



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

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

January 2024

“Grief never ends. But it changes. It’s a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith. It is the price of love. ”

~ Unknown

**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.

As we enter into this New Year, many of us might be thinking about new resolutions or changes we want to see in the future. When embarking on a new year, it's natural to wonder how we can make this year different. You might feel hope. Hope that things will be brighter and warmer than they have been. You might feel fear. How can we move forward through the fog when we still don't know what comes around the corner? When we experience a loss it's common to experience an increased fear of the unknown. We can feel a loss of safety and a loss of control over what happens to us. We might feel deeply aware of how little control we have.

It can be easy to feel lost when we don't feel empowered. Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, specifically related to controlling one's life. This is an ongoing process that takes time, effort and support to engage in. This is never more true than after a loss when our feelings of control have been taken away from us.

How can we feel more empowered? Often empowerment comes over time, from lots of little acts that make us feel like we have choices and are free to make the choices that best serve our needs. This can give us a sense of control and greater peace.

So what can we control? Maybe we can control the way we make a meal, preparing it just the way we like it. Maybe we can reach out and call a friend. Maybe we can commit to going for a walk every day, even on the coldest days. Maybe we can decide to learn how to lower our anxiety with deep breathing. Maybe we can seek the support of a therapist and deepen our understanding of ourselves. The beauty of starting a journey of self empowerment is that it is an ongoing practice and it looks different for everyone.

The start of the new year can encourage us all to seek spaces that make us feel empowered and to ask ourselves the tough questions about how we can take on the enormous task of building lives that serve our hopes, rather than feed our fears.



# Helpful Hints

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## ***Ideas for Increasing Empowerment***

### **Increase engagement in hobbies and self care activities:**

This looks different for everyone. It might mean that you take a nap when you feel like it, just because you choose to. It might mean that you make yourself breakfast and sit in the sun without being rushed. It could mean making things or taking space to build a new routine. Asking ourselves what choices we do have that can impact the outcome of the day ahead can increase feelings of freedom and control, even through small actions.

### **Carve out space and limit feelings of being rushed:**

This might mean sitting in your car enjoying a quiet moment before going into a crazy work day. It might look like taking a few deep breaths after a busy morning. Finding pockets of time that are yours and that offer you space to get in touch with yourself can help strengthen that feeling of connection with oneself.

### **Seek out things that feel comforting to you:**

This could be time with a friend you trust. Investing in your living spaces to make them more aligned with what you like. It might also mean limiting the things you feel you “should” do and prioritizing the things that actually feel good to engage in.

### **Seek out mental health support:**

While we always encourage outreach to our grief counselors, we also want to take this time to stress the value of mental health support during times of grief. Grief can take a toll on our mental health from ongoing experiences of isolation, exhaustion, depression and anxiety. It’s important to know that mental health support and seeing someone weekly can be used as an uplifting tool towards self care, rather than a last resort in an emergency.

Many people can find clarity and personal growth through ongoing work with a counselor, but it is common to not know where to start with finding someone you would like to work with. Below are a few helpful places to begin, if this feels correct for you and your needs:

- If you do have health coverage, begin looking at your health insurance providers site to see what providers might be available to you. Often, insurance companies offer websites with tools to filter a search based on what you might be looking for. Explore these and see if anyone within your network looks appealing.
- It can be overwhelming to start looking for a counselor for the first time, especially when you are unsure what questions to ask or who would be a good fit for you. Ask yourself more about what traits would make you feel trusting and comfortable with a provider in terms of personality and style. Looking for a therapist can be a shopping process and not every provider is the right fit for everyone. We recommend calling to ask if someone is taking new clients and speaking on the phone before scheduling a session to get a feel for your personal comfort level.
- Remember you’re trying to hire someone that is the right fit for you. That person might not be the first person you speak with and that’s okay!



### Grief Support for You

**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:

**Wednesday, January 24th 2024, 6-7:30PM**

**Wednesday, February 7 2024, 6-7:30PM**

**Thursday, February 22, 2024, 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.slnh.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

#### 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.

#### Virtual

Our virtual grief support group is held on the first Friday of every month from 10:00-11:30 am. The group meets via Microsoft Teams.

This group will provide a space for therapeutic and supportive conversation to process grief. Topics will vary based on attendance. It is facilitated by a grief counselor. For more information or to register, contact Katie Ruf at (484) 225-9269 .

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***But it changes.***

***It's a passage, not a***

***Place to stay.***

***Grief is not a sign***

***Of weakness...***

***It is the price of***

***Love.***

***-Author Unknown***

## 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).