

Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

July 2024

“The word changes from year to year, our lives from day to day, but the love and memory of you, shall never pass away.”

~ 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.

Often as bereavement counselors, we hear “Is what I am going through normal?” Yes it is. Grief is a natural response to loss, typically involving a range of emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. While grief is a universal experience, its manifestation and intensity can vary widely among individuals and cultures

Some things many people experience are emotional symptoms such as sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, numbness, yearning, irritability, or feeling emotionally overwhelmed. Physical symptoms may include fatigue, insomnia, changes in appetite, physical pain, headaches, or gastrointestinal disturbances. You may experience cognitive symptoms including difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, confusion, preoccupation with thoughts of your loved one, or difficulty making decisions. Lastly, you may also notice behavioral symptom of crying spells, social withdrawal, avoiding reminders of the loss, engaging in risky behaviors.

Understanding grief is crucial for anyone navigating the experience of loss or supporting someone who is grieving. Here are some key points to consider. Grief is unique and not linear. Grief shows up in physical and emotional manifestations. There is no timeline for grief. Coping strategies vary from person to person and over time. Grief can be triggered. Support is essential. Grief often changes over time. It is okay to seek help. Grief can also help you honor your loved one's memory in wonderful ways.

It's important for you to explore different forms of grief support to find what works best for you. No single approach is right for everyone, and it's okay to try out different options until you find the right fit. The key is to prioritize self-compassion, patience, and seeking support you need it. Understanding how grief can differ for each of us fosters empathy, resilience, and healing for both individuals experiencing grief and those supporting them.



Helpful Hints

Grief support encompasses various resources and strategies aimed at helping individuals navigate the complex and often overwhelming emotions that accompany loss. Here are some avenues for grief support:

Support Groups: Joining a grief support group can provide a sense of community and understanding from others who are also experiencing loss. These groups may be facilitated by mental health professionals or offered through religious institutions, community centers, or online platforms.

Therapy/Counseling: Individual counseling or therapy sessions with a licensed mental health professional can offer a safe space to explore feelings of grief, learn coping strategies, and work through the challenges of mourning.

Hotlines and Helplines: Many organizations offer phone lines staffed by trained volunteers or professionals who can provide emotional support, information, and resources for individuals experiencing grief. These hotlines are often available 24/7 for immediate assistance.

Online Resources: There are numerous websites, forums, and social media groups dedicated to grief support. Individuals can connect with others who are going through similar experiences, access educational materials, and find coping strategies.

Books and Literature: Reading books and articles about grief can provide insight, validation, and guidance for navigating the mourning process. Many authors share their personal experiences with loss, offering comfort and understanding to readers.

Peer Support: Talking to friends, family members, or acquaintances who have experienced similar losses can provide a sense of validation and connection. Sharing stories and experiences with others who understand can be incredibly comforting.

Creative Expression: Engaging in creative activities such as writing, art, music, or gardening can be therapeutic ways to express emotions and process grief. Creative outlets provide opportunities for self-expression and reflection.

Physical Activity: Regular exercise and movement can help alleviate symptoms of grief by releasing endorphins and reducing stress. Activities like walking, yoga, or swimming can be particularly beneficial for improving mood and overall well-being.

Spiritual Guidance: For those who are spiritually inclined, seeking support from religious leaders, attending religious services, or participating in spiritual practices such as prayer or meditation can offer comfort and a sense of connection to something larger than oneself.

Self-Care Practices: Practicing self-care is essential for maintaining mental and emotional well-being during the grieving process. This can include getting enough rest, eating nourishing foods, spending time in nature, and engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation.

Grief Support for You

Individual support: Our bereavement counselors provide support and information through video, telephone and in person counseling sessions. Please contact 484-526-2499 if you are interested.

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

Thursday, July 25th 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

In Person Bethlehem

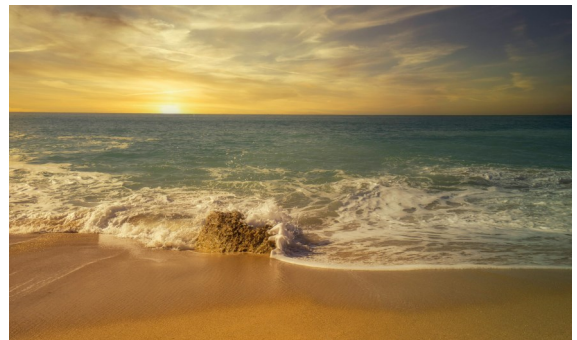
The Bethlehem support group meets on the first Friday of the month from 10:00 am to 11:30 am at the Wesley United Methodist Church 2540 Center Street (Route 512) Bethlehem, PA 18017.

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 Sheri Martin at (484) 526-2499.

“In the quiet, your absence echoes
loud,

A silent space in the bustling crowd.
Grief whispers softly, a relentless tide,
In its waves, I helplessly abide.”



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

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. Enter your zip code to locate the local chapter and contact person near you.

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.

St. Luke's Psychiatric Associates is offering a grief support group. This group provides a safe place to discuss, express, and experience grief for a loved one, as well as provides the opportunity to gain a toolbox to help cope in the most challenging moments. The group is held in Bethlehem. For more information please call Nicholas Reilly at 484-658-7773 or Daniel Phillips at 484-658-6782.

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.

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 *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 or call 484-747-6825. Advanced registration is required, please email 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 or 484-788-9440 or Tim Howe at 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 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

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

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