



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

484-526-2499

June 2025

Finding Yourself After Caregiving Ends

For days, weeks, months, maybe even years, your world revolved around another. Every decision, every moment, was filtered through the lens of their needs. You were the steadfast anchor, the tireless advocate, the loving caregiver. You poured your heart and soul into doing your best to provide them comfort, well-being, and peace. And then, it happened. They're gone.

As the initial shock begins to subside, a quiet realization might dawn: the intense, all-consuming role of caregiver has ended. And with it, the constant deferral of your own needs. For so long, your focus was on them. Now, the spotlight, however unwanted, is back on you. You might find yourself asking: *Who am I now? What do I need?*

The truth is, after dedicating yourself so completely to another, just the thought of prioritizing yourself can feel awkward, unsettling, even selfish. You might feel a pang of guilt at the thought of focusing on your own well-being, as if it's a betrayal of the love and commitment you shared. But this couldn't be further from the truth.

This is not a betrayal; it is a necessary act of healing and self-preservation.

Think about it from the perspective of the love you shared. Would your loved one, who witnessed your selfless dedication, want you to lose yourself in their absence? Would they want you to neglect your own health and happiness as a way to honor their memory?

Instead, ask yourself, *What would my loved one want for me?* They would likely want you to find peace, work towards healing, and to rediscover joy in your own life. Your well-being was likely something they cared about deeply. Neglecting yourself now not only harms you but also diminishes the vibrant spirit they loved.

Honoring their memory doesn't mean sacrificing your own future. It means carrying their love within you while allowing yourself to heal and grow. By taking care of yourself, you are building a foundation for a life that, while different, can still be meaningful and fulfilling. You are allowing their love to inspire you, rather than confine you.

It's time to gently turn that caregiving energy inward. It's time to nurture the one who gave so much. It's time to reclaim yourself, not as a betrayal, but as a testament to the enduring love you shared and the life you deserve to live.

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 - grief)



So, how do you find yourself, again? It's a gentle process, one step at a time:

- **Acknowledge Your Own Needs:** Start by simply recognizing that you have needs again – physical, emotional, social, spiritual, etc. What are you craving? Rest? Nourishment? Connection? Solitude? Allow yourself to acknowledge these.
- **Prioritize Basic Self-Care:** Begin with the fundamentals. Ensure you are eating regular, nutritious meals. Try to establish a consistent sleep routine, even if it feels difficult. Gentle exercise, even a short walk, can do wonders for your mood and energy levels.
- **Seek Support:** You don't have to navigate this alone. Lean on friends, family, or support groups. Talk about your feelings, your struggles, and your journey of rediscovery.
- **Rediscover Your Interests:** What did you enjoy before caregiving became your primary focus? What hobbies brought you joy? Re-engaging with these activities can help you reconnect with a sense of self beyond the caregiver role. Sometimes pursuing new interests can be helpful. Don't be afraid to dip your toe in the water of things you may be interested in. Remember to be patient with yourself; it might feel different at first.
- **Allow Yourself to Feel:** There will be good days and bad days. Allow yourself to feel all your feelings without judgment. Grief is a complex process, and there's no right or wrong way to experience it.
- **Be Kind to Yourself:** Practice self-compassion and patience as you navigate this new reality. There will be moments of guilt, sadness, and confusion. Treat yourself with kindness and encourage compassion from others.

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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.



Bethlehem Area Support Groups—

Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center St., Bethlehem, PA 18017.

Join us from 10-11:30 am: June 6, July 11

Hanover Township Community Center, 3660 Jacksonville Rd, Bethlehem, PA 18017

Join us from 6:30-8pm: June 17, July 15

Brodheadsville Area Support Group

Western Pocono Community Library, 131 Pilgrim Way, Brodheadsville, PA 18322

Join us from 1-2:30pm: June 25, July 23

Carbon/Schuykill Area Support Group

St. Luke's Miners Campus, 360 W. Ruddle St. Coaldale, PA 18218

Join us from 1-2:30pm: June 4, July 2

Good Grief Workshops

These virtual 90-minute workshops are offered monthly to provide you with a better understanding of what grief is. How it affects us emotionally, physically, cognitively, spiritually, and socially, and providing ways to understand, process, and work through your grief. 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: June 12, July 24

Join us from 6-7:30pm: June 25, July 9

St. Luke's Senior Meals

St. Luke's University Health Network provides healthy, affordable meals for seniors (65 or older).



It's a great opportunity for a great meal at a great price (under \$5 for an entrée, salad, side, veggie, dessert and drink) and enjoy meeting new people.

- **Anderson, Carbon, Miners, Upper Bucks Campuses:** M-F, 4-6pm
 - **Monroe Campus:** 7 days a week, 4-6pm
 - **Bethlehem Campus:** Thursdays, 4-6pm (Speaker on the first Thursday)
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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.sluhn.org/vna/hospice>. Scroll down to "Grief Support".

Click onto the video library heading "Want to understand your grief?" at the bottom of the page.

Then view the videos from the comfort of your home.



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 givinggriefavoice.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.

Grand View Hospice offers groups & services that change seasonally. Call 215-453-4210.

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.

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