

HORIZON

Living with loss

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF THE PIEDMONT

A Search for Hope in Winter

by Erin Webb, Manager of Grief and Loss Services

As I began to think about writing some words for the winter edition of *Horizon*, I thought about how this time of year can be difficult for so many people. The season can be cold and dreary, and crummy weather keeps us in the house with only our thoughts to keep us company. We can become isolated from the outside world. Days are shorter and nights are longer. Those long nights are often very hard for grievers. In the winter it is harder to do what is good for us, like exercise, eat well and spend time in nature, among other things.

In thinking about this, I was beginning to feel a bit down myself. I was looking for something to lighten my mood when I came across a professional newsletter, *The Forum*, published by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. In her article, "Incorporating Loss Into Holiday Rituals," Candice Courtney shares about the beliefs of the ancient Celts and, with her story, an invaluable tool for coping



with difficult times came back to me . . . hope. She writes:

When the days got shorter and nights grew colder, the world all around began to speak of death. Trees and shrubs lost their leaves, turning into skeletons. Plants shriveled and turned brown before descending into the earth to decay. The earth became stark and barren.

Yet there were certain trees and plants that held onto their green life when all else died. It was believed [by the Celts] that these held a special life force. [The magical trees and shrubs gave] them faith and hope that somehow life could survive the darkest of times. Unlike those ancient people, we trust that, after the winter solstice, the sun will rise higher in the sky, but we may not fully trust

that the light will return to our lives again. The cycles of the year are predictable, but it is sometimes hard to trust in the cycles of life.

Both ancient Celts and American Indians associated pine with immortality, and the scent of pine was believed to help soften the sharp edges of grief. The sight and scent of the pine branches are a silent affirmation of faith and hope during the dark time . . . not only that we can survive, but that the cycles of life will indeed turn, and that some day, however distant spring may seem, daffodils will push their way up out of the ground and into the strengthening light of the sun.

Ah, yes! That's right! Spring will come, the ground will thaw and the earth will come to life again. And with spring comes promise and hope. Just as we know spring will follow winter, we know that, in time, grief almost always softens and moves from the forefront of your life to the background to make room for possibilities to come.

Grieving in the New Year

Pat Schwiebert, R.N. and author of *Tear Soup*, a wonderful book for grievers, both children and adults alike, shares some thoughts on New Year's Resolutions for grievers:

"Acknowledging our special needs as grieving persons, we can choose to make softer resolutions for the new year — resolutions that can still be challenging, yet are not unrealistic. Why not frame your New Year's resolution in terms of hope for a gentler year, for gaining control of

your emotions, for better understanding of the grief process and what we can learn about ourselves as we journey thru it. Why not resolve to enter into a future that can be good even though it lacks all that we might desire and offers a hope that we will be at peace with sorrow and enjoy life even though we grieve."

*Excerpted from the
GRIEF WATCH EMAIL NEWSLETTER,
Volume 2, Issue 1*

Words of Wisdom

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms or books that are written in a foreign tongue. The point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live your way some distant day into the answers."

— Rainer Maria Rilke

Valentine's Day Blues & Other Colors

by Laura Slap-Shelton, Psy.D.

Valentine's Day, a day when love is officially celebrated in the United States, can be a day of increased pain and sadness for the bereaved. Many individuals speak of their heart being shattered or smashed as they describe the pain their loss has created. They find it hard to assemble the pieces back into the beautiful wholeness they once knew.

Others feel frozen and disconnected from those they love. Their feelings no longer flow freely, and they carry a sense of emotional isolation. It is hard to keep one's heart open when it has been hurt and traumatized by a loss, and yet staying open to the sources of love in your life and remaining a source of love for others is one of the best paths to healing.

One way of turning the difficulty of Valentine's Day around is to re-label it as a time of opening the heart. Take time to identify your feelings and openly accept them. It is likely that a variety of feelings are crowding together, making it hard to feel much of anything. Making a list of

the different feelings you are aware of can help to sort them out. Noticing what problems the negative feelings stem from and thinking of possible solutions may help to release some of the worries and negative emotions that are present.

Focusing on the greatest source of love currently in your life is another positive way to reconnect with loving feelings. The source could be anyone or anything: a memory, a poem, a painting, an old letter, and spiritual or religious writings, whatever has positive meaning to you. Try relaxing and letting the positive feelings that this inspiration creates fill your mind. What colors does it bring to mind? As you relax, see if you can notice a warm feeling in your chest and let it spread slowly throughout your body.

Connecting with friends and family can be helpful, too. You might create a buddy system and agree to exchange flowers or candy with a friend, just for the fun of it. Send a card to someone whom you care about. Call a friend or

relative. Go out for lunch or dinner. Let those close to you know that you love them even if its been hard to show it recently. Reach out to someone who might need your attention.

Some people find it comforting to write a note to the person they have lost, and let the person know how they are feeling and what they are doing. Others might honor the person they have lost with a remembrance ceremony.

If Valentine's Day feels too big to handle, it may be a good time to find a counselor or therapist who can help you through it. Connecting with a support group of other bereaved people may be a great way to open up in a community that understands your experience and is able to offer support.

While the blues might well be a realistic part of your Valentine's experience, taking steps to reconnecting with your feelings and with others will allow other colors to flow in, and keep open the path of healing.

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.

Grief and Loss Calendar of Events

ADULT SERVICES

Beginning Your Grief Journey Workshop

An evening of education & sharing for the newly bereaved

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, 6:00–8:00 P.M.

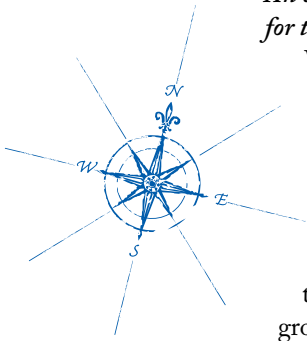
FEBRUARY 6, MARCH 5,

APRIL 9, MAY 7

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.



YOUTH SERVICES

Journeys Thru the Seasons Winter Bereavement Camp

ACAC Adventure Central

CHILDREN AND TEENS

AGES 8–15

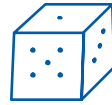
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8–9,
6:30 P.M.–9:30 A.M.

Art Therapy, Games,

Late Night Movie,

Closing Ceremony.

Registration Deadline: February 1.



Living with Grief Workshop Series

“Beyond Sadness”

Exploring emotional responses to grief

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 6:00–7:30 P.M.

“Art for the Bereaved Heart”

Expressing your grief through art making

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 5:30–7:00 P.M.

Advance Registration Requested

for “Art for the Bereaved Heart.”



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.



Bereavement Support Group

MONDAYS, 5:30–7:00 P.M.

MARCH 3–APRIL 21, 2008

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.



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

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.

HORIZON
HOSPICE OF THE PIEDMONT
2200 OLD IVY ROAD
SUITE 2
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903

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

Living with loss

After Caregiving Ends

by Judy Tatelbaum, MSW

There is a natural sense of loss when the need for our caregiving is over. We must often face the double sorrow of losing a loved one and our purpose or role in their lives.

The aftermath can be a very difficult time that leaves us feeling lost, lonely, and useless. We may not feel grounded without our important caregiver function. Our direction may feel unclear. The future may look bleak or even empty.

If our self-confidence was based on the job we were doing, we may experience a shift in self-esteem. Our confidence may drop or diminish. It may be hard to pick ourselves up and start over again.

The first step after any kind of loss is always to allow and accept our feelings. We must acknowledge this shift in our lives and the feelings it may provoke. It is possible that we'll feel relief that we don't have to work so hard any longer, and then feel a sense of guilt for feeling such relief. We may be angry with

ourselves or someone else for letting us down. All of these are natural reactions. It is important to express our sadness, anger, loneliness, regret, and whatever else we may feel.

It is also important that we listen to ourselves and appreciate what we feel as we go through the mourning process. We must accept reality and forgive ourselves and others now that the loss has occurred. Those are not always easy steps to take, but our healing depends on our willingness to move forward and let go of the past feelings and resentments, regrets and disappointments. The future is a blank canvas. We have a choice as to how we approach it.

Starting a new life is now the job ahead. We need to take a deep breath and grasp the fact that our new purpose in life is how to begin again without the physical presence of the one we cared for, and minus the job of caregiving.

As much as we might wish to, we

cannot avoid the fact that change is what is demanded of us now. It may seem a monumental task to create new lives. However, starting over can be done in baby steps, with one new activity at a time, or one telephone call or even with one minor change each day.

We all have different reactions to starting over. For some it is like climbing a mountain that is too rocky and too steep. For others, even though it may feel like a blind walk through a forest, starting over is something we are familiar with, something we've done before. We know we will eventually find our way. And for those lucky few who deal with life as an adventure, there may even be some excitement at discovering the new, unexplored lands or places that lie ahead after caregiving is over.

Excerpted from Hospice Foundation of America's bereavement newsletter, JOURNEYS, April 2001.