

## Grief Notes

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

The annual 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 to hope the snowy days are behind us, we are forced to contend with the 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.

The adjustments and adaptations that are 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.

## INSIDE

- 2 Grief Symptoms: What to Expect
- 2 Validating Your Experience Grief Support Now Available to the LGBT Community
- 3 Notes on Music: Music and Moments of Grief Relief
- 4 Coping with the Grief of a Sudden Loss
- 5 Coffee Hour Connection Coming to Springboro in May
- 5 New Huber Heights Location Enhances Access to Grief Counseling
- 6 Healing the Grief Following the Death of a Spouse
- 6 Registration for Camp Pathways Now Underway
- 7 Journaling and Grief
- 8 Grief FAQ
- 8 Griever’s Bookshelf

**PATHWAYS OF HOPE**  
324 Wilmington Avenue  
Dayton, Ohio 45420

(937)258-4991  
(800) 653-4490 toll free  
(513) 422-0300 Butler and  
Warren Counties

[hospiceofdayton.org](http://hospiceofdayton.org)  
[hospiceofbutlerco.org](http://hospiceofbutlerco.org)  
[hospiceofwarrenco.org](http://hospiceofwarrenco.org)

# Grief Symptoms: What to Expect

Nancy Gardner-Messer, MSW, LISW

When a loved one has a terminal illness, caregivers learn to live day by day, usually with the needs of the patient as their primary focus. There is so much to do and to manage that what life may hold after the patient dies may not be considered. Thoughts of the future may be fleeting, quickly pushed aside by the demands of the moment. Perhaps, if the caregiver has had other losses, he or she believes they know what lies ahead, what to expect.

Whether or not they have experienced other losses, most people have expectations for themselves as they begin the grieving process. Grievors generally expect they will feel sad, shed tears and miss their loved one. However, as the time passes, it is not unusual for the bereaved to discover that their expectations do not always correspond to their actual grief experience.

Grievors will see effects or symptoms in their thinking, their feelings, their bodies, behaviors, and in spiritual ways and when these effects are unanticipated, it may lead them to question whether what they are experiencing is “normal”. Some of the most disruptive effects for grievors are in the way they think. They may feel confused, have a hard time processing information, are forgetful, or find it hard to concentrate. These symptoms can cause grievors to feel as if they are losing control. These unanticipated reactions can make them feel as if they are “going crazy”, causing them to be reluctant in sharing their concerns with friends or family.

It can be of help knowing that grief affects people in these global ways. Although distressing, these effects are a normal part of the slow, painful process of adjusting to a loss. Over time, with work and the support of others, grief

*“...Some of the most disruptive effects for grievors are in the way they think.”*

symptoms slowly recede as a “new normal” is established and equilibrium is regained.

## Validating Your Experience

## Grief Support Now Available to the LGBT Community

As part of our mission to support the bereaved, Pathways of Hope has always been proud to offer services designed to meet the specific bereavement needs of our diverse community. Our one-on-one grief counseling services have provided professional, individualized counseling to thousands of people in the past decade. Countless widows and widowers have found understanding and support in our spousal loss groups; children have found hope and healing in child-friendly services such as our school based services and Camp Pathways; grieving parents and bereaved adult children have likewise found solace in groups designed to meet the challenges associated with these difficult losses.

We are happy to announce the addition of grief support services specifically designed to meet the needs of the bereaved in the gay and lesbian com-

munity. The *Validating Your Experience* grief support group is designed to address unique stressors and challenges faced by grieving people in the LGBT community. The death of a loved one can be overwhelming for any of us,

but can be particularly difficult when understanding, support and acceptance are lacking. The group is designed to provide participants with a healing pathway through the unique challenges of their grief and loss. Topics related to partner loss, family loss, and challenges in finding support are only a few of many issues discussed in this group.



The *Validating Your Experience* group meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month from 6:30pm-7:30pm at the Pathways of Hope center on Wilmington Avenue. Registration is not required and the group is open to any bereaved member of the LGBT community regardless of prior experience with our hospice services.

# Notes on Music: Music and Moments of Grief Relief

Teresa Edingfield, MSA, MT-BC Music Therapist

One of the common symptoms of heightened grief is poor concentration. This can quickly develop into a sense of feeling overwhelmed. One may notice a reduced ability to accomplish routine tasks, or follow conversations. It may present as confusion, forgetfulness, or the feeling of being unable to keep up.

Music has innate elements that create a much needed break from the deluge of over-stimulation during these times. Listening to personally chosen music allows one to know what is coming and what is required.

- Music offers rhythmic continuity with a definite beginning and end. A piece maintains the same level of energy for those few minutes. This provides assurance and a sense of stability.
- Music can be pleasurable; it can give release or escape from emotional pain and sadness.

Music offers personal choice and can be varied according to need. Choosing the right music to help during this stage is as individual as the experience of loss itself.

*“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”*

- B. Auerbach



- Familiarity: Choose music you know. Listening to something less known or new requires thought. The goal is to experience a mental break.
- Sounds and Lyrics: Choose music with instruments that seem soothing and messages that help. This depends on individual taste, need and a sense of comfort.
- Speed and Rhythm: Choose music with which you can mentally keep up in that moment. This may require a slower pace than normal. Find something with a steady, appealing rhythm. Use deep breathing techniques and emphasize exhaling completely. If possible, synchronize breathing speed to the music to enhance the effect of clearing the mind.

- Music follows a form, often a pattern of verses and a repeated chorus with or without words. The verse creates a story line or sets up the message. The chorus recurs with the most important points. This predictability and repetition requires little effort from the listener.
- Music is received or “taken in.” No problem-solving or action is required.



The goal is to identify something that takes the work out of tending to demands for a few minutes. It will provide a point of refuge as many times throughout the day as needed. Using music in this way can help regulate and refresh concentration during this intense time of the loss experience.

# Coping with the Grief of a Sudden Loss

Debbie Holt, MS, PCC-S

“I wasn’t ready!” is usually the cry of the individual who, in a moment, finds themselves unexpectedly bereaved. While you can never feel completely prepared for any death, a sudden death leaves a person particularly vulnerable to initial feelings of shock, disbelief and bewilderment.

Often times the death was expected, but farther into the future, as the patient had seemed to stabilize. This type of sudden decline and death can be every bit as challenging as the loss is for the person who suddenly loses a healthy, or seemingly healthy loved one. There is no gradual transition or time to adjust, at least intellectually, to the impending loss of one who had been such a part of your life.

People grieving a sudden loss often struggle with greater levels of anxiety as they try to make sense of a world which no longer is experienced as safe and predictable. Decisions about a funeral and burial need to be made, possibly without any prior thought or planning, leading to increased stress. The griever may experience a high level of guilt, wondering what signs he or she ‘missed’ in their loved one and what actions may have been taken to change the outcome. More often than not, there was not time to say ‘good-bye’ or ‘I love you’. It is common to be distressed by such feelings of unfinished business and missed opportunities. The sense of not having closure in the relationship is acute.

In some cases, the griever may not experience grief symptoms for some time, staying in a state of shock or numbness for longer than what would be expected. This experience of ‘delayed grief’ is fairly common among grievers of a sudden death. When grief

symptoms do appear, they may appear with an intensity that is distressing.

How does one cope with the grief of a sudden loss? Just understanding the complexity in grieving such a loss may help in normalizing the experience and bringing reassurance to the griever. Talking out the intense emotions with a trusted friend, clergy or professional may provide clarity and relief. Finding healthy ways to deal with anxiety, such as deep-breathing and other relaxation techniques is crucial.

Writing a letter to your loved one, expressing things that were left unsaid, may help bring comfort. “Talking back” to your guilt is a helpful skill.

Acknowledging you did the best you could with the knowledge you had will eventually ease the guilt. If feelings of guilt or anger remain strong and persistent, talking with a professional, such as a counselor at Pathways of Hope may be a good idea.

*“I wasn’t ready!”*



# PATHWAYS OF HOPE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

Grief 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.

Pathways of Hope offers grief support groups which are designed to meet different needs. All of our groups are open to anyone in the community who is coping with the loss of a loved one. Some groups are available on a drop-in basis, while others require pre-registration. For our drop-in groups, it is up to you how frequently you choose to attend. Plan on attending two or three meetings before you decide that the support group is or isn't for you.

## LOSS OF A PARENT GROUP

*Four-session group  
Registration required*

A support group for adults who have experienced the death of a parent. Commitment to attending all four sessions is required. Pre-registration is also required. For information or to pre-register, please contact Pathways of Hope (937) 258-4991.

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
Mondays, 6:30 to 8:00 pm  
May 6, 13, 20, 28  
July 8, 15, 22, 29

## LIVING WITH THE LOSS OF AN ADULT CHILD

*Twice monthly  
No registration required*

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

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
Second and fourth Wednesday night of every month,  
6:45 to 7:45 pm

## WIDOW/WIDOWER SUPPORT

*No registration required*

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

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
First and Third Tuesday every month  
6:30 to 7:30 pm

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
First and Third Wednesday night of every month from  
6:30 to 7:30 pm

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
First and Third Thursdays of every month, 10:00 to 11:00 am

CENTERVILLE, CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
50 Nutt Road, Centerville  
Second and Fourth Tuesday night of every month, 7:00 to 8:00 pm

## YOUNG WIDOWS SUPPORT GROUP

*Support for widows 55 and younger  
No registration required*

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
Third Monday of every month,  
4:30 to 5:30 pm

## COFFEE HOUR CONNECTION

*Informal support for bereaved adults.*

DOROTHY LANE MARKET, SPRINGBORO  
Springboro  
Second Floor Community Room  
740 N. Main; Springboro  
First Wednesday of every month,  
10:00 to 11:00 am

## LGBT GRIEF GROUP: VALIDATING YOUR EXPERIENCE

*A grief support group for the LGBT community. No registration required*

PATHWAYS OF HOPE  
Hospice of Dayton,  
324 Wilmington Avenue, Dayton  
First and Third Monday of every month,  
6:30 to 7:30 pm

## YOUTH SUPPORT HEALING PATHWAYS

*School-based grief support programs*

- 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.

## CAMP PATHWAYS

*Registration required  
June 21-23, 2013*

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

\*Children must be registered before June 1. Limited space available.

**For more information, please call Pathways of Hope at (937) 258-4991.**

# UNDERSTANDING THE GRIEF EXPERIENCE

The loss of a loved one can be a life-changing experience that challenges the bereaved 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. 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 designed to help the bereaved or others interested in learning about what to expect when grieving. 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, and coping strategies will be some of the topics covered. Helpful resources and materials for grieving individuals will be identified. Participants will be provided with 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. Knowing what to expect when loss enters our lives can do much to make the grieving process less challenging and more manageable.

**Individuals, families, coworkers or small groups may call to arrange a convenient time to hear this helpful presentation.**

**KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN LOSS ENTERS OUR LIVES CAN DO MUCH TO MAKE THE GRIEVING PROCESS LESS CHALLENGING AND MORE MANAGEABLE.**



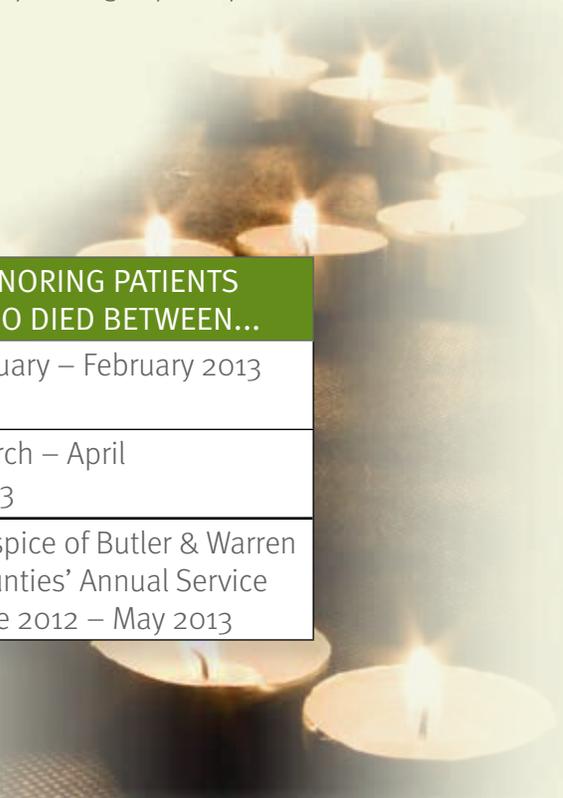
# MEMORIAL SERVICES

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

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	HONORING PATIENTS WHO DIED BETWEEN...
Sunday, May 19, 2013	3:00 pm	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	January – February 2013
Sunday, July 21, 2013	3:00 pm	Hospice of Dayton Community Room	March – April 2013
Sunday, July 21, 2013	3:00 pm	Hospice of Butler & Warren Co. Team and Staff Center	Hospice of Butler & Warren Counties’ Annual Service June 2012 – May 2013



## Coffee Hour Connection Coming to Springboro in May

One of the discoveries made by grieving people is that there is a lot of truth in the saying “*Grief shared is grief diminished.*” One of the challenges of grief can be finding others who are supportive of the need and desire to talk honestly about the challenges of life after loss.

The *Coffee Hour Connection* is designed to provide an informal opportunity to meet and talk with others in Warren, Butler and southern Montgomery counties who are dealing with similar challenges. Beginning May 1, this informal gathering will meet the first Wednesday of each month from 10-11AM in the second floor community room at the Dorothy Lane Market in Springboro. This room has been reserved exclusively for the *Coffee Hour Connection* and is accessible either by stairs or by elevator. Anyone in the community who is coping with the loss of a loved one is welcome to attend; no prior registration is required.



The Springboro Dorothy Lane Market is located at 740 N. Main St. (State Route 741), Springboro, Ohio and is easily accessible from I-75 on either the Springboro or Austin Landing exits.

There is close, ample parking in front of the store. Come talk, listen, or just share a cup of coffee.

## New Huber Heights Location Enhances Access to Grief Counseling

We are pleased to announce that Pathways of Hope counseling services are now available at our new community team center on Brandt Pike in Huber Heights. In an effort to increase accessibility and minimize travel barriers, Pathways of Hope’s individual counseling services have been expanded to be more conveniently located to those we have the privilege of serving. Current locations include our main office on the campus of Hospice of Dayton on Wilmington Pike, the new offices on Brandt Pike in Huber Heights, offices at our location in the Wright Dunbar historical district on West Third Street as well as in Franklin/Middletown on the campus of Hospice of Butler & Warren Counties.

Appointments for all locations are scheduled through our main number (937) 258-4991. When calling, please do not hesitate to request services at your desired location.

The new location can be found at 7371 Brandt Pike Huber Heights, Ohio 45424.



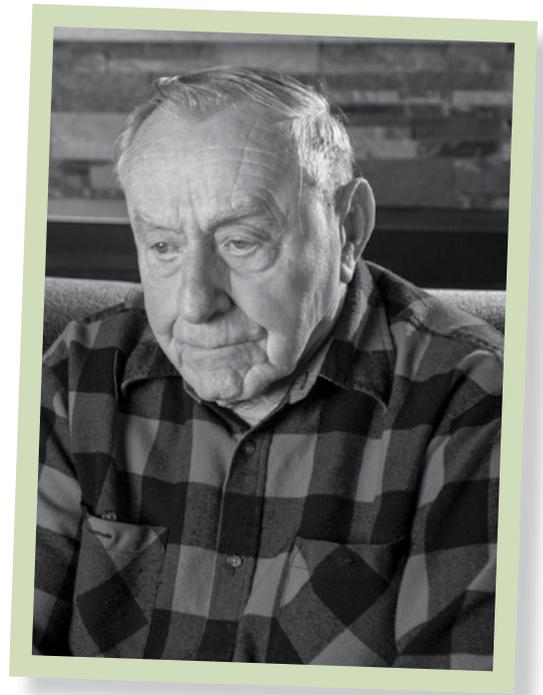
# Healing the Grief Following the Death of a Spouse

Brenda Wolfe MS LPCC-S, NCC

When a spouse dies, no matter the length of the marriage, the length of the illness or the suddenness of a death, we experience a grief that we could never have understood before.

It is human nature to measure everything in our lives by something else. Recently bereaved spouses soon discover that losing a spouse involves a grief that can't be measured by other losses. The "comparing one loss with another" concept doesn't work with grief because each loss is felt individually and experienced for itself. No two relationships are the same. In addition, the loss of one's husband or wife brings many unanticipated peripheral losses. We lose our companion, our partner, our love. We lose a shared connection to our past, present and our future.

In an attempt to avoid grief's pain, we may consciously try not to remember the good times because "they hurt." Paradoxically, it is necessary for us to remember because in those memories the healing can begin. Just as we need to cry for our losses, we also need to remember our happiness and love. Laughter brought by memories has a powerful ability to heal the worst pain. Telling our stories and listening to others tell their stories of a loved one is part of the process through which we help each other to heal. So share your memories with love and laughter. In the telling of these memories, your pain will in time fade but your memories and their stories will live on.



## Registration for *Camp Pathways* Now Underway

If you think a camp for grieving kids sound 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 fifty children and teens, ages 7-16, discover that 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 and the fun and 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 hi-jinks add up to a memorable and life-altering experience for everyone involved.

As has been the case for many years, *Camp Pathways* will be held the fourth weekend in June (Friday, June 21 through Sunday, June 23) and involves two overnight stays. Transportation from Hospice of Dayton to the campsite at Joy Outdoor Education Center in Warren County is provided on Friday morning, June 21. Parents or guardians are required to provide transportation back home following closing ceremonies on Sunday June, 23. Pre-registration is required prior to June 1, 2013 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 information and registration materials please visit our website at [www.hospiceofdayton.org](http://www.hospiceofdayton.org) or call us at (937)258-4991.

**Date:**  
June 21-23, 2013

**Cost:**  
1 Child = .....\$20  
2 Children = .....\$30  
3+ Children = .....\$40

# Journaling and Grief

Donny Marlow MSW, LSW

Have you ever felt so many conflicting emotions that it leaves you unsure of what you want or feel? Grieving often makes us feel lost and overwhelmed. The practice of journaling can be a very therapeutic process that helps us better understand what we are experiencing.

At its simplest, journaling involves exploring your experiences and feelings by writing about them. While some people use a blank book to record their thoughts, an inexpensive spiral notebook works just as well. Many people who find blank paper and a pen to be an intimidating prospect have found it easy to express themselves when using a computer. The first rule of journaling is that there are no rules. Don't be preoccupied with grammar, spelling or editing. It doesn't matter whether you are a good writer or not- no one will see what you write unless you choose to let them.

Some people may wonder what they should write about. The answer is anything that comes to mind-again, there are no rules. While grieving, it is common to feel a confusing mix of emotions. Among these can be sadness, loneliness, anger, despair and relief, to



name just a few. Journaling can serve to clarify thoughts and feelings.

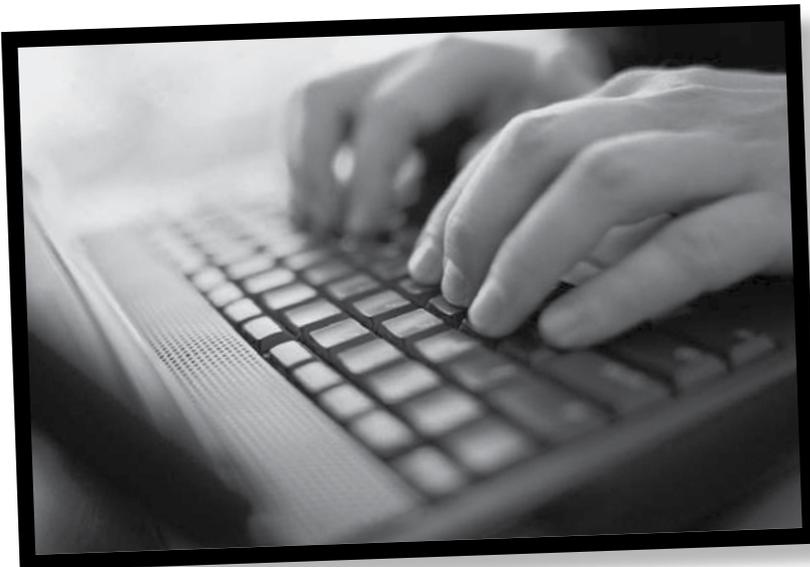
Challenging emotions such as anger, resentment and anxiety can feel destructive to personal well-being. They can also grow in intensity if we don't find ways to release them. Often anger can feel so debilitating that it blinds us. Journaling about these kinds of emotions can reduce the intensity of the emotion and lead to a more peaceful and calmer

present.

While most people are well intentioned in offering us their condolences, we sometimes find certain people and situations more comforting than others. Journaling brings us closer to better understanding ourselves and what it is that we need and don't need.

Journaling has also been found to be helpful in addressing the family conflict which can sometimes occur after the loss of a loved one. The action of putting your own words and thoughts to paper helps to create a pattern or trail of your journey. You may find after looking back at old entries, that you have found some resolution in things that felt insurmountable at the time.

How to start? Some people find that setting aside 20 minutes a day is a good way to begin. Others find that keeping a notebook handy for spontaneous entries works best for them. Whatever your preference, you are likely to be pleasantly surprised at the results of your self-guided journey.

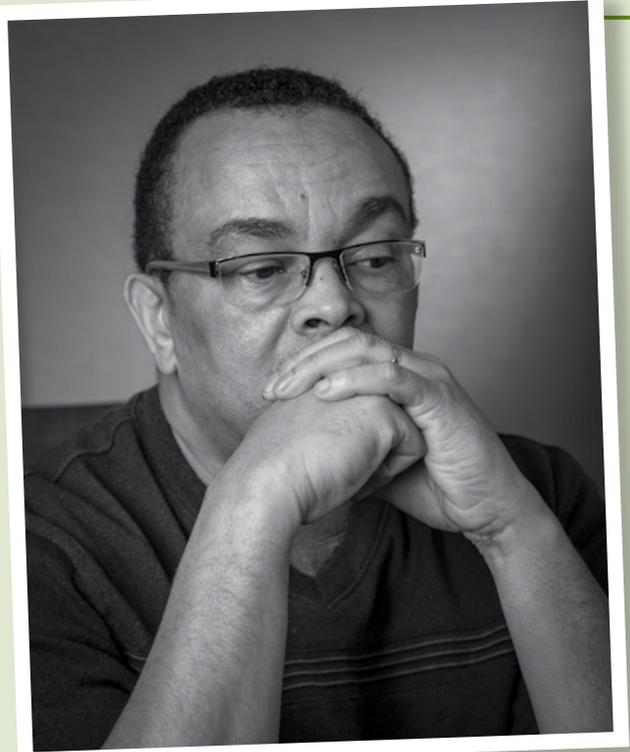


# Grief FAQs

**Q:** On several occasions since my loved one died, it has seemed to me that I could actually *feel his/her presence*. I'm wondering if others have had similar experiences but I am reluctant to talk about it, for fear of what others will think.

**A:** It may be helpful to know that many bereaved individuals have reported experiences similar to yours. Research has found that it is not uncommon for recently bereaved individuals to feel a strong awareness that their deceased loved one has been either physically nearby or emotionally or spiritually present. Some have reported seeing their loved one or hearing their voice. For some, the

experience may be difficult to describe, while others can clearly describe the encounter. Most often, those reporting such experiences have found them to be comforting and helpful.



*Hospice of Dayton Bridge* is published quarterly for families, staff members, and friends of Hospice of Dayton, Inc.

Kent Anderson, *President/CEO*,  
Hospice of Dayton

*Pathways of Hope Staff*  
Mary Gamage, MSW, LSW  
Nancy Gardner-Messer, MSW, LISW, CT  
Jonathan Haag, LISW-S, ATR-BC  
Deborah Holt, MS, PCC-S  
Donny Marlow, MSW, LSW  
Bonnie Orlins, MSW, LISW-S  
Brenda L Wolfe, MS, PCC-S, NCC  
M Bernadine Parks, MS, PCC-S,  
*Director, Pathways of Hope*  
Kate Hawvermale, *Office Coordinator*

The *Pathways of Hope* Grief Counseling Center at 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 Hospice of Dayton Foundation, 324 Wilmington Ave, Dayton, Ohio, 45420



Hospice of Dayton meets the Better Business Bureau of Dayton/Miami Valley Charity Standards



## The Griever's Bookshelf

**The Wilderness of Grief, Finding Your Way**  
By Alan D. Wolfelt. Companion Press. (2007)

Author, educator and grief counselor Alan Wolfelt, likens grief and mourning to a journey through nature's hospitable and inhospitable terrains. Using metaphors that are both tangible and visual, he discusses intense, difficult emotions and uses parallels with nature to normalize distressing and frightening grief experiences. His discussion of mourning as a process that occurs in stages demystifies an experience that is often difficult to describe. This book is a good choice

for those who feel lost or overwhelmed by their grief and may be particularly helpful to those who gravitate toward nature. His words underscore the message that, despite its sometimes painful path, grief provides us with an opportunity for growth and rebirth.

Featured books may be purchased or ordered through your local bookseller or may be available at your public library.

