Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukah! ‘Tis the season to be jolly, fa la la la la la la la! For many “merry, happy, jolly” are far from the feelings they are experiencing at the holidays. “How can I be happy when I’ve lost the most important person in the world? How do I go on, let alone rejoice when I have nothing to celebrate?”

Getting through the holidays is as individual as our grief. When we experience loss, it is normal to be sad. Your grief may take more energy than you would ever imagine. You may have trouble thinking, remembering, organizing and making decisions.

It is important to communicate your needs to family and friends. Only if they know can they offer you the support you need. Family and friends do their best to keep us happy, but sometimes joyful is not exactly what we want to be. Maybe you’re looking for quiet time to reflect and remember, or maybe you would prefer to gather with specific people rather than with a large group. If you’ve been the one who organizes the holiday celebrations maybe this is the time to delegate that responsibility or ask for help. Comfort may be found in continuing old rituals—or this may be a time of creating new ones. Sometimes people like to bring out all the memories of the loved one—or sometimes it can be too painful.

It is important to make a plan ahead of time. Make a list of shoulds and wants and pick and choose what you want to do. This will eliminate the chaos and the last minute running and stress often associated with the holidays. Some things you may want to include in your list are:

• I predict that the most difficult parts of the holiday season for me will be:
• My support people (those who can hear my grief) are:
• The most difficult people to be with might be:
• These things may trigger my grief:
• Words that would be helpful for me to hear would be:
• Last year (or years), prior to my loss, I celebrated the holidays by:
• This year I want to include the following traditions in my holiday:

Don’t be afraid to turn down or limit the invitations you accept, but be gracious and gentle when explaining your need to decline.

Patience, allowing enough time for you to do and feel, and giving and receiving lots of hugs can be the best gifts of all. So instead of “happy” and “merry,” I wish you a holiday season of peace, comfort and love.
Now that winter is upon us and the days are short, I find myself thinking of my recent trip to Alaska. How would it be to live in darkness for 20 hours every day? The bereaved often feel enveloped in darkness. In Alaska, hobbies help them cope with the long hours of blackness, and during the nighttime hours, the northern lights abound. They are a beacon of hope, and hope can guide us through our grief.

While traveling, I could not avert my eyes from the Alaskan mountain ranges. I was especially drawn to the jagged-edged, raw-looking brown mountains, but I found great comfort in the green rounded mountains. The tour guide said that the jagged mountains are younger. In time they become more rounded, and greener with growth. I immediately thought of the jagged edges of new grief. And while time doesn’t necessarily heal, time does soften (or make round) the rawness of grief.

It’s easy to relate grief to climbing a mountain. The journey is hard. The slope is steep. But along the way there are plateaus to stop, rest, and take in the view before you continue the climb. When you finally reach the top you think “Ahhhh, I have arrived.” But then you see another peak, another valley, another pass to climb. You continue on your grief journey. With each new crest and each new vale you carry more experience and skills to manage the trek. The jagged edges soften as time passes. Grief doesn’t end but it becomes manageable as you carry the memory of your loved one in your heart.

Know that we continue to be here with comfort, hope and healing.

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

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.
How long does this grief process take?

By Kathryn Harrison Brown, MA, PC

Bereavement counselors are often asked, “when will I be over the death of my loved one?” Perhaps the question is the result of feeling as though the sharp, raw pain of grief will never end. Or maybe the question arises because well-meaning friends and family have asked “shouldn’t you be over this by now?” The answer to the question “when will I get over this” is NEVER. Grieving is a lifelong process, not a long-term or short-term process. This does not mean you are doomed to a life of misery and sadness. It means that grief will be part of your life history and become a part of who you are as you redefine the relationship you once had. The relationship with your loved one does not end because they are no longer here physically; rather, a new type of relationship is created based on memory, spirit, and love.

Memories are painful, but they are also comforting and beautiful. At first, memories can hurt so much, you avoid them as much as possible. You may put away photos of loved ones because the reminder is too painful. Or you may jump into one project after another to stay so busy that there is little time to think or mourn. Although these strategies may help for a while, eventually memories will surface as well as the emotions they trigger. You must acknowledge the pain and then the steps of healing can begin.

Be aware of feelings/emotions. You may feel pain, fear, anger, anxiety, regret, anguish, and/or hopelessness. These feelings are normal and may occur at different times throughout the journey of grief. Find someone with whom you can share these feelings. This may be a friend, family member, support group, or religious community. Talking with someone who thinks there is a certain time frame for recovery will probably not help. You may think something is wrong with you because you “aren’t over the death yet.”

Be sensitive to the suffering of others. Your own personal experiences help you provide strength and courage to others in similar situations. As you give empathy and compassion to others, you also receive this from them. People who share their grief, can offer each other the strength to face another day.

Allow the necessary time to grieve. Despite responsibilities, make your own time frame for healing which will discourage others from pushing you to “get over it.” Spend time each day setting aside worries to focus thoughts and feelings on your loved one. This helps you to understand that death is not the end, but simply one form of ending. You may find comfort in creating a sacred place in your home with pictures or objects that have special meaning where grieving can occur and you feel reconnected.

Let your tears flow. A good cry has many benefits: chemicals built up during stress are released; blood pressure is lowered; and heart rate decreases. Although this emotional release is healing, it is also tiring so make sure you renew your energy.

“The death of someone you love is so painful and tragic precisely because life is so precious. By hurting deeply, you are affirming the value of life.”

– Rabbi Harold Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People

All of us will face loss during our lives. It cannot be avoided, but there is a choice in how you respond to the loss. Hope, healing, and a renewed spirit will come in time but your life will forever be changed because of the death of your loved one. So when someone asks how long your grief will last, you can answer honestly forever...

THE USES OF SORROW
(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift. –Mary Oliver
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.
Wednesdays, 5:30 – 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.

Ashtabula
Henderson Memorial Public Library
54 East Jefferson Street, Jefferson OH 44047
Wednesdays, January 15 – February 19, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Susan Hamme 440.997.6619

The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Wednesdays, February 5 – March 12, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6364

Lakeshore Campus
Mondays, January 27 – March 3, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
Tensie Holland 216.383.3741

Lakewood Office
Mondays, January 13 – February 17, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114

CIRCLE OF HOPE
Art Therapy Edition
A six-week art and educational support class for adults who have had a loved one die. No previous art experience necessary.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Art Therapy Studio
Six consecutive Wednesdays, January 8 – February 12, 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 information.
Lakeshore Campus
3rd Monday of the month, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
April Ratcliffe 216.383.3782
Mentor Office
2nd Tuesday of the month, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Lisa Florjancic 216.383.2222 ext. 1052

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 – 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.
Warrensville Heights Office
Thursdays, February 6 – February 27, 2:00 – 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 – 2:30 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301
Spousal Loss Groups

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.
Westlake
St. John Medical Center, Westshore Professional Building
29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R
2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
JoDee Coulter 216.383.2222 ext. 1301

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 – 11:30 a.m.
Diana Battles 216.486.6331

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 – 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. – 12:00 p.m.
Laurie Mason 216.383.2222 ext. 1359

Children & Family Support Groups

KIDZ ART: FRAMES OF LOVE
Kids (ages 6 and up), bring an adult along for an evening painting and decorating a wood frame in remembrance of your loved one! Bring a story of you and your loved one to share. Refreshments provided.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
Tuesday, March 11, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Saturday, January 11, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Felicia Dunlop 216.486.6335

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.
To register call Felicia Dunlop at 216.486.6335.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
Wednesday, December 11, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Lakeshore Campus
Tuesday, December 17, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

WORKSHOP Managing the Post-holiday Blues
Feeling down after the holiday? Need a bit of extra support? Please join us for coffee and conversation as we share coping strategies for the winter months.
Lakewood Office
Wednesday, January 8, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Register by Monday, January 6.
Judy Beckman 216.383.2222 ext. 1114
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Saturday, January 11, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Register by Wednesday, January 8.
Felicia Dunlop 216.486.6335

Healing Arts Workshops, Winter 2013
Funded in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through Cuyahoga Arts & Culture

ART FOR RELAXATION
Sparkling Ice Crystals
These ice crystals are fun and easy to make. They will add wintery beauty to your holiday décor and remind you of the unique individuality of your loved one.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
Tuesday, December 10, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, December 11, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, December 12, 6:30 – 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 to remember a loved one. A candlelight ceremony will complete the evening.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, January 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
Tuesday, January 14, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, January 15, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Support Groups Continued on Page 6 >>
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 – 4:00 p.m.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

Ames Family Hospice House - Art Studio
Monthly – 4th Wednesday of the month, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544

FUSED GLASS PENDANTS
Make a fused glass pendant in memory of a loved one to wear close to your heart or to hang on your rearview mirror. At the first session, you will pick out pieces of glass and assemble them the way you want. During the week, the glass pieces will be fused. The second session will consist of selecting and attaching a cord and sharing stories of your loved one.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
BOTH Tuesdays, February 11 and 18, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Warrensville Heights Office
BOTH Wednesdays, February 12 and 19, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
BOTH Thursdays, February 13 and 20, 6:30 – 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
1st Thursday of the month, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE
ART FOR RELAXATION: KIRIGAMI
Kirigami is a variation on Origami, the Japanese art of paper-folding. Kirigami involves cutting concentric paper circles in interesting ways, then curling and manipulating the paper and the cut out parts to make an intricate 3-D paper sculpture. It sounds complicated, but is simple to make. The focus will be on the creative process.
Warrensville Heights Office
Wednesday, March 12, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Westlake Center for Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, 44145
Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
Thursday, March 20, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Children who are grieving experience conflicting emotions during the holiday season. Excitement about presents and parties is often coupled with the sadness of knowing they cannot share them with their deceased loved one. Family traditions may have changed since the death. It may seem like nothing is the same as it used to be or everything is too much the same, EXCEPT that their special person is missing. Children may feel jealous of others who haven’t experienced the death of a loved one. They may feel mad and not even know why. Sometimes when grieving children are feeling happy and having fun they suddenly remember their deceased loved one and then feel guilty or ashamed for their enjoyment.

Here’s a list of ten ideas to help children manage grief during the holidays:

1. Encourage them to talk about their feelings and express them to someone they trust.
2. Remind them to ask for comfort and hugs when they need it.
3. Suggest they write down how they feel, or draw pictures of their feelings, thoughts and memories. This can be in a journal or in a letter to the person who died.
4. Remember, children grieve in spurts. Tell your child that it’s okay to have fun when grieving. It’s even okay not to think about their deceased loved one for a while.
5. Encourage outside physical activity. If it snows, make snowballs and snowmen.
6. Light a candle and surround it with photos.
7. Make a holiday card, decoration or ornament in honor of your loved one.
8. Bake or cook favorite foods that you previously enjoyed as a family.
10. Volunteer or make a charitable donation in your loved one’s honor.

The holidays are different this year. Work together as a family to plan ahead and meet each person’s needs and wants. It’s good to laugh and love and cry and remember.
Often in my quest to find the answer that will take away my heartache over the deaths of loved ones, I will search libraries, bookstores, the internet and my friends’ minds. Of course, there is no such answer. However, I have found a number of resources that ease the ache, including Harold Ivan Smith’s, ABCs of Healthy Grieving.

In this book, Smith offers short and concise ideas for coping with grief for every letter of the alphabet. He encourages us to “Allow for individual differences; Exercise; Get a massage; Pamper ourselves; Quit urging yourself to ‘get over it’; Zest up our life” and to seek healing with every letter in between. For the letter “O,” he asks us to “Overlook the easy answers” by not succumbing to the clichés of grief such as “she is in a better place” or “he lived a good long life.” Smith challenges us to ignore these ideas which disenfranchise us from our right to grieve and to do the hard work of grieving.

ABCs of Healthy Grieving is a great companion for those of us who need daily reminders of our right to grieve, as well as reminders that grief is a normal response to loss of all kinds. Smith reminds us to “give grief its voice” and that your “grief print will be as individual as your thumbprint.” He exhorts us to “listen” to our hearts and to “allow grief to teach” us its lessons.

As painful as loss is, we can learn from it. Harold Ivan Smith is a loving, kind ally in this process.