



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

May 2017

"Life is on a lease. We have to accept that. And that means we must  
make life more meaningful"

Satish Modi

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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.

When I first started my employment in hospice and told my family and friends what I would be doing, I was met with varied responses, but mostly with glazed over looks and quick attempts to find some way to change the subject. I get it...death, dying and grieving are uncomfortable and gloomy topics to talk about. They are a difficult and painful part of life that all humans will experience, yet they remain topics that nobody wants to talk about. We want to pretend they don't exist.

What would happen if we talk about it? What would happen if we open doors and conversations and invite death and grief into our world? It happens to us all, so why treat it like the proverbial elephant in the room? Not talking about death is cultural; our culture tells us that pain and feelings of loss are experiences that are to be avoided or alleviated and that normal thoughts and feelings after a loss are unnecessary and even inappropriate. The role of pain and suffering is greatly misunderstood. As Elad Nehori wrote on the Pop Chassid website, "For thousands of years, humans have had to deal with high infant mortality, death during childbirth, plagues, unadvanced medical care, and everything else. Not only that, there are still plenty of people dealing with those things around the world. We've built up a nice little luxury hotel for us in this country". What she is pointing out is that awareness of death is natural, refusing to think about it (let alone talk about it) is unnatural.

Our cultural denial of death means not only do we not talk about "the whole death thing", but we also don't talk about the accompanying grief that death causes. The irony in all of this is that in its attempt to make us feel better by avoidance, our culture has set us up to fail in grief.

To embrace death is to embrace life. Often, when we experience a death, we develop a keen awareness of how fragile life is and how in an instant it can end. It becomes real, and we start to live a life led with an awareness of death. This isn't a bad thing; it actually forces us to look at life through a new lens and one that is now infused with more meaning. Hiding from death and our grief makes our life meaningless – facing it square in the face makes our life *meaningful*. We may start to feel more humility; a new sense of awe and wonder about our world, and our place in it, starts to develop. When we face our grief, we realize that every moment is valuable, and we are suddenly grateful for what we have experienced rather than for what we may have missed out. We may experience a shift in our values and things that were once important are now overshadowed by a deeper sense of curiosity and a reprioritization of our beliefs.

Death and grief are taboo subjects that we would rather sweep under the rug and have hidden from our sight. But, when we refuse to think about death, we refuse to think about what happens after death. How might you make your experience with death a coffee table subject rather than a forbidden topic? Open the conversation. Share your story. Be open to finding and experiencing new meaning. Be in awe.

*-Mindy*

## 6 Week Grief and Loss Group

Our 6 week Grief and Loss Support Group will start again in May 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 Tuesdays from May 23, 2017 through June 27, 2017 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at St. Luke's Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building, 1872 St. Luke's Boulevard, Easton, PA 18045. **Registration is required:** Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org or call Suzann at (484) 526-2514

## 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 May 20, 2017 through July 1, 2017**. This group will meet at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meeting-house, 4116 Bath Pike (Route 512) Bethlehem, PA 18017. **Please pre-register** with Mindy at 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).

## Creative Arts and Grief Group

Artists have always used their art to express despair, to find meaning in life and transcend emotional struggles. Human suffering has inspired some of our greatest artwork. After a trauma such as a loss, art can help us express and release painful and stressful emotions, and allow us to do this in a safe manner. Our artwork can also give us a sense of empowerment, capability and freedom that your grief experience has taken from you. Creative arts are a powerful tool to reinforce your resiliency and find hope.

Join us for a 7 week Creative Arts experience, where we will use various forms of art to help in your healing process. This group will meet Wednesdays from May 3, 2017 through June 14, 2017 from 3:30 to 5:30 pm. We will be meeting at the Banana Factory, 25 W. 3rd Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015. **Registration is required:** please contact Suzann at 484-526-2514 or Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org.

*No art experience or expertise is needed, and there is no fee for this program.*



"The more we talk about death and grief, and the more people share their experiences of what does and doesn't work for them, the less awkward we will all feel about the whole death thing."

Annie Broadbent,  
*We Need to Talk About Grief*

### 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 meet on **Tuesday, May 16, 2017 from 6:00 - 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 Suzann at (484)526-2514 or email Suzann.Ditzel@sluhn.org. The next workshop will be scheduled in July.



### Lehighon News :

**Lehighon 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, Lehighon, PA 18212. All members of the community who are in need of bereavement support are invited to attend.

Lehighon friends, we need **YOU!!!** We are looking for compassionate and friendly volunteers to share their time and talents by visiting with patients in their homes or skilled nursing facilities. We are particularly in need of volunteers in the Slate Belt area...if you have thought about volunteering, please consider joining St. Luke's Hospice! For more information, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Juana Van Steenvoort, at (484) 526-7100 or visit <http://www.slhn.org/volunteerNOW>

### 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 the following Drop-In Support Groups:

**Easton: First Monday of every month from 4:00 - 5:00 pm** at St. Luke's Hospital-Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building (MOB), 1872 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 Pricilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 in Room 112.

# 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 Ariel at (610) 347-9988 or [ariel@bradburysullivancenter.org](mailto:ariel@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.