



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

September 2017

Oh, hello.

St. Luke's Hospice

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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 484-526-2499.

“From the moment we are born, we say hello to love in our lives by seeking it out, by acknowledging it when it unfolds, by welcoming it, and by nurturing it so that it will continue. We must also say hello to loss and grief in our lives. To be sure, we do not seek it out, but when it unfolds, we must acknowledge it. I would even say that we must welcome our grief. After all, the hurt we feel is the consequence of the love we were privileged to experience.”

- Alan Wolfelt

Saying hello to our grief can feel like a bit of a paradox. As we begin to adjust and cope in a world without our loved one, we start to say hello to new feelings, new routines, new changes; but these hellos are not wanted or easily accepted, as they remind us of the goodbye we just said.

Living in a high-speed world can be both a blessing and a curse. With the click of a button, we can “go” almost anywhere and do almost anything. We have fast food, text messaging, high speed internet. Everything is go-go-go. It seems only natural, then, that grief should work the same way, right? So often after only a few weeks or months after the loss of someone loved, people begin to wonder why they are not “over” (or are just beginning) the intense feelings of grief; why they are still crying or in a daze; or why in this world of high efficiency they are feeling so inefficient. We live in a world of instant gratification and one where there is a prescription for just about every ailment under the sun. So, why no instant relief or magic pill for grief?

Our body is designed to slow down during periods of grief. Your feelings of fatigue, exhaustion, and lack of focus are not because you are suddenly lazy. Your body is giving you a cue that it's time to slow down. Grieving is hard work that takes its toll mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and socially. There is no way to fast forward through it. No buttons to click, no one-stop shopping, no magic pill. What we need to do, instead, is slow down and say hello to our grief. This is essential to your healing process.

So, how do we say hello to grief? We pay attention to it. We acknowledge when it is present and heavy, and we sit with it and spend time with our emotions and feelings. We share pictures and tell stories. We do things in our loved one's memory. We cry. We visit the gravesite. We ask for help. We are gentle and patient with ourselves. In doing these things, we begin to acknowledge and realize that our relationship with our loved one did not end just because he or she is no longer alive. Rather, our loved one is woven into the fabric of who we are, and will forever be a part of our story.

-Mindy

Healing Rhythms Drumming Group

Healing Rhythms, a drumming group, is a unique approach to loss, grief and support in life transitions. The use of the drum is a vehicle of expression when you may not be able to put your thoughts and feelings into words. Research indicates that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system and produces feelings of well-being, a release of emotional trauma, and reintegration of self. Drumming circles also provide a sense of connectedness with others and interpersonal support.

Our Healing Rhythms drumming group is led by a Remo HealthRhythms endorsed facilitator. Each week you will experience meditative drumming, guided imagery, inspirational readings and thought provoking conversations about moving through loss. The group will run on Saturday mornings from 10am to 12pm from November 4, 2017 through December 16, 2017. *This group will meet at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse, 4116 Bath Pike (Route 512) Bethlehem, PA 18017.* Please pre-register with Mindy at Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org or 484-526-2314. For more information on drumming and its healing benefits, visit www.lvdrumcircle.com.



Lehighton News :

Lehighton Open Group: We meet for our Drop In/Open Group on the **Third Monday of every month** from **3:00 - 4:00 pm** at Dinkey Memorial Church, 1742 Dinkey Road, Lehighton, PA 18212. All members of the community who are in need of bereavement support are invited to attend.

Newly Bereaved Workshop

This one-time workshop is for those who have a lost a loved one within the past 1-3 months and will provide education on the first few weeks and months of grief following a death. We will cover understanding common grief reactions, coping strategies, self-care throughout the grief process and beyond, and the uniqueness of your grief experience. These workshops are offered on a bi-monthly basis. We will meet on **Wednesday, September 20, 2017 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm** at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 (building is located in front of Priscilla Payne Hurd annex of the hospital). ***Registration is required:*** please call Mindy at (484)526-2314 or email Mindy.Watson@sluhn.org. Our next workshop will be held in November.

Open /Drop-in Support Groups

Our Drop-In groups are designed to offer continued support to bereaved individuals who have already attended grief and loss programs through St. Luke's Hospice. Drop-In groups afford participants the chance to continue with supportive services. This group is facilitated, but directed by group members in terms of content and discussion. We currently offer the following Drop-In Support Groups:

Easton: First Monday of every month from 4:00 -5:00 pm at St. Luke's Hospital-Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building (MOB), 1872 St. Luke's Blvd, Easton, PA 18045 in Conference Room A.

Quakertown: Second Monday of every month from 6:30-7:30 pm at St. Luke's Hospital-Quakertown Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, PA 18951 in Taylor B Conference room.

Bethlehem: Fourth Monday of every month from 9:00 - 10:00 am (please note new time) at St. Luke's Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015 in Room 111.

Resources

“Along the road to reconciliation, if you are openly, honestly, and actively mourning, you will be saying lots of hellos. Oh hello, this death. Oh hello, this thought. Oh hello, this feeling. Oh hello, this change. Oh hello, this me. Oh hello, this doubt. Oh hello, this new belief. But you will also be saying many goodbyes. Goodbye, this voice, this kiss, this body. Goodbye, this routine. Goodbye, this me. Goodbye, this belief. Goodbye, this ever-present pain. Your hellos and goodbyes will overlap one another, with more hellos needed at the start of your journey and more goodbyes in the later days.

Saying goodbye is not the same as "closure." As I said, you never fully close the door on the love and grief you feel for someone who has died. But you can achieve a sense of peace. The days of intense and constant turmoil can be replaced by serene acceptance as well as days of love, hope, and joy.

So yes, work on saying your goodbyes. But first, work on saying your hellos.”

- Alan Wolfelt



Tools and Tips for Saying Hello to Grief..

1. **Avoidance is okay, *at times*.** When used as a person’s one-and-only coping skill it can become a harmful cycle that is detrimental to personal healing. Many mistakenly think that if they make efforts to avoid their feelings for long enough, unpleasant emotions will be kept at bay or fade away, when in actuality deliberate attempts to suppress certain thoughts often make them more likely to surface.
2. **Acknowledge the pain.** If you’re grieving the death of a loved one, you *will* experience painful thoughts, emotions, and memories and you won’t always know when, where, why, or how. Knowing that these experiences are likely to happen may cause you a fair amount anticipatory anxiety, but instead of spending your days figuring out how to avoid grief triggers, try and learn to tolerate them.
3. **Identify coping skills** that will help you *deal with* distress, rather than avoid it. Tools like relaxation and mindfulness techniques can help in the moment. So can calling a friend; creative expression (journaling or art); finding ways to put the moment into perspective (finding humor or seeking gratitude), and identifying ways to decompress as soon as the moment has passed.
4. **Be realistic.** Research has shown that we are pretty bad at predicting emotional responses to future events. Although we are usually able to anticipate the *types* of emotions we will experience, we often believe negative experiences will be far more painful than they truly are. The anxiety and fear of anticipating and avoiding an event are often far worse than the actual experience. What are your expectations for your grief? Are they realistic?
5. **Just go with it.** Distressing emotions tend to become intense, peak, and then dissipate. You will probably find that if you allow yourself to stay in the distressing moment that the anxiety and emotion will wash over you and then recede.

Adapted from www.whatsyourgrief.com

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 the Bereavement Office at (484) 526-2499 for referrals to other services.

Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley is a local non-profit organization providing emotional and social support to family members and caregivers. They offer support groups, educational workshops and mind/body classes in their Allentown, PA office. Programs are free, but registration is required. Call 610-861-7555 or email info@cancersupportglv.org to register or for more information.

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

TCF of Lehigh Valley meets at Sacred Heart Hospital, 2nd floor, 421 W. 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 267-380-0130.

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.

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 www.givinggriefavoiced.com

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.

Soaring Spirits Regional Group Lehigh Valley social gatherings for widowed individuals to provide opportunities to connect with others in a positive, caring, and supportive environment. For more information, contact Sonja Handwerk at 610-297-0057 or soaringspiritslvpa@yahoo.com.

HALOS - CLC is for parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the loss of a child or sibling to suicide. The group meets every 4th Thursday from 6:30-8:30 pm at Hughes Library in Stroudsburg, PA. Register with Alice Keyes at (570) 236-1168, alicekeys00@gmail.com

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Center offers an Open Group on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 pm. Registration is required, contact Ariel at (610) 347-9988 or ariel@bradburiesullivancenter.org. The Center is located at 522 W. Maple St., Allentown, PA 18101. There is no charge for the group.

GriefShare Groups are a faith-based 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.

St. Francis Retreat House holds monthly grief support groups on the first and third Tuesday of the month from 9:30-11:00 am. Located at 3918 Chipman Avenue, Easton PA. Please call 610-258-3053 for more information.

GRASP - For families who have experienced a death due to substance use. Group meets every 3rd Monday of the month at 1st Presbyterian Church in Allentown, Room 118. Please register with Nancy Howe (484) 788-9440

Stepping Stones for Adolescents is a group for teens ages 11-16 that meets at Lehigh Valley Hospice for teen peer support. Call (610)402-7481 for more information. They also offer Stepping Stones for Children, for ages 5-10

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

Doylestown Hospital Hospice offers a variety of support groups, including a widow/widower group, a young survivors group, and an adult loss group. Visit www.dhospice.com or call Celia Blum, 215-345-2079.

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 information, please call 610-969-0330.

New Jersey: Compassionate Care Hospice provides bereavement support groups at Warren Hospital on a rotating basis. Call 973-726-7510 for more information.