

Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

November 2022

"No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear." - C.S Lewis

St. Luke's Hospice

484-526-2499

Bereavement Team:

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

"Am I doing this right?" Grief is a deeply human experience and one experienced by almost everyone at some point in life. Yet, in spite of this, many people report feeling alone in their grief journey. Grief can feel deeply confusing and scary. New emotions might come up and at a speed that knocks us out. It won't always feel like things make sense. Most of us don't get a lot of guidance on how to move through this process.

Suddenly, our world has turned upside down and we are left with the tasks of making sense of this new reality, whether we feel up to it or not. It can be overwhelming and truly impossible to see all the details and pieces all at once. It can be tempting to try to rush to "feel better" or "move on". Our minds crave knowing when they will be out of grief and out of the feelings of uncertainty and deep emotional pain. Often it can feel like we're doing grief "wrong" somehow if we don't feel better "fast" enough. Lots of "should" statements and a lot of judgement can come up in our heads.

The grief process can be compared to when a building collapses. There will be dust everywhere in the air, so much so that it's impossible to see clearly. It's too early to pull rubble away or to assess what is still standing. And it's absolutely not a time that allows any new structures to be built. Instead, we must wait, letting the dust settle, on its own chosen time frame, before we can plan our next move. It is too big sometime to engage with fully so we have to do it in smaller bites.

There is no way to rush this. There is no right way to do this. Everyone's loved one, relationship and loss is unique.

As you move through your own unique grief journey, try to focus on giving yourself the freedom and grace to feel what comes up.

Try to speak lovingly to yourself and to not bully yourself into thinking that you're "doing it wrong" because it doesn't look like someone else's grief or like what you expect.

There is no wrong way to grieve.

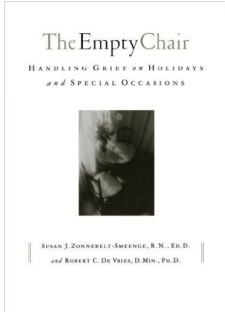
Give yourself permission to be deeply human.



Reading Recommendations:

The Empty Chair

By: Susan Zonnebelt Smeenge and Robert C. De Vries



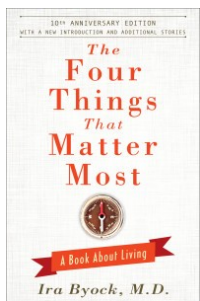
Losing a loved one whether a spouse, parent, child, sibling, or friend leaves people feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. Holidays and other special occasions seem to intensify the pain. Whether the occasion is Christmas or Easter, a birthday or anniversary, these celebrations force the bereaved

to again face the reality of a loved one's absence. In *The Empty Chair*, the authors share a comforting blend of emotional support, spiritual guidance, and personal experience to help readers honor their loved one on important days. Those who support the bereaved mental health professionals, pastors, funeral home staff, and others will also appreciate this book for its reflective yet, practical approach.

The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living

By: Dr. Ira Byock

Dr. Ira Byock, an international leader in palliative care, explains how we can practice these life-affirming words in our day-to-day lives.



Too often we assume that the people we love really know that we love them. Dr. Byock demonstrates the value of “stating the obvious” and provides practical insights into the benefits of letting go of old grudges and toxic emotions. His stories help us to forgive, appreciate, love, and celebrate one another and live life more fully.

Using the Four Things in a wide range of life situations, we can experience emotional healing even in the wake of family strife, personal tragedy, divorce, or in the face of death. With practical wisdom and spiritual power, *The Four Things That Matter Most* gives us the language and guidance to honor and experience what really matters most in

For Grief by John O'Donohue

When you lose someone you love,
Your life becomes strange,
The ground beneath you becomes fragile,
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;
And some dead echo drags your voice down
Where words have no confidence
Your heart has grown heavy with loss;
And though this loss has wounded others too,
No one knows what has been taken from you
When the silence of absence deepens.
Flickers of guilt kindle regret
For all that was left unsaid or undone.

There are days when you wake up happy;
Again inside the fullness of life,
Until the moment breaks
And you are thrown back
Onto the black tide of loss.
Days when you have your heart back,
You are able to function well
Until in the middle of work or encounter,
Suddenly with no warning,
You are ambushed by grief.

It becomes hard to trust yourself.
All you can depend on now is that
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.
More than you, it knows its way
And will find the right time
To pull and pull the rope of grief
Until that coiled hill of tears
Has reduced to its last drop.
Gradually, you will learn acquaintance
With the invisible form of your departed;
And when the work of grief is done,
The wound of loss will heal
And you will have learned
To wean your eyes
From that gap in the air
And be able to enter the hearth
In your soul where your loved one
Has awaited your return
All the time.

Grief Support for You

St. Luke's Hospice abides by CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines for public gatherings during these challenging times. All workshops continue to be held virtually. Here are support options we currently offer:

Individual support: Our bereavement counselors provide support and information through video and telephone counseling sessions. Contact information is on the front page of this newsletter.

Good Grief Workshops: These 90-minute workshops are offered virtually twice a month to provide you with a better understanding of what grief is, how it may affect you emotionally, physically, spiritually and psychologically, coping strategies and ways to reconcile the loss. For more information and to receive an invitation to join the meeting, call (484) 526-2499. You will be asked to download the Microsoft Teams app on your smart phone or computer. Workshop offerings include a daytime and an evening option each month:

Thursday, 2022, 1-2:30PM

Wednesday, 2022, 6-7:30PM

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 after a loss. To view the videos, go to <https://www.slhn.org/vna> and click on the hospice heading. On the left side of the screen under the VNA heading, click on 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 the videos from the comfort of your home.

Monthly Support Group

Brodheads ville Group

The Brodheads ville group meets on the third Monday of the month from 10:00am-11:30am at the Western Pocono Community Library, 131 Pilgrim Way, Brodheads ville 18322.

This group provides space for participants to receive and provide support in a collaborative environment.

This group is facilitated by a grief counselor. For more information, contact Alexandra at (484) 635-0662 and if the weather looks threatening, call (484) 526-2514 and listen for an update on this phone line.



The Window by Rumi

Your body is away from me
but there is a window open
from my heart to yours.

From this window, like the moon
I keep sending news secretly.

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.

Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress and Life Transitions is currently being offered virtually by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Visit www.givinggriefavoic.com or call 610-730-1992. Be sure to indicate if your loved one was a St. Luke's Hospice patient.

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 nan-cyhowe@ymail.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.

Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley cancersupportglv.org

Find an individual therapist at: Psychologytoday.com

We encourage you to call the number on the back of your insurance card to find resources paid by your individual insurance plan.

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.