Grief and Travel

By Mindy Stewart, LPC

The days are longer, a summer breeze is in the air, songbirds are singing, and grief continues to hang on even through the transition of seasons. It seems as though one ought to have an opportunity to escape grief just as people vacation from work or the busyness of life. Some may even think if they could just get away and focus on their grief, they’ll “get over it faster,” or be better able to handle the variability of its emotions.

Planning your first family vacation or personal get-away while living in this season of grief may feel just as daunting or heart-wrenching as planning a funeral. Emotions and opinions of how to handle past traditions of travel can vary just as much as the details of the trip itself. Grief also is a journey—emotionally and sometimes physically.

Traveling and purposefully placing oneself in a new setting can help break up the routine of mourning. Getting away can provide the time for emotional healing to occur. Depending on the months or days leading up to the death of a loved one, physical rest may be in order before any attention can be given to the emotional aspects of healing. However, burying your feet in the sand, literally, hugging a tree, submerging yourself in the language, people and traditions of a different culture, or feeling water lap up against your toes can bring restoration of the soul that only the act of travel can provide.

Whether you’re ready to pack your bags tomorrow, or still feel as though some time needs to pass before traveling, here are a few tips:

1. Visit a familiar location or explore some place brand new. If you can’t bear the thought of returning to you and your loved one’s favorite vacation spot, it’s okay to try some place new. This does not mean you are “moving on and leaving your beloved behind,” it just means you’re in a new season of life, and traveling to a new place can be an outward representation of exploring different emotions and feelings.

2. Go for a month or go for a day. Just as there is no timeline with grief, there is no set time frame for traveling. If flight arrangements or hotel reservations need to be made, planning ahead is necessary. But going to a museum and immersing yourself in a different cultural exhibit for a day can also provide a welcome “vacation” from grief.

3. Travel with a fellow companion or go alone. If you are grieving the death of your beloved travel companion, the thought of traveling with someone different or even alone may be stressful. It is okay to grieve this loss and create new memories with others you know or meet new people along your journey.

4. Consider a way to honor your loved one. Honoring someone can be as simple as going to a restaurant that serves your loved one’s favorite food – or releasing a balloon with a message. If you travel to a familiar location, create some sort of memorial site you can enjoy on future visits.

The analogy of “grief as a journey” may get old sometimes, but there is truth behind the colloquialism. Packing for, and going on, a journey provides unique challenges and perspectives, and can be helpful in navigating your grief.
In addition to grieving the death of a special person in our lives, many of us have experienced the death of a pet. For pet owners, animals hold a special place in our heart and life. It is natural to grieve when these treasured friends die.

The love relationship between pets and their owners takes on many qualities – companionship, comfort, security and love. When a pet dies, these aspects of the relationship are lost and the grief can be intense. Yet society often disenfranchises pet loss with clichés and unhelpful comments such as “you can always get another one.”

Pets play an important role in the family. Children often lay claim to the family pet – they feed, clean up after, and play tirelessly with the beloved animal. The death of a pet is often a child’s first major loss. Adults and older adults often have special relationships with their pets and the death of a pet can trigger grief reactions. Many hospice patients worry about what will happen to their pet when they die and only find peace once their pet has been placed in a home. Indeed, pets have become family members.

In April, we led a pet loss workshop and offered suggestions on ways to remember our special friend, whether “furry, feathered or finned.”

Here are a few helpful hints:

• Create an atmosphere where feelings can be expressed and talked about openly.
• Confide in someone who is an animal lover. They are more likely to offer an empathetic ear.
• Rituals can be helpful. It may seem silly to have a funeral for a pet, but it is often beneficial. Some pet hospitals host yearly memorial services. Design a ritual that provides meaning to you and your family. Remember to involve your children.
• Resist the impulse to replace the pet too quickly. Take time to work through your grief and loss before developing a relationship with a new pet.
• Memorialize your pet. With pets, as with people, poems, pictures, music, hugs, laughter, memories and tears will help maintain that continuing bond.

Please remember that we are here, providing comfort and support.

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Guilt

By Lesley Dials, LISW

Feelings and thoughts of guilt are a common reaction to grief. Guilt can also be one of the most challenging emotions to work through on our grief journeys. You are not alone with your struggle.

It is not uncommon for a bereaved person to wish they could have done more to stop the death. It is also not uncommon to wish you had treated a loved one differently before they died. This can be particularly challenging if the death was sudden or viewed as preventable. Sudden death prevents us from completing any unfinished business that we had with our loved one.

It is important to express your feelings of guilt honestly and to take the time to identify whether your guilt is rational or irrational. Rational guilt comes from actions that are directly connected to your feelings of guilt. Rational guilt involves having your actions directly cause harm to the person who has died. For example, a woman may struggle with rational guilt if she was text-messaging while driving and caused a fatal accident. Irrational guilt comes from actions that are not directly connected to your feelings. Irrational guilt is not uncommon for the bereaved. We did not want our loved one to die and therefore put unrealistic responsibility on ourselves to prevent their death. In irrational guilt we often are judging our current knowledge based on our past actions. For example, a man was feeling guilty for arguing with his son the evening before he was in a fatal car accident. His son was also not at fault for the car accident—but his father still felt guilty for his son’s death. The man felt, “Maybe my son would not have been at that location at that time if our argument had not occurred.” But the argument did not cause the car accident and the man could not have known about it in advance.

A supportive counselor, friend or professional can help you identify if your guilt is rational or irrational. To address rational guilt, forgiveness of self or someone else is the key. The woman who texted while driving engaged in many forms of “forgiveness work” including advocacy in her community to prevent texting and driving. Irrational guilt requires work to let go of irrational thoughts and feelings over time. The man whose son was killed in a car accident spoke with a supportive person & acknowledged that the argument did not cause the accident. He learned techniques to manage these feelings.

Identifying and managing feelings of guilt can be difficult. Grief counselors at the Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center are available to support you in this process.

The Vista Walk and Tribute Walks
Remember Your Loved One

The Tribute Walks and 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 these special places by dedicating a paving brick, stone bench or even a newly-planted tree in tribute to your loved one. For more information, please call the Development Team at 855.475.0245 or visit our tribute page online at tributes.hospicewr.org.
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. To schedule an appointment, call Felicia Dunlop at 216.486.6335. All appointments will be held at The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center.

Basic Fees: $25 for 30 minutes $50 for 60 minutes

YOGA MATTERS

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. Classes held at Hospice of the Western Reserve Lakeshore Campus. For more information please call 216.486.6838.

On-going Yoga Class designed for caregivers & bereaved.
Wedgesdays, 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.
Fee: $40/month or $12 Drop-in (sliding scale fee available)

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 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.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Wedgesdays, June 3 – July 8, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

Lakewood Office
Mondays, June 15 – July 20, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

Warrensville Heights Office
Tuesdays, July 7 – August 11, 10:30 a.m. to noon
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

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
Wedgesdays, July 15 – August 19, 10:00 to noon.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544 or mpostotnik@hospicewr.org.

COMMUNITY OF HOPE

A six week group for members of the LGBTQ community who have experienced the death of a loved one. Whether a new loss or an old loss, come for education, support and discussion in a safe to be you environment. Register by May 29.

Lakewood office
Wednesdays, June 3 – July 8, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

HOPE & HEALING

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

Ashtabula Office
1st Wednesday of the month, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Susan Hamme 440.997.6619

Lakeshore Campus
3rd Monday of the month, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
April Ratcliffe 216.383.3782

Mentor Office
1st Tuesday of the month, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

PARENT LOSS - Monthly
A monthly support group for adults adjusting to life after the death of one or both parents.

Lakewood Office
2nd Tuesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

PARENT LOSS FOR THE YOUNG ADULT
The death of a parent is the single most common form of bereavement. This is a two-week group for those in their 20’s adjusting to life after the death of one or both parents. Register by June 10.

Mentor Office
Two Saturdays, June 13 and June 20, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

PARENTS TOGETHER - Monthly
A monthly support group for parents who have experienced the death of an adult child.

Warrensville Heights Office
2nd Thursday of the month, 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

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
4th 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
Five Thursdays, July 2 – July 30, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

Mentor Office
Four Tuesdays, July 7 – July 28, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Karen Kincaid 216.486.6973

WOMEN’S WORKSHOP
For women who have experienced the death of a partner, significant other, or spouse. Come for discussion, support and education. Registration is required.

Lakewood office
Tuesday, June 16, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
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.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library
2345 Lee Road, Levey Room
2nd Thursday of the month, 2:00 to 4:00 pm
Mary Murphy 216.454.0399

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
2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

NEW JOURNEY - Adults of any age.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
2nd Thursday of the month, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

Warrensville Heights Office
2nd Monday of the month, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

HORIZONS - Adults age 65 and older.
Mayfield Village Baptist Church
6500 Highland Road, Mayfield
2nd Tuesday of the month, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Kathryn Harrison Brown 216.486.6331

Lorain County Community College
Spitzer Conference Center, Room 219
1005 North Abbe Road, Elyria
1st Friday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Laurie Mason 216.383.2222 ext. 1359

Children & Family Support Groups

Making Memories Family Day
Join hospice staff for an afternoon of crafts, sharing and memories for the whole family. Memory boxes, memory frames, and stepping stones will be available to create and take home. Spend time sharing your memories and stories with others while you create. We will close our day with a balloon release in honor of your loved one. All ages welcome to come and participate. Register by July 10.

Ashtabula Office
Saturday, July 18, noon to 3:00 p.m.
Susan Hamme 440.997.6619

For more information about the The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center and a full list of services, visit hospicewr.org/grief-loss
**KIDZ ART: BOTTLE CAP ART**

Kids (ages 6 and up), bring your family members along for this workshop. Create a mini landscape or other design in memory of your loved one using beads, charms and other small items arranged into a small or large bottle cap. Items are held in place by a clear-drying liquid glue and can be made into a pendant or magnet. Light refreshments provided.

Westlake Center for Community Services  
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145  
Tuesday, August 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center  
Tuesday, August 25, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

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**Healing Arts Workshops Summer 2015**

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

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**SHADOW BOXES OF MEMORIES**

Remember your loved one(s) by creating a three-dimensional shadowbox using one or more photographs. Participants will paint the shadowbox first; then small items such as pieces or bits of clothing, mementos or writing can be incorporated, surrounding the photo or photos.

Warrensville Heights Office  
Wednesday, July 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center  
Thursday, July 16, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Westlake Center for Community Services  
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145  
Tuesday, July 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

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**ART FOR RELAXATION: Landscapes of the Heart**

Painting a natural landscape can sometimes help reveal one’s emotional landscape. Come and paint a scene from our grounds on the lake if weather permits at our Lakeshore campus to express mood and feeling. If you attend either one of the workshops in Warrensville or Westlake, you can paint from a stock photograph or bring your own.

Warrensville Heights Office  
Wednesday, August 12, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

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**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.

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**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 – 4th Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.  
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

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**LGBTQ ART THERAPY EVENT Painting on Velour**

This event is for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer Community who have experienced the death of a loved one. Participants will use soft pastels to “paint” a flower close up à la Georgia O’Keeffe on velour paper. The velour surface holds the color so that the pastel dust is kept to a minimum. If you are doubting your ability to draw a flower, don’t worry—you will be pleasantly surprised at the result!

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center  
Tuesday, July 28, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

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**PHOTOGRAPHY AND JOURNALING GRIEF SERIES Words and Snapshots**

This five-week series is for those who desire a more introspective way to convey their feelings of grief for their loved one through digital photography and writing. Participants will need their mobile phone or another digital camera to take photos and the ability to either email or print them. Space is limited. Call to register.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center  
Five consecutive Wednesdays, September 2 – September 30, 10:00 a.m. to noon
When you lose someone you love it may feel as though your world has been turned upside down. Things may be completely different in your life or everything may still look the same but you feel different. Whether you lost a loved one unexpectedly or knew they were going to die, the world may still feel strange, unfair and unpredictable. Frequently one of the feelings that you experience after a loss is WORRY.

You may worry whether something will happen to you or someone else that you love.
You may worry if things will ever feel “normal” again.
   You may worry if you will ever be happy or even if it is okay to feel happy.
   You may worry if it is your fault.
   You may worry about the dark.
   You may worry about going to school.
   You may worry about the stomachache you have.
   You may worry about going to sleep.

It makes sense that you might worry, a sad thing has happened. But sometimes the worries keep growing and increasing and it is important to learn to slow them down. Sometimes we have to work on worrying less so that we can do other things in our lives and be happy.

Here are some suggestions:
• Think about your worry and come up with a sentence or two that will help you worry less. For example, “I am afraid to go to a sleepover because what if something happens to mommy while I am gone.” Say to yourself, “I can call or text mom anytime to check that she is ok and she will respond.” Then go to the sleepover!
• Allow yourself 10 minutes of worry time. Set the timer and list or name all your concerns. Have someone listen to you. When the ten minutes are up, stop.
• Imagine locking your worries in a box. Close the lid and place a lock around it. Put the box away for now. You can always come back to it at worry time.
• Do something to distract yourself, like riding your bike, throwing a ball, listening to music or drawing.
• If your worry pops up when you don’t want it to, pick a sentence that you can say to tell it to go away, like: “Go away, I am busy now.”
• Imagine you can brush your worry off your shoulder and step on it when it is getting in the way of doing something fun.
• Take a nice deep breath and exhale slowly.
• Shake out all that worried energy in your arms and legs.

It is always a good idea to share how you feel with an adult whom you trust and that you know can listen. They will help to answer your questions and help you decide whether your worries are getting too big. They can help you work to manage them so that you can continue to do the things you love and be with the people who make you happy.

RIDING THROUGH GRIEF
This camp is offered in collaboration with Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center and is for children ages 8-12 who have experienced the death of a loved one. Through riding and working with horses, campers explore grief issues supported by trained counselors.

Week 1: June 22–June 26 OR Week 2: July 13–July 17 9:00 a.m. to noon. Call Lesley Dials at 216.486.6702.

A three day camp for grieving children ages 6 through 12; August 4-6, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Red Oak Camp in Kirtland (transportation available from 3 convenient locations); call Karen Hatfield at 216.486.6042 for information and registration materials.
Go green! If you would like your copy of About Grief emailed to you, please send your email address to Diane Snyder Cowan at DSCowan@HospiceWR.org

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center is a community-based grief support program that provides services throughout Northern Ohio. We offer support to anyone who has experienced a loss due to death.

Parentless Parents
How the Loss of Our Mothers and Fathers Impacts the Way We Raise our Children
By Allison Gilbert

Journalist Allison Gilbert shares her account of experiencing her mother’s death from ovarian cancer; two years later, while raising her toddler daughter, she watches as her father succumbs to lung cancer. Surprised by her feelings and thoughts, she begins to notice a vast difference in her parenting style and needs as compared with her husband. She finds herself overwhelmed with feelings of jealousy, resentment and isolation.

This prompts her to conduct her own study of 1,300 parentless parents. Parentless Parents relates her findings as well as the stories of those who were interviewed. You will find comfort in their thoughts and feelings as only someone who is parentless can.

Gilbert describes the marital challenges faced when one spouse is parentless and the other isn’t. She observes how family dynamics change and can be misinterpreted by siblings. Readers will learn how she has been able to soften the blow of her loss and learn to focus on the moment rather than on her continual fear of forgetting her parents.

The author offers ideas about how to keep memories alive through purposeful conversation, letter writing, sharing stories, creating quilts, memory boxes and cookbooks, as well as suggestions for helping grandchildren to create a memorial for Grandparents Day.

You will find a story to connect with in Gilbert’s writings, as well as many helpful tools including a memory journal and reading recommendations for children who have lost grandparents. Parentless Parents will support you as you work your way toward peace in your loss.