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INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

Grief Notes	1
When Will the Grief Get Easier?	2
Notes on Music: The Sounds of Grief	2
Group Schedule	3
Group Schedule	4
Loss of an Adult Child Group	5
Widow and Widowers Group	5
What If I Don't Want To?	6
Loss of Parent Group	7
Camp Pathways 2011	7
The Griever's Bookshelf	8

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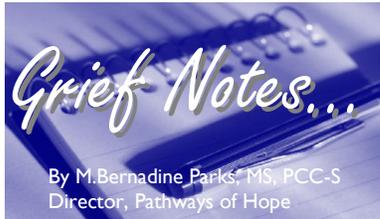
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# The Bridge

Bereavement newsletter published by  
Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center at  
The Hospice of Dayton.



WINTER 2011



By M. Bernadine Parks, MS, PCC-S  
Director, Pathways of Hope

While December tends to dither a bit about the arrival of winter, vacillating from cold and snow to occasional unanticipated warmth, January sets the record straight that winter is upon us. Arctic winds, gray skies, brown and white landscapes, icy roads, slippery sidewalks and frigid temperatures, make it abundantly clear that winter has not only arrived, but plans to stay for a while. The state of the weather being a perennially safe topic for conversation, we find ample opportunities to connect with others over shared perceptions and common challenges. Simple comments such as “*Watch your step*” and “*Be careful out there -I’ve heard that such and such a street is pretty treacherous*” remind us that our well-being and safety is of concern to others. “*I’m with you on that one*” in response to our complaint about the cold, ice or heating bill not only connects us with others but provides validation that we

are not alone in our discomfort. Seemingly simple remarks about the weather and its impacts serve to remind us that we are all in this particular challenge together- and that we will make it through the winter’s worst together.



Although January’s rigors can generally be anticipated, the challenges of grief are less predictable and often seem to catch the bereaved unprepared. The early weeks following the death of a loved one are reminiscent of December’s weather patterns. One day we may seem to be doing pretty well while on other days we feel overwhelmed with sadness and sorrow. We may be surprised at how well we managed to cope during the funeral activities and are likewise taken aback when weeks or months later grief worsens or descends in full force. Unlike the weather, grief is

not typically regarded by most people as a “safe” topic for conversations. As a result, grieving individuals are too often left feeling alone and isolated as they struggle to navigate the very normal emotional and practical challenges of loss.

While grief and loss are universal human experiences, the seasons of an individual’s grief are not regulated by the earth’s predictable rotational cycle, but by the individual’s own personal trajectory of loss. Grief support groups provide the bereaved with the opportunity to connect with other grieving people in a setting where grief and its challenges are not only safe but welcomed topics for open and honest conversation. Support groups provide needed opportunities to connect over shared challenges and provide helpful validation that we are not alone in our perceptions and struggles. Just as simple comments about the weather support our struggle to survive winter’s worst, the opportunity to share, support, and learn from others facing similar challenges can propel us through the most difficult days of grief’s season.

# When Will the Grief Get Easier?

By Debbie Holt, MS, PCC-S  
Bereavement Counseling Associate

In the early days of grief process, many griever's begin to think there will never be relief from the intense, unremitting symptoms of grief. Energy, motivation and desire seem to have vanished. Sleepless nights are the norm. Concentrating on the simplest of tasks may seem beyond one's ability. The crushing longing, loneliness and sadness become constant companions. As the days go by, other people in your life may express concern over the continued intensity of your grief and may gently suggest it is time to "move on". You may begin to wonder if your grief is normal.

It is important to recognize what is "normal" varies widely among individuals. But generally, while intense emotional, physical and cognitive reactions are very normal in the early stages of grief, as time goes on, the griever usually finds such reactions decreasing in



both intensity and frequency. Grief often intensifies two to three months after the loss and again before the first anniversary. Special days and events can trigger grief for years to come. Also common are sudden, unexpected surges of grief around such things as hearing a special song or spotting a favorite restaurant. The griever gains experience in dealing with upsurges in acute grief in healthy ways which allows the activities of daily life to continue without too much disruption.

Looking for small signs of healing can be helpful. Perhaps you find yourself laughing more or you begin looking forward to future events and plans for the future. For most grieving people, healing occurs. Holding on to that hope and looking for small signs of healing can bring comfort during the heavy days of early grief.

## Notes on Music: The Sounds of Grief

By Teresa Edingfield, MSA, MT-BC  
Music Therapist

Music is multi-faceted and creatively expresses some hard-to-describe emotions. The melodies, speed, rhythms, instrumentation, and lyrics all work together. There is a song by Peter Gabriel called "I Grieve." A segment of it was used in the movie "City of Angels" and is available on the movie soundtrack. The full recording is over eight minutes long and is quite difficult to sit through because it is so descriptively written. The song is aptly entitled; it is about grief, the disbelief, the intense sadness of loss. It simulates the process of grief and moving forward. The song begins with somber low tones, pulsating background percussion and

lyrics that describe the loss in an honest way: "I grieve for you; you leave me; so hard to move on." It effectively describes the darkness in the midst of loss, but life continues to pulsate. At first listen, you might want to turn it off because it is very "muddy" sounding. But, that is its essence, the "muddy" feeling of grief. Further into the song, the rhythm picks up. The tones are higher. The lyrics describe that life carries on in everything around us. At the end of the song, it resolves, "now I can find relief; I grieve." It is not a song to which you would listen for inspiration or comfort, but it is a good example of a song which is written with all the

elements to sound like what it says.

The experience of grief is very personal and creates a sense of aloneness. This song is a release and confirmation of those feelings. No one wants to be stuck in that painful place. It is most important to know that expressing oneself is a step in moving through grief; it is not an end. You are on your way to another place, just as the song moves on to a different place. This song ends much differently than it begins. In time, your grief will end much differently than it begins.

# PATHWAYS OF HOPE SUPPORT GROUPS

**The Hospice of Dayton memorial services**, which are held six times a year, provide hospice families with an opportunity to come together during the first year of loss to remember their loved one in a non-denominational memorial service. The services are designed to honor The Hospice of Dayton patients who have died during a given time frame. Family members are asked to bring a single cut flower for use in the service. Light refreshments follow the service, which lasts less than an hour.

All memorial services are held in the Community Room on the second floor of the Shaw Building at The Hospice of Dayton. If you are unable to attend the memorial service designated to

honor patients who died in the same time frame as your loved one, it is fine if you attend a **later** one.

**We do ask that you wait at least three months following the death before planning to participate.**

Date	Time	Honoring Patients Who Died Between
Sunday, Mar. 20, 2011	3:00 pm	11/1/10-12/31/10
Sunday, May 15, 2011	3:00 pm	1/1/11-2/28/11
Sunday, July 17, 2011	3:00 pm	3/1/11-4/30/11

## UNDERSTANDING THE GRIEF EXPERIENCE

The loss of a loved one can be a life-changing experience that challenges the bereaved individual at many levels. Making the necessary but painful adjustments and adaptations can be emotionally and physically exhausting. Knowing what to expect when loss enters our lives can do much to make the grieving process less challenging and more manageable. Taking the time to seek out a better understanding of the grief process can go a long way toward easing some of the pain of grief. For too many, inaccurate information or unrealistic expectations about grief add an additional burden to an already heavy load of personal distress.

*Understanding the Grief Experience* is a 90 minute educational program designed to help the bereaved learn about the grief process. Appropriate for anyone who has already suffered a loss as well as for those who are facing the loss of a loved one, *Understanding the Grief Experience* is a highly recommended starting point. Normal grief symptoms, the stages and tasks of grief, and healing coping strategies will be some of the topics covered. Helpful resources and materials for grieving individuals will be identified. Participants will be provided general information about grief support groups as well as specific information about the various grief support services available through Pathways of Hope or other community resources.

*Pre-registration is not required.* The program is free and open to the general public.

*Pathways of Hope—The Hospice of Dayton, 324 Wilmington Ave., Dayton, Ohio*  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday night of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M.  
2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday afternoon of every month from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M.

*Butler & Warren Counties—Lorelei's Place at The Hospice of Butler & Warren Counties*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday morning of every month from 10:00 to 11:30 P.M.

## Grief Support Groups

**G**rief support groups can provide a much-needed bridge over the difficult days, weeks and months following loss. Participants discover that the group is a place where understanding, encouragement, and practical suggestions may be readily found. Just as the stories of others can provide direction and hope in your own journey through loss, you may discover that your experience may benefit others as well.

**P**athways of Hope offers a number of grief support groups designed to meet different needs. Some groups are general grief support groups, while others are groups designed to bring together people that share similar losses. All of our support groups are open to anyone in the community who is coping with

the loss of a loved one and require no pre-registration or commitment for a set number of sessions. Thanks to the generous support of community donors, these services are offered at no cost.

**I**t's up to you how frequently you choose to attend. You are encouraged to attend at least two or three meetings before you decide that the support group isn't for you. If you would like more information, please call *Pathways of Hope* at (937)258-4991. A current schedule of our groups can always be found on our websites, [www.hospiceofdayton.org](http://www.hospiceofdayton.org), [www.hospiceofwarrenco.org](http://www.hospiceofwarrenco.org) or [www.hospiceofbutlerco.org](http://www.hospiceofbutlerco.org).

**Please turn this page over for MORE Groups and Youth support information**

## MEMORIES OF MOM—4-SESSION GROUP—PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Support group for adults who have experienced the death of their mother. Commitment to attending all 4 sessions in the series is required. Enrollment will be closed after the first session; pre-registration is required. New groups are offered throughout the year. For more information or to pre-register, please contact Pathways of Hope (937)258-4991.

Pathways of Hope—Mondays, 6:30 to 8:00 P.M.

January 2011 series: 1/10, 1/17, 1/24, 1/31

March 2011 series: 3/7, 3/14, 3/21, 3/28

## FATHER LOSS SUPPORT GROUP—4-SESSION GROUP—PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Support group for adults who have experienced the death of their father. Commitment to attending all 4 sessions in the series is required. Enrollment will be closed after the first session; pre-registration is required. New groups are offered throughout the year. For more information or to pre-register, please contact Pathways of Hope (937)258-4991.

Pathways of Hope—Mondays, 6:30 to 8:00 P.M.

February 2011 series: 2/7, 2/14, 2/21, 2/28

April 2011 series: 4/4, 4/11, 4/18, 4/25

## LIVING WITH THE LOSS OF AN ADULT CHILD—TWICE MONTHLY—NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Support group for parents who have experienced the death of an adult child.

Pathways of Hope—2nd and 4th Wednesday night of every month from 6:45 to 7:45 P.M.

## WIDOW / WIDOWERS SUPPORT GROUPS

### WALKING THROUGH GRIEF: WIDOW AND WIDOWER SUPPORT GROUP—TWICE MONTHLY—NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Widows and widowers meet others experiencing the death of a spouse.

Pathways of Hope—1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday night of every month from 6:30 to 7:30 P.M.

Pathways of Hope—1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of every month from 10:00 to 11:00 A.M.

CENTERVILLE, Christ the King Lutheran Church, 50 Nutt Rd., Centerville

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month from 7:00 to 8:00 P.M.

WARREN & BUTLER COUNTIES, Lorelie's Place at The Hospice of Butler & Warren Counties

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of every month from 10:00 to 11:00 A.M.

## YOUTH SUPPORT

### SCHOOL-BASED GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMS—CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION—(937) 258-4991

#### **Grief Support Groups, Specialized Grief Support Groups, 1:1 Supportive Grief Counseling, Grief Education for Staff and Students, Consultation, Debriefing**

Working together with school administrators, teachers, and parents, Pathways of Hope staff can provide grief support services designed to meet the particular needs of a school community. Over the past five years, Pathways of Hope has provided grief support services in over thirty schools or youth centers in Montgomery, Greene, Clark, Clinton, Butler and Warren counties. Due to the generous support of community donors, these services are offered at no charge to individuals or schools. For informational materials on Healing Pathways programs or consultation, please call Mary Gamage at 258-4991, ext. 1153.

### CAMP PATHWAYS 2011—WEEKEND—REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Weekend camp for youths ages 7-17 who have experienced the death of a loved one. \$20/one child, \$30/two children, \$40/three or more children. Financial assistance is available if needed.

Friday morning, June 24 to Sunday afternoon, June 26, 2011 – Joy Outdoor Education Center, Clarksville, OH

\*Children must be registered prior to June 1<sup>st</sup>. Limited space available. Call in February for registration form.

## ***Living with the Loss of an Adult Child Group Provides Support for Grieving Parents***

**L**osing one's child, no matter what the age, is a life-shattering experience that leaves in its wake an overwhelming sense of loss and the most intense grief imaginable. The loss of a child is so devastating, that our language has no word comparable to "widow", "widower" or "orphan" to describe the parent whose child has died. Bereaved parents soon learn that the very thought of losing one's child is so threatening that few "outsiders" can really understand the power, intensity and duration of their grief. Marriage partners are too often unable to provide the necessary comfort and support to their grieving partner due to their own pain and feelings of helplessness. Not knowing what to do or say, friends and acquaintances say the wrong thing, or nothing at all. As a result, bereaved parents often feel isolated and alone in their grief.

**L**iving With the Loss of an Adult Child Support Group is specifically designed for any parent who is grieving

the loss of an adult child. Grief for these parents is experienced at a time in the individual and family life cycle which is markedly different from the early years of the parenting experience. The support group offers grieving parents an opportunity to share their experience, struggles, and memories with others who know the pain of losing an adult child and understand the challenges of coping and finding meaning in the midst of suffering.

**L**ed by professional staff with experience in parental grief, *Living With The Loss of an Adult Child* is open to anyone in the community who has lost a grown child. Prior involvement with The Hospice of Dayton is not a requirement. This ongoing group meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month from 6:45-7:45 pm in the Pathways of Hope bereavement counseling center at The Hospice of Dayton.

## ***Walking Through Grief***

### ***Widow and Widower Support Groups Provide Support After the Loss of a Spouse***

**T**he death of a spouse brings about major changes in almost every life area. Familiar and comfortable routines are disrupted by the permanent absence of a life partner. Reminders of loss often seem to permeate every aspect of daily life. The shift from the "We" of a couple to the "I" of a single life can be a difficult and lonely process.

**O**ur *Walking Through Grief* Widow and Widowers Support Group offers grieving spouses an opportunity to share their experience, struggles, and memories with others who know the pain of losing a life partner and understand the challenges of coping and finding meaning in the midst of suffering. Those who attend will discover:

- The support of others who have experienced a similar loss and understand the pain of grief
- A safe environment in which to share thoughts and feelings that they may hesitate to share with friends
- Opportunities to talk about specific grief related problems and to hear how others are coping with similar challenges
- A chance to explore with others what is "normal" while grieving

**W**alking Through Grief *Widow and Widower Support Groups* are open to anyone who is coping with the loss of a spouse; prior involvement with The Hospice of Dayton is not required. Groups meet twice monthly at various times and locations; please see page 4 for details on group meeting times and places.



# What If I Don't Want To?

By Brenda Wolfe, MS, PCC-S  
Bereavement Counseling Associate

*“Grief unprocessed can result in stress, anxiety, depression and even physical illness.”*

- Grief doesn't just disappear
- It must be acknowledged and processed
- We may feel confusion and anxiety
- We may have difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Loss changes our priorities
- The journey of grief can be hard

If given a choice, most of us would opt out of the grief experience. Unfortunately we don't get to choose to grieve or not to grieve. The death of a loved one alters our world. No matter how long their illness, we are rarely ready for them to go. We may stay very busy, pushing our grief aside, convincing ourselves that we are managing our grief. We may attempt to avoid facing the impact of our loved one's death on our future because we can't contemplate a future without them. We may feel immobilized, wanting to believe that if we just stand still it won't be real. That thought doesn't last long though because reality has a way of crashing in on us. We soon discover that grief doesn't just disappear. It is both powerful and sneaky. Grief can outwait and outwit us. It will lie in wait until we are vulnerable and ambush us when we least expect it. It must be acknowledged and processed.

Grief unprocessed can result in stress, anxiety, depression and even physical illness. Most of us feel a lot of pressure to “behave normally” even though our world has shifted and will never be the same. But what's normal when we are grieving? We may feel confusion and anxiety. We may have difficulty concentrating and making decisions. We may think “we are losing it.” Others may wonder what's wrong with us if we are more irritable or

forgetful than normal. They -and we- may find it difficult to understand why we can't just “let go” and “move on”.

The expectations that we and others have of how we should behave are usually unrealistic, adding to our already heavy load of distress. Loss changes our priorities and saps our energies. It can affect everything we say or do or think or feel. Although our loved one has died, we remain alive, faced with the fact that we are alive and it is our job to live our life. Grief makes thinking about how to design this new life difficult. Knowing how to do this takes time. The truth is that we don't want to plan a life without the love and support of our loved one. It seems unfair and frightening.

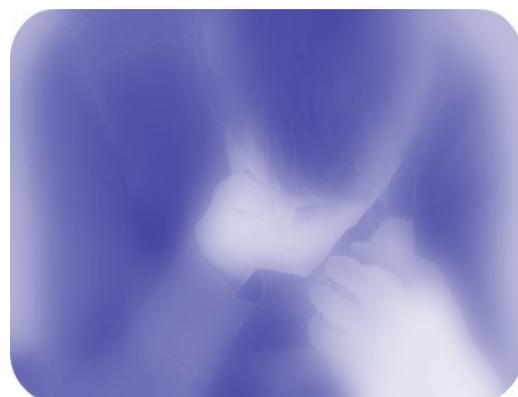
The journey of grief can be hard or it can feel next to impossible. Grief support from people who understand can be enormously helpful. If you find yourself struggling with the challenges of grief, reaching out for support is the most important first step to begin the healing process. The bereavement staff at Pathways of Hope is here to help you during this difficult time with confidential and professional grief counseling and support. We will help you to understand and make your way through this journey. Call and set up an appointment today. 937-258-4991.

## On-Line Link to Back Issues

Back Issues of *The Bridge* can be found on The Hospice of Dayton website at [www.hospiceofdayton.com](http://www.hospiceofdayton.com), [www.hospiceofwarrenco.org](http://www.hospiceofwarrenco.org) and [www.hospiceofbutlerco.org](http://www.hospiceofbutlerco.org). From our home page, navigate to Grief Support to find links to *The Bridge*. Back issues cover a variety of topics which may be helpful to specific concerns and needs.

# Support Available for Those Who Have Lost a Parent

Although the loss of our parents at some point is an expected part of the adult experience, the intensity of the grief that follows often takes surviving children by surprise. Facing life without the love and support of a parent leaves a huge hole in the lives of many adults. Support groups specifically designed to meet the needs of bereaved adult children can be immensely helpful in the struggle to adapt and adjust to the loss of a beloved parent. Pathways of Hope offers two groups specifically designed to support grieving adults. Our Memories of MOM and Fatherless Child Grief Support Groups are designed to support those who have lost their mother or their father, respectively. The groups, which are free to the public, meet for four consecutive weeks and require preregistration. For information on meeting dates and times, please see page four.



## Registration Underway for Camp Pathways 2011

By Jonathan Haag, LISW, ATR-BC  
Bereavement Counseling Associate

Although we like to think of childhood as a carefree time, the childhoods of many of our young people are colored by the life-altering loss of a parent, sibling, or grandparent. Part of the grieving child's bereavement experience involves feeling "different" from peers who have not experienced the loss of a loved one. Opportunities to connect with and learn from other children who have experienced the death of a loved one can be immensely helpful to a child struggling to adapt and cope with challenges no child should have to face. Too often, those opportunities are limited or nonexistent for many children, leaving the bereaved child on his or her own to cope as best he or she can.

The *Camp Pathways* experience is designed to provide bereaved children with the opportunity to share a weekend with other children and teens who are likewise facing the challenge of living without a special loved one. This annual summer event offers grieving children and teens old-fashioned summer fun coupled with opportunities to explore, share, and gain understanding of their grief experience. The success of the camp can be measured in feedback from campers themselves. In 2010, 100% of our 59 campers stated they would recommend the camp to a friend, citing how helpful the camp was in helping them with their grief and how much fun they had over the course of the weekend.

This year's camp is scheduled to begin on Friday morning, June 24 and will end on Sunday afternoon, June 26. As has been the case for many years, Camp Pathways will be held at the beautiful Joy Outdoor Education Center in Warren County. The overnight, 3 day camp experience provides grieving children with supervised outdoor activities such as swimming, fishing, canoeing, climbing walls and ropes courses. Interspersed with the outdoor activities are grief support activities as well as evening campfires, a talent show and arts and crafts. Professionally licensed bereavement staff from Pathways of Hope, trained volunteers and outdoor educators from Joy Outdoor Education Center lead activities with age specific groups.

Registration for camp is now underway and is open to children between the ages of 7 and 17 who have experienced the death of a parent, grandparent, sibling or other loved one. Although a minimal registration contribution is suggested (\$20 for one child, \$30 for 2 children and \$40 for three children) financial aid is available where need exists.

If your child or a child you know could benefit from a fun-filled summer camp experience that includes time with other children who have experienced the loss of a loved one, please contact Pathways of Hope at (937) 258-4991 for information and registration materials.



# The Griever's Bookshelf

*Remembering With Love: Messages of Hope for the First year of Grieving and Beyond* by Elizabeth Levang & Sherokee Ilse (1992). Fairview Press.

This book is comprised of over 300 short (one page) entries that cover a wide range of feelings, issues and experiences that are commonly encountered in the grief process. The book's format makes it an ideal daily companion to the bereaved, providing hope and comfort throughout the grief process. Readers may choose to read the selections in order or may select readings based on issues that seems pertinent at a given time. A companion workbook *The Remembering with Love Journal* is also available from the first author.

*The Pathways of Hope Grief Counseling Center at The Hospice of Dayton relies on the individual and community donors who so generously support the services we provide. Thanks to your generosity all Pathways of Hope services are available without charge to serve the bereavement needs of anyone in the communities we serve. Donations to support our services are gratefully accepted through The Hospice of Dayton Foundation, 324 Wilmington Ave., Dayton, Ohio, 45420.*

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What Hospice Should Be

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
324 WILMINGTON AVE.

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