

Grief MATTERS

MAY/JUNE 2021

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

On The Journey

There are many ways of coping with grief. In this issue of Grief Matters you will read about how volunteers find meaning in their service to patients and families. Sometimes, because they have had their own experience of grief and loss, people may 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 may seem odd that something that can 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 okay. 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, 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.

*Grief Matters is
published bi-monthly.*

Grief Services Online

For information on upcoming grief support meetings and events, visit us online at: hospiceoflansing.org or ioniaareahospice.org.

Mailing List

Please call (517) 882-4500 or e-mail kabbey@hospiceoflansing.org if you wish to be removed from this mailing list.

To view Grief Matters online please visit hospiceoflansing.org. Using the drop-down menu under Resources, hover over Patients & Families, then click on Grief Support. Scroll down and you will find the links to our most recent issues.

If you would like to receive a physical copy, please fill out the form on the same page, next to the links. Please be assured we do not sell or share our list with other organizations or businesses.

Online Donations

Donating to Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence, and Ionia Area Hospice is even easier now! Visit us at hospiceoflansing.org or ioniaareahospice.org to make a donation and save yourself the time to mail in a check!

HOSPICE OF LANSING
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Annual Memorial Service

Please join Hospice of Lansing, Ionia Area Hospice, and Stoneleigh Residence for our 2021 Memorial Service, **Monday, May 24th** at 7:00 pm.

You will be able to participate in this service from your own home via Zoom online. To access the service please download the Zoom App or access Zoom on your web browser. Please join us for readings, music and the reading of names. To register and to request a name to be read aloud please call (517) 882-4500 or email kabbey@hospiceoflansing.org by Wed., May 19.

Please follow the link below to join us that evening.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5178824500>

On The Journey

(Continued from cover)

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. I would like to share with you the following quote by author Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

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, Grief Counselor

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 privilege to walk with someone on this road.

Please Note: During this time of pandemic we are unable to utilize our volunteers. However, we will in the future.

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 ext. 2027. I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions and help you experience the privilege of helping others in need.

Tracie Yurkinas
Volunteer Coordinator

Hospice of Lansing/Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice offer free bereavement counseling to community members and families who have used our hospice service. Please call for grief support.

Hospice of Lansing/Stoneleigh Residence 877.882.4500 or 517.882.4500	Ionia Area Hospice 877.882.4500 or 616.527.0681
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Grief During COVID

“I can’t get rid of the thoughts that I didn’t do enough before he died”; “I see her sitting at the window waiting for me”; “I should have been more insistent on better answers”; “I just want to sleep at night.”

As part of the bereavement support team at Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice I have heard many people express these thoughts and worries, especially during this past year of COVID.

These have always been familiar concerns that those of us helping with bereavement have heard, but nothing like this year. This year the concerns are not letting up, they are persisting for months. Understanding what’s happening won’t erase these issues, but it can give some peace of mind and perhaps some thoughts for how to cope.

We all have a basic capacity to endure stress and loss, but this year has been a perfect storm for unrelenting stressors and anxiety due to the coronavirus pandemic. While our vulnerabilities have increased, our reserves have decreased. We are already under stress, so with bereavement we may become overwhelmed. We are not weak, deficient or crazy, we are on overload.

Research shows that being socially isolated magnifies the grieving process by limiting our ability to release many of our emotions. How much comfort have you received this year from hugs and chatting with people over coffee? Think of how often physical contact makes up for a loss of words when someone’s grieving. Even when we are able to be with people, it’s difficult to read emotions because of masks coverings.

Technology certainly can help to reach out to people, but we know it’s not the same.

The lack of rituals and routines also has an effect. Funerals and memorial services help us process our grief. The inability to hold these important rituals to honor our loved one adds to the weight of our grief. But grief does not have a timeline. Whenever we are able to gather with family and friends again and have the funeral or memorial service, we will still find it to be a healing time.

In the meantime, we can create our own kind of ritual: setting time apart to light a candle, sitting quietly to reflect or listen to music, having a cup of coffee and remembering special times with our loved one, journaling our thoughts and feelings, or whatever you discover that brings comfort.

The structure of our lives have changed, because of COVID or because the person we loved or were taking care of has died. This leads to a loss of routine, we have less to hold onto. During this pandemic our daily lives have changed and there are few certainties we can count on. Most of this has been out of our control, so it’s important to put some framework back into our day.

While guilt is often a part of grief, it seems to be more so during COVID. We question, self-blame and ruminate in the “*what if’s?*” When we do this we often take on responsibility for something that is beyond our control. With time, as we process and work through these thoughts they often get resolved, but right now, during this pandemic, it is taking longer.

Grieving is hard work at any time. But it is especially difficult now. What helps is being open to whatever emotions we are experiencing.

You are strong enough to do this. You have already shown how many challenges you can live through. Thinking about them does not create them, the challenges, the feelings, the fears are already there. They are part of being a living, breathing human being. Emotions like guilt, fear, misery... don’t feel good, but you won’t break. It is also important to embrace the good feeling and emotions, too, like joy and gratitude. They might be missing now, but they’ll show up - at their own pace.

We are filled with resilience and courage, even if we do not recognize it. Mary Ann Radmacher, (workshop leader for a balanced life) says, “Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”

Joey L.
Bereavement Support Volunteer