



# Comfort for the Grieving Heart

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Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

September 2023

"I can't see a way through," said the boy. "Can you see your next step?" "Yes."

"Just take that," said the horse.

— Charlie Mackesy,

St. Luke's Hospice

*The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*

**Bereavement Team:**

484-526-2499

The loss of a loved one impacts each of us, regardless of age. When you think about loss, in general, it means change. Change is not easy at any age. Having to adapt to life without someone you love dearly can feel overwhelming and daunting, not only in thought, but in task.

**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.

In families with children you are not only trying to cope with a heartbreaking loss yourself, but trying to help support and care for young ones in their grief and adaptation, as well. Within homes or families where you have children of varying ages, you may notice more irritable infants, clingy toddlers, and inquisitive youngsters. Pre-adolescents, in understanding the permanence of death, can be more fearful recognizing its inevitability and irreversibility. While adolescents may be more angry and often times avoidant in wanting to discuss the death.

Grief is not something we go through alone. It is complex and can manifest itself in varying emotions and behaviors. Utilize the resources around you. As children return to school, let their guidance counselor, teacher, coaches and trusted adults know of any losses. This can help give your child added layers of support at school and additional sets of eyes to keep you informed of any behavioral changes they may notice. Ask your school for any additional resources and information on children's grief to help you in supporting your child. Also, if you would like a copy of our Children's Grief Support folder, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Bereavement Office at 484-526-2499.

While you cannot take your child's pain away, you can help them cope in healthy ways and provide them with safe outlets to express their grief.



## *Helping Your Child Work Through Grief*

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- **Be available to listen.** Make time to sit and not just talk with, but listen to your child. Let them know you are a safe space to express how they are feeling. Younger children may not have the words, encourage play as a means of expression.
- **Be developmentally appropriate.** Children understand, process and express their grief dependent upon age. Be sensitive to this as you help your child in their grieving process.
- **Keep routines.** Children crave routines and a sense of normalcy. As much as able, provide consistent schedules and daily routines (eating, sleeping, play, people).
- **Share stories.** When you share stories about your loved one it lets children know it is okay to talk about them. Through stories our loved ones legacies not only live on, but it keeps them a part of us.
- **Share how you are feeling.** You are a role model to your children in this grieving process. When you share how you are feeling in missing and continuing to think of your loved one, it normalizes their grief and lets them know they are not alone in their thoughts and feelings.
- **Give them permission to feel the way they are feeling.** It is okay to feel sad, mad, scared, confused, anxious, vulnerable, lonely, numb, etc. Encourage your children to talk with you and share their feelings. Regardless of age, we need safe spaces to share our feelings. Teens especially need support and to feel heard. Allowing them to express their feelings may decrease their anger and help provide a sense of purpose. *\*If your child is having extremely intense behaviors, their behaviors are impacting their own safety or the safety of others, if they are expressing loss of interest in life, giving away possessions or making threats of suicide, contact Crisis or a mental health professional.*

- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - Call 988

- **Encourage them to express themselves.** Young children may express themselves through play. Older children may express themselves more through art, music, and writing.
- **Acknowledge they may need alone time.** Sometimes we all need a little alone time to sort through our thoughts. Continue to provide a supportive presence and check in with your children.
- **Be honest.** As your children have questions, especially for young children, provide brief but concrete answers. Share your family's beliefs about what happens to a person's soul or spirit after death.
- **Provide reassurance.** After a loss, children may become fearful they will lose others in their lives. They may not want to let you out of their sight. While you cannot promise children you will not go to die, you can reassure them that most people live to an old age and that you are taking care of yourself to stay healthy, in the meantime. Help them feel safe.
- **Correct mistaken perceptions.** As children begin to think abstractly and have more magical thinking, they may believe it was something they did, thought, or said that could have caused their loved one's death. Let your child share their thoughts and provide assurance nothing they did caused the loss.
- **Know it is okay not to have all the answers.**



# Grief Support

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## Grief Support for You

St. Luke's Hospice abides by CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines for public gatherings during these challenging times. Here are support options we currently offer:

**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:

**Thursday, September 7th 2023, 1-2:30PM**

**Wednesday, September 27th 2023, 6-7:30PM**

**Thursday, October 12th 2023, 1-2:30PM**

**Wednesday, October 25th 2023, 6-7:30PM**

**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

### Brodheadsville

The 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.

## Children's Grief Resources

### National Alliance for Children's Grief

- <https://nacg.org/>

### Dougy Center

- <https://www.dougy.org/>

### Sesame Street Helps Kids Grieve

- <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/grief/>

### Hospice of Santa Cruz County - Youth & Teen Grief Handbooks (Available in English and Spanish)

- <https://www.hospicesantacruz.org/grief-support/grief-support-youth/>



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

Below is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Because of the pandemic and the need for physical distancing, many 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 email at [reilly@bradburysullivancenter.org](mailto:reilly@bradburysullivancenter.org).

**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.

**Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress and Life Transitions** is currently being offered virtually by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Visit [www.givinggriefavoice.com](http://www.givinggriefavoice.com) or call 610-730-1992. Be sure to indicate if your loved one was a St. Luke's Hospice patient.

**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 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 offered in-person. For dates and times, visit [www.oasisbethlehem.org](http://www.oasisbethlehem.org), call 484-747-6825 or email at [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).

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

**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](http://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).