



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program 484-526-2499

August 2026

The Oxygen Mask for Grieving

When moving through the motions of loss, you may feel as if you are operating on autopilot. Many of your senses feel dull, there is not much activity you feel you can do beyond the basics of sleeping (or disrupted sleeping), eating to sustain yourself, maintaining your home, and even returning to work or other necessary activities that keep your life going.

There is a version of your reality where autopilot feels comfortable because you may have spent a lengthy amount of time being a caregiver and easily putting others' needs before your own – because you had to. You might be experiencing a shift where you are not sure how to meet your own needs, let alone prioritize them.

Let's attempt to envision this current phase of your life as a plane ride, and you are experiencing extreme turbulence. It isn't what you expected from your ride, but you knew in the back of your mind it was a possibility. There are signals alarming all passengers to put on their oxygen masks. Your initial instinct may have always been to ensure your loved one had their mask on first, but you are now on this plan ride alone. You know that if you do not put your own mask on in the next few seconds, you could pass out and no longer be able to help anyone, let alone yourself. Attempt to envision this metaphor as a reminder of self-compassion: Attending to your own needs to take care of others. Envision that in the future, the turbulence will subside, and your ride will resume to its destination safely.

Self-compassion is often misunderstood as giving up but in true practice, it is fuel to keep moving forward. It is a practice in momentum, keeping you strong. Self-compassion is not self-pity, or feeling sorry for yourself, or selfish. Self-compassion is backed by science and gives us an opportunity to reset. While you might have the thought, "I don't have time to do this, I have too much else to do," remind yourself of the metaphor of the oxygen mask.

Self-compassion is an active practice, and we can tailor this practice to be short, intentional, and specifically targeting the complicated feelings that arise with grieving, whether it be loneliness, hurt, numbness, anger, despair, sadness, or any emotional response you might be experiencing. The following exercise is a gentle guide to help you "put on your own oxygen mask first."

For more information about the services offered by the St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program or if you would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact us at 484-526-2499. Newsletters are also available electronically by calling our office or online at www.sluhn.org (search - Hospice grief)



A Two Step Guide to Kind Self-Talk



Acknowledge your pain.

This is a moment for us to be honest with ourselves with how much these experiences and these feelings hurt. This is true, authentic awareness of the depth of emotions entangled in grief. We want this moment to be wrapped in kindness as well.

A simple formula for this practice would be to develop a memorable phrase that helps name your experience of difficult emotions. An example could be, “I am noticing [emotion],” or “I am feeling [emotion],” or even “[Emotion] is showing up for me right now.” Instead of saying, “I am [emotion],” we can create a deliberate space between ourselves and what we are feeling instead of identifying as the emotion. While it might feel uncomfortable initially, making it a practice can help create a kind and accepting space for your emotions. Attempt to say this phrase in a calm and soothing voice, accompanied by two breaths.

Respond with kindness.

This step might initially appear over simplified, but it tends to be the hardest step. Remind yourself of our initial metaphor, that it is necessary to put your own oxygen mask on first, when practicing this step. Moments of raw kindness may feel foreign during this time, but it is essential to developing the whole practice. Phrases of kindness can include, “May I meet myself with kindness,” or “I am deserving of a break,” or “Easy does it.” Phrases that sound more like your own language will be more effective, so it is encouraged to tailor it to be your own.

Bring it all together.

Let’s put this into play. During moments of emotional challenge, acknowledge your pain and respond with kindness. Incorporate a few gentle breaths and use a calm, soft tone.

I am noticing sadness, may I meet myself with kindness.

The same way that we wanted our loved ones to be comfortable and supported, we can give ourselves that same permission. The goal of this exercise is comfort and support in saying these phrases. Now, similarly to other tools, this is not a guaranteed practice; it is a gentle, encouraging moment for just you. It might feel uncomfortable or uneasy at first, you might feel undeserving of your own time and kindness. Simply remember, it is essential for you to put your oxygen mask on first to continue through this journey.

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Our Monthly Support Groups

Our bereavement support groups are facilitated by one of our grief counselors. We provide a safe and collaborative space to process your grief journey. **For more information, call us at 484-526-2499.**



IMPORTANT—There will be no support groups in August. Groups will resume in September.

Lehigh Valley Area Support Groups

NEW Location: Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church 323 Nazareth Pike, Bethlehem 18020 **10-11:30am: 9/4, 10/2**

NEW Location: Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church 323 Nazareth Pike, Bethlehem 18020 **6:30-8pm: 9/8, 10/13**

Brodheadsville Area Support Group

Western Pocono Comm. Library, 131 Pilgrim Way, Brodheadsville 18322 **1-2:30pm: 9/16, 10/14**

Carbon/Schuylkill Area Support Group

St. Luke's Lehighton Campus, 211 N. 12th Street, Lehighton PA 18235 **1-2:30pm: 9/9, 10/7**

Sellersville Area Support Group

Zwingli UCC Church, 350 Wile Ave, Souderton PA 18964 **1-2:30pm: 9/14, 10/12**

INTRODUCING "Walking with Grief" Walking Support Group

Physical activity is a powerful tool in the healing process. The simple practice of walking has been shown to be a healthy outlet for working through difficult emotions. If you are looking for a different outlet to grieve, come join us for our new **Walking with Grief Support Group**. Sometimes we don't just want to talk about it, we want to walk about it. Facilitated by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Team.

Location: Anderson Campus 1872 St. Luke's Blvd, Easton, PA 18045 (Meet at Gazebo near Cancer Center)

Time: 12:00pm - 1:30pm

Dates: Tuesday 9/15; Tuesday 10/13

****This is an outdoor program, dress for the weather. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bring a water bottle.****

Good Grief Workshops

These virtual 90-minute workshops are offered monthly to provide you with a better understanding of what grief is. This workshop is informational, interactive, and a good starting point towards entering our in-person support groups. Sign-up is recommended for those 4-6 weeks out from their loss. For more information, call 484-526-2499.

Join us from 1-2:30pm: Aug. 20, Sept. 10

Join us from 6-7:30pm: Aug. 12, Sept. 23

St. Luke's Senior Meals

St. Luke's University Health Network offers healthy, affordable meals for seniors. It's a great opportunity for a meal for less than \$5 and to enjoy meeting new people. Scan the QR code and select **Older Adult Meal Program** for location, days and times.



Other Places to Find Support

We encourage you to call the number on the back of your insurance card to find resources paid by your individual insurance plan. Find an individual therapist at psychologytoday.com

Community Bereavement Resources

Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center offers bereavement support for LGBT people who have experienced loss. Visit bradburysullivancenter.org or email at reilly@bradburysullivancenter.org.

Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley provides professional programs of emotional support and education. Visit cancersupportglv.org.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing support for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling. Visit 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 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 givinggriefavoices.com or call 610-730-1992. Be sure to indicate if your loved one was a St. Luke's Hospice patient.

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.

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

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

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.). Visit oasisbethlehem.org, call 484-747-6825 or email at rhonda@oasisbethlehem.org.

Suicide Loss. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has excellent information on risk factors, statistics, and education about suicide. Visit 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 karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement.

"But as long as there's grief, I will endure it; Because it means that you were here; And that it mattered. As long as grief is here, I will endure it. As long as grief is here, we will endure it."

I Look to the Mourning Sky by Liz Newman

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