When a Friend Dies

By Laurie Mason, MSSA, LISW-S

What happens when friends grieve over the death of a friend? Typically friends are not considered immediate family and are passive participants in the rituals after death. Most emphatically, society dictates that the friend’s grief must not seem to overshadow the grief of the family. These expectations can make it very difficult for the grieving friend to truly express the depth of their sorrow.

As in every death, the nature of the relationship influences the intensity of the grief reaction. The more close and valued the friendship, the more intense the grief will be. Some people are more devastated by the death of a lifelong friend than by the death of some individuals in their own family.

Men and women grieve differently. Men and women may also have different relationships with their friends. Many men seem to cultivate acquaintances that require less mental energy and self-disclosure than the new development of close friendships. Women often form rich social networks and utilize different skills to maintain and nurture those relationships. While there are no hard and fast “rules” for how men and women grieve, the outward expression of that grief may differ, and the death of a friend can appear to have a greater impact for a woman.

As a friend, you have a right to grieve, and it’s important to honor the memory of your friend. Consider returning to a place familiar to you and your friend and use it as a place of remembering. Share memories of your friend, particularly with people who knew him or her -- this can be very healing. Give time or a donation to your friend’s favorite charity as a way to honor your friend’s life and passions.

The death of a friend can be very significant, yet the relationship is not readily honored by society. This is why it is important not to be afraid to openly grieve the loss. Honor their memory and remember the life of this special person who so impacted you and your life.

Honor their memory and remember the life of this special person who so impacted you and your life.
It seems as if every few months there is a national tragedy where innocent lives have been abruptly taken. Schools, movie theatres, and malls have all been targets of unimaginable events. How do we reassure our children when their world view is shattered? How do we reassure ourselves?

Regardless of where we are in the world, tragic events impact all of us. Grieving over a recent death can make a person more fragile or vulnerable when a national tragedy occurs. It may really shake an individual or a family to the core. Some folks may feel resentful that their personal loss is regarded as less important and that all the attention is elsewhere. Some may even feel apologetic for their personal loss. Sometimes news of a tragedy can make an old sadness feel new. We need to recognize that all of our grief is valid.

What can we do as a family?
Allow yourself and your children to question why such a horrible thing would happen. It’s okay not to have all the answers. Reassure your children and yourself that this was an isolated event. While it seems to be happening with increasing frequency, it is fortunately rare. Find out about your school’s safety plan and emphasize within your family that the school and community is doing everything that can be done to keep everyone safe.

Be available to listen to your children. Allow children to lead the conversation about the tragedy and answer questions honestly in a language they can understand. Be a model for appropriate, healthy expressions of grief and sadness. Children learn from what adults say and do and what they don’t say and don’t do. Consider limiting media exposure and try not to have detailed conversations with other adults about the tragedy while children are within earshot.

Think about doing an enjoyable activity with your family. This is a way to redirect attention and let them know that it is still okay to have fun. Spring is around the corner. You may want to take a walk outdoors and locate the first signs of spring – a robin, a crocus, or new buds on the trees. You may want to design or plan a memory garden in honor of your loved one. Or you may want to just kick back and watch a favorite movie.

When tragic events like the school shootings in Newtown, Connecticut happen, it’s a good time to reconnect with family and friends. While it may be difficult, consider all your blessings and look forward with hope for the healing of the communities which have been impacted.

We continue to be here with comfort, hope and healing.

Diane Snyder Cowan, MA, MT-BC
216.486.6312
dscowan@hospicewr.org
To most people, the Healing Arts art therapy program offered by the Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center may seem mysterious. You may wonder how making art helps heal grief. In clinical terms, art helps to facilitate the expression of emotions such as sadness, loss, anger, guilt etc., and helps bereaved people come to a resolution and acceptance of the death of a loved one. An example of this is Joan’s story.

“After I experienced two losses in my family, I reached out for help and support from the Healing Arts program at the bereavement center. I started going to the weekly grief support group, Fabric and Feelings. I was interested in learning how to make a quilt, and had lots of ideas, but needed an easier project to begin with. I was given patterns to make stuffed bears and sewed together three that same day! It felt so good to start and complete a project. I made a large bear for myself and one for my daughter out of clothing that belonged to one of our loved ones. I made several other bears for people out of their loved one’s clothing, such as a flannel nightgown and dresses. With the use of various fabrics and buttons, each bear has a unique appearance and its own personality. Creating the bears out of clothing has brought me comfort and healing and has helped me work through the strong emotions of grieving. At Fabric and Feelings I enjoy meeting with other people who have also experienced a loss. I can talk about my thoughts and feelings openly while focusing on a project and setting a goal to complete it. I feel accepted and encouraged to move through my grief. My desire is to keep making bears, but also to start on making quilted pillows with a special photo transferred on the front.”

“I have also participated in other Healing Arts workshops and created a handmade journal, painted a candle, drummed for relaxation and then painted a mandala afterward. These are only a few of the many workshops offered monthly. I felt out of my comfort zone at first with some art media, like painting. I began with an unsure hand, making brush strokes randomly and feeling inept. But in the end the result was very pleasing. For me, self-expression through art therapy has been a beneficial strategy for coping with the pain of grief. The different forms of art, whether sewing, painting or crocheting, are healthy outlets for moving through grief. These are truly healing arts!”

A poem by Joan:

Memories

They can never be
Taken from me
They are mine to keep
Yesterday has ended
The funeral is over
The flowers have withered
My loved ones are dead
They are not coming back
All that remains is the Memories…
That is how I will
Keep them alive
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-Stanley 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 and bereaved. Wednesdays, 5:30 pm to 6:45 pm 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
Wednesdays, April 10 – May 15, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

Lakeshore Campus
Mondays, April 15 – May 20, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
Tensie Holland 216.383.3741

Lakewood Office
Mondays, March 11 - April 15, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

Mentor Office
Wednesdays, April 10 – May 15, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

Warrensville Heights Office
Tuesdays, April 2 – May 7, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

CIRCLE OF HOPE: Art Therapy Edition
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Art Therapy Studio
Six consecutive Wednesdays, beginning April 10 and ending May 15, 10:00 a.m. to noon. Call Mollie Postotnik at 216.486.6544 or email her at mpostotnik@hospicewr.org to register.

HOPE & HEALING
An on-going monthly support group for grieving adults. Registration is not required. Please call facilitator for more info.

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

Mentor Office
3rd Tuesday of the month, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

University Hospital, Geneva
Behm and Hospice of the Western Reserve Support Group
2nd Monday of the month, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Marie DeHaas 440.997.6619

PARENT LOSS
A monthly support group for adults adjusting to life after the death of a parent.

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

PARENTS TOGETHER
A support group for parents coping with the death of an adult child. Registration is required.

Lakewood Office
Mondays, April 29 - May 20, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

Warrensville Heights Office
Thursdays, May 2 – May 23, 2:00 to 3:30 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

BRANCHES OF HOPE
A series for adults who have experienced the death of both parents. This group will help you move forward while honoring your parents’ memory and identifying their gifts to you. Registration is required.

St. John Medical Center, Community Outreach Building
29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R, Westlake
Thursdays, March 28 - May 2, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383-3737 ext. 3440
Spousal Loss Groups

**MINI CIRCLE OF HOPE FOR SPOUSAL LOSS**
A four week support group for spouses, partners or significant others ages 55 and older. Registration is required.
**Lakewood Office**
**Thursdays, April 25 - May 16, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

**NEW BEGINNINGS**
A monthly support group for young widows and widowers (ages 55 and younger). This group is open-ended and on-going. Registration is not required.
**St. John Medical Center, Community Outreach Building**
29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R, Westlake
**2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

**Warrensville Heights Office**
**2nd Monday of the month, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.**
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

**NEW JOURNEY**
A support group for widows and widowers of any age, adjusting to life without their spouse. This group is open ended and on-going. Registration is not required.
**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
**2nd Thursday of the month, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.**
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

**Ashtabula Office**
**2nd Thursday of the month, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.**
Marie DeHaas 440.997.6619

**HORIZONS**
A monthly support group for the older adult widow and widower. This group is open ended and on-going.
**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 113
**1st Friday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**
Laurie Mason 216.383.2222 ext. 1359

**Workshop**
**GRIEVING THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP**
Workshop for adults dealing with the loss of a difficult/conflicted relationship. Light refreshments. Registration is required.
**Warrensville Heights Office**
**Thursday, March 7, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**
Vicki Jackson 216.383.2222 ext. 1197

---

Children & Family Support Groups

**S.T.A.R.S. (Supporting Tears, Anger, Remembrance & Sadness)**
A six-week support group for grieving children ages 6-12. While the children are meeting, there is an adult support group to assist parents and family members in dealing with their own grief. The groups are free and open to the public. Registration is required.
**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
**Wednesdays, April 10 – May 15, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**
Colleen Thompson 216.486.6316

**HELPING HANDS/HEALING HEARTS**
A monthly support group for children ages 6-13 and adults, who have experienced the death of a loved one. While the adults are meeting, there is a co-existing support group for the children. Registration is not required.
**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
**3rd Tuesday of each month, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**
Colleen Thompson 216.486.6316

**FABRIC AND FEELINGS**
A weekly 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**
**Thursdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

---

**Save the Date**

**Mother’s Day Tea**

For those who have experienced the death of their mother or mother figure, please join us for a Mother’s Day tea where we will honor the memory of those relationships.

Call Felicia Dunlop-Stanley at 216.486.6335 to register by April 26.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**
**Saturday, May 4**
**2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**
Healing Arts Workshops, Spring 2013

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.

ART FOR RELAXATION:
Gelatin Monoprints

We know that gelatin helps strengthen nails and hair, but who knew it could also be used as a printing “plate” for printmaking! Participants will apply ink or paint to gelatin plates and press paper to the plates several times to make unique monoprints. Gelatin plates will be provided.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145

Both Tuesdays, June 11 and 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Both Thursdays, June 13 and 20, 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 every month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

LGBT ART THERAPY GROUP

This group is for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender Community. Whether you have lost a partner or other family member, you are welcome in this group. Your loved one need not have been a patient of the Hospice of the Western Reserve. We explore a variety of art media and techniques.

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Last Tuesday of every month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

HOSPICE OF THE WESTERN RESERVE OFFICE LOCATIONS

DAVID SIMPSON HOSPICE HOUSE AND LAKESHORE CAMPUS
300 East 185th Street
Cleveland, OH 44119-1330
216.383.2222 or 800.707.8922

THE ELIZABETH SEVERANCE PRENTISS BEREAVEMENT CENTER
216.486.6838

AMES FAMILY HOSPICE HOUSE
30080 Hospice Way
Westlake, Ohio 44145-1077
440.414.7349 or 835.281.5727

ASHTabula Office
1166 Lake Avenue
Ashbyula, OH 44004-2930
440.997.6619

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

SUMMIT Office
150 Springside Drive, Suite A-100
Fairlawn, OH 44334
330.890.2240

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

hospicewr.org
“How are the children doing?” As a Children’s Bereavement Coordinator with Hospice of the Western Reserve, I am often asked this by parents, family members, teachers or service providers assisting the grieving family. “Ask the child,” I reply, “Be gentle. Be concerned. But ask the child.” Asking these questions directly serves more than one purpose. It can break the ice between adults and children in discussing grief issues. It also assures the child that the adults around them understand that they have feelings too. Most importantly, the adult can receive first hand information on how the child is doing.

When we know how a child is grieving we have the information we need to offer support. Remember however, that just because we ask does not mean we will receive the information we need at the time we need it. The child’s knowledge of grief, death and dying, like everything else, is growing and developing. We must be patient. We need to open the door for conversation and let the child know it will remain open.

It is also important to pay attention to the different ways children express their feelings and reveal their grief. I’ve worked with some children who don’t talk much about their grief but they make beautiful art presentations in honor of their loved ones. I’ve encouraged parents to ask the child about their art and what it means. One teenage girl created a playlist of songs in honor of her deceased mother. Some of the songs were her mom’s favorites and some were songs she herself used to cope during periods of sadness and anger. The song playlist told an awesome story of this teenager’s grief journey. There are children who are really good at sports. They use their competitive nature not only to blow off steam from the stress of grief but also to win awards and trophies in honor of their deceased loved ones.

As parents, older relatives and teachers, it is okay to ask children directly how they are doing after a major loss has occurred. Be ready to accept the fact that children will respond in their own way and in their own time. Be open and supportive to their expressions of grief. That is the most critical thing we can do for them.

A Child's View
Shavaun Jones, M.ED., PC
By Children’s Bereavement Coordinator

Together We Can
A three day camp for grieving children; August 6 through 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Red Oak Camp in Kirtland (transportation available from three convenient locations); call Karen Hatfield at 216.486.6042 for information and registration materials.

Bridges To Hope – May 17. For more information call Dominique Butler, 216.486.6287.

The Vista Walk and Tribute Walks
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.
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.

A New Normal: Learning to Live with Grief and Loss

By Darlene F. Cross, MS, MFT

Darlene Cross, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, working with those who are grieving, struggled with her own first significant loss before she decided to write this book. She describes it as offering “information that helps you make sense out of what you are thinking, feeling, and experiencing,” and offers “respectful and practical answers.” “You want a book that helps you know what to DO!”

This paperback of 86 pages explores how to make the grieving process work for you, the impact of loss by type of relationship, and includes questions, answers and the dispelling of myths connected to bereavement. The author focuses on normalizing the grieving process while acknowledging its individual uniqueness. Cross advises “take what works and pitch what doesn’t.” She introduces other newly bereaved people that she has worked with in her practice, sharing their stories and her interventions. Throughout the book there are “new normal” tips to help guide the reader. The book concludes with the author’s personal story of loss and her journey to achieve a new balance.

Reader-friendly and covering many topics, this book can assist anyone who is grieving.

By Tensie Holland, LSW

Book review