



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

May 2018

"I don't know how I feel until I write it."

-Dana Shapiro

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.

The book, *A Grief Observed*, was first published in 1961 under a pseudonym because its author, C. S. Lewis, wished to avoid identification. This slim book is a collection of Lewis's reflections on grief following his wife's death. It was compiled from four notebooks he wrote in as he examined his feelings and responses to her death. Lewis's stepson pointed out in the 1994 edition of the book that the article 'A' in *A Grief Observed* is meant to underscore the fact that his father's book is only one person's perspective on grief.

People who are grieving the loss of someone close to them are often encouraged to put pen to paper as a way to process the river of emotions that swirl around the griever after a death. There are many reasons to record thoughts and feelings when grieving. Writing or journaling allows one to clarify certain thoughts and feelings, thereby gaining valuable personal insight. The act of writing can be an invaluable problem-solving tool as well. Often one can hash out a problem and come up with solutions more easily on paper.

But beyond these payoffs, there are also some health benefits to jotting down thoughts and feelings. In fact, research has demonstrated the following:

- Journaling or writing decreases symptoms of asthma, arthritis and other health conditions.
- Writing improves cognitive functioning.
- It strengthens the immune system, preventing a host of illnesses.
- Writing about anger, sadness and other feelings helps release the intensity of these emotions and counteracts the negative effects of stress.

Despite the many benefits of recording one's thoughts and feelings, the act of writing often evokes fear. Perhaps a grade school teacher armed with a red pen sucked the joy out of this activity for you. Perhaps you are so concerned with the readability of your work, penmanship, or other peripheral factors that you can't focus on the emotions and thoughts you're attempting to access. Or perhaps writing fatigues the hand or psyche.

Take the challenge and push aside your fears. The act of writing is an inexpensive technique to increase self-awareness. Composing perfect prose is not the intent; the goal is allowing the words to flow as the brain and the hand connect and from this act comes insight and wisdom. Turn the page for some writing prompts to get you started.

Jean and Lindsey

Writing Prompts

First things first. There aren't any rules when it comes to writing or journaling your thoughts and feelings. Choose a format that works for you. Some people treasure lovely blank bound books while others favor simple spiral notebooks. Still others are more comfortable plucking away at a computer keyboard.

Don't feel you have to write every day and don't worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar. Give yourself permission to write whatever comes to mind. This is writing for you and only you. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Write a letter. Letters are an excellent way to maintain a sense of connection with your loved one. They offer opportunities for comfort and healing.

Write about a favorite memory. Close your eyes and recall a favorite time with your loved one. Think about it in terms of all five senses (see, hear, taste, smell, touch) and write a line about each sense.

Browse through photo albums. Notice your reactions to various photos. When you find a photo that makes you react strongly (either positively or negatively), write about it. Explore your feelings, memories or what you wish you could change.

Write to combat procrastination. Have you been avoiding a task for weeks on end? Write about it. Look at the task from all angles and write about what might be causing your avoidance. Write about what you need in order to face the task you've been avoiding.

Write three words that describe your feelings each day. This helps you track your feelings over time and will give you the opportunity to notice that emotions shift over time.

Make to-do lists. Because memory is often affected by grief, to-do lists provide structure and comfort when things feel like they are spinning out of control. Write lists of your emotions, memories, plans, ideas and more.

One Year From Now. Imagine a time when the loss might not be as painful. Write a "One Year from Today" page in which you fast-forward yourself to the healing side of grief. Imagine your life one year from the feelings you are experiencing today.



Healing Rhythms

Healing rhythms is a drumming group and it's a unique approach to loss and grief during life transitions. The drum is a vehicle of expression to articulate thoughts and feelings without words. Research indicates that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system, releases emotional trauma and produces feelings of well-being. Drumming circles also provide a sense of connectedness with others who are grieving.

Our Healing Rhythms drumming group is led by a Remo HealthRhythms endorsed facilitator. Participants experience meditative drumming, guided imagery and inspirational readings about moving through loss. The group will be held on consecutive **Saturday mornings from 10am to 12pm beginning June 9 through July 14, 2018.** The group will meet at Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse, 4116 Bath Pike (Route 512), Bethlehem 18017. Please pre-register by calling 484-526-2499. For more information on the benefits of drumming, visit www.lvdrumcircle.com.

Grief and Loss Support Group

Our next six-week Grief and Loss Support Group will begin in May. 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.

The group will meet on consecutive Wednesday evenings from May 23 through June 27, 2018 from 5-6:30 pm in conference room A (lower level) at the Anderson Campus. **Registration is required.** If interested, please contact Jean Francis at 484-526-2514.



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 are offered on a bi-monthly basis. We will meet on Monday, **June 18 from 6-8 pm** at St Luke's Hospital-Monroe Campus, 100 St. Luke's Lane, Stroudsburg, 18630 in the lower level conference room B. Preregistration is required. To register, please call (484)526-2499.

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. Groups are facilitated by a bereavement counselor but are 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 4-5 pm at St. Luke's Hospital-Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building, 1700 St. Luke's Blvd, Easton, 18045 in the lower level 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, 18951 in the cafeteria conference room.

Lehighton: Third Monday of the month from 3-4 pm at Dinkey Evangelical Lutheran Memorial Church, 1742 Dinkey Road, Lehighton, PA 18212. **Beginning in June, the time for this meeting will change from 4-5 pm.**

Bethlehem: Fourth Monday of every month from 9-10 am at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital-Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, 18015 in Room 111.



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– The center offers a professionally led monthly bereavement support group for LGBT people who have experienced loss. The group meets on the 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. 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 on the 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 support groups for parents, grandparents and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling. Visit their website at 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.

New Jersey

Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice 800-882-1117

www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement

Compassionate Care Hospice 570-296-3591

<http://cchnet.net/>