

HORIZON

Living with Loss

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF THE PIEDMONT

HOPE ON THE HORIZON

by Erin Webb, Manager of Grief and Loss Services

I am so pleased to share with you this issue of Horizon: Living with Loss. Horizon is a publication dedicated to grief education and support and is intended to give hope to those who are bereaved.

When visualizing a horizon, sometimes you might see the sun rising over a calm sea. It is the beginning of a new day and you have a sense of peace and hope. But sometimes you look to the horizon to find the sky is dark and stormy. The waters are rough and you might feel lost at sea, unable to find the horizon at all. When the journey through grief is dark and stormy, be assured there are calm waters ahead and a day will come where the wind will catch your sail in such a way to

help you move toward peace and hope.

Hope tends to evolve as life changes. As your loved one was dying, many of you experienced a shift in your vision of hope. You moved from hope for a cure to hope for a good day, free from pain and suffering. Or you hoped that your loved one would make it to that special day. Maybe it was an anniversary, a birthday, Christmas. Similarly, you now find yourself in the midst of a shift. Life is forever changed, but you can hope to learn to live life in a new way now that your loved one has died.

Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD, writes in his book, *Understanding Your Grief*, that the “pain of grief will give rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feelings of loss will not completely disappear,

yet they will soften and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person you have given love to and received love from will never be forgotten. The unfolding of this journey is not intended to create a return to an ‘old normal’ but the discovery of a ‘new normal.’”

Have hope. Keep your eye on the horizon and persevere through the stormy seas. The sea will calm and peace will come. The sun will rise and opportunities will be discovered in the new day.

Please read on to learn about grief and loss topics and bereavement services provided by the Hospice of the Piedmont to help on your journey through grief.

IS A SUPPORT GROUP FOR YOU?

Understandably, some people shy away from the idea of joining a grief and loss support group. For some, the idea of discussing their very personal pain and problems with “outsiders” is too uncomfortable. They feel much more comfortable in one-to-one situations. Still others are so preoccupied and overwhelmed by their own problems that they are unable to listen to or respond to the grief of others. However, for many other people, a support group has been of significant help in dealing with the death of a close family member or friend. Support groups provide a setting for people to tell their stories, admit

their fears, vent their anger and discuss their frustrations.

Support groups provide a setting for people to tell their stories, admit their fears, vent their anger and discuss their frustrations.

For one thing, it is a tremendous solace to be in the presence of others who have suffered loss and discover that your feelings are shared by others. What a relief to hear others say, “me, too!” when you’ve thought your feelings were abnor-

mal or bizarre—feeling anger toward the person who has died, being certain you can hear that person coming in the door each night or being convinced that you’ll never recover from the pain and emptiness you feel at this moment.

A support group can also be of great benefit in dealing with loneliness. Many people who have lost someone special and are trying to cope with terrible loneliness worry about being a burden to friends and family members. But, in a support group, participants can feel comfortable and safe talking about their loneliness and fears.

continued on page 2

Poetry Corner

You left, but you left peace of your
own gifting,
Imparted gently through the
quiet years;
You left, but you left goodness
so uplifting
That each remembering only endears.

You left, but your soft steps of
sympathy
Move still to each soul turbulent
in need,
Your gentle going did not set you free
Of hearts who loved you through
each selfless deed.

Your ministering spirit warms us still.
Your seeds of goodness still
continue growing,
You left so much of love it seems
to fill
The very emptiness about your going.
Your presence was a blessing
so very dear
That even in your absence
you are near.

—BETTY W. STOFFEL

IS A SUPPORT GROUP FOR YOU?

continued from page 1

Typically, the members of support groups tend to be extremely helpful to each other—offering practical suggestions, reassurance and insights, or simply sharing problems.

Is a support group for you? Only you can answer that. However, whether it be a formal support group or our own grouping of family and friends, we all need to find meaningful support following the death of someone we love. For it is true that, when people feel supported, they are more likely to take better care of themselves.

Healthy Ways to Keep a Loved-One's Memory Alive

The most well-intentioned condolences upon the death of a loved one often suggest that time will heal the pain, that letting go is essential to moving on with life and that the memory of the loved one will fade. Yet significant pain may repeatedly return for many years or even a lifetime; the truth is, memories don't simply disappear (nor would we want them to), and letting go completely may not be possible or even healthy.

Denial of the emotional loss of a loved one can delay the trauma of that loss or prolong the underlying pain and anger. On the other hand, giving oneself completely over to grief or stoking its embers for a long period of time can prohibit you from living your own life and result in a serious psychological depression. A remembrance tradition can provide a place for healthy remembering; a way to grieve and recognize the person's life and their impact on your life, while allowing you to continue a life worth living.

Some people find that involving others in a mutually shared remembrance tradition can provide an opportunity for both honoring their memory and grieving in a healthy manner, whether with just family, family and friends or as a solo tradition. A designated time, place and ritual for the tradition provides a structure for expressing appreciation of the deceased person, as well as acknowledging our sadness over their loss.

Your ritual might be a prayer, an annual dinner with tributes to the person or another ritualized remembrance. Some people find a symbol, such as a gravestone or a tree planted in memory of the person, helpful to remembrance. Others may seek less tangible ways.

A visit to the gravesite can be made a tradition by going on a designated date each year. The person's religion or yours may suggest further ways to remember

in a healthy way, such as annually designating a pew by making a donation to your church in memoriam to the person. There are other ways, too, such as:

- Continuing to celebrate the person's birthday;
- Creating a video of the person's life from still photos and viewing it annually;
- Designating a charity in the deceased person's name or endowing a chair or scholarship at the deceased person's alma mater, and then perhaps donating to it on an annual basis and attending the charity's annual meeting or school's award presentation;
- Creating a memory book of pictures and stories about the loved one that's passed at intervals throughout the family;
- Having a brass plaque to their memory mounted on a new bench for a local park; or
- Making a regular tradition of your own creation.

According to M. Mitchell, author of *Remember Me: Socially Constructing Life After Death*, death doesn't terminate nor erase a relationship. To deny that a relationship existed or to minimize its importance is to deny the part of yourself that the loved one contributed to your life. Suppressing or denying the memory of a relationship can result in delayed or prolonged suffering. By the same token, it can be exaggerated attention to remembrance over an extended period of time. This doesn't mean you've forgotten or will forget. Your tradition won't stop you remembering spontaneously during the course of each day, week or month, but can periodically provide you with a safe haven for intentionally remembering, grieving and celebrating your loved one's life.

Grief and Loss Calendar of Events

Beginning Your Grief Journey Workshop

An evening of education & sharing for the newly bereaved

THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

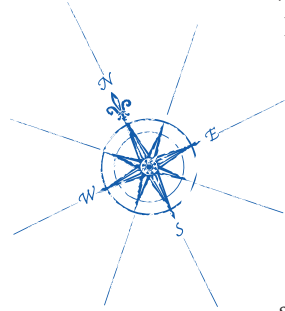
Hospice Conference Center

Part 1, 6–7 P.M. Understanding Grief:

Introduction to basic grief concepts.

Part 2, 7–8 P.M. Sharing Your Story:

time to share the story of your loss in a group setting and discuss topics of grief.



Living with Grief Workshop Series

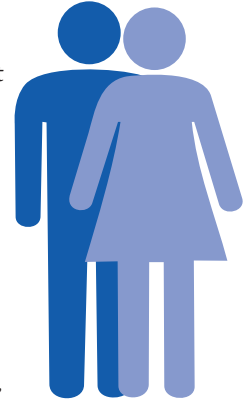
Hospice Conference Center

This series of workshops supports the bereaved and facilitates a deeper understanding of the grief journey.

“Exploring Gender Differences in Grief”

Although men and women don't always express themselves in stereotypical ways, gender may still play a part in the grieving process. Come learn about your own style of grieving and those of the people close to you.

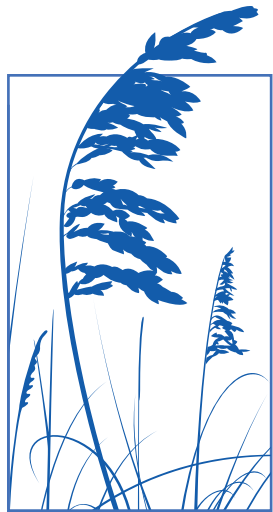
MONDAY, JUNE 16, 6:00–7:30 P.M.



“Meditation: A Pathway to Healing the Grieving Mind, Body & Spirit”

Learn about and experience a variety of mediation techniques and learn how meditation can help you in your grieving process.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 6:00 – 7:30 P.M.



Bereavement Support Group

MONDAYS, 5:00–6:30 P.M.,

JUNE 9–JULY 28, 2008

or

WEDNESDAYS, 3:00–4:30 P.M.,

JULY 30–SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

Meet for eight consecutive weeks to learn about the grieving process and be with others who are grieving. This group is for adults who have experienced the death of a loved one, and three months have passed since the death.

Visit Hospice of the Piedmont on the Web at www.hopva.org

The bereavement page of the site provides the latest information about all of our upcoming events.



Journeys Grief Groups

At the Journeys Center

Children and teens receive support and grief education and use art as a tool for creative self-expression.

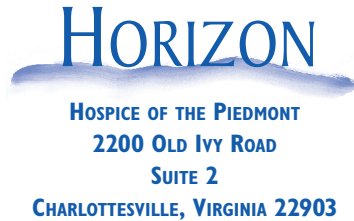
SCHOOL-AGED GROUP (AGES 7–12 YEARS OLD): Tuesdays, 5:00–6:15 P.M.

TEEN GROUP (AGES 13–17 YEARS OLD): Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:30 P.M.

PARENT GROUP: Occurs simultaneously on both evenings.

Please call the Hospice of the Piedmont office for more information about events, to register, and for directions to event venues: 434-817-6900.

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
PERMIT # 320



Bereavement Support
Services are open to the
community and free of
charge. Please see the
Grief and Loss Calendar
or call the Bereavement
Department for further
information and to
register: 434-817-6900
or 800-975-5501.

Living with loss

Grief & Loss Services at Hospice of the Piedmont

Grieving the loss of a loved one is a natural part of healing. Hospice of the Piedmont's Grief and Loss Services help the bereaved understand the grief process and provide support that encourages healthy adjustment to loss. Services are available, following the death of a loved one, to the community at large and to the family and friends of hospice patients free of charge. Grief and Loss Services include:

- Mailings of educational and supportive material, reminders of upcoming grief and loss events, and a quarterly mailing of *Horizon*, a publication dedicated to grief education and support.
- Bereavement support groups where a small group of people gather weekly for eight consecutive weeks to learn about the grieving process and be with others who are grieving.
- Educational and experiential workshops on grief-related issues to aid coping.
- Short-term grief counseling provided by bereavement counselors.
- Youth services provided through the *Journeys* program, where children and teens (ages 4–18 years old) receive support and grief education and use art as a tool for creative expression. Youth services include three bereavement camps throughout the year for children and teens (age requirements vary for each camp).
- Interfaith memorial services held to remember loved ones who have died and honor those who are living.
- Referrals to additional resources and counseling services available in the community.
- Educational presentations on grief and loss issues to community groups and organizations.

Those interested can take part in just one or all of our services. Bereavement counselors are available to help you decide how Hospice of the Piedmont can best help you through this journey called grief. For more information, to register for an event, or to get on our mailing list, please call the Hospice of the Piedmont office at 434-817-6900 or 1-800-975-5501.