

SPRING 2015

# BRIDGE

A PUBLICATION FOR OUR FRIENDS FROM PATHWAYS OF HOPE



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and Rituals page 8



# Grief Notes

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The transition from winter into spring can be a particularly unpredictable and uncomfortable process, with seasonal changes proceeding in fits and starts. We are so anxious for the return of warm, sunny days that the notoriously variable weather seems to affect us more than we would like. One day we are outdoors, basking in shirtsleeves, only to find ourselves shivering in heavy coats the next. Just when we dare hope the snowy days are behind us, we are forced to be content with an unexpected snow or ice storm. Sunny days can quickly give way to dark skies and drizzling rain. Hardy spring bulbs poke hopefully out of the ground toward the warming sun, only to be temporarily stunted by a cold snap. Even as we grumble about the fickle weather, we cling to the certainty that seasonal instability will eventually give way to the warmth and beauty of spring.

Adjustments and adaptations forced upon us after the loss of a loved one can make grief a rather bumpy, uneven process. Our emotions can seem as variable as the weather. Like the seasonal passage from winter to spring, the transition from the familiarity of life before loss to the “new normal” of life





after loss proceeds in fits and starts. “Two-steps forward, one step back” can make us believe we are making no progress, when in fact we continue to move slowly forward. The discomfort produced by new challenges can obscure awareness of small victories and inherent strengths. We tentatively reach out, discovering comfort in the company of others or in the pursuit of personal interests. The thoughtless comment or the unexpected grief trigger may temporarily derail us, but like the spring bulbs exposed to a sudden freeze, our inherent hardiness, in the end, prevails. As uncomfortable as grief may at times be, we can find hope knowing our grief process is pushing us into renewal and unexpected avenues of growth.

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# Grief FAQ's:

## Frequently Asked Questions about Grief

### I am having trouble sleeping. Is this normal?

Sleeplessness is an almost universal problem for grievers. For some, providing care to their loved one before death was a long process, characterized by frequent nighttime care needs and light dozing to be alert to calls for help. Therefore, the sleep process has been chronically disordered. For others, the loss has caused sleep disturbance. Typically, the griever finds falling asleep to be less of a problem than **staying** asleep. The dark and quiet of night intensifies the recognition of loss and leads to more sleeplessness. Sometimes all that is needed is more attention to healthy sleep hygiene: going to bed at the same time each night, resisting napping, intentionally relaxing before bed, and avoiding exercise or alcohol immediately before bedtime. Most people return to healthy sleep patterns after a period of time. However, if lack of sleep becomes an issue in functioning during the day, consult your physician about further sleep aids.

## Remembrance Services for 2015

Hospice of Dayton's Remembrance Services provides families with an opportunity to come together during the first year of loss to remember their loved one in a non-denomination memorial service. Family members are asked to bring a single cut flower for use in the March, July and September services. Named luminaries honor our Hospice of Dayton patients in the "Hope for the Holiday" memorial services in November and December. Light refreshments follow each service, which last less than one hour. If you are unable to attend the memorial service designated to honor patients who died within your loved one's time frame, you may attend one of the other services. Invitations will be sent out for all of the services, and RSVPs are appreciated.

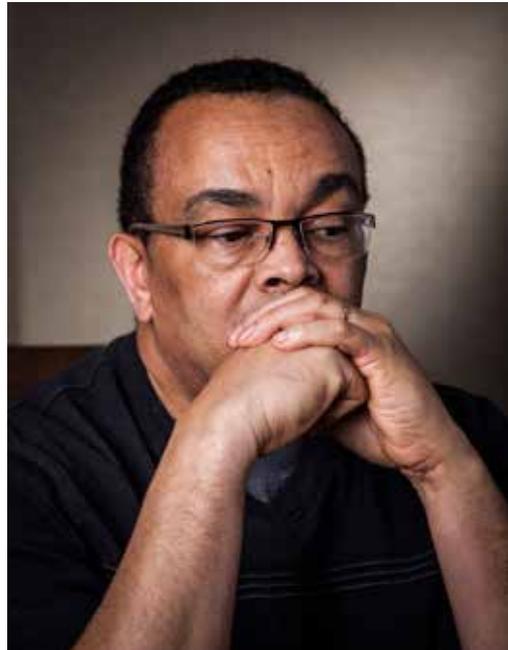
2015 DATES	TIME	LOCATION	HONORING PATIENTS WHO DIED BETWEEN
<i>Time of Remembrance</i> Sunday, July 19	3:00 p.m.	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	January, February, March and April 2015
<i>Time of Remembrance</i> Sunday, September 20	3:00 p.m.	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	May, June July and August 2015
<i>Hope for the Holidays</i> Monday, November 30	3:00 p.m.	Hospice of Butler & Warren Counties Team and Staff Center	January – November 2015
<i>Hope for the Holidays</i> Monday, December 7	7:00 p.m.	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	January – December 2015
<i>Hope for the Holidays</i> Thursday, December 10	7:00 p.m.	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	January – December 2015

# Grappling with Guilt

Guilt can be one of the most painful aspects of grief. Carrying guilt in the grief process can be likened to adding cumbersome boulders to the already heavy load of grief one must carry after the loss of a loved one. Grieving minds might obsessively play the “If only...” mind game – “If only I’d seen the signs of illness earlier,” or, “If only I had spent more time with him/her,” or, “If only I had insisted on seeking different treatment.” Guilt producing statements with the word “should” may also play prominently – “I should have been able to care for my loved one at home,” or, “I should have been with him/her when he/she died.” Running on the “if only...” or “should/shouldn’t” treadmill is exhausting and disheartening. Even more seriously, failing to properly deal with guilt may lead to a complicated or blocked grieving process.

Realizing there is a difference between guilt and regret may prove helpful to the griever. Nearly all individuals who are grieving suffer a certain number of regrets or wish things could have been done differently. Regrets are normal and do not imply one has done something wrong; only that, in hindsight, one wishes they would have made different choices. Regrets usually lead to sadness and the ability of the griever to state “I did my best.” Guilt implies wrong-doing and must be addressed. Talking back to the guilt can be very helpful. Consistently making statements to yourself such as, “I did my best,” and changing wording to, “I **wish** I had spent more time with my loved one,” removes the blame element and moves guilt to a more healthy regret.

If you continue to struggle with guilt, it may be helpful to talk to one of the trained bereavement counselors at Hospice’s Pathways of Hope. Learning to let go of guilt can be a freeing process.



# Registration Open for *Camp Pathways*

If you think a camp for grieving kids sounds like a real “downer,” you may be surprised at what former campers have to say about their Camp Pathways experience:

- It was so much fun!
- It was awesome!
- It is amazing and helpful!
- I LOVED it!
- It is a great camp and it helps a lot!

These comments come as no surprise to anyone who has ever seen what happens when 50 youth, ages 7-17, attend Camp Pathways and discover they have a lot in common with others who have lost a parent, sibling, grandparent or other loved one.

The camp experience is designed to help bereaved youth understand that, as difficult as the loss of a loved one can





be, grief, fun and the joy of being a kid can coexist. Opportunities to better understand their grief experience and explore how they can cope with grief's challenges are interspersed with abundant opportunities for fun. Swimming, fishing, hiking, mastery of a climbing wall and age appropriate games, sports and team building activities as well as plenty of campfire hijinks add up to a memorable and life-altering experience for everyone involved.

## CAMP PATHWAYS

**Date:** June 26-28

**Cost:** \$20-\$40

**Register by:** June 1

**Go to:** [hospiceofdayton.org/camp](http://hospiceofdayton.org/camp)

Camp Pathways will be held Friday, June 26 through Sunday, June 28. Transportation from Hospice of Dayton to the campsite at Joy Outdoor Education Center in Warren County is provided. Parents or guardians must provide transportation home following closing ceremonies on Sunday, June 28. Pre-registration is required prior to June 1, as well as a non-refundable registration fee of \$20 for one child, \$30 for two children and \$40 for three or more children. Fees can be waived in cases of financial hardship.

For more information and registration materials, please visit our website at [www.hospiceofdayton.org/camp](http://www.hospiceofdayton.org/camp) or call us at (937) 258-4991.



# Remembering through Memorials and Rituals

Pamela Tyler, PhD

A love story made the national news recently. The chronicle featured an 82-year-old Wisconsin widower, Bud Caldwell. There's a park bench in Fond du Lac dedicated to his wife, Betty Caldwell—a memorial that prominently displays her framed picture. During their 56 years together, Betty and Bud could often be heard singing verses from “Pennies from Heaven” and “A Daisy a Day,” two of their favorite songs. With Betty gone, these songs have been delightfully incorporated into a memorial ritual, one which helps Bud remain connected to his sweetheart even though it has been necessary to move on without her. Regardless of how much snow blankets the area, Bud makes the daily drive to the park where he ambles to the front of Betty's bench. Once there, Bud carefully places a daisy and a penny on the bench—a sentimental expression of love and remembrance—and touches Betty's photograph, pleasantly greeting his beloved wife before taking leave.

The Caldwell love story is representative of Worden's fourth task of grieving: To find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life. Maintaining a connection with a deceased loved one is commonly obtained through the use of memorials and rituals.





Choosing a memorial is one way for people to honor a deceased loved one. For Bud Caldwell, the bench represents a public display where he and other park visitors can remember Betty. A headstone at the cemetery is also a common type of public memorial which can provide insight into the person who is buried there with the use of a picture(s), specific quotes, and/or other original design features.

The ceremony of visiting the bench every day with a daisy and a penny is Bud's personal ritual, something that has meaning associated very specifically to the relationship between Bud and Betty. Rituals and memorials can be a valuable tool in transforming grief into healing action by celebrating the life of the person who has died. Ideas for remembering a deceased love one might include: creating a memorial fund for donations to a project/cause the deceased supported; creating a scrapbook or memory book; identifying the seat at the dining table usually used by the deceased as a seat of honor and either leaving it empty or inviting guests to be seated at the special place at the table; making a quilt—or perhaps a memory teddy bear—out of the person's clothing or wearing an article of clothing or jewelry that belonged to the deceased; continuing to celebrate the birthday of the deceased by gathering family/friends for a favorite meal. The number of ways to honor and remember can be as varied and unique as are the people being remembered.

Regardless of the manner in which a life is celebrated or memorialized, memorials and rituals provide a valuable and functional component for the healing journey. By identifying a meaningful way to honor someone, mourners will find a way to incorporate the memories of their loved ones into their newly created realities, which will encourage the ability to move forward in peace.

# The House is So Empty Now

by Debbie Holt, MS, PCC-S

Learning to live alone is one of the most challenging aspects of life after loss. Whether it is coming home to an empty house, facing the quiet evening hours on our own, or learning to sleep alone, the adjustment is often difficult and painful. The home we have shared too often feels like an empty and unwelcoming house, filled with memories that remind us only too vividly of our loss. Sometimes, very small changes in behavior or environment can help make the transition to a new normal more manageable. Following are strategies to consider that others have found to be helpful.



- Turn the radio or TV on before you leave so you do not have to return to a silent house.
- Move painful reminders from plain sight to a safe place or special area of the house where you can access them intentionally.
- Adopt a pet – many have found caring for a companion animal deeply rewarding on many levels.
- Ask friends and family to call in the evenings.





- Move the TV to a different spot; changing the view sometimes helps.
- Create a “sacred space” where you can choose to be alone with your thoughts, memories and mementos such as photos or other meaningful objects.
- Sleep on the other side of the bed or with a full-length body pillow.
- Experiment with scented candles or room scents to make it feel more homelike.
- Change your routine. Record evening TV shows and watch them during the day; answer emails and correspondence in the evening; and take care of chores later in the day.
- Take your walk in the evenings.
- Rent videos you and your partner would never have enjoyed together.
- Use your loved one’s t-shirt as a pillow case for your bed pillow.
- Join a support group and make plans with new acquaintances. You are sure to meet someone else who would enjoy sharing a meal, movie, concert or walk.

# About Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center

Pathways of Hope is Hospice of Dayton's grief support program. In addition to helping families whose loved ones are hospice patients, Pathways of Hope offers support to all members of the community who have lost a loved one. There is never a fee to those receiving grief support, as these services are supported by donations to the Hospice of Dayton Foundation.

Support and education through one-on-one counseling or group sessions 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.

One-on-one counseling sessions for children, teens and adults are available by appointment. Many times, just one session can provide adequate information for the griever to feel they are processing grief normally. A bereavement counselor/social worker assesses the individual needs of each person experiencing grief and an individual plan of care is developed.

Grief support groups can provide a much-needed 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 are readily found. Designed to meet different needs, all groups are open to anyone in the community who is coping with the loss of a loved one. Our groups typically meet on a rotating basis through the year. Call Pathways of Hope at 258-4991 for the current schedule.

Pathways of Hope group sessions include:

**Growing through Grief** groups focus on education and support, meeting for six sessions over a period of 12 weeks. Three types of groups are offered: Loss of a Parent Group, Spousal Loss Group and



Living with the Loss of an Adult Child Group. Registration is required.

**Coffee Connection** groups provide informal support for bereaved adults, meeting monthly for an hour at locations in Springboro and Dayton. No registration is required.

**Healing Pathways** are school-based grief support programs, providing 1:1 supportive grief counseling, grief support groups and grief education for staff and students.

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



**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 26-28, 2015. Registration is required and space is limited.



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



# The Pathways of Hope Bereavement Counseling Professionals Team

Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center is a well-established (2002) service provider in the greater Dayton community. This accomplished, knowledgeable, caring staff provides support and education when requested by an individual, family, group or community organization. All of our clinicians have a Master's level or higher education and are seasoned professionals in grief and bereavement work.

- Lisa Balster, MA, MBA, LSW
- Lisa Conn, MSW, LISW-S
- Jonathan Haag, MSW, LISW-S, ATR-BC (Art Therapist)
- Kate Hawvermale, Pathways of Hope Office Coordinator
- Debbie Holt, MS, LPCC-S
- Fran Jerisk, MS, LPC
- Bonnie Orlins, MSW, LISW-S
- Anne Petratis, MA, MS, LPC, BCCC
- Pamela Tyler, PhD, LSW

# Healing Links

## ***Gaining Traction: Starting Over After the Death of Your Life Partner***

by Vicki Panagotacos, PhD, FT

This book is a very practical guide for those who are a little farther along in their grief process after the loss of a life partner. Asking, “Who am I?” and, “What do I do now?” can occupy most griever’s after the initial shock of the loss wears off. Dr. Panagotacos offers a step-by-step program, including helpful exercises, to help the griever open his or her eyes to a new way of life and discover what is really wanted from this “new normal.” Personal stories and appropriate research make this book an excellent resource.

## ***Sad Isn’t Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss***

by Michaelene Mundy

Many parents and caring adults struggle with knowing what to say to a child when someone they love has died. Our anxiety and our own grief can sometimes cause us to delay or avoid the conversation. However, talking to children about loss can bring us closer as well as present an opportunity for growth for both parent and child. There are many books available to help us start this conversation. In a past issue of Bridge, we reviewed “The Invisible String” and “The Very Best of Friends.” “Sad Isn’t Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss” by Michaelene Mundy speaks directly to kids, giving straight talk about what to expect after a loss. Mundy normalizes feelings, invites questions, encourages sharing, and offers a positive, life-affirming outlook focusing on helping children cope with through their grief.

## **compassionatefriends.org**

The Compassionate Friends website ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)) provides care and comfort to griever’s who are experiencing the death of a child. The Compassionate Friends is an international organization with more than 600 local chapters worldwide. This website provides support for parents, grandparents and siblings. This site also offers suggestions to help others better assist the grieving family. The website includes information about locating a local chapter and also a link to “virtual chapters” which promote conversations through live chats. Although the website offers articles, books, and links to other resources, griever’s have shared that the most helpful benefit of this website is the opportunity to connect with others who understand their emotions firsthand.



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