Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke’s Hospice Bereavement Program

I was 400 miles from home when I received the phone call that my mother had died. After the funeral, my siblings and I retreated to four corners of the house to deal with our sadness. Dad took the box containing her ashes and placed it in his bedroom closet where it stayed for the next 23 years. We witnessed the pain that creased his face any time her name was mentioned so we avoided any topic that might pertain to her. Eventually our family stopped talking about her altogether.

Five years passed. I had just gotten married and my husband and I had moved into our first house. It was springtime and I eagerly anticipated all the new buds and blooms that began coloring the yard. In one garden bed, I saw thin green shoots pushing through the heavy clay like a field of drinking straws rising up from the ground. Slowly, these slender tubes thickened, the green leaves unfurled and tiny white flowers formed on delicate stems. When these bell-shaped flowers bloomed, I inhaled and immediately recognized this delicious scent. It was Muguet des Bois, the perfume my mother always wore.

In that same garden bed, I kept noticing an untidy tangle of small fuzzy leaves. I yanked them from the ground yet no matter how diligently I weeded, a few stragglers always managed to survive. Then one afternoon tiny blue flowers with golden-eyed centers defiantly burst into vivid blue blooms as if to say, “Don’t forget me.” It was not a weed at all, I soon learned. It was a patch of Forget-Me-Nots.

The smell of my mother’s perfume from the Lily of the Valley and the Forget-Me-Nots … Was this coincidence or something else? I strongly felt that my mother was attempting to communicate with me. I longed to remember the mother who used to spin cartwheels on our front lawn. I longed to remember the mother our family seemed to have forgotten.

Some call this synchronicity. It’s a concept first introduced by psychologist Carl Jung to describe events that appear to be “meaningful coincidences” if they occur with no causal relationship, yet they seem to be meaningfully related. It’s one form of after death communication that loved ones may employ. Every year when the Lily of the Valley and the Forget-Me-Nots bloom in my garden, I smile and remember the mother firmly rooted in my heart.

Jean

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. For death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity. Death cannot kill what never dies.

~William Penn~

August 2018

St. Luke’s Hospice
484-526-2499

Bereavement Team:

Jean Francis, M.Ed., C.T.
Bereavement Coordinator and Counselor
Jean.Francis@sluhn.org
(484) 526-2514

Dawn Cavanaugh
Bereavement Assistant
Dawn.Cavanaugh@sluhn.org
(484) 526-2499

If you would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, or if you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, please contact Dawn at 484-526-2499.
After Death Communication

Deceased loved ones may communicate with us in a myriad of ways, some quite obvious and others much more subtle. They may make contact to comfort us during intense times of grief following their death. Or they may connect as a means of signaling their continued presence in our lives. The following are some ways deceased loved ones communicate with us using afterlife signs.

**Music:** This appears to be a very common form of after death communication. Either a favorite song or one that reminds us of our deceased loved one is heard at an opportune moment or under seemingly strange conditions. Often the same song will be heard over and over again.

**Synchronicity:** These are coincidences often occurring in groups that signal to us something beyond the ordinary is going on. For example, you are driving and suddenly you think of your long deceased grandmother. In the next moment, you hear her name spoken on the car radio and you look at the license plate on the car in front of you. There you see her initials.

**Physically Occurring Afterlife Signs:** This contact can take the form of birds and other wildlife that behave in a strange or remarkable manner in our presence. It may include objects that remind us of our deceased loved ones or plants that grow or bloom in spectacular ways that we can connect to our deceased loved ones. People have reported having birds swooping down in front of them or even touching them while they were thinking of their deceased loved one. Many who are grieving the loss of a loved one report having butterflies, cardinals, dragonflies or other flying insects or birds follow them or behave in unusual or remarkable ways.

After death communication through **physical sensations and scents:** A few years after my mother died, my sister felt warmth and gentle pressure on her shoulders as she sat in church. She had the distinct impression that my mother was placing her hands there to comfort her. Others report feeling that their hair is being moved or tousled, a pressure on the bed next to them at night, or a brush against their cheek. Still others describe a sensation of warmth that spreads over them or a whoosh of cold air.

**Telepathic communication:** This involves a recurring thought, a picture that pops into your mind, a phrase or even a feeling. This form of after death communication is generally more subtle and takes a certain amount of belief and trust. In acknowledging this telepathic communication, our inner skeptic must be quelled to acknowledge the receipt of these types of signs.

I give you this one thought to keep.
I am with you still. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on the snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning’s hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not think of me as gone.
I am with you still in each new dawn.

~Native American Poem~
**Newly Bereaved Workshops**

Feelings and thoughts are often quite intense after experiencing the death of someone we loved. How do you handle the unpredictable nature of grief? Why do sudden sounds, sights and smells suddenly reduce us to tears?

Grief is often messy and unpredictable. And sometimes we need affirmation that we aren't going crazy. That’s why we offer the Newly Bereaved Workshop. It’s designed to help participants understand the emotional, physical, social and spiritual impact of loss on us. Due to popular demand, we’re offering more of these workshops in more locations throughout the Lehigh Valley.

The Newly Bereaved Workshops are designed for those who have experienced a recent death of a loved one. Each session will help participants learn about grief reactions and coping strategies while honoring the uniqueness of their grief journey. Preregistration is required. Please call (484) 526-2499 to register. Here is a list of the upcoming workshop times and locations:

**Thursday, August 23**
from 6-8 pm  at St Luke’s Hospital-Monroe Campus, 100 St. Luke’s Lane, Stroudsburg -18630 in conference room B (lower level).

**Monday, August 27**
from 5-7 pm  at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, St. Luke’s Hospital-Bethlehem Campus, 801 Ostrum Street, Bethlehem - 18015 in Room 102.

**Tuesday, September 25**
from 6-8 pm  at St. Luke’s Allentown Campus, 1736 Hamilton Street, Allentown – 18104 in the Wieand conference room on the 3rd floor of the east wing.

**Open/Drop-in Groups**

Open/Drop-In Support Groups are designed to offer continued support to bereaved individuals who have already attended grief and loss programs through St. Luke’s Hospice. Drop-In/Support Groups afford participants the chance to continue with supportive services. Groups are facilitated by a bereavement counselor but are directed by group members in terms of content and discussion.

We currently offer Open/Drop-in Support Groups in the following locations:

**Easton:** First Monday of every month from 4-5 pm at St. Luke’s Hospital-Anderson Campus, Medical Office Building, 1700 St. Luke’s Blvd, Easton, 18045 in the lower level conference room A.

**Quakertown:** Second Monday of every month from 6-7 pm at St. Luke’s Hospital-Quakertown Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, 18951 in the cafeteria conference room.

---

*Resources*

- Change
  - Worrisome, Fearful
  - Troubling, Anxiety-provoking, Disconcerting
- What next, What do I do, A new future, Full of possibilities
  - Promising, Adjusting, Transitioning
  - Hopeful, Optimistic
  - Opportunity
Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

This is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Please call the bereavement office at 484-526-2499 if you are in need of something more or for referrals to other services.

**Adult Support Information**

**Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center** – The center offers a professionally led monthly bereavement support group for LGBT people who have experienced loss. The group meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 pm. Please register with Ariel@bradburysullivancenter.org.

**Doylestown Hospital Hospice** offers a variety of support groups. Visit www.dhospice.com or call Celia Blum at 215-345-2079 for more information.

**Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress and Life Transitions** is offered by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Please contact her at 610-730-1992 or visit her website at www.givinggriefavoice.com to learn more about these offerings. Let her know if your loved one was a St. Luke’s Hospice patient.

**Grief Share** is a faith-based grief support group program. Several locations are provided within the Lehigh Valley. Visit www.griefshare.org to find a location near you.

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

**GRASP** is for families whom have experienced a death due to substance abuse. The support group meets at the 1st Presbyterian Church in Allentown, room 118 on the first Monday of the month at 12 noon. Please register with Jenny Kemps at 610-422-8490 or email jenkemps@ptd.net. A second group meets on the third Monday of the month from 7-8:30 pm. Please register with Nancy Howe at 484-788-9440 or email nancyhowe@ymail.com.

**HALOS – CLC (Hope After a Loved One’s Suicide – Child Loss Chapter)** is for parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced loss of a child or sibling to suicide. The group meets on the 4th Thursday of the month from 6:30–8:30 pm at Hughes Library in Stroudsburg, PA. Call to register with Alice Keyes at 570-236-1168 or email at alicekeys00@gmail.com.

**Lehigh Valley Health Network** offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

**The Compassionate Friends** offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling. Visit their website at www.thecompassionatefriends.org for more information or contact these local chapters: Lehigh Valley Chapter—484-597-0240; Quakertown Chapter—267-380-0130; Easton Chapter—610-866-5468.

**Virtual Grief Support** is offered by Dr. Don Eisenhauer. Don has a background in counseling and pastoral ministry and he runs monthly tele-grief groups and chat room support. Participants either dial in via phone or log in via computer to speak and share with other grievers. For more information about the dates and times for these opportunities, contact Don at onlinegriefcommunity@gmail.com.

**VNA Hospice of Monroe County** provides an adult support group to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one within the past year. These groups are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 12:00 noon—1:30 pm at 502 VNA Road, Route 447, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Please call 570-421-5390 to learn more.

**Pocono VNA** offers a grief support group for those who have experienced a death of a loved one within the past 12 months. These groups are held on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fish Hill Rd., Tannersville, PA 18372. The group begins at 7:00 pm. Call 570-629-1992 for more information.

**Support Information for Children**

**Lehigh Valley Health Network** offers “Stepping Stones for Children” for ages 6 through 17. This is a combination of education, activities and support to help facilitate healthy grieving with others who are the same age. Please call 610-402-7481 to register. The group meets at 2024 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103.

**Support Information in New Jersey**

Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice 800-882-1117  www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement