



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

June 2021

“Never smother your sorrow, but tend and cherish it till it comes to have a separate and integral interest. To regret deeply is to live afresh.” ~ Henry David Thoreau

St. Luke's Hospice

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PLEASE NOTE: If you would like to be added or removed from our mailing list or prefer to receive an electronic copy, please contact Dawn at 484-526-2499.

The emotions of guilt and regret are often mentioned by grievors and are frequently used interchangeably. There are, however, subtle differences between the words. Guilt is the emotional experience that occurs when we believe that we have compromised our standards of conduct and bear responsibility for our actions. Regret, on the other hand, is the emotion we experience when we look back on an action and realize we could have done something differently. Regret differs from guilt in that we didn't know that we were doing something against our personal values or that we didn't actually have control over the situation at the time. It's often is a benign action (or inaction) that we later wish we'd done differently based on the outcome.

Here's a hypothetical situation: I receive a telephone call that my grandmother who lives in Ohio is ill and has only a few days to live. I'm told that she wants to see me. Not wanting to change my weekend plans, I avoid the situation and lie, explaining to family that I can't get time off from work. I don't see her before she dies. In this case, I feel guilty because I actively made a decision to do something inconsistent with my values and love for my grandmother.

In a second scenario, I get the phone call about my grandmother and rush off to the airport. When I arrive, I learn that my flight is cancelled and by the time I arrive in Ohio, she has already died. In this situation the feeling I experience is more accurately regret, not guilt. I didn't know the flight would get cancelled nor did I do anything to cause this cancellation to occur.

In both situations, I feel terrible, wishing I could change the past. Here's where understanding the nuances of these two emotions can help with coping and healing. When we feel guilty, the work we need to do centers around taking responsibility for our actions, seeking to make reparations (if possible) and seeking self-forgiveness to manage the guilt. When the emotion is more accurately regret, working through this involves self-acceptance and determining how we can learn and grow from the experience.

There are many situations where guilt and regret may become blurred. We often wish we'd said or done things differently, especially now that the person has died. When my flight was canceled, I might have said, "I should have known the flight might get canceled and I should have driven." When this happens, it's important to recognize this as "shoulda-coulda-woulda" thinking and, if possible, to cut ourselves a break. We need to accept that we can't possibly live life acting on every possible outcome of every situation.

When You Have Regrets

Unfortunately when we regret something we did or didn't do to someone who has died, we're at a disadvantage because we can't ask for forgiveness. This often puts us at greater risk of letting these unresolved regrets affect us negatively. The solution is not wishing these feelings away. Instead it's more helpful to recognize the discomfort and to work toward forgiving ourselves and growing from our mistakes.

Here's an exercise for those who are struggling with regrets:

1. Get two sheets of paper. Spend at least 10 minutes writing about your regrets on the first sheet of paper. Write down everything you wish you could have done differently and everything you wish you could change.
2. Keeping the first sheet of paper nearby, take the second sheet of paper and spend at least 10 minutes writing down all the ways you have grown from your regrets and all the lessons you've learned.
3. Do what you want with the first sheet of paper, but keep the second sheet, the one with your lessons learned. The next time you feel yourself getting caught up in "if-only" thinking, take out this paper out and remind yourself how far you've come.

SOURCE: <https://whatsyourgrief.com>



Time of Remembrance

The pandemic has forced us to miss so many things, including opportunities to gather and remember loved ones who have died on our hospice service. St. Luke's Hospice is presenting the next Time of Remembrance virtually on Wednesday, June 30th beginning at 7 p.m. We will be reading the names of patients we have served in the Bethlehem area and the Hospice House who died between November 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021. You will receive a letter with instructions on how to connect virtually using Microsoft Teams.

In addition, we are planning three in-person Times of Remembrance for the summer: July 24, 2021 for Stroudsburg families (rain date is July 25); July 31, 2021 for Lehighton families (rain date is August 1); and August 21 for Bethlehem and Hospice House families. Locations for these events to be announced soon.



Funeral Assistance through FEMA

FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is providing financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020 for deaths related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). The toll-free phone number is 844-684-6333 and hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern standard time. Additional information about eligibility and documentation needed is outlined at www.fema.gov. There is no deadline to apply for this assistance.

Grief Support for You

Despite the increase in COVID-19 vaccinations, St. Luke's Hospice is required to abide by the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines for public gatherings. For this reason, all in-person support groups and workshops are being held virtually. Here are the support options we offer at this time:

Individual support: Three bereavement counselors provide support and information through in-person visits as well as video and telephone counseling sessions. Contact information for us is on page 1 of this newsletter.

Good Grief Workshops: These 90-minute workshops are being held virtually twice a month to provide you a better understanding of what grief is, how it affects us emotionally, physically, spiritually and psychologically, coping strategies and ways to reconcile the loss. Pre-registration is required by contacting Jean Francis at (484) 225-9269. Workshop offerings include a daytime and an evening option each month:

▶ Monday, June 28, 2021 (2-3:30 pm) and Wednesday, June 30, 2021 (7-8:30 pm)

▶ Tuesday, July 13, 2021 (2-3:30 pm) and Thursday, July 29, 2021 (7-8:30 pm)

▶ Monday, August 9, 2021 (2-3:30 pm) and Thursday, August 26, 2021 (7-8:30 pm)

Video library: St. Luke's website includes a dozen short videos that provide information about the grieving and mourning process and ways to care for yourself during these tender times. To view them, go to <https://www.slnh.org/vna> and click on the hospice heading. On the left side of the screen under the VNA heading, click onto grief support. About halfway down this page, click onto the video library heading "Want to Understand Your Grief?" Access the library by answering the question about

your connection with St. Luke's Hospice (if any). Then view videos from the comfort of your home.

Virtual drop-in support groups: These groups enable participants the opportunity to receive and provide support in a collaborative environment. They are facilitated by a bereavement counselor and participants are invited to suggest topics for discussion.

One group meets virtually on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (**June 8, 2021**) from 4-5:30 p.m. For information on connecting with them, contact Tara George at (484) 523-0833. A second online group meets virtually on the third Tuesday of the month (**June 15, 2021**) from 1:30-3 p.m. For more information, contact Alexandra Becker at (484)-635-0662.

Learning From Death

The true worth of a life is the story it has left behind.
Tell it well.

Search for meaning and understanding.

Search for truth:

Did he teach you about love?

Did she personify genius or sensitivity?

Did his life warn you of the danger of bitterness and anger?

As I stand and behold the eyes of those who mourn, I realize that the only difference between people in this world is not their wealth, fame or success.

The only difference is those who had love in their life and those who did not.

SOURCE UNKNOWN



Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

Below is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Because of the pandemic and the need for physical distancing, many resources may only be offered virtually. Please contact our bereavement department at 484-526-2499 if you need additional support.

Adult Support Information

Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center offers bereavement support for LGBT people who have experienced loss. For more information, please visit their website at www.bradburysullivancenter.org or email at reilly@bradburysullivancenter.org.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing support for parents, grandparents and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling. Visit www.thecompassionatefriends.org. Enter your zip code to locate the local chapter and contact person near you.

Doylestown Hospital Hospice offers a variety of support groups and programs that change seasonally. Visit their website at www.doylestownhealth.org/hospital/services/bereavement or call 215-345-2079.

Grand View Hospital Hospice offers groups and services that change seasonally. For more information, call 215-453-4210.

Grief Share is a faith-based support group offered throughout the Lehigh Valley. Visit their website at www.griefshare.org and enter your zip code to find the contact person and program near you.

OASIS Community Center offers a variety of support groups to those grieving a loss due to substance related causes. Therapist-led meetings are held in-person and virtually for bereaved parents and young adults (siblings, partners, friends, etc.). Groups for bereaved youth ages 7-17 and bereaved caregivers raising bereaved children are offered in-person. For dates and times, visit www.oasisbethlehem.org, call 484-747-6825 or email at rhonda@oasisbethlehem.org to register.

GRASP (Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing) currently offers two virtual evening meetings per month, plus an afternoon meeting at the Oasis Center. Call 484-788-9440 or Call/Email at nancyhowe@gmail.com or 484-788-9440 or Tim Howe at howet60@yahoo.com or (646-401-4455).

Lehigh Valley Health Network offers many groups and services for adults and children between the ages of 6-17. For more information, call 610-402-7481. For information about program offerings in the Pocono area, call 272-762-3826 or email Bryson.Boes@lvhn.org.

Suicide Loss: The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has excellent information on risk factors, statistics and education about suicide. Visit www.afsp.org and enter your zip code to find the chapter/contact person near you. All chapters are run by people who have experienced the suicide of a loved one.

Support Information in New Jersey

Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice offers support to those who are grieving the death of a loved one. For more information, call 973-948-2283 or visit www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement.