time. Our three groups meet:

**First Monday of every month from 4:00-5:00 pm** at St. Luke's Hospital, Anderson Campus, 1600 St. Luke's Boulevard, Easton, PA 18045. Meeting room will be Medical Office Building, Conference Room Side A, 1700 St. Luke's Blvd. The next group will be **Monday, August 1, 2016 (no group on July 4, 2016)**.

**First Wednesday of every month, from 7:00-8:00 pm** at St. Luke's Hospital, Quakertown Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, PA. We will meet in the Cafeteria Conference Room. The next group will be **Wednesday, July 6, 2016**.

**First Friday of each month from 10:00-11:00 am** at St. Luke's Hospice House (2455 Black River Road, Bethlehem.). Our next meeting will be on **Friday, July 1, 2016**.

## Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

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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 the Bereavement Office at (484) 526-2499 for referrals to other services.

**Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley** is a local non-profit organization providing emotional and social support to family members and caregivers. They offer support groups, educational workshops and mind/body classes in their Allentown, PA office. 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.

**The Compassionate Friends** offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling. [www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org)

**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 610-837-7924.

**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.

**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 [www.givinggriefavoice.com](http://www.givinggriefavoice.com)

**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.

**Soaring Spirits Regional Group Lehigh Valley** is planning to hold monthly social gatherings for widowed individuals to provide opportunities to connect with others in a positive, caring, and supportive environment. For more information, please call Sonja Handwerk at 610-297-0057, email [soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com](mailto:soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com), or follow on Facebook at Soaring Spirits International Group Lehigh Valley.

**Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Center** offers an Open Group on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 pm. Registration is required, contact Deb at (610) 347-9988 or [deb@bradburysullivancenter.org](mailto:deb@bradburysullivancenter.org). The Center is located at 522 W. Maple St., Allentown, PA 18101. There is no charge for the group.

**GriefShare Groups** are a faith-based 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).

**St. Francis Retreat House** holds monthly grief support groups on the first and third Tuesday of the month from 9:30-11:00 am. Located at 3918 Chipman Avenue, Easton PA. Please call 610-515-9028 for more information.

**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 information, please call 610-969-0330.

**Stepping Stones for Adolescents** is a group for teens ages 11-16 that meets at Lehigh Valley Hospice for teen peer support. Call (610)969-0330 for more information.

**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.

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

**Doylestown Hospital Hospice** offers a variety of support groups, including a widow/widower group, a young survivors group, and an adult loss group. Visit [www.dhospice.com](http://www.dhospice.com) or call 215-345-2838.