



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

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*Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program*

June 2024

“We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world--the company of those who have known suffering.”

~ **Hellen Keller**, *We Bereaved*

**St. Luke's Hospice  
Bereavement Team :**

484-526-2499

**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.

Grief tends to make us feel so alone and yet it is something we all have or will experience. Although we all experience it, none of us grieve in exactly the same way. That is what makes us feel alone.

Grief is as individual as a fingerprint. Our fingerprints are unique to us, but all of us have them. We all experience grief. We all go through loss and change. We just do it in different ways, because like our fingerprints, we are not all the same. We have different personalities. We have different supports. The relationship we had with the person we lost is unique and different from anyone else who knew them. We cannot expect to all grieve the same, but that does not mean we do not grieve.

Some will choose to face the grief head on. Some will utilize supports. Some will be willing to share and others choose to keep it close to the vest. Our personality, experience and culture all are factors in how we grieve. We cannot judge the way someone chooses to grieve. There is no right or wrong when we are grieving. However, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to grieve. What we can do is support one another as best we are able.

Grief is a trickster that makes us feel like we are the only ones who have ever been through it and that no one could possibly understand what we are going through and what we are feeling. If you feel this way, please know you are not alone and that reaching out to a trusted friend, family member, your faith community, grief support group, or Bereavement Counselor can help. Knowing you are not alone and being validated in your feelings and provided an outlet can make such a difference in the grieving process.

We realize it can be difficult to reach outside of ourselves when we are going through something so personal, but in grief we are not our own best friend. In a time when we should be good to ourselves, we tend to be our biggest bully. Remind yourself that reaching out for support is not a sign of weakness, but an act awareness, strength, self-love, and courage.



# Helpful Hints

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## **Grief & The Body**

Grief is complex. It is not only emotionally draining, but also impacts us socially, spiritually, behaviorally, and cognitively. Just as we encourage reaching out for emotional support, we hope you will take care of your physical health, as well. In doing so, we wanted to share with you some ways grief can impact the body.

**Stress Response:** Grief triggers a significant stress response in the body. The stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline are released, leading to physiological changes such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration. This can result in feelings of tension, restlessness, and irritability.

**Sleep Disturbances:** Grief often disrupts normal sleep patterns. Some people experience difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, while others may sleep excessively. Sleep disturbances can contribute to fatigue, weakness, and difficulties with concentration.

**Weakened Immune System:** Prolonged grief can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses and infections. Stress hormones released during grief can suppress immune systems, increasing risk of illnesses and delaying healing processes.

**Appetite and Digestive Issues:** Grief can affect appetite, leading to changes in eating patterns. Some individuals may experience a loss of appetite, leading to weight loss, while others may turn to food for comfort, resulting in overeating or unhealthy food choices. Grief can also contribute to digestive problems, such as stomachaches, indigestion, and gastrointestinal distress.

**Physical Pain:** Grief can manifest as physical pain. People often report experiencing aches, headaches, muscle tension, and overall body pain. This can be attributed to the body's physiological response to stress and emotional distress.

**Fatigue and Lack of Energy:** Grieving requires significant emotional and psychological energy, which can result in persistent fatigue and a lack of energy. This fatigue can make it challenging to carry out daily activities and can contribute to feelings of physical and mental exhaustion.

**Cardiovascular Effects:** Intense grief has been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular problems. The stress and emotional upheaval can contribute to elevated blood pressure, irregular heart rhythms, and even an increased risk of heart attacks or other cardiovascular events.

**Please let your primary care physician know if you are experiencing any of the above and make them aware of any recent losses.**

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## News & Events

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### Grief Support for You

**Individual support:** Our bereavement counselors provide support and information through video and telephone counseling sessions. Contact the St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Team at 484-526-2499.

**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, June 6th 2024, 1-2:30PM**

**Wednesday, June 26th 2024, 6-7:30PM**

**Wednesday, July 10th 2024, 6-7:30PM**

**Thursday, July 25th, 1-2:30PM**

**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 half-way 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 s

#### **New -- In-Person Bethlehem**

The Bethlehem support group meets on the first Friday of the month from 10:00am to 11:30am at the Wesley United Methodist Church 2540 Center Street (Route 512) Bethlehem, PA 18017.

This group provides a safe and collaborative space to process your grief journey with others in a similar situation. Together we will review a topic that meets the need of the group that day. This group is facilitated by a grief counselor.

For more information, contact Katie at (484) 225-9269 and if the weather looks threatening, call (484) 526-2514 and listen for an update on this phone line.

#### **In-Person Brodheadsville**

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

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

***"Those who have suffered understand  
suffering and therefore extend their  
hand." -Patti Smith***

## *Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story*

Below is a list of bereavement services in the area. Some 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](http://www.bradburysullivancenter.org)

or call 610-347-9988

**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](http://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](http://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](http://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 *Hopeful Hearts* 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 occasionally offered in-person. For dates and times, visit [www.oasisbethlehem.org](http://www.oasisbethlehem.org) or call 484-747-6825. Advanced registration is required, please email [rhonda@oasisbethlehem.org](mailto: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@ymail.com](mailto:nancyhowe@ymail.com) or 484-788-9440 or Tim Howe at [howet60@yahoo.com](mailto:howet60@yahoo.com) or (646-401-4455).

**Suicide Loss:** The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has excellent information on risk factors, statistics and education about suicide. Visit [www.afsp.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement).