



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you"  
Maya Angelou

February 2017

**St. Luke's Hospice**

**484-526-2499**

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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.**

Wikipedia defines storytelling as "the social and cultural activity of sharing stories, often with improvisation, theatrics, or embellishment". Stories have been shared in every culture as a means to entertain, educate, preserve culture and instill values. Stories have been carved, scratched, painted, printed and inked onto wood, ivory, stone, paper, cloth and every other imaginable surface that can be used to write on. They have been recorded on film and stored electronically in digital form. Our oral stories continue to be created and passed from generation to generation, often with the intent of preserving into our legacy the importance of people, places, values and lessons.

Sharing our stories is one way in which we connect as humans, and is an important part of our work in processing our grief. When we experience a death, our 'life story', which is our story about our relationships and memories, immediately becomes intertwined with our 'grief story', which now serves to hold our experience with death, pain and loss. We are accustomed to telling our life story – it is easily embedded into our daily conversations and effortlessly passed from parent to child. Our grief story, on the other hand, holds much more pain and sorrow and may take more time and more repeating to assist us in fully integrating the loss that we have experienced. In "The Importance of Telling (and Listening to) the Story", author Kirsti A. Dyer says "Stories help make sense of the insensible. Stories can help people explore other ways of doing, feeling, thinking and behaving. Storytelling can be regarded as one of the oldest healing arts; it has been used for centuries as a universal, useful way for the grieving person to cope with loss". Stories are healing.

As you tell and retell your story, your grief begins to change. Through stories, we bring order to the chaos that has entered our lives and we can start to organize the disorder and put it into logical and sequential events. This helps us make sense of what has happened; it grounds us in the reality of our loss and directs us towards healing. Telling our story helps clarify what has happened – we process what we have just experienced and each time we share our story, we develop skills and strength to move forward. Telling our story is a release – each time we tell our story, it occupies less space in our body, heart and mind. Sharing our stories can lessen the pain of grief - the process of telling and retelling helps us to make sense of our loss and assign meaning to our grief. Telling our stories can create community – as we share, we identify others who have experienced similar pain and we have opportunities to connect on a deeper level about our experiences with death.

As bereaved individuals, our enormous task is to adjust to a new life and create a 'new normal' following the death of a loved one. As we do this, our story is written and rewritten, over and over, as we navigate a new landscape that now includes loss. Tell your story; as it was and as it continues to unfold. Let your story be your guide as you make meaning from the chaos, and may you find solace in sharing your experience and knowing you are not alone in your feelings of grief.

*-Mindy*

## Grief and Loss Support Group

Our next round of our 6 week Grief and Loss Support Group is scheduled for February 2017. 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 February 22, 2017 through March 29, 2017 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 (building is located in front of Priscilla Payne Hurd annex of the hospital). **Registration for this group is required:** Please call Suzan at (484) 526-2514 or email [Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org](mailto:Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org)

## Open /Drop-in Support 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 directed by group members in terms of content and discussion. We currently offer 4 Drop-In Support Groups:

**Easton: 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.

**Quakertown: Second Monday of every month from 6:30-7:30 pm** at St. Luke's Hospital-Quakertown Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, PA 18951 in Taylor B Conference room.

**Bethlehem: Fourth Monday of every month from 6:00 - 7:00 pm** at St. Luke's Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 in Room 112. (starting March 27, 2017)

*I talk about him, because grief doesn't need to be experienced silently, especially when the silence is fueled by stigma and shame.*

*I talk about him, because frankly, acknowledging him is more important than the discomfort of acquaintances. As much as I never want to alienate people, he's as familiar to me now as the air that I am breathing.*

*I talk about him, because it's my prerogative. In a culture of bravely making your own choices, no matter which direction others are going in, this is mine.*

*I talk about him, because it's one way I process and feel. Feelings demand to be felt, I'm learning, and the stuffing and pushing aside doesn't leave room for the wounds to heal.*

*I talk about him, not because I'm stuck or because I haven't moved on, but I talk about him because I am his, and he is mine, and no passage of time will ever change that.*

*I talk about him, not because I'm constantly living in pain. I'm not anymore, but in my world, this is my normal, and I'd rather live honestly and out loud. Joy, love, happiness, and gratefulness are my everyday, but so are death, loss, heartache, and grief.*

*Even more so...*

*I talk about him because I'm proud.*

*I talk about him, because he deserves to be remembered.*

*I talk about him, because even though he's not physically with me, he's never far from my mind.*

*I talk about him, because he's part of me, a part that I could never ignore or disown.*

*I talk about him because I love him still, and I always will. Forever. Nothing will ever change that.*

*Lexi Behrndt*  
[www.scribblesandcrumbs.com](http://www.scribblesandcrumbs.com)

### Volunteer Opportunities Available

We need you! Specially trained volunteers are an integral part of the St. Luke's Hospice team, and we are always looking for individuals who are wanting to serve as a welcome friend to our patients and their family members. Volunteers share their time and talents in many ways; they visit with patients in their homes or at St. Luke's inpatient Hospice House, and they also assist with a variety of administrative duties and help at special events. If you have thought about volunteering, please consider donating your time and talents to St. Luke's Hospice!

For more details, please contact Juana Van Steenvoort, Volunteer Coordinator at (484) 526-7124, or visit <http://www.slhn.org/volunteerNOW>

*(Due to the sensitive nature hospice volunteering requires, we ask that applicants who have experienced the loss of a loved one wait until they have completed a bereavement period of at least one year before applying to become a hospice volunteer).*

### Newly Bereaved Workshop

This one-time workshop is for those who have 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 **Thursday, March 16, 2017 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm** We will meet at 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.*** please call Mindy at (484)526-2314 or email [Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org](mailto:Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org)



### Lehighton News :

**Lehighton Open Group:** We meet for our Drop In/Open Group on the **Third Monday of every month** from **3:00 - 4:00 pm** at Dinkey Memorial Church, 1742 Dinkey Road, Lehighton, PA 18212. All members of the community who are in need of bereavement support are invited to attend.

**Grief and Loss Support Group:** We will be offering another round of our 6 week Grief and Loss Support Group on **Tuesdays from 3:30 - 5:30 pm from March 21, 2017 through April 25, 2017.** 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. To register, please contact Suzann Ditzel at (484) 526-2514 or [Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org](mailto:Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org)

## 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.