My Life, the Greatest Gift of All

By Kathryn Harrison Brown, MA, LPC

Grieving the death of a loved one may dampen the normal joy of the upcoming holidays, but many people want to continue with their usual traditions because they still bring comfort and enjoyment. Thoughts may turn to special gifts for loved ones. Much time and energy is spent choosing the gift, shopping, wrapping and finally, giving the present. While this is rewarding, consider the best gift ever given…the gift of your life.

Parents bring children into the world with hopes and dreams for them as they watch them grow into the adults they will eventually become. Hopefully the parent-child relationship has been healthy, loving and respectful throughout the years. That is the ideal but, unfortunately, not always the reality. However, as long as there is life, there is the potential for forgiveness and reconciliation. This is especially important to remember.

If a person has a terminal illness, there may still be opportunities for closing old wounds and finding reconciliation. Miscommunication is often the source of parent-child conflicts and, if there is a willingness to work through the problems, resolution is still possible. If there has been a history of abuse or abandonment this can be harder to do. For some adult children, it may be necessary to work through these lasting effects with a professional counselor. Or there may be a need to acknowledge the loss of a relationship that never was as well as to grieve over the actual death.

We do not get to choose our parents, but, as adults, we can choose how we think and react to them: Do we allow negative situations to color our perception of the world and leave scars for life? Or do we challenge our self-destructive thinking and make efforts to succeed, despite our history? Sadly, not all role models are positive but even those that are not can be powerfully effective in changing how someone reacts to their parents or children. Treating someone with respect and dignity, and being willing to forgive can help to reduce guilt and regret should that loved one die.

If the relationship has been good and loving, it is easier to be grateful for those who provided life and to reciprocate the love that was given. If the relationship has been difficult and damaging, there is still the capacity to learn and grow from life circumstances, and to recognize that perhaps the person did the best she/he could do, based on their own experience. Since there is the potential for change in each of us, there not only can be gratitude for those who provided life but also for the lessons learned from their example. Who will you treasure this holiday season? What gifts did they provide you? What legacy did they leave you? What gifts will you pass on?
For those of you who have experienced the death of a loved one, the impending holidays can be difficult. The glitz and jingle of the season can be overwhelming. First of all, be kind to yourself this December. Second, know that there are others out there who have experienced the death of a loved one and are also feeling a heavy heart this holiday season. You are not alone. Try to be open to feelings of peace and even some joy in your grief.

Welcoming in the New Year can be anything but welcoming when you are grieving. A new year raises questions about what the future holds and looking ahead can seem overwhelming. Some people who are grieving, however, find that the New Year is a relief and look at it as a “fresh start.” It may seem unreal that time has marched on. We have been used to counting the time since our loved one died in weeks or months and suddenly we are saying “my loved one died last year.” That can come as a shock. Remember that it is normal to feel afraid that your memories will fade: the reality is you will always hold the memory of your loved one in your heart. You will remember what you need to when you need it.

With this edition of About Grief, we are happy to highlight our partnership with HMC Hospice of Medina County. We are excited to be better together as our two bereavement centers provide grief support throughout the communities we serve.

We hope you find comfort and support with this issue of About Grief. We encourage you to review the support group listings and consider attending one. It is our wish that the upcoming year will bring you strength, hope and peace.

With comfort and support,

Diane Snyder Cowan, MA, MT-BC, CHPCA
216.486.6312
dscowan@hospicewr.org

Better Together.

Hospice of the Western Reserve and HMC Hospice of Medina County are excited to be better together as our two bereavement centers provide grief support throughout Northern Ohio.

A kind word can warm three months of winter.
-JAPANESE PROVERB

Mother’s Day Tea
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Saturday, April 30, 2016, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Felicia Dunlop 216.486.6335

Walk to Remember 2016
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
3900 Wildlife Way, Cleveland, OH 44109
Sunday, June 12, 2016
Bridget Murphy 216.383.3715
International Overdose Awareness Day was held this year on August 31, 2015 to remember the many people who have died due to an overdose and to educate the public on the growing commonality of this tragedy. A primary goal of this day is to remove the stigma associated with drug overdoses. This epidemic does not discriminate based on gender or any other factors. Everyone is at risk.

The number of deaths caused by overdoses keeps growing, surpassing the number of deaths due to automobile accidents. Every fourteen minutes someone dies due to a drug overdose. How can this happen? Why does this happen? We wrestle with many questions.

Grieving a death due to an overdose often leaves loved ones with feelings of loneliness and isolation. Some feel as if they are the only ones experiencing a loss in this way and may not want to share the real cause. They may feel embarrassed or angry when informing others about it. So, they avoid social situations or conversations with others. This exacerbates the cycle of loneliness and isolation.

To help yourself through your grief, however, it is important to find others you can connect and relate to — people who are also suffering a loss due to an overdose. At least, find people who are good listeners.

In addition, remember to take care of yourself. Do what helps you. Practice yoga or breathing exercises. Take long walks or fast runs. Listen to music, take naps, journal. Find your own rhythm in healing and seeking peace.

Also, it is crucial to accept the role that substance abuse played in the death. It is important to educate yourself and understand the addiction. This does not need to happen right away, but in time, this knowledge can better help you come to peace with the how and the why.

Become your own ambassador through grief. Guide others to understand how you are feeling. Grieving people will often say that others do not ask about the grief or mention the person who died by his or her name. Take the initiative and tell others what you need; “Today I am having a bad day. Could you just listen to me? I don’t want you to give me advice. Just listen.” Or maybe “I understand you are not bringing up what happened because you don’t want to upset me. However, I am always grieving and thinking about it.” We often feel we will be let down by family and friends if they don’t call us. Call them.

And, remember you are not alone. Give yourself permission - and the time - to grieve.

“Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope.”

ELIZABETH GILBERT

Grieving After An Overdose
By Stephanie McIlvaine, MSSA, LISW-S

TRIBUTE GARDENS AND WALKWAYS
Remember Your Loved One

The Gardens at David Simpson Hospice House and Ames Family Hospice House offer beautiful outdoor spaces for meditation and reflection. We invite you to add your own memory to the Vista Walk on the eastside or to the Tribute Walk in Westlake by purchasing a paving brick and writing your own personal dedication. For more information, please call the Development Team at 855.475.0245 or visit our tribute page online at tributes.hospicewr.org.
Bereavement Support Groups

Unless otherwise noted, our support groups are open to anyone who has had a loved one die. Groups are subject to change. Call to verify time and location.

Adult Support Groups

Circle of Hope Series
A four or six-week educational support group for adults who have had a loved one die.
Registration is required. Please call the facilitator listed below for more information or to register.

Ashtabula Office
Wednesdays, January 20 – February 24, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Susan Hamme 440.997.6619

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Wednesdays, January 27 – March 2, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

Lakeshore Campus
Mondays, January 25 – February 29, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Tensie Holland 216.383.3741

Lakewood Office
Mondays, January 18 – February 22, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

Mentor Office
Tuesdays, January 19 – February 23, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

Circle of Hope: Art Therapy Edition
A six-week art and educational support class for adults who have had a loved one die.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Wednesdays, January 20 – February 24, 10:00 a.m. to noon.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544 or mpostotnik@hospicewr.org

Hope & Healing
An on-going monthly support group for grieving adults. Registration is not required. Please call facilitator for more information.

Lakeshore Campus
Third Monday of the month, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
April Ratcliffe 216.383.3782

Mentor Office
First Tuesday of the month, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

Community Support Groups & Activities

Massage Therapy
Providing Comfort Through Touch
Stress is a normal part of life. As you move along grief’s journey, you may face many challenges. Massage therapy is a tool useful in helping to cope with stress, anxiety and fatigue.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
To schedule an appointment, call Felicia Dunlop at 216.486.6335
$25 for 30 minutes, $50 for 60 minutes

Yoga Matters
On-going Yoga Class designed for caregivers and bereaved.
Give yourself the gift of time and attention. The practice of Yoga helps you tune into yourself and take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Lakeshore Campus
Wednesdays, 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.
$40/month or $12 Drop-in
(sliding scale fee available)
216.486.6838

Hopeful Hearts
A monthly grief support group for anyone age 60 and over who has experienced the death of someone special in the past two years.

Holy Spirit Family Center
410 Lear Road, Avon Lake
Fourth Tuesday of the month, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

Who Am I?
Grief challenges us to take a new look at our roles in life. In these weekly groups you will Rediscover personal interests, explore new opportunities and identify support systems and tools to help you through. Come brainstorm, share and discover new ideas and resources with the group. There will be independent assignments most weeks.
Registration is required.

Westlake
St John Medical Center,
Westshore Professional Building
29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R
Thursdays, February 4 – March 10, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

Parents Together – Monthly
A monthly support group for parents who have experienced the death of an adult child.

Warrensville Heights Office
Second Thursday of the month, 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197
Parent Loss – Monthly
A monthly support group for adults adjusting to life after the death of one or both parents.

**Lakewood Office**
Second Tuesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
④ Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

Mindful Grieving
Open group, meeting monthly, for grieving adults who have experienced a loss more than six months ago. Participants in this group will learn body, mind, emotional, and relational practices to understand and come to peace with loss. Comfortable clothes are suggested. Refer to Sameet Kamur’s *Grieving Mindfully and Mindfulness for Prolonged Grief*.

**Warrensville Office**
Second Wednesday of the month, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
④ Mary Murphy 216.454.0399

Suicide Loss
This group is for those individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide. Grief following loss by suicide is complex and emotions can be intense. As a result, survivors of suicide share a common bond. Although each individual’s situation is unique, the feelings, emotions and questions asked are often similar. *Call to register.*

**Medina Office**
The Robertson Bereavement Center
Second Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
④ 330.725.1900

“*To Be Known*” Infant Loss Support Group
A six-week group for parents who missed the opportunity to know their child due to death in utero or within the first year of life. Join us “*To Be Known*” with others who can share in your sorrow, questioning and healing. *Registration is required.* Call for more information.
④ Mindy Stewart 216.916.5520

Partner/Spousal Loss Groups
Monthly support groups for adults who have experienced the death of a spouse, partner, or significant other. Groups are open-ended and on-going. *Registration is not required.*

**New Beginnings**
*Adults age 55 and younger.*

**Westlake**
St John Medical Center,
Westshore Professional Building
29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R
Second Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
④ JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

**New Journey**
*Adults of any age.*

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
Fourth Thursday of the month, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
④ Diana Battles 216.486.6364

**Horizons**
*Adults age 65 and older.*

**Mayfield Village Baptist Church**
6500 Highland Road, Mayfield
Second Tuesday of the month, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
④ Kathryn Harrison Brown 216.486.6331

**Lorain County Community College**
Spitzer Conference Center, Room 219
1005 North Abbe Road, Elyria
First Friday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
④ Laurie Mason 216.383.2222 ext. 1359

**Holiday Support Groups for Families**

**Holiday Family Night**
Join us for a special evening using art to memorialize your loved ones during the holiday season. Materials and light refreshments provided.

**Ashtabula Office**
Thursday, December 10, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
④ Susan Hamme 440.997.6619

**Trimming the Tree with Love**
Paint a holiday ornament for your tree in remembrance of a loved one who has died and write a personal message to place inside. *This workshop is appropriate for anyone age 7 and older. Children must be accompanied by an adult.* Call to register. Seating is limited.

**Medina Office**
The Robertson Bereavement Center
Saturday, December 12, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
④ 330.725.1900

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**Hospice of the Western Reserve Office Locations**

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
300 East 185th Street
Cleveland, OH 44119-1330
216.486.6838

**The Robertson Bereavement Center**
5075 Windfall Road
Medina, OH 44256
330.725.1900

**Ames Family Hospice House**
30080 Hospice Way
Westlake, OH 44145-1077
440.414.7349 or 835.281.5727

**Ashtabula Office**
1166 Lake Avenue
Ashtabula, OH 44004-2930
440.997.6619

**David Simpson Hospice House and Lakeshore Campus**
300 East 185th Street
Cleveland, OH 44119-1330
216.383.2222 or 800.707.8922

**Headquarters**
17876 St. Clair Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44110
216.383.2222 or 800.707.8922

**Lakewood Office**
14601 Detroit Avenue, Suite 100
Lakewood, OH 44107-4212
216.227.9048

**Lorain County Office**
2173 N. Ridge Road E., Suite H
Lorain, OH 44055-3400
440.787.2080

**Mentor Office**
5786 Heisley Road
Mentor, OH 44060-1830
440.951.8692

**Medina Office**
5075 Windfall Road
Medina, OH 44256
330.722.4771

**Warrensville Heights Office**
4670 Richmond Road, Suite 200
Warrensville Hts, OH 44128-5978
216.454.0399

**Westlake Office**
29101 Health Campus Drive
Building 2, Suite 400
Westlake, OH 44145-5268
440.892.6680
Healing Arts Workshops WINTER 2015 - 2016

Healing Arts Workshops provide grieving people with a creative outlet for their grief and are open to the community. No art experience is necessary. Call Mollie Postotnik at 216.486.6544 or email her at mpostotnik@hospicewr.org to register no later than four days in advance of workshop date. Suggested $5.00 donation for supplies.

Fabric and Feelings
A group where participants use fabric techniques such as quilting (sometimes involving clothing from loved ones) or photo transfer to create quilts, pillows, dolls and other types of lasting memories. Sewing expertise is not necessary.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Weekly – Thursdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

Ames Family Hospice House – Art Studio
Monthly – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

Holiday Family Nights: Comfort Bags
The holiday season can be difficult to negotiate when one is grieving. In this workshop, individuals and families can paint and decorate a large or small canvas bag which can be used to carry items of comfort to help them cope during the holidays. Please bring an apron or wear old clothes as we will be using fabric dyes. Light refreshments provided.

Westlake Office
Tuesday, December 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, December 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, December 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Snuggle Bears
One of the hardest parts of losing a loved one is the inability to hold them again. Create a Snuggle Bear using fleece and/or clothing from your loved one to help you feel closer to them. Give it to a child, grandchild, or keep it for yourself! (No sewing experience necessary.)

Westlake Office
Tuesday, February 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, February 17, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, February 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Monthly Scrapbook Night
Remember that scrapbook of your loved one(s) that you never got around to finishing? No matter where you are in the process or if you haven’t yet begun, come join us! Bring your photos (copies of originals is recommended), handwritten notes, poetry, etc. Scrapbooks and some embellishments provided.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
First Thursday of the month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

LGBTQ Art Therapy Event: Spirit Stick
This event is for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer Community who have experienced the death of a loved one.

Each person has a unique spirit or personality. In this workshop, create a Spirit Stick that embodies the personality and spirit of your loved one using driftwood, paint, embellishments, and love!

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Tuesday, January 26, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Letting in the Light
A tradition in Mexico and the Southwest, luminarias make beautiful decorations of light. Participants in this workshop will have the opportunity to make a tin luminaria to brighten the longest nights of the year as well as remember a loved one. A candlelight ceremony will complete the evening. Please bring a regular-sized hammer with you!

Westlake Office
Tuesday, January 12, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, January 20, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, January 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Kidz Art: Feelings Sculpture
Kids (ages 6 and up), bring your family members along for this workshop. Working with clay evokes emotion. Let your hands create and paint a sculpture that represents how you feel. We will be using paper clay which is light, easily manipulated, and air dries. Light refreshments provided.

Westlake Office
Tuesday, March 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Tuesday, March 29, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Grief is as individual as a snowflake.

HI, KIDS! WINTER IS HERE and it seems like everyone is getting ready for something…the bustle of the holidays, visits from family and friends, a break from school, a new year, the list seems to never end! But what if someone you love has died, and this is your first (or second or more…) holiday season without them? How do you handle it when it seems like everyone around you is excited ALL the time when you might feel excited some of the time, SAD some of the time, CONFUSED some of the time, then maybe…a little festive again? Or even some other combination of feelings that only you can understand? We have some ideas for you:

Ask a trusted adult to help your teacher understand that some classroom holiday activities may be hard for you – it may be possible for you to decide ahead of time how or if you will participate.

With the permission and help from an adult, light a candle and create a space for it near some special pictures of your loved one. They even make great candles now that don’t need a real flame!

Remember that it’s ok to feel whatever you are feeling. Someone you love is no longer here, and that changes things.

Share memories with others in the family, and tell stories about your loved one. Laughing and crying together can really help.

Create a special ornament in honor of your loved one.

Write, draw, sing and even act out your thoughts, feelings and memories. Some kids and adults like to keep a journal, or write letters to their special person.

Play outside in the snow. It doesn’t matter how old you are – you’re never too old to make a snow man!

Talk about how you feel with someone you can trust. Or don’t talk – sometimes you just need a hug.

Grief is as individual as a snowflake.
The Mourner’s Book of Hope: 30 Days of Inspiration

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PH.D

ian Wolfelt is the Director for the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Ft. Collins, Colorado. A renowned author, teacher, and grief counselor, he has written many best-selling books read by the bereaved all over the world. In The Mourner’s Book of Hope, Dr. Wolfelt draws on his personal experiences as a grieving person as well as his professional work supporting the bereaved.

Dr. Wolfelt describes how he was compelled to write a user-friendly, easy-to-read book that would help the mourner invite hope into their lives. He describes it as an “invitation to come out of the dark into the light.”

The Mourner’s Book of Hope guides the reader through 30 days of reflections and offers the author’s favorite quotations on hope and healing. At the end of each section the reader is invited to write their own personal reflection on hope.

This book can be read day by day or the reader can select a section they would like to focus on. Many quotes can serve as powerful affirmations. This is a small book of 200 pages that the reader can carry with them for words of hope and encouragement when needed.

The Mourner’s Book of Hope will remind the reader to keep HOPE alive.