

# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

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Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

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## What Is "Normal", Anyway??

"What a different place this world would be if people remembered that grief is born of love and all acts of grief are normal, healthy and expected"

Rae Anne Fredrickson, *All That Love Can Do*

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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 484-526-2499.

Grieving the loss of a loved one feels anything but normal. When we are grieving, we often experience all sorts of emotions and feelings that make us wonder if we are going crazy. We might forget things, feel disconnected, or feel like all we are doing is crying. We may also have a hard time believing that our loved one is really gone, and impatiently wait for them to pick up the phone or turn the corner. Sometimes we experience such intensity in our emotions that we become worried of our own power; we become intensely angry, feel guilty, worry that we could have done more, lose things, have trouble making decisions. We may isolate ourselves socially or have trouble eating or sleeping. The list of feelings and experiences that grief brings to us is long and exhaustive, and may at some point bring us to ask, "Is this normal?"

It is clear to see why grief makes us question our normalcy. It comes in like a tornado and spins around inside of you, effecting every part of your being. Your head, your heart, your body...they are all influenced by grief. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried, and there is no "normal" timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

It may be helpful to remember that grief typically does not happen as one long continuum, where we get better as time goes on. What grief teaches us is that it acts more like waves in an ocean, coming intensely at times and then lessening, then coming in once again, and then lessening. Many metaphors are used to describe the uncertainty of grief and "grief bursts." Whether we talk about grief in terms of waves in the ocean, riding a roller coaster, going through the wilderness, or enduring a storm, it is clear that grief is not a gentle and easy path with a clear direction. There are many twists and turns that can leave our already-vulnerable selves questioning not only where we are, but who we are now.

So, if you are wondering if what you are experiencing is 'normal', think about how grief has come into your life and settled within you. Try to remember that your grief is unique to you and you will have a learning curve to figure out how to do it best, and in your own way. If it has been several months and you find that your grief remains so intense and debilitating that you have trouble going about your new routine, it may be helpful to talk to your health care provider or a personal counselor. Remember that we are also here to support you in your grief process and can offer a variety of supportive services to help you heal. You are not alone. And, you are not crazy.

*-Mindy*

## Healing Rhythms Drumming Group

Healing Rhythms, a drumming group, is a unique approach to loss, grief and support in life transitions. The use of the drum is a vehicle of expression when you may not be able to put your thoughts and feelings into words. Research indicates that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system and produces feelings of well-being, a release of emotional trauma, and reintegration of self. Drumming circles also provide a sense of connectedness with others and interpersonal support.

Our Healing Rhythms drumming group is led by a Remo HealthRhythms endorsed facilitator. Each week you will experience meditative drumming, guided imagery, inspirational readings and thought provoking conversations about moving through loss. The group will run on Saturday mornings from 10am to 12pm from November 5, 2016 through December 10, 2016. This group will meet at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse, 4116 Bath Pike (Route 512) Bethlehem, PA 18017. Please pre-register with Mindy at [Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org](mailto:Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org) or 484-526-2314. For more information on drumming and its healing benefits, visit [www.lvdrumcircle.com](http://www.lvdrumcircle.com).



What one person is saying about her drumming experience:

“I’ve come to realize that nothing in life prepares us for losing someone we love...nothing...”

After trying numerous support groups, I discovered the Healing Rhythms Drum Circle. I was amazed how the vibration of the drum filled the emptiness I was feeling since my husband passed away. We drummed as a group, cried and made lasting friendships. Through drumming I saw a glimmer of hope for my future.

The journey in grief can be lonely until you find others along the same path. For me, that was drumming”.

Joan F.

## Open /Drop-in Support Groups

\*Please note the new changes to our Drop-In Groups\*

Our Drop-In groups are designed to offer continued support to bereaved individuals who have already attended grief and loss programs through St. Luke’s Hospice. Drop-In groups afford participants the chance to continue with supportive services. This group is facilitated, but group directed in terms of content and discussion. We currently offer 4 Drop-In Support Groups:

**First Monday of every month from 4-5 pm** at St. Luke’s Hospital-Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building (MOB), 1700 St. Luke’s Blvd, Easton, PA 18045 in Conference Room A.

**First Wednesday of every month, from 7-8:00 pm** at St. Luke’s Hospital-Quakertown Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, PA 18951 in Taylor B Conference room.

**Second Monday of every month from 4:00-5:00 pm** at St. Luke’s Pricilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke’s Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 in Room 112

**Third Monday of every month from 3:00 - 4:00 pm** at Dinkey Memorial Church, 1742 Dinkey Road, Lehigh, PA 18212.

## Newly Bereaved Workshop

This one-time 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, September 21, 2016 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm The Pricilla 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:** [Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org](mailto:Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org) or 484-526-2314.

## Resources

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### Grief & The Holidays Workshop

Whether it is a birthday, anniversary or holiday, special days on our calendar keep memories alive that are near and dear to us. Yet, not everyone anticipates holidays and special occasions with joy and, particularly for those of us who have lost a loved one, the holidays can be a time of sadness, pain or anger. The waves of grief can overwhelm us and the stress of the holiday season can seem daunting. There is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays, but planning ahead and understanding your needs and limits on these special days can help.

Please join us for a 2 hour workshop on Monday, November 7, 2016 from 6-8 pm to explore strategies to help cope during the holidays, and beyond. We will meet at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center on the St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus (801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem). For more information and to register, contact Suzann at (484) 526-2514 or email [Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org](mailto:Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org).



I talk aloud when no one is there  
I call a phone that is never answered  
I smell clothing that belongs to another  
I light candles  
I make special ornaments for the tree  
I hang stockings that will not be opened  
I cry in the shower  
I cry in public  
I see meaning in ordinary things found  
I visit a grave every day  
I am stronger than I appear  
I do many things that might be strange....

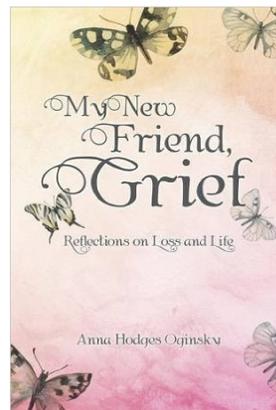
If I wasn't grieving

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

### Mindfulness & Grief Support Group

We will offering our Mindfulness and Grief Support group again this fall. This is a 6 week structured group that explores mindfulness based practices that allow you to tap into your natural resilience. Mindfulness enables us to live in the present and examine what we are truly feeling in the here and now. This group will meet on Tuesdays from October 4, 2016 through November 8, 2016 from 3:30-5:30 pm at St. Luke's Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus (801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015). **Registration for this group is required:** [Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org](mailto:Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org) or (484) 526-2514

### New Reading:



My New Friend,  
Grief: Reflections  
on Love and Life

Anna Hodges Oginsky

In this new release, author Anna Hodges Oginsky offers a transparent and deeply personal reflection on the loss of her father and her experience into the grief process. *My New Friend, Grief: Reflections on Loss and Life* tells the story of how Oginsky's previous life experience shaped her understanding of death and loss. As she sifted through the broken pieces of her heart, she discovered that befriending grief would allow her to move through life in richer, more meaningful ways. *My New Friend, Grief* brings to light the feelings and fears many of us face in grief, but hesitate to explore. As Oginsky reveals her personal insights into loss and life, we find a friend who affirms for us that, as we too grieve, we are not alone.

Available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

## 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** social gatherings for widowed individuals to provide opportunities to connect with others in a positive, caring, and supportive environment. For more information, contact Sonja Handwerk at 610-297-0057 or [soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com](mailto:soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com).

**HALOS - CLC** is for parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the loss of a child or sibling to suicide. The group meets every 4th Thursday from 6:30-8:30 pm at Hughes Library in Stroudsburg, PA. Register with Alice Keyes at (570) 236-1168

**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.

**GRASP** - For families who have experienced a death due to substance use. Group meets every 3rd Monday of the month from 7-8:30 pm at 1st Presbyterian Church in Allentown, Room 118. Please register with Nancy Howe (484) 788-9440

**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.