

Bereavement Support

A community newsletter published by The Hospice of VNS Center for Loss & Hope

"A profound change in our world calls for profound changes in us."

— Thomas Attig

Grief: Finding Meaning in the Midst of Pain (Part 2)

by **Rochelle Sheppard**, MA, LPCC-S, GC-C, CT, Spiritual Care and Bereavement Services Coordinator



"Why is it that my loved one had to die? I mean look at all the bad people in the world; he never

hurt any one and yet he was the one who died." How often have we heard these words as we seek to console a bereaved person? What the bereaved is really asking of the consoler is to help them find meaning in what seems so meaningless; to help them to understand why do bad things happen to good people?

The wise listener/consoler does not seek to answer these

questions for the bereft. Those who mourn must discover these answers on their own. The listener/consoler allows the tension, strain, and even the confusion these purposeful questions evoke to settle within the soul and spirit of the mourner. For it is in the formation of their questions and their own discovery of the answers that the grief-stricken begin to find new meaning and hope for their life without the loved one.

The grief journey can take us in varied directions as we seek to heal from our loss. These

various directions are meant to help us discover new strength, new found courage and a new purpose for our lives. As we walk the grief journey, we discover that we do have the courage to face the daily challenge of everyday living. I have heard many mourners' report that the

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Service of Remembering

We invite all families and friends to our interfaith memorial service for those who have lost loved ones in the past year. This meaningful supportive service will be held on **Sunday, May 20 at 4 p.m. at the Faith Lutheran Church** located at 2726 W. Market Street in Akron. Please call us at 330-668-4662 to receive an invitation. All are welcome.



Camp Promise: June 11-13

The second annual Camp Promise will be offered by the Hospice of VNS Center for Loss and Hope **June 11, 12, and 13** from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. The **free** summer camp is for children **ages 6 - 11** who need help processing a significant loss (parent, grandparent, sibling...)

The children will learn to manage and understand their grief through creative activities such as drama, music, art and sandtray therapy. A staff of experienced facilitators, including school counselors and bereavement professionals, will oversee the children as they go through the creative stations.

There is **no cost** for the program. A morning snack and boxed lunch will be provided. Camp Promise will be held at the Hospice Care Center at 3358 Ridgewood Road in Fairlawn. For more information or to register your child, please contact Rochelle Sheppard at 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455, Ext. 4662.

Walking Meditation

by Marilyn Mihalic, Hospice of VNS Chaplain

May the stars light your way and may you find the interior road. Forward!

— Traditional Irish Farewell

Walking with a loved one during a serious illness requires of us our wholehearted attention to an ever-changing landscape of need. Our loved one's care is our concern and holds for us meaning. When death arrives and our time as a caregiver ends, we sometimes experience a void, a lack of meaning with the cessation of activity. In the

emptiness and silence of our loved one's absence, our attention now meets our loss. Our walking is halted. The landscape we now find ourselves in is that of our own need.

Walking as a spiritual practice can be a way through loss. Different cultures and traditions have long engaged in walking as a form of spiritual practice. Buddhists engage in walking meditation as a type of mindfulness. While

Jews, Muslims and Christians go on pilgrimage and join in procession.

WALKING AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE CAN BE A WAY THROUGH LOSS.

The Labyrinth is yet another form of a walking meditation that has been reintroduced

as a spiritual tool. The Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth is beautiful in it's circular form. It was laid in the floor of the cathedral in the 13th century using sacred geometry. It is comprised of a solitary path with an entrance that also serves as its exit. When walking the

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most devastating thing about the death of their loved one is, "Waking up one day and realizing that they are not coming back." Death is permanent. The effect of death is change.

Change is the very thing we fight against. Our life has taken another direction — one that we did not plan. We want our lives just as they were. However, it cannot be; somehow we must learn to accept this permanent change. In fact, part of our healing depends on our realistic acceptance of what has changed forever. Along with our acceptance to what has altered our life must come a willingness to go on living in spite of this soul-

wrenching change. Eventually, we discover that we have the courage to live with change. We discover

LETTING GO DOES NOT MEAN FORGETTING. WE DO NOT NEED TO LET GO OF THEIR MEMORY. WE CAN NEVER FORGET THEIR IMPACT ON OUR LIVES. WE CAN NEVER FORGET HOW THEIR LIVES INFLUENCED US TO BE BETTER PERSONS.

we have the strength and the courage to release control of what was and accept the unknown of our future. Now we are ready to open our heart so that we might embrace a new meaning and purpose for our lives.

Embracing new meaning and purpose for our lives does not mean we need to forget

our deceased loved one. J. William Worden, states in his book, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*,

The fourth task of mourning is

to find a place for the deceased that will enable the mourner to be connected with the deceased but in a way that will not preclude him or her from going on with life. We need to find ways to memorialize, that is, to remember the dead loved one – keeping them with us but still going on with life.¹

Letting go does not mean forgetting. We do not need to let go of their memory. We can never forget their impact on our lives. We can never forget how their lives influenced us to be better persons. We learn to embrace their impact and influence on our

lives by finding space for them in our emotional lives. While we continue to discover, we have the



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labyrinth the mind is set free as the feet simply follow the turning path to the labyrinth's center. For the contemporary pilgrim the labyrinth represents the path of the heart, a glimpse of one's whole journey. Walking as a spiritual practice can help us move more consciously into meaning through

our grief. For information or to experience this form of walking meditation contact First Congregational Church of Akron at www.akronfcc.com for scheduled times or other labyrinths in the Summit County area. May the stars light your way through grief as you journey in silence and attention.

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emotional stamina and courage needed to continue to grow in this life.

Lama Surya Das states, in his book, *Letting Go of the Person You Used To Be*, "Being separated from those we love invites us to take a fresh and deeper look at the meaning of love itself. This is the major challenge of love."² Lama Surya Das goes on to say, "Yet part of the healing is a realistic acceptance of loss. Life goes on. In fact, love goes on."³ Yes, love does go on, that is why we can find meaning in the midst of what seems to be insurmountable pain. It is our love that is everlasting; it is love shared that is infinitely enduring.



Visiting Nurse Service is Celebrating 60 Years in 2007!

¹ Worden, J. William. *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*. Third Edition. Springer Publishing Company. Pg. 36.

² Das, Lama Surya. *Letting Go of the Person You used To Be*. Broadway Books. Pg. 161.

³ Ibid. Pg. 163.



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Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service

Bereavement Support is a community newsletter published by the Communications Department of Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service, #1 Home Care Place, Akron, OH 44320, 330-745-1601, 800-362-0031, www.vnsa.com

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As a nonprofit organization, Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service relies on the community to support the development of new patient care programs and the delivery of hospice care to those who are unable to pay for their care. Gifts to Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service can be made in a number of ways. For more information, contact the Development Office at 800-335-1455.

For more information about our bereavement support services, or about hospice care, call your local Hospice and Palliative Care of VNS office:

Summit	330-665-1455
Medina	330-725-5887
Portage	330-677-4666
Stark	330-834-3484

Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service is a nonprofit, Medicare-certified agency, and is a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Ohio Hospice Organization.

You have the right to request that we not send you any future fund raising materials, and we will use our best efforts to honor such request. You may make the request by sending your name and address to Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service, Attn: Development Office, at 3358 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH 44333, together with your request to be removed from our fund raising mailing and contact lists.

Can You Help?

Yes, I would like to help make bereavement services available for grieving adults and children in our community.

My Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Accept my tax-deductible gift of:

\$20 \$50 \$100

\$250 \$500 \$_____

Please return this coupon with your check to:

Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service
3358 Ridgewood Road
Akron, Ohio 44333

Thank you!

Calendar of Grief Support

Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service provides bereavement support programs in group settings for those in our community who have experienced a loss. There is no cost for these programs. If you would prefer to talk with someone individually, please call for an appointment. Evening appointments are possible.

All sessions meet at the Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service Justin T. Rogers Care Center, 3358 Ridgewood Road, Akron, unless otherwise noted. Some support groups/programs require registration. For more information, to register, or to schedule an individual appointment, please call 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455, Ext. 4662.

TRUSTED SHARING SERIES

An eight-week series for adults who wish to learn what they might experience during the grieving process. Group members share their stories, emotions, victories and hopes. Group members can expect to receive loving support from group leaders, information on the grieving process, and tools for handling the normal grief response. Support groups are held Thursday's beginning May 3 from 2 - 4 p.m. or 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. *Registration required.*

TRUSTED SHARING SERIES - STARK COUNTY * NEW

This six-week series of classes is a collaboration of Stark County VNS and Hospice and Rose Lane Health Center. The group will meet on Wednesdays beginning April 25 at 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Rose Lane Health Center, 525 High Mill Avenue, NW, Massillon. To register, call Julie Smith, LISW, at 330-834-3484 or 800-648-1385, or Amy Noall at 330-833-3174, Ext. 74.

LIVING FORWARD SUPPORT GROUP

A monthly support group for the adult at least one year from the death of a loved one. Group members discuss the grief changes after the first year, and the new challenges and successes experienced during the year. The group looks to the future and how they can begin the process of moving on to rebuild life. The support group will consist of guest speakers and group discussion. Call for days and times.

MOVING ON — FOR FAMILIES IN GRIEF

A six-week group for the family unit experiencing grief. A certified sandtray therapist works with children under 18 years old to transform their grief through focusing on the child's memories of the loved one, including what they gave and taught, and what the child misses as the result of the loss. There must be an adult present for each youth. Adults have a separate group that focuses on the process and symptoms of mourning, and the developmental stages of children experiencing grief. Call for more information.

INDIVIDUAL GRIEF COUNSELING

One-on-one grief counseling is an option for individuals who either need more privacy in expressing their reaction to loss or who are unable to attend group meetings. Call for more information.

On a regular basis we update our mailing list. Each month we take off persons who have been on the mailing list for two years. If you have been receiving the Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service Center for Loss & Hope mailings since March 2005, you will be taken off this year.

If you wish to continue to receive these mailings, please call and let us know. We will be glad to keep you on the list. We're at 330-665-1455 or 1-800-335-1455.

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