

FALL 2013

BRIDGE

A PUBLICATION FOR OUR FRIENDS FROM PATHWAYS OF HOPE



Hope For The Holidays

Your Personal Invitation to our Annual Holiday Remembrance Event is Inside!

page 10

Grief Notes

Lisa Balster, MA, MBA, LSW

Director, Patient and Family Support Services

Here at Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center, we are busy with all of activities that come with the autumn and we are thinking of the holidays that will be upon us shortly. This is the time of year when we need to pause and take some time to be thoughtful and intentional about how we want to spend our precious time and energy. For those who are grieving, taking this time is of the utmost importance. Losing a loved one calls all of us to think on the reality that we have choices to make about how to use the time and energy that we have.

As the days become shorter and colder, we find ourselves of having to find ways to stay warm, encouraged, and hopeful. Our pain and sadness can be more challenging to move through unless we make an intentional plan to be gentle with ourselves when we feel difficult emotions, but then allow ourselves to move through to a more peaceful place.

You are encouraged now to give yourself the gift of loving kindness. Make plans to provide simple but important pleasures such as time with friends whose company you enjoy, an early bedtime a couple of times a week, a lovely book that can take you to another place, or your favorite cool weather food and hot beverages. These basic "creature comforts" can go a long way to provide healing. Take time to be alone if this is what you need, and to reach out to be with others when that seems right.

The Pathways staff is busy working to put together a refreshed program that can offer you a variety of support. We are here to serve those who have lost a loved one through our Hospice of Dayton services, and also make ourselves available to those who have experienced a sudden loss. You are invited to call our office at 937-258-4991 to make an appointment to create the care plan that works the best for you.



We also have planned a beautiful and useful holiday memorial service for you that I hope you will consider attending, there are several options from which to choose. (for more details, see page 14) Peaceful holidays to you and those you love. We look forward to serving you in the weeks and months ahead.

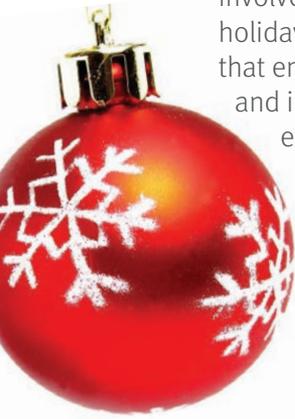
Table of Contents

- The Pain of Multiple Losses.....4
- When a Teenager Grieves 6
- Conquering Sleeplessness Starts Early in the Day 8
- Don't Forget The Hospice of Dayton 5K
- Remembrance Walk10
- Grief FAQ's11
- Remembering Your Loved One With a Memorial Plaque11
- Drawn Together Completes Its Spring Installment
and Prepares for Fall 2013 12
- When Grief Isn't Acknowledged14
- The Griever's Bookshelf 15

Living With Loss During a Season of Celebrations

Birthdays, anniversaries and holidays tend to be particularly challenging for the bereaved, painfully triggering memories and longings for times past. For many, Halloween has replaced Thanksgiving as the “kick-off” to an ever lengthening marathon of holiday preparations and activities. Even in the best of times the holiday season can tax physical, emotional, and financial resources. It should come as no surprise when grieving people start to feel a sense of dread as they contemplate the first holidays after loss. Since withdrawing into a cave and hibernating with the bears until spring comes is not a practical option, the best strategy is to prepare and plan for the challenges the holiday season brings.

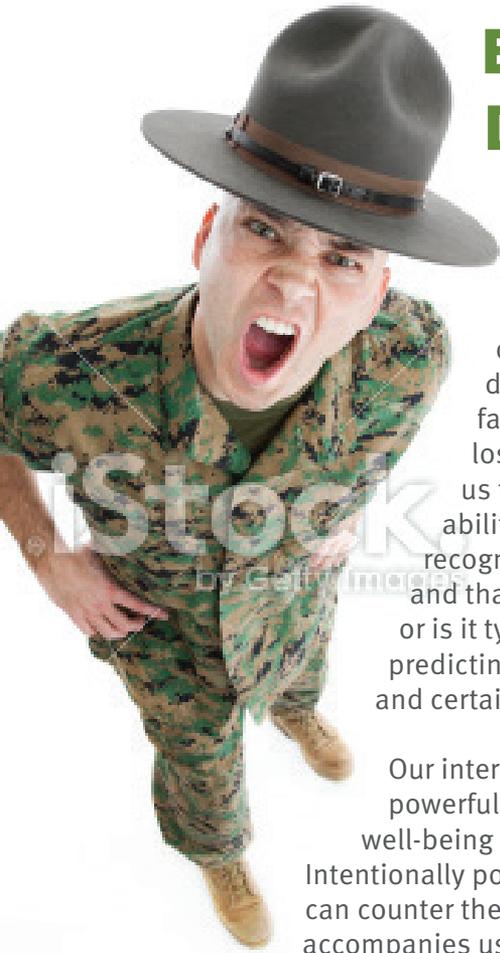
- Recognize your very human tendency to expect and predict the worst. In fact, most bereaved veterans of “first holidays” will tell you that although the holiday itself presented them with some painful moments, their anticipation was much worse than the experience.
- Seek out structured opportunities to acknowledge your loss and honor the memory of your loved one. Participation in remembrance events such as the Hospice of Dayton’s Remembrance Walk and the Hope for the Holidays program or one of the many advocacy group sponsored events such as Walk for the Cure, Walk to Defeat ALS can serve as meaningful opportunities for healing.
- Involve other family members in planning for the holidays. A family conference can be an effective forum that encourages the renegotiation of holiday plans and individual responsibilities based on input from everyone.
 - Scale back or eliminate—decorating, shopping, baking, cards, social obligations. Even in the best of years we often find ourselves exhausted by trying to “do it all”;



when grief is part of the mix, it becomes clear that “doing it all” is more than impossible.

- Consider altering, rather than discarding, important family traditions. While it might be too painful this year to gather around the dining room table for the “traditional” home-cooked dinner, a buffet meal that everyone contributes to, or dinner out at a restaurant, may be preferable alternatives.
- Create new rituals that incorporate your loved one’s memory into the holiday. Flameless candles that “burn” throughout the season, lighting a memorial candle at mealtime, decorating the gravesite with seasonal flowers or other items are all examples of small, but meaningful, rituals that acknowledge our continuing bonds.
- The custom of holiday gift giving is often a painful reminder of the gifts and people we are no longer shopping for. Many find that intentional gifts to lonely shut-ins, residents in nursing homes, or individuals/families with material needs can be a meaningful way of honoring deceased loved ones.
- Intentional “random acts of kindness” during the holiday season can be highly therapeutic. A larger than normal tip for the waiter or waitress, paying the bill for an unsuspecting diner, leaving change in a vending machine, leaving a book in a waiting room or bus station with a note to enjoy, sending an anonymous gift to someone you know, offering a kind word to a frazzled mother... the opportunities to look outside ourselves are limitless.
- Nurture yourself. Take a nap, sleep in, soak in the tub, or get a massage.
- Ask yourself this question- “If I knew that this holiday season were to be the last one that I would have with my remaining loved ones, how would I spend it?” Loss teaches us that the moments we are granted in life are incredibly fleeting and valuable.
- Seek out additional support. Attending a grief support group or talking to a grief counselor can be of immeasurable help in meeting the challenges on navigating the holiday season.





Best Friend or Drill Sergeant?

Whether we recognize it or not, there is a “voice inside our head” that provides a running commentary on ourselves and others. What does that voice say to us as we face the challenges of life after loss? Is it a voice that allows us to feel hopeful about our ability to weather adversity, that recognizes our small successes, and that encourages us to persevere or is it typically negative and critical, predicting insurmountable problems and certain failure?

Our internal dialogue, or self talk, powerfully influences our emotional well-being and coping abilities.

Intentionally positive self-talk messages, can counter the negativity that too often accompanies us through difficult times. They can help us shift our focus and see ourselves more clearly as we struggle to develop the “new normal” of life after loss. Some examples of healing messages that you may want to try are:

- I think I can handle this instead of This is just impossible
- I am healing in small increments instead of This never seems to get any better
- I am able to ask for help when I need it instead of No one seems to notice what I need

- I can get through the next hour instead of I don't think I can take this any more
- I can trust my judgment instead of I'm so unsure of myself
- I will survive instead of I don't think I can do this
- It's alright to cry; tears are a normal expression of grief and sadness instead of Tears mean I am weak
- I'm only human; part of being human is making mistakes and learning from them instead of I mess up everything

Whose voice does most of the talking? Grief is challenging enough without a critical, demanding and never satisfied drill sergeant running the show. Just as we are free to decide who may or may not enter our homes, we can decide who we will let take up residence in our head. Out with the drill sergeant and in with the supportive, encouraging, and nurturing friend!





Working Through Grief

Nancy Gardner-Messer, MSW, LISW

A significant death can so fracture one's life that at times it may seem impossible to consider a future. Sadness, loneliness, confusion, difficulty concentrating, and other grief symptoms can at times feel overwhelming, leading individuals to feel as if their lives are out of control. The bereaved often wish for directions or a map to follow through the new landscape of grief in which they find themselves.

In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis described his grief experience in the following way: "I thought I could describe a state: make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however,

turns out not to be a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history....there is something new to be chronicled every day.”

Many people have found that William Worden’s four tasks of mourning provide a helpful structure to guide them through the grief process. The tasks suggest that grief is not a passive process but involves work and effort on the part of the griever. It is also not a straight road, but one that circles back on itself many times.

The 4 tasks are:

1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To work through the pain of grief
3. To adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing
4. To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life

The journey through the grieving process can feel disorienting and exhausting. It can be reassuring to have guideposts along the way pointing in the direction of healing. The tasks of mourning can be such guideposts. By working through these tasks, griever can rebalance their lives, regain hope and reach a future that initially did not seem possible.

.....
*“Comfort comes from knowing
that people have made the same
journey. And solace comes from
understanding how others have
learned to sing again”*

– Helen Steiner Rice
.....



Pathways Breakaway : A Day-long Grief Event for Children and Teens

Jonathan Haag, LISW, ATR-BC

Pathways Breakaway is a day long, grief focused event designed for children, 7-17, who have experienced the death of a parent or other loved one. Going through the day-long event in age specific groups, participants will enjoy fun activities such as swimming, ice skating, and games as well as grief activities involving art, music and discussion groups; lunch and snacks will be provided.

Pathways Breakaway will be held on Monday, January 20, 2014, a day on which most children will be out of school for the Martin Luther King holiday. The event, which will be held at the Kettering Recreation Center, 2900 Glengarry Drive, Kettering, Ohio, and will begin at 8:00 am and end at 5:30 pm. Breakaway is offered at no charge, but pre-registration is required as the event will be limited to 50 children. For further information and registration materials, please contact Pathways of Hope at (937)258-4991, or email pathwaysofhope@hospiceofdayon.org, or register online at www.pathwaysofhope.org.

Grief FAQ's:

Frequently Asked Questions about Grief

Sometimes I feel like I'm on an emotional roller coaster; there are times when I'm feeling better and seem to be doing OK and then it seems like out of nowhere I'm down and feeling overwhelmed. Is this "normal"?

The "emotional roller coaster" is one of the most common ways that people describe their experience when grieving. The demands of daily life may distract us from our grief for a time, only to throw us back into it with reminders of who and what we have lost. Early on, the ups and down are likely to feel exhausting and discouraging. Over time the ups and down become more manageable. We start to recognize the occasional grief wave as a normal part of the process of adjusting and adapting to life after loss.

Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center

Support and Education are provided by a team of Masters prepared counselors, social workers, and an art therapist with significant experience and expertise in journeying with grieving children, adolescents, and adults.

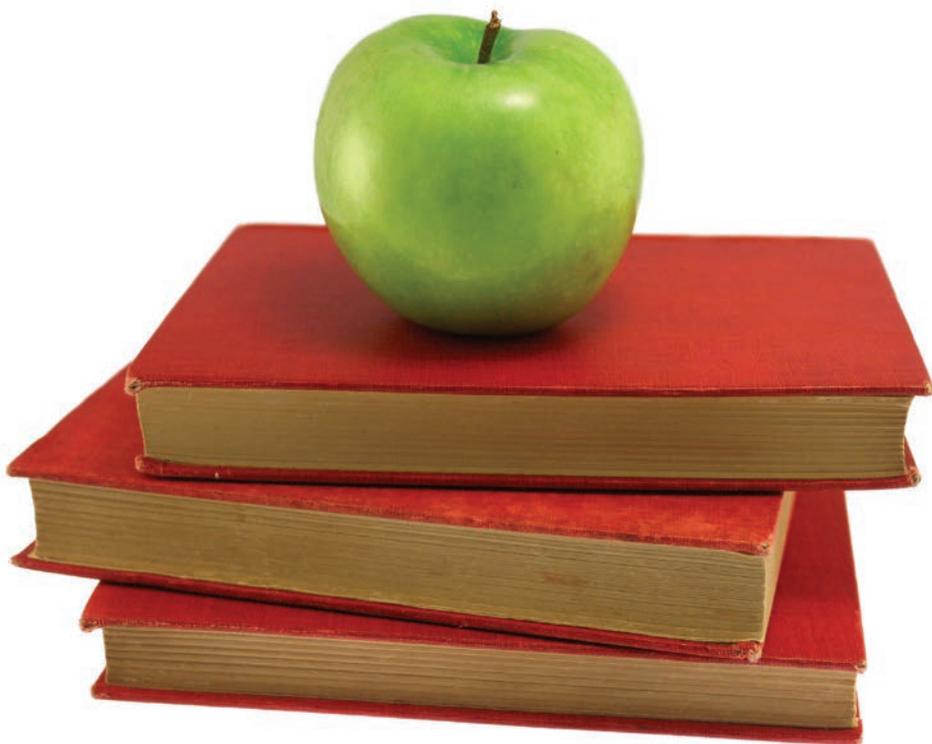
There are a variety of support groups available, as well as individual counseling, and opportunities to gather socially. Our philosophy is that grief is a normal reaction to loss, and that it is a unique experience for each individual, as each relationship is itself one of a kind. The Pathways staff seeks to understand what is needed for each individual to navigate the grief process, and to assist with an effective plan to cope with this life change.

Pathways serves all friends and family of any Hospice of Dayton patient, as well as the community, free of charge, thanks to the support of the community through the Hospice of Dayton Foundation.

Please call (937)-258-4991 to arrange for a time to meet so we can understand your needs and create a plan that works for you.

Healing Pathways Provides School-Based Support for Grieving Youth

With the start of a new school year, children toting heavy backpacks become a common sight. But the burdens that many children carry into the classroom may be far heavier and less recognizable than textbooks and gym clothes. The death or life-threatening illness of a family member, friend or classmate creates a burden of grief and loss that extends into the classroom and onto the playground. Significant loss changes a child's world forever, affecting emotions, behaviors, social relationships and academic performance. Sensitive about appearing different from their peers, children and teens may feel isolated and alone at a time when they most need support and validation.

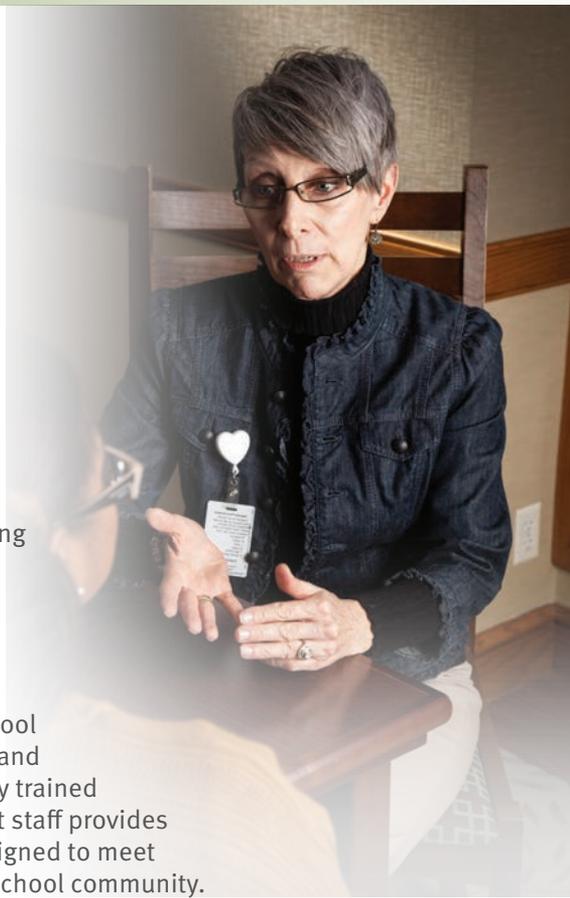


It is a difficult experience for everyone-peers, teachers, administrators, and parents, to watch a grieving student yet feel powerless to help. Funding and staffing constraints may make it difficult for many school systems to provide effective support to grieving students.

Pathways of Hope's Healing Pathways programs have been providing support for bereaved children and teens right in the school setting for over ten years. Working together with school administrators, teachers, and parents, our professionally trained and licensed bereavement staff provides grief support services designed to meet the particular needs of a school community. A direct call to Pathways of Hope will begin the process.

For further information or to arrange for in-school services, please call Donny Marlow at (937) 258-4991. We can be reached Monday through Friday from 8:00 am-4:30 pm. Due to the generous support of community donors, these services are offered at no charge to individuals or schools. Services include:

- Grief Support Groups
- Specialized Grief Support Groups
- 1:1 Supportive Grief Counseling
- Grief Education for Staff and Students
- Consultation
- Debriefing



Grief Support Program Provides “*Hope For the Holidays*”

Nancy Gardner-Messer MSW, LISW

The advent of turning leaves and chilly nights remind us that the holidays will soon be upon us. The November and December holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas and Hanukkah are traditionally times associated with family gatherings and familiar traditions. Yet for the bereaved, facing the first holidays after the death of a loved one can be fraught with anxiety. Hearts heavy with grief and loss feel out of sync with holiday celebrations.

Hope for the Holidays, our annual holiday remembrance event, has been so well received in past years that we are now offering it several times during this year’s holiday season. This hour long program provides participants with support and helpful suggestions for coping with grief during the holidays as well as the opportunity to remember and acknowledge deceased loved ones. Light refreshments will be available after the program.

Whether you would like help coping with the holiday season or an opportunity to remember and honor loved ones in a meaningful way, please consider attending. Because of

limited seating, reservations are required. For reservations or for additional information,



please contact Pathways of Hope, at (937) 258-4991. When calling to make your reservation please indicate the date and location of the program you plan to attend.

Dayton Area

Monday, **December 2**, 2013 or
Thursday, **December 5**, 2013
7:00 - 8:00p

Pathways of Hope

Hospice of Dayton Community
Room (Shaw Building)
324 Wilmington Ave.
Dayton, Ohio

Middletown Area

Tuesday, **December 10**, 2013
7:00 - 8:00p

Pathways of Hope

Team and Staff Center
Long Meadow Dr.
Franklin, Ohio

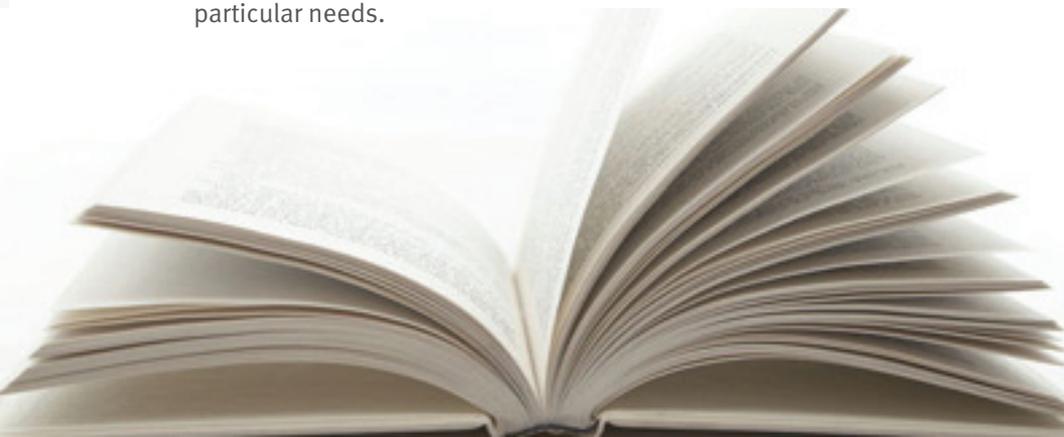
The Griever's Bookshelf

Title: Healing Your Holiday Grief: 100 Practical Ideas for Blending Mourning and Celebration During the Holiday Season

Author: Alan Wolfelt

Publisher: Companion Press, 2005

This easily read book provides the bereaved reader with practical and realistic ideas about coping with the demands of the holidays that are forever changed by a loved one's death. Dr. Wolfelt also offers suggestions on how to honor and remember deceased loved ones during the holiday season. Recommendations are offered in a plain and simple format, while encouraging the reader to choose those ideas that seem most relevant to the reader's particular needs.





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