



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

April 2018

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness.
It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity,
the price we pay for love.
- Earl Grollman*

St. Luke's Hospice

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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.

The well-worn phrase is delivered with a sympathetic smile: "I know *just* how you feel." What comes next are the explanations and clarifications, another relationship, another loss and another person's grief journey. Yet when we are grieving the loss of *our* loved one, these words feel like a dagger to the heart.

Grievers receive a bounty of advice, often from those who are ill equipped to dispense it. Tired phrases flow freely from family, friends and even total strangers. There are the "get on with life" clichés as grievers are urged to get over, get busy or to move on with life. It is as though grief has a finish line and other people are impatient with our sadness. There are the clichés about trying to be strong. A 10-year-old boy is told that he is now the man of the house and that men don't cry. An elderly spouse is praised for doing so well after the death of her husband. Translation? Please don't cry in front of me!

There are the discounting clichés, the phrases offered to rationalize a death. Grievers are reminded that our loved one would have been a burden to us if he or she had lived or that they certainly would have suffered if alive today. We are nudged into thinking how lucky we are that things turned out the way they did. And finally, there are the religious clichés. We are reminded that now we have another angel in heaven and that death is part of God's perfect plan. If that's true, God is a pretty lousy planner.

What's a griever to do? Sure, these are just words, but they fuel anger and resentment. Perhaps you recognize that you, too, have uttered similarly hollow assurances while attempting to comfort someone else who has lost a loved one. Forgive yourself if you did.

We live in a grief-denying society. When death occurs, we find ourselves in uncharted territory, navigating without the benefit of instrumentation. The feeble lifelines tossed our way are an attempt to acknowledge our pain or even to alleviate it. People simply don't know what else to say. Don't take misguided advice to heart. But perhaps more important is not allowing someone else to diminish the significance and uniqueness of your loss.

Jean and Lindsey

Your Bereavement Team

The bereavement department includes two new faces. Lindsey Tomcics has been with St. Luke's Hospice for 3½ years, most of this time as the social worker at the hospice inpatient unit. Lindsey previously worked in mental health for 10 years. She is a licensed clinical social worker and holds a certificate/licensure as a hospice and palliative care social worker.

Jean Francis has a background in teaching and communications. Twenty years ago, she joined hospice as a patient care volunteer and has also served as a volunteer coordinator and bereavement counselor. She is certified in the field of thanatology (death, dying and bereavement).



When Someone Else Is Grieving

More than 6,000 people die every day in the United States. So it's only a matter of time before each of us will be called on to demonstrate caring and support to someone who has lost a loved one. Our fear of death often overcomes our reasoning abilities, ties our tongues and leaves us challenged when we are with someone who is hurting.

When we try to console someone, a well-meaning comment can actually make a griever feel worse. There seems to be a never-ending supply of comments that could be offensive. Fortunately, however, mourners have also confirmed that there are many helpful and compassionate things you can say to help them with their grief. Consider the following:

I am sorry to hear about (name of person).

How are you doing right now?

I don't know how you feel, but I am here to help in whatever way you need me.

I wish I had the right words to say.

I am sorry you are having to go through this.

I'm bringing dinner over.

No one can take another person's grief away. These responses are helpful because they are neither judgmental nor controlling. They do not try to fix the unfixable nor do they tell the mourner what to think, feel or do.

When we are with someone who is grieving, it's important to allow the person to speak freely about what they are thinking and feeling. It's also important not to insert yourself in their story, share your own experiences or correcting or interrupt them. When griever are encouraged to express themselves openly, they begin to feel safe and "heard." It is in the telling of their story that they begin to make sense of what has happened. It's also in their story of loss that healing can begin.

More valuable than words, though, is your presence. Sitting alongside someone who is grieving, offering a hug or a hand squeeze communicates more than words can. Most griever remember the person who companioned them in their sadness and pain far more than words. Often the best thing to do when you are with someone who is grieving is to "show up, shut up and listen with your heart."



It is better to have a heart

without words than

to have words

without a

heart.

Grief and Loss Support Group

Our next six-week Grief and Loss Support Group will be offered in May 2018. This group is for adults grieving the loss of someone significant in their lives and it 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 and provides grief education and support. Please note that this is not a therapeutic group; this group provides education, resources and support on the healing process.

PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE: The group will meet on consecutive Wednesday evenings from May 23 through June 27, 2018 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm at the Anderson Campus. *Registration is required.* Please contact Jean Francis at 484-526-2514 for more information or to register.



Service of Remembrance

Three times a year, we gather at various houses of worship for a non-denominational, interfaith time to remember loved ones who have died. During these services, we read the names of the patients we have served at St. Luke's Hospice during a certain time period and we use music, readings and imagery to provide stimulus for meditation and reflection.

The next service of remembrance will be held on **Sunday, April 15th at 3:00 pm** at Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18017. This will be for patients who died from November 1, 2017 through March 31, 2018.

Open /Drop-in Support

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 the cafeteria conference room.

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

Bethlehem: Fourth Monday of every month from 9:00 - 10:00 am (please note new time) at St. Luke's Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's, PA 18015 in Room 111



There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep sadness and of unspeakable love.

- Washington Irving

Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

This is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Please call the bereavement office at 484-526-2499 if you are in need of something more that is not on this list or for referrals to other services.

Adult Support Information

Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center- Bereavement Support Group - A professionally led monthly support group for LGBT people who have experienced loss. The group meets every 4th Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 PM. Please register with Ariel@bradbrysullivancenter.org.

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 or call Celia Blum at 215-345-2079 for more information.

Gentle Yoga for grief, stress, and life transitions— offered by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Wendy is a psychotherapist specializing in grief counseling related to a range of losses. She works privately with individuals, couples and families, and also facilitates group therapy focused on grief psychoeducation and counseling, therapeutic yoga practices for the integration of grief, stress, and life transitions, coping with anxiety and depression and cultivating self-esteem. Wendy offers many group sessions: Monday evenings from 6:00-7:30 PM, Tuesday afternoons from 2:00- 3:30 PM and Thursdays from 11:00 AM-12:30 pm. Group size is limited to ten. Group members bring a yoga mat. Please contact 610-730-1992 for location and more information or visit www.givinggriefavoic.com.

Grief Share are faith based grief support groups. Several locations are provided within the Lehigh Valley. Please visit www.griefshare.org to find a location near you.

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

GRASP is a grief recovery after a substance passing and is for families whom have experienced a death due to substance abuse. The support group meets at the 1st Presbyterian Church in Allentown, room 118. A group meets every 1st Monday at 12:00 PM. Please register with Jenny Kemps at 610-422-8490 or email jenkemps@ptd.net. Another group meets every 3rd Monday of the month from 7:00– 8:30 PM. Please register with Nancy Howe at 484-788-9440 or email nancyhowe@ymail.com.

HALOS – CLC (Hope After a Loved One’s Suicide – Child Loss Chapter) is for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings who have experienced loss of a child or sibling to suicide. The group meets every 4th Thursday of the month from 6:30– 8:30 PM at Hughes Library in Stroudsburg, PA. Call to register with Alice Keyes at 570-236-1168 or email at alicekeys00@gmail.com.

Lehigh Valley Health Network offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

St. Francis Retreat House offers a support group for people experiencing grief due to loss, trauma, and/or death. It is an effort, on the part of the Franciscan Friars and Retreat Team of SFRH, to assist in helping people in the surrounding community to heal, be healthy, and to ultimately reach peace. Groups are held 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month 9:30 am to 11:00 am Sept. – May at 3918 Chipman Road Easton, PA 18045. Please call 610-515-9028 for more information.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing supports groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling. Feel free to go to their website www.thecompassionatefriends.org for more information or contact them at 484-597-0240 for the Lehigh Valley Chapter, 267-380-0130 for the Quakertown Chapter, and the Easton Chapter at 610-866-5468.

VNA Hospice of Monroe County provides the community with an adult support group open to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one within the past 12 months. These groups are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 12:00 PM– 1:30 PM at 502 VNA Road, Route 447, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Please contact 570-421-5390 for more information.

Pocono VNA offers a grief support group for those who have experienced a death of a loved on within the past 12 months. These groups are held on 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fish Hill Rd., Tannersville, PA 18372. The group begins at 7:00 PM. Call 570-629-1992 for more information.

Children

Lehigh Valley Health Network

Stepping Stones for Children: This special group is a combination of education, arts, activities, and support designed to help facilitate healthy grieving with others of the same age who understand what they are going through. Please call 610-402-7481 to register. The group will meet at 2024 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103. **Next Sessions:** March 7, 14, 21 & 28 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. **Future Session:** July/August 2018.

Lori Yoder’s Bereavement Center

Healing Hearts Loss, Grief and Bereavement Center LLC, 600 N. 3rd Street, Emmaus, PA 18049 Call 610-421-8625 for more information about available services.

New Jersey

Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice 800-882-1117

www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement

Compassionate Care Hospice 570-296-3591

<http://cchnet.net/>