



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

February 2023

"We never lose our loved ones. They accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives.

We are merely in different rooms." -Paulo Coelho

St. Luke's Hospice

484-526-2499

Bereavement Team:

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.



After the death of someone we love, life can feel like a slow motion dance, putting one foot in front of the other in a fuzzy haze that can last weeks, months or even years. Still some bereaved— even as they struggle with the pain of loss and this adrift feeling – find themselves forging a deeply intimate connection to themselves. They may be able to find a new understanding of what this important to them, what is meaningful and what in life is worthy of their time.

This is not an attempt to look for a silver lining or some spun explanation why everything will be okay. Instead, it is the result of deep and raw connection we can find to ourselves, when we are vulnerable and deeply feeling. It can show us what to prioritize, what to tend to, and how to nurture ourselves differently, when we experience something so human as loss.

This was the story of Fred, a former client. Fred struggled to get his bearings after his wife died. Fred and Sally were married for 42 years and she had been a stay-at-home mother to their only child, daughter, Julie. Fred's job as an investment banker took him all over the country. Frank felt broken when he first started working with a counselor. He had retired a few months before her death and the retired life he had worked so hard to achieve now looked very bleak without her.

In the following months, though, Fred's love for Sally deepened. She had kept their house immaculate so in the beginning, he struggled with learning how to cook for himself, do laundry and grocery shop. Sally had been the social butterfly in their marriage, arranging dinner parties and backyard barbeques, he was the quiet one by her side. Friends stopped by to check in on him and he heard stories about the wife who never said "no" to volunteering for school events or driving neighbors to doctor appointments. He had never realized fully what a giving person he had married.

As he moved through this experience, Fred realized he was able to connect with others who understood his experience. When his neighbor's wife died, he stopped at the house to offer condolences. Fred had always been uncomfortable talking about sad things, but over the next several months he and his neighbor often met for coffee. Fred realized he didn't have to offer words of wisdom; he just listened. It felt good to sit and affirm another person's grief.

Death often requires us to make changes. The first change is recognizing that life as we know it will be different. But through the changes we encounter along the way, we can also celebrate the growth that comes from these changes. We can use it to be radically connected to ourselves and to learn what actually makes us feel connected to others.

How to Try New Things When You are Grieving & Feeling Vulnerable:

Acknowledge that your needs might be different right now

If you have entered a grieving process, you've potentially been feeling new and bigger emotions than you're used to. You might be facing problems that challenge you and your sense of who you are. Small things might feel bigger and everything can feel tiring. Respect this. Often we bully ourselves with how we "should" be reacting, feeling, or being when we are in grief. The truth is that loss can spin our world upside down, change every routine we have, and really challenge our stories of who we are. It is often the hardest thing anyone ever does. Try not to make it harder by telling yourself that you're "doing it wrong". It is what it is.



Take small steps

Many of us like to think in very black and white terms. We don't see small changes as being as impactful or feel open to gray areas. Gray can feel like uncertainty. We can go all or nothing with change. As humans, we're even more vulnerable to this when we are emotionally drained or hurting. We want answers and we want a plan. But small steps count and usually have more lasting impact. Maybe you try a new walking path. Maybe you call a friend you don't always talk. Sometimes we can try out a new activity and only do it once. All of the small things count and add up.

Pick one thing and treat it like play or an experiment

When trying something new, it can feel like a lot of pressure for it to "work". Sometimes we have less gas in the tank when we are in grief. It can make it harder to do things and harder to feel comfortable be unsure if something we put time into was worth it. Instead, try to see anything new you try like as a playful experiment. Did I like this support group? Did I like lunch today with that friend? Instead of the goal being to feel better, the goal can be to try something and gain the information about how you feel about it. You never have to do it again and you don't have to commit to anything. Just an experiment and a way to learn how you feel about something new.



Know that learning is a time based process

We aren't born knowing who we are and what we do or don't like. When we're grieving it can feel like things that used to make us feel good, feel different. After a loss, the world can feel like a different place and we can feel different in our own skin. We are relearning who we are, in this new world. That's okay. That's normal. And it takes time and trial and error to learn. We might find that we like more alone time. Or maybe some friendships feel differently to use now. It's all information to gather and use, however feels good to us. Don't feel afraid of this learning process.

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, Feb 9th 2023, 1-2:30PM

Wednesday, Feb 22nd 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.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 halfway 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 Group

The Brodheadsville group meets on the third Monday of the month from 10:00am-11:00am at the Western Pocono Community Library, 131 Pilgrim Way, Brodheadsville 18322.

This group provides space for participants to receive and provide support in a collaborative environment.

This group is facilitated by a grief counselor. For more information, contact Alexandra at (484) 635-0662.

If the weather looks threatening, call (484) 526-2514 and listen for an update on this phone line.



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 or email at 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. 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 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.givinggriefavoic.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 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, call 484-747-6825 or email at 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 nan-cyhowe@ymail.com or 484-788-9440 or Tim Howe at 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.

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

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.