

COMFORT FOR THE GRIEVING HEART

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

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St. Luke's Hospice
Bereavement Team

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If you would like to be added to or removed from our mailing list, or if you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, please contact Dawn at (610) 997-7125.

The Other Side of Suffering

"Disappointment and loss are a part of every life. Many times we can put such things behind us and get on with the rest of our lives. But not everything is amenable to this approach. Some things are too big or too deep to do this, and we will have to leave important parts of ourselves behind if we treat them in this way. These are the places where wisdom begins to grow in us. It begins with suffering that we do not avoid or rationalize or put behind us. It starts with the realization that our loss, whatever it is, has become a part of us and has altered our lives so profoundly that we cannot go back to the way it was before.

Something in us can transform such suffering into wisdom. The process of turning pain into wisdom often looks like a sorting process. First we experience everything. Then one by one we let things go, the anger, the blame, the sense of injustice, and finally even the pain itself, until all we have left is a deeper sense of the value of life and a greater capacity to live it."

From "Pearls of Wisdom," Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., in My Grandfather's Blessings

Thank you for taking this moment to reflect on your grief journey. Where are you right now? Has your loss happened very recently? If so, you may still be in a state of shock and disbelief, almost a little bit numb as the full impact of everything has not yet completely settled into your heart.

Perhaps more time has passed. You may be feeling your grief deeply and wondering if that's normal. Unfortunately, grief does not keep a regular schedule; it can be messy and unpredictable and surprising. (And yes, feeling deeply during the months after your loss is completely normal.)

When we are surrounded by our emotions and overwhelmed by life, it can be challenging to believe that there is anything else. But there is. Grief can transform us if we allow it to. In her book Honoring Grief, Alexandra Kennedy reminds us that, "Few experiences have the power that grief does — to humble, transform, and expand us."

We begin to discover strengths within that we never saw before. We find new meaning in things that previously went overlooked or unappreciated. We reconnect to our sense of purpose in life and live with renewed intention. Day by day, we gradually begin to notice subtle changes that indicate our healing. And as we connect with others who share our perspective and sense what we're going through, we grow stronger in our belief that there really is another side of suffering.

With Fond Farewell

Christine Holmfelt will be moving to Colorado this month and would like to take a moment to thank everyone with whom she has worked. It has been her deepest privilege to share in the tears, the laughter, and the deep reflections that accompany the journey of grief.

Upcoming Events

Sponsored by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

Open /Drop-in Support Group

Perhaps you've thought about attending a group but weren't sure if it was for you. Maybe you've already participated in a group and are looking to reconnect to people who understand.

Please join us for an open, ongoing support group. We will meet on the **first Friday of each month from 10--11am** at St. Luke's Hospice House (2455 Black River Road, Bethlehem.) Our next meeting will be on **October 2nd**.

No registration is required, but you can contact Mindy with any questions.

Memoir Writing Workshop

Most of us don't write about those we love while they are alive – unless we happen to keep a diary. After we lose them, we may want to use writing as a way to cope with our loss. We may want to chronicle the family stories or capture the unique way someone spoke or dressed.

In chronicling the lives of those we have lost, we are writing for an audience of one. For some, it may help to imagine we are writing for the person we mourn. In other cases, it may be enough to know that you are writing down the stories for yourself – because they are important memories for you.

“Writing can help you make sense of the world and give you direction and company and solace,” Lamott said in a *New York Times* interview. Please join us for a 6-week workshop in the fall, starting **October 8th through November 12th (Thursdays) from 6:30-8pm**. We will meet at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center on the St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus (801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem) in room 104. Because of the nature of this workshop, we ask that participants be at least six months beyond the date of their loss.

For more information or to register, contact Mindy at (610) 997-7139.

Luminaria Ceremony

St. Luke's Hospice invites you to join our 3rd annual Luminaria Ceremony on Saturday, **November 7th at 5pm**. Participants can create luminarias in honor and memory of loved ones; the luminaria will be placed along walkways near our offices at 1510 Valley Center Parkway in Bethlehem.

- 5:00pm Creation and Placement of Luminaria Bags
- Gathering for Refreshments
- 5:45pm Opening Remarks
- 6:00pm Luminaria Lighting

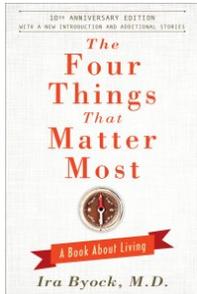
To register, call St. Luke's Info-link at (866) 785-8537. (See flier on page 5 for more information.)

Service of Remembrance

We gather periodically as family members of our patients and as a Hospice staff to remember those who have died. Our Services of Remembrance are inter-faith and are offered as a way in which we may take time to reflect, remember, and celebrate the lives and legacies of those who have passed from ours. The names of the deceased will be read at these services unless we are notified that you prefer otherwise. Please bring your family and friends and join us for this time of remembrance.

For patients served by our **Lehighton office** who died between September 30, 2014 and September 30, 2015, the Service of Remembrance will be held on **Sunday, November 1 at 3pm** at St. Peter's Union Church of Mantzville, 184 St. Peter's Road, Tamaqua, PA, 18252.

Resources and Reflections



The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living

Dr. Ira Byock

“Four simple phrases—“Please forgive me,” “I forgive you,” “Thank you,” and “I love you”—carry enormous power to mend and nurture our relationships and inner lives. These four phrases and the sentiments they convey provide a path to emotional wellbeing, guiding us through interpersonal difficulties to life with integrity and grace.

Dr. Ira Byock, an international leader in palliative care, explains how we can practice these life-affirming words in our day-to-day lives. Too often we assume that the people we love really know that we love them. Dr. Byock demonstrates the value of “stating the obvious” and provides practical insights into the benefits of letting go of old grudges and toxic emotions. His stories help us to forgive, appreciate, love, and celebrate one another and live life more fully.

Using the Four Things in a wide range of life situations, we can experience emotional healing even in the wake of family strife, personal tragedy, divorce, or in the face of death. With practical wisdom and spiritual power, *The Four Things That Matter Most* gives us the language and guidance to honor and experience what really matters most in our lives every day.” (Amazon.com)

A Meditation on Grief

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.

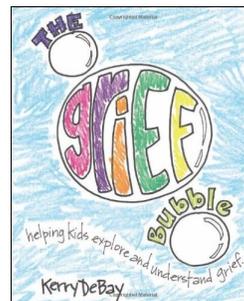
Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy;

And you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always accepted the seasons that pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.”

~ Kahlil Gibran



The Grief Bubble: Helping Kids Explore and Understand Grief

Kerry DeBay

“The Grief Bubble is a special workbook for children ages 6 and older who have experienced the death of someone special. The interactive format invites them to find expression for their thoughts and feelings, encouraging the exploration of their grief. A useful tool for parents, counselors, educators and other caring adults supporting children in grief.” (Amazon.com)

Honoring the Journey

Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

This is a listing of free bereavement resources in the area. If you have a need for something and don't see it on this list, please call Mindy at (610) 997-7139 for referrals to other services.

Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley with St. Luke's offers the Hope and Healing Series, a series of creative classes at St. Luke's Cancer Center-Anderson Campus. Programs are free, but registration is required. Call 610-861-7555 or email info@cancersupportglv.org to register or for more information about classes, dates and times.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling.

TCF of Lehigh Valley meets at Sacred Heart Hospital, 2nd floor, 421 Chew Street in Allentown. The group meets the 2nd Monday each month at 7pm. For more information, call 484-597-0240.

TCF of Quakertown meets at St. Luke's Hospital, ground floor, 1021 Park Ave in Quakertown in Taylor Conference Rooms A&B. This group is held the 2nd Tuesday each month from 7:30 – 9pm. For more information, call 215-536-0173.

TCF of Easton meets the 2nd Thursday each month from 7-9pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2115 Washington Blvd. in Easton. For more information call 610-866-5468.

TCF of Carbon County meets the 1st Wednesday each month from 6:30 – 8:30pm in the Palmerton Community Ambulance Association, 501 Delaware Ave in Palmerton. Please call 610-826-2938 for more information.

Family Answers holds a Survivors of Suicide support group at 402 North Fulton Street in Allentown, PA. This group is held the first and third Monday each month from 7-8pm. Call 610-435-9651 for more info.

Free Spirits is a group of more than 2 dozen older widows who go out to lunch once a month to keep active and offer support to each other--and to newer widows. Most are members of Church of the Manger UCC, Bethlehem. Call 610-866-8223 for more information.

Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress, and Life Transitions offered by Wendy Littner Thomson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. First session offered for free to caregivers whose loved one recently received hospice services from St Luke's Hospice. For location, times, or more information, please call 610-730-1992.

Grand View Hospital Hospice offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

GriefShare Groups are a faith-based, evangelical approach to grief and loss. GriefShare groups are provided at several locations in the Lehigh Valley. To find a location near you, please visit www.griefshare.org.

Lehigh Valley Health Network offers grief support services in the form of counseling, support groups, and workshops for adults and children, as well as a lunch club for women. For more information, please call 610-969-0330.

Sacred Heart Home Care and Hospice is offering "Heal Your Heart" grief workshops, which meet for 5 weeks. For more information, contact Lynn Schiavone at 484-664-2704.

Soaring Spirits Regional Group Lehigh Valley is planning to hold monthly social gatherings for widowed individuals to provide opportunities to connect with others in a positive, caring, and supportive environment. For more information, please call Sonja Handwerk at 610-297-0057, email soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com, or follow on Facebook at Soaring Spirits International Group Lehigh Valley.

VNA/Hospice of Monroe County offers a support group the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month at noon. Call 570-421-5390 for more information.