

FALL 2015

BRIDGE

A stylized logo consisting of three overlapping leaf shapes in shades of blue and green, positioned above the letter 'i' in the word 'BRIDGE'.

A PUBLICATION FOR OUR FRIENDS FROM PATHWAYS OF HOPE

A low-angle photograph of several large trees with dense green foliage, looking up towards a clear blue sky. The trees are the central focus of the page, with their trunks and branches creating a complex pattern of light and shadow.

Help for the Holidays

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Grief Notes

Lisa Balster, MA, MBA, LSW

Director of Care: Patient and Family Support Services

Here at Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center, we are busy with all of the activities that come with the autumn. We are also thinking of the holidays that will be upon us shortly. This is the time of year when we need to pause and take 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 about the reality that we have choices to make about how to use our time and energy.

As the days become shorter and colder, we find ourselves 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. We 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. Peaceful holidays to you and those you love. We look forward to serving you in the weeks and months ahead.

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Supporting Grieving Children During the Holidays

Jonathan Haag DAT, LISW-S, ATR-BC

The holidays can be very difficult for grieving children, especially during the first year following the loss of a loved one. No matter what the holiday is, every celebration involves family traditions that have been created and shared over the years. Because of this, holidays can be a reminder of the loss of a loved one and a reminder of special, pleasant memories shared with that person. This can be a painful time for children as they watch others enjoy the holidays while they experience longing for their loved one. Often the anticipation of the holiday can be worse than the special day itself.

What can parents do to help? It is useful to let grieving children know that they may feel some painful feelings during the holidays, and that this is normal. Encourage them to tell you about what they feel. Plan some new activities and rituals with them that can



add creativity and fun to an otherwise hard situation. Here are just a few ideas:

- Draw pictures or make cards of favorite holiday memories with the deceased.
- Create a special ornament to hang on the tree or doorway.
- Write a holiday letter to the deceased and place it in a special place either wrapped as a present under the tree or tied with a bow and placed next to their picture.
- Place a picture of the deceased at the dinner table with a candle so they are part of the holiday feast.
- Cook a favorite dish or dessert the deceased especially enjoyed.
- Create a “gratitude bowl.” Family members can write on colorful slips of paper holiday memories of their loved one for which they will always be thankful. These memories can be read out loud during a special time during the holidays.

These activities are powerful and healing. They allow the child to mourn while at the same time giving permission to enjoy the holidays.

Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center

Pathways of Hope is the Grief Counseling Center of the Hospice of Dayton. Pathways provides a variety of services to the community. Support and education are provided by a team of Masters prepared counselors, social workers, and an art therapist with significant experience and expertise in supporting grieving children, adolescents, and adults.

Our philosophy is that grief is a normal reaction to loss, and a unique experience for each individual. Every 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.

One-on-one counseling sessions are available by appointment for children, teens, and adults. Many times, just one session can provide enough information for the griever to feel they are processing grief normally. Each individual's need will be assessed by a bereavement counselor/social worker so an individual plan of care can be developed.

Grief support groups can provide a bridge over the difficult days, weeks and months following a loss. Participants discover that the group is a place where understanding, encouragement and practical suggestions can be found. All of our groups are open to anyone in the community who is coping with the loss of a loved one. Groups are designed to meet different needs. Our groups meet on a rotating basis through the year. Contact Pathways of Hope (258-4991) for the current schedule.

Growing Through Grief groups focus on education and support. They meet for 6 sessions over a period of 12 weeks. Registration is required. Groups Include:

- Loss of a Parent Group
- Spousal Loss Group
- Living with the Loss of an Adult Child Group



Coffee Connection groups provide informal support for bereaved adults. They meet monthly for an hour at locations in Springboro and Dayton. No registration is required. Call Pathways of Hope for more information.

Healing Pathways are school based grief support programs. They provide 1:1 grief counseling, grief support groups and grief education for school staff and students

Art Forever After group is a multi-generation, art-based group. This group provides the opportunity for children, teens, friends and family members of all ages to make art together. Located at the new William & Dorothy Yeck Family Grief Counseling Art Center on the Hospice of Dayton campus, this group is offered weekly on Monday evenings in 3 month segments.

Camp Pathways is an overnight summer camp experience for youth ages 7-17 who have experienced the death of a loved one. Camp Pathways will be June 24-26, 2016. Registration is required and space is limited.

Pathways of Hope serves all friends and family of any Hospice of Dayton patient, as well as the community. Services are 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.

Help for the Holidays

Debbie Holt, MS, PCC-S

The holiday season can be challenging to those who are grieving the loss of someone close. It helps to explore needs, be flexible and plan ahead.

Holiday rituals and traditions have been important symbols of security and family bonds. They were created at a time when they made sense to us. However, this year things are different. Rather than place unrealistic expectations on themselves to do things the way they always have, grievers should lower expectations for themselves. They may feel insincere by trying to force feelings of happiness and joy.

Ask for help and let others know that things may be different this year. Not only are those who grieve dealing with loss in their everyday lives, they are experiencing a loss in their traditions and rituals as well.

Some helpful ideas to consider this holiday season are:

- Realize that it is normal to feel some pain this season. Allow yourself to express your feelings.
- While it may feel insincere if you try to force feelings of happiness and joy, do allow yourself to have fun. Loss teaches us more than anything about the preciousness of life and not to take it for granted.
- Honor your loved one by making a toast, creating a memory area in your home, creating a special ornament,



or hanging a holiday stocking filled with notes of special memories.

- Look at photo albums and share memories.
- Donate to a special charity in your loved one's name.
- Try to make small changes so that this year may be a little bit easier. Plan a meal at a different time or place. Limit the numbers of holiday cards and decorations. Buy some prepared food instead of cooking or baking.

While holidays can be a challenge for grievers, we can take steps to plan and allow the holidays to be opportunities for memory, legacy, honor, connection, and healing.



Holiday Grief Support Groups

Knowing the holidays can be a particularly difficult time for grievers, Pathways of Hope will be offering groups specifically designed to provide education and support during the holiday season. These groups are open to anyone grieving a loss. No registration is required. Attendance at each session is not required. Feel free to drop in on any of the group meetings. Two meeting days and times are being offered:

Wednesday evenings 6:30-7:30 p.m.

November 4th-December 16th – Pathways of Hope

Thursday mornings 10-11 a.m.

November 5th-December 17th (excluding Thanksgiving) -
Location: Community Room, located on the upper level of the Shaw Building at Hospice of Dayton

For further information or questions, please call the Pathways of Hope at 937-258-4991.

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 people describe their grief experience. 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 downs are likely to feel exhausting and discouraging. Over time the ups and downs become more manageable. We start to recognize the occasional grief waves as a normal part of adapting to life after loss.

Dealing with Grief "Ambushes"

Debbie Holt, MS, PCC-S

It is natural for those grieving to dread certain holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. Grief often begins in anticipation of the event. This is to be expected and accepted. However, the bereaved may be taken by surprise at grief "ambushes." These are sudden and unexpected reminders and cause strong emotional responses. Hearing a loved one's favorite song on the radio, finding an old photograph or note from a loved one, or even something as simple as passing a loved one's favorite food in the grocery aisle can trigger these ambushes.

How are these to be handled? The healthiest way is to accept these ambushes as part of the normal grief process. Grievers often report they felt they were doing well until experiencing these sudden, intense grief responses. Then they judge themselves to have "gone backwards" in their grief. Understanding these episodes to be a normal part of grieving can take the fear out of the experience. Know they are going to happen. Allow yourself to feel and express the emotions and keep pressing forward in your grief journey.

Pathways Breakaway:

A Daylong Grief Event
For Children and Teens

Jonathan Haag, LISW, ATR-BC

When: 1/18/16

Where: Kettering Recreation Center

Register: hospiceofdayton.org/breakaway

Pathways Breakaway is a daylong, grief focused event designed for children, 7-17, who have experienced the death of a parent or other loved one. Participants will be placed in age-specific groups to 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 18, 2016, 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, will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m. 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@hospiceofdayton.org, or register online at hospiceofdayton.org/breakaway.



Book Review:

Disney-Pixar's *Inside Out*

Adapted by Suzanne Francis

Inside Out, based on the recently released popular movie, takes the reader on an adventure through the inside of the mind of a little girl named Riley. As Riley and her family move from Minnesota to San Francisco, we share Riley's journey of coping with change and loss. The story reveals that all our feelings, even sadness, are important to our growth and development. Each emotion has something to teach us which will help us on our journey through life. All our emotions must work together to make us who we are as individuals. This book appears to be targeted to a young audience. However, the ideas presented are more abstract than concrete, and some terms and words will not be familiar to young readers. The text is quite lengthy. This read is best suited to school-aged children who can hold their attention for 20 minutes or longer to read with a parent or caregiver. The goal of the story to bring awareness to grief as a necessary and normal human experience is ambitious and admirable.



Healing Links



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

Author: Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Publisher: Companion Press, 2005

As noted in the title, this publication offers practical suggestions for making grief and loss part of your holiday tradition. Some of the recommendations may seem to be common sense. Other ideas may be more original and creative (e.g., #61—“Make a memory display”, #66—“Stargaze”, or #75—“Hang a symbol in your window...denoting your loved one’s death”). The text is laid out in a simple format. Each of the 100 ideas is listed on a separate page with bullets. This easy-to-read format allows a reader to open the book to any page and begin reading. With a total of 100 ideas, the book offers something useful to every grief-stricken reader.

Please visit the following websites for information on grief:

www.centering.org: The Centering Corporation and Grief Digest Magazine is a website that provides a variety of grief resources. Some of the topics covered are adult, teen and children’s grief issues, death of a child or infant, pet loss, and sympathy cards. The website shares information on professionals and support groups. It also identifies resources written in Spanish.



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