Loss Changes the Landscape: Adjusting to a New World

“And tell me now.
How do I live without you?
I want to know.” – Trisha Yearwood

Your life has been forever changed by the presence of your loved one. You have co-created your journey together through good times, through hard times, and all those in between. Whether you had the gift of months, years, or decades together, those experiences, like photos in an album, will be forever captured in your mind and printed on your heart.

And here you are today, as your life has changed again, this time by the absence of your loved one. You stare into the empty space that remains and wonder what in the world comes next.

When people say that time heals the deep wounds of grief, I wonder if that has something to do with the nature of life. It pushes us to continue to grow and adapt, whether we want to or not. If our partner paid the bills, we learn how to keep a checkbook. We seek to understand who we are now in the world as we mourn our loss.

Throughout this issue of the newsletter, you will find a variety of opportunities for reflection as you continue on your journey. Whether you attend a group, watch a movie, or create a life map, you are taking that next step. As you travel, we would love to hear from you. How are you relearning the landscape of your life? Who or what has been helping you navigate this new world? What discoveries have your made?

Looking forward to your reflections,
Christine.Holmfelt@sluhn.org

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Grief & Loss Support Group
April 1 – May 6, 2015 from 3 – 4:30 pm (Wednesdays in Quakertown)

Service of Remembrance
April 12, 2015 at 3pm (Wesley Methodist Church, Bethlehem)

“The Psychology of Illness and the Art of Healing” with Dr. Bernie Siegel
April 22, 2015 at 7:30pm (Central Moravian Church, Bethlehem)

5th Annual Charity Bike Ride
June 6, 2015
Grief and Loss Support Group

This is a 6 week support group for adults grieving the loss of someone significant in their lives. Our support group provides an opportunity to come together with others who have experienced the loss of a loved one to share stories, offer and receive support, and find hope and healing. A group can offer both peer support and education and information about the grief journey. It is important that participants are able to attend all 6 weeks. Registration for the group is required. There are no drop-ins permitted. Please note that the group is subject to be canceled if sufficient registration is not reached. Space is limited. Please call for more information.

Quakertown Area
April 1 – May 6, 2015 from 3 – 4:30pm.
St. Luke’s Quakertown Hospital (Cafeteria Conference Room), 1021 Park Ave, Quakertown.
Call Christine at (610) 997-7132 to register for this group.

Service of Remembrance

We gather periodically as family members of our patients and as a Hospice staff to remember those who have died. Our Services of Remembrance are inter-faith and are offered as a way in which we may take time to reflect, remember, and celebrate the lives and the legacies of those who have passed from ours. The names of the deceased will be read at these services unless we are notified that you prefer otherwise. Please bring your family and friends and join us for this time of remembrance.

For patients served by our Bethlehem office and Hospice House and who died between November 1, 2014 and February 28, 2015, the Service of Remembrance will be held on Sunday, April 12, 2015, at 3pm at Wesley Methodist Church, 2540 Center St. in Bethlehem.

5th Annual Charity Bike Ride to Benefit St. Luke’s Hospice
Saturday, June 6, 2015
Lehighton Trailhead – D&L Trail
200 N. Main Lane, Lehighton PA

Whether you are a serious cyclist or a recreational rider, we invite you to join us for this ride to help create awareness and support for St. Luke's Hospice, our patients, and their families.

You will begin your ride south of Jim Thorpe at the Lehighton Trailhead, part of the D&L Trail. You'll ride what might be the most dynamic section of the trail. There are parts when you'll ride riverside, on the rail-trail, down the canal towpath, and even along paved sections. You'll see museums, an environmental center, the Appalachian Trail crossing, and beautiful vistas of the Blue Mountain, Appalachian Trail and Lehigh Gap.

Riders can choose to participate in a 15 or 30 mile ride. The 15 mile ride will begin at the Lehighton Trailhead and end at Treichlers parking lot (where shuttle service will be available). The 30 mile ride will be an out and back ride, beginning and ending at the Lehighton Trailhead.

No bike? No problem! Loaner bikes and shuttle services are available through Pocono Biking (for no additional fee). Registration is $40 per participant. Both rides begin at 10am.

For more information and to register, please visit [www.active.com](http://www.active.com) and search “St. Luke’s Hospice.”

For sponsorship or memorial tribute opportunities, or other questions about the event, please contact Lindsey Rich at 484-241-5451 or Lindsey.rich@sluhn.org.
Inexperienced as a trekker, Tom soon discovers that he will not be alone on this journey. On “The Way,” Tom meets other pilgrims from around the world, each with their own issues and looking for greater meaning in their lives.

From the unexpected and, oftentimes, amusing experiences along “The Way,” this unlikely quartet of misfits creates an everlasting bond and Tom begins to learn what it means to be a citizen of the world again. Through Tom's unresolved relationship with his son, he discovers the difference between “the life we live and the life we choose.”

*The Way* was filmed entirely in Spain and France along the actual Camino de Santiago. (http://www.theway-themovie.com/film.php)

**“The Mourner’s Code” (from Understanding Your Grief)**

Dr. Alan Wolfelt

The Mourner’s Code is a list of ten principles that are meant to empower you on your journey to healing.

1. **You have the right to experience your own unique grief.** No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do.

2. **You have the right to talk about your grief.** Talking about your grief will help you heal. If at times you don’t feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.

3. **You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.** Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey.

4. **You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.** Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don’t allow others to push you into doing things you don’t feel ready to do.

5. **You have the right to experience “griefbursts.”** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. It is normal and natural.

6. **You have the right to make use of ritual.** They can be important ways to mourn your loss.

7. **You have the right to embrace your spirituality.** If faith is part of your life, let it comfort you.

8. **You have the right to search for meaning.** You may find yourself asking, “Why did he or she die? Why now?” Some questions may have answers and some may not.

9. **You have the right to treasure your memories.** Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved.

10. **You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.** Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Be patient and tolerant with yourself.
Map of Life’s Journey
Nan Sell-Parry

Some of us are not list makers. We don’t read books. We are visual and love color and movement. We enjoy drawing and looking at images. So for this reason, we can be intrigued with maps – maps to a destination, maps as we drive or hike, topographical maps, Google Earth with streets marked. At certain periods of life, when we feel lost, making a Life Map can help us get our bearings. It is a simple and fun activity.

To get started with your map, get yourself comfortable with a big piece of paper and some crayons, markers, colored pencils, and a relaxed state of mind. You might want a pile of magazines and glue to cut pictures of the type of terrain you have covered.

You are going to make a time line of your life across the paper. Begin with your starting point and the then plot where you are now. You may be at the middle point of your journey or closer to the end. Maybe you are young person just starting out, but leave space for where you are going to go tomorrow and the months ahead.

There will be places that go straight uphill, places that meander around beautiful scenery and sharp turns. Make notes on the map for important life events and achievements. Note those places of loss and despair. Add the landscape details of desert, thick woods, mountain tops, cliffs, swamps, and dead ends. You can draw them or cut pictures from magazines to enliven your record. Use color to show the mood of that section. Show how the path changes from smooth to rocky. Note the rivers and streams you needed to cross and the bridges that helped you over. Did you have to wade through the water? Did a fast current sweep you downstream? What kind of weather do you want to include? How can you show temperature, precipitation, sun, wind? Maybe you want to put the sun in the sky to show how long you have been traveling. Who has been with you along your journey so far?

This is a map of your life so far with all its peaks and valleys. You can show where you stopped and rested or made a home. You can show the special events you visited on your travels. You can include people who have been meaningful teachers. You can use the whole paper or you can zoom in with a new piece of paper for a significant section of your map to give it more detail. You can imagine your future destination. You can include paths not taken.

We shape the journey with our unique gifts and activities. Our lives intertwine with others, which, in turn shapes our experiences. Each of us travels through dark places and to mountain tops. Regardless of the details you include, your map will be a unique, beautiful illustration of your life’s journey.

“An Affirmation for Those Who Have Lost”
James Miller

In the act of losing, there is something to be found.
In the act of letting go, there is something to be grasped.
In the act of saying “goodbye,” there is a “hello” to be heard.
For I believe that living with loss is about beginnings as well as endings.
And grieving is a matter of life more than death.
And growing is a matter of mind and heart and soul more than of body.
And loving is a matter of eternity more than time.
I believe in the promising paradoxes of loss.

In the midst of darkness, there can come great Light.
At the bottom of despair, there can appear great Hope.
And deep within loneliness, there can dwell a great Love.
I believe these things because others have shown the way –
Others who have lost and have grown through their losing,
Others who have suffered and then found new meaning.
So I know I am not alone:
I am accompanied, day after night, night after day.
Let’s Make Some Popcorn: Cinematic Resources for Families

Jeanne Dennis, Senior VP at VNSNY Hospice Care, writes that, “movies are as full of loss as they are of love, unspooling the human experience in all its dimensions. They can provide a wonderful springboard for conversation about all manner of emotions – including the complex, confusing, and often isolating feelings associated with the loss of a loved one. Movies can create a safe space for conversation, especially for families. It may be easier – or more accessible – for children to talk about what little Nemo (Finding Nemo) or Simba (The Lion King) is going through than what they themselves are going through. In fact, they may well not understand what they are going through and what the future holds, and it can be very comforting – and revealing – to talk about the feelings and the journey of a fictional character.”

Dennis provides some suggestions, as well as discussion topics and viewing tips, for watching movies with your family.

**Early Childhood (ages 4–7)**
- Finding Nemo – A widowed clownfish chases his son halfway around the world.
- Land Before Time – Orphan dinosaurs travel the ruins of their lost world.
- The Lion King – Following the death of his father, Simba, the cub who will be king, goes into exile.
- Up – A grieving widow and young boy become reluctant adventurers together.

**Middle Childhood (ages 8–12)**
- Bridge to Terabithia – Based on the award-winning book, a magical story of the death of a friend.
- Fly Away Home – Following the death of her mother, a young girl bonds with her estranged father by learning to fly with geese.
- My Dog Skip – A boy and dog grow up in 1940s Mississippi (spoiler alert: in the end, the dog dies of old age).
- My Girl – An 11-year-old girl is surrounded by death — and transformational gifts.

**Adolescence (ages 13–18)**
- The Boys Are Back – A young father and son go it alone after a tragic death.
- Hugo – Two orphans solve a mystery in 1931 train station.
- Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (mature teenagers) – A young boy's search for meaning after his father dies in the 9/11 catastrophe.

Possible Questions for Discussion:
Begin by asking the child to identify his or her favorite character and favorite or least favorite scenes in the movie. This will give you a window into his or her point of view. Some additional questions might include:

1. What does the main character discover about him/herself?
2. What good things happen in the movie? What new opportunities come up following the loss?
3. How does the missing loved one stay with or return to the main character over time?
4. What did you see in the film that reminded you of yourself or your life?

Viewing Tips:
- Be honest about the movie, and ask the child if he or she wants to watch. You might say, “This is a pretty sad movie. I think someone dies. Are you sure you want to watch it?”
- Select age- and stage-appropriate movies; keep in mind the child's age and maturity level. Watch with the child, and don't be afraid to be emotional when the film moves you.
- Get comfortable, perhaps pop some popcorn. Although the movie may be illustrative or therapeutic, it is, first and foremost, entertainment.
- Check in with the child, especially if you notice agitation. Make it clear that the child can stop watching the movie at any time.
- After the movie, begin a discussion in general terms. Did you like it? Who did you like best? Gently stick with your questions, but be understanding if the child does not want to talk.

Bereavement Services in the Community

This is a listing of additional bereavement resources in the area. If you have a need for something and don’t see it on this list, please call Christine at (610) 997-7132 for referrals to other services.

GriefShare Groups are a faith-based, evangelical approach to grief and loss. GriefShare groups are provided at various locations around the Lehigh Valley. To find a location near you, please visit www.griefshare.org.

Free Spirits is a group of more than 2 dozen older widows who go out to lunch once a month to keep active and offer support to each other—and to newer widows. Most are members of Church of the Manger UCC, Bethlehem. Call 610-866-8223 for more information.

VNA/Hospice of Monroe County offers a support group the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month at noon. Call 570-421-5390 for more information.

Lehigh Valley Health Network offers grief support services in the form of counseling, support groups, and workshops for adults and children, as well as a lunch club for women. For more information, please call 610-969-0330.

Grand View Hospital Hospice offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress, and Life Transitions and Grief Education and Counseling Groups offered by Wendy Littner Thomson M.Ed., LPC, RYT. For locations, times, or more information please call 610-730-1992 or visit www.givinggriefavoice.com.

The Compassionate Friends offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents, and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling. To find a local chapter, visit the organization’s website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on “Chapter Locator.”

Family Answers holds a Survivors of Suicide support group at 402 North Fulton Street in Allentown, PA. This group is held the first and third Monday each month from 7-8pm. Call 610-435-9651 for more info.

Cancer Support Community of Lehigh Valley with St. Luke’s offers the Hope and Healing Series. Call 610-861-7555 or email info@cancersupportglv.org for more information.

Thank you!

We’d like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all of you who have made donations from your heart as a way of expressing your appreciation for our hospice bereavement services. It is an honor to companion you on your grief and life transition journeys. Your gifts ensure that this service continues to evolve in meaningful directions to meet the ongoing and growing needs of our families and our community. Many of you ask for a telephone number for donation information.

You may contact the Development Office at 484-526-3067.

Again, heartfelt thanks.