On The Journey

There are many ways of coping with grief. In this issue of Grief Matters you will read about people who volunteer for Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice because they have had their own experience of grief and loss and so feel called to help others during this time. They find that volunteering is a way to help others as they continue to work through their own grief.

It might seem odd that doing something that may be difficult, such as working with dying patients and their families can be so rewarding. However, life is filled with contradictions. When we accept the tension that life is indeed contradictory and live into this knowledge, then we are able to live life more fully.

Living into the contradictions of life--facing the death and the pain that comes with loss--is the only way we can move through the pain in a healthy way and the only way we can work at putting our lives back together again.

We must not deny our experiences of loss. The loss of loved ones also means that there are many kinds of losses that accompany it; the loss of a relationship and companionship, the loss of family income, the loss of the contributions our loved one brought to the family unit, the loss of friendship, plus a myriad of other losses.

There may also be contradictions in how we handle our grief. This is ok. We may at times desire to be alone, not wanting to talk with anyone. At other times we may seek to be with others to share memories of our loved one.

There are contradictions from one day to the next; at some points along the journey of grief we feel at peace, and at other times anxiety may overwhelm us. At times all we may think about is our loss; what we miss about our loved one.

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Volunteers and Grief

When I tell people that I train volunteers to work with hospice patients, they tend to respond with a look of discomfort on their face. What does a hospice volunteer actually do? What kind of person wants to volunteer in a hospice setting? … and why? It’s true that most people hope to avoid the reality of this setting, whether they are the caregiver or the patient. But, if hospice care becomes a necessity for your loved one, most people are very relieved to find our caring, compassionate volunteers ready to meet their non-medical needs.

There are many reasons why someone would become a hospice volunteer. Often times, our volunteers have walked through the grieving process already, either personally or as an experienced volunteer. In a strange new environment, they know (and many have experienced) how comforting it is to have someone close by who understands and can provide a sense of peace, and practical support as they navigate this new territory. You will find that our volunteers consider it a high privilege to walk with someone on this road.

At the risk of being uncomfortable, they are willing to enter into a difficult situation in order to lend a helping hand to the patient and their family members. Our volunteers are ready to listen, read, play music, perform light housekeeping tasks, or simply be present to hold the hand of a hospice patient. They also provide peace of mind to the caregiver who needs to run errands or take a break from the daily care-giving role. Volunteers also may provide relaxing hand touch/aroma therapy, vigiling services, or help record a patient’s life story. Some of our volunteers are certified in massage therapy and Reiki. Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice volunteers are willing to make themselves available as a companion to the patient or as an added support to the caregiver during the course of the grieving journey. The volunteer possibilities are as unique as our patients themselves.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a volunteer for Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence, or Ionia Area Hospice please call me at 517-882-4500 xt. 34. I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions and help you experience the privilege of helping others in need.

~Pat Spreng
Volunteer Coordinator

Out of the depths and shadows from the bottom of a pond, the lotus emerges, untouched and unstained. Representing the purity of the mind and soul, the lotus flower is a powerful symbol of peace, hope, transcendence and rebirth. The lotus reminds us to strive through difficulties and that beauty and light can rise from the murky darkness.

The staff at Hospice of Lansing & Stoneleigh Residence invites you and your family to join us and learn more about hospice care in a relaxed, comfortable setting.

Our Legacy of Love information sharing sessions are held at Stoneleigh Residence

3411 Stoneleigh Drive • Lansing, MI 48910

Please note that the Legacy of Love is not a fundraising event and attendees will not be asked for a donation. Please call 517.882.4500 to reserve your space or visit our website at www.hospiceoflansing.org
To notice your joys instead of minimizing or discounting them is to become joyous. Notice joy, nourish joy, consciously take advantage of your opportunities to experience joy. Joy known over a long period of time takes you beyond yourself, deepening and expanding your mind beyond the boundaries of your disconnections.

Blessings on your journey,

Rev. Kris Abbey
Chaplain

Meet Our Volunteers

Joey is a Lansing native, proud to live in Michigan with its wonderful lakes and wintry temperatures. She helped raise her family of six and now loves being a part of the lives of seven grandchildren.

Over the years, she has been a teacher, a LaLeche League leader, a religious education director and a social worker, as well as being involved as a volunteer in numerous organizations. She currently tutors at the Eaton County Youth Facility. She also helps the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan via the Lansing walk every June. Joey’s hobbies include healthy food options, exercise, knitting and learning.

Her husband’s death a few years ago led her to get involved with grief activities. She is grateful to be assisting with bereavement support at our hospice. Thank you Joey, for all you do on behalf of Hospice of Lansing and Ionia Area Hospice.

Drop-in Grief Support

Hospice of Lansing/Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice offer “drop-in-grief support.” You are invited to call or drop in during these times. You may also call and schedule an appointment at your convenience.

HOSPICE OF LANSING/STONELEIGH RESIDENCE
3186 Pine Tree Road, Lansing • 1:30-3:00 pm
May 22, June 19, July 31
Donuts and coffee will be served.

IONIA AREA HOSPICE
Please call Kris, Ionia Area Hospice grief counselor to set up a time to meet. Call 877.882.4500 to schedule a time and/or for more information.

Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice offer free bereavement counseling to community members as well as to families who have used our hospice service.

On The Journey (continued from cover) —

one, how lonely we are, or how much we feel abandoned. At other times we are able to look to the future in hope, believing we will not always feel this way.

Naming and claiming our spirituality is important too as we live into the contradictions of life. We may not think of ourselves as spiritual beings as we go about our day-to-day lives. This occurs because we frequently associate spirituality with the practice of a religion; but whether we practice a faith or not, we are all spiritual beings.

Our spirituality connects us to something larger than ourselves; it enables us to find meaning and purpose for our lives.

It is especially important to recognize how important our spirituality is when we are grieving a loss; to connect with those things that give our life meaning and purpose helps to make it possible to have the strength to continue on.

Some might find meaning through family members or friends; important relationships with others that give us purpose. Some might find meaning in nature; a sense of connection to the majesty and mystery of our created world, while others find meaning and purpose through faith.

This is all part of the work of grieving. We must mourn our losses so that we might find joy again. In the midst of the pain of loss it is possible to find joy. As you continue to read this you will see this truth as they extend time, support and care to patients and their families. I would like to share with you the following quote by author Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.
Online Donations
We have made donating to Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice even easier!

Save yourself the time it takes to write a check and attach a stamp by visiting us at www.hospiceofLANSING.org or www.IONIAareahospice.org to make a donation. Please visit our website and make a secured donation today!

Grief Services Online
For information on upcoming grief support meetings and events, visit us online at www.hospiceofLANSING.org or www.IONIAareahospice.org.

Mailing List
Please call 877.882.4500 or e-mail kabbey@hospiceoflansing.org if you wish to be removed from this mailing list or if you want to receive this newsletter electronically. Please be assured we do not sell or share our list with other organizations or businesses.