

Grief MATTERS

MAY/JUNE 2023

*“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 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 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 embrace this knowledge, then we are able to live life more fully.

Living with 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 or ioniaareahospice.org. Click on “Grief Support” at the top left of the page. Scroll down and you will find the links to the 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!

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Annual Memorial Service

Notice change of date

Please join us for our Annual Memorial Service, **Tuesday, May 30, 2023, 2:00–3:30 pm** at Hospice of Lansing main office, 3186 Pine Tree Rd., Lansing, MI 48911.

This will be a time of readings, music, and reading of names. To register and/or request a name to be read please register by **May 25** by calling Hospice of Lansing (517) 882-4500.

On The Journey

(Continued from cover)

Naming and claiming our spirituality is important too as we face 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. Connecting 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 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. They know how comforting it is to have someone close by who understands and who can provide a sense of peace and practical support. You will find that our volunteers consider it a privilege to walk with someone on this road.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a volunteer for Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence, or Ionia Area Hospice please call 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. For grief support please call

**Hospice of Lansing/
Stoneleigh Residence**
877.882.4500 or
517.882.4500

Ionia Area Hospice
877.882.4500 or
616.527.0681

Thoughts from a Grief Volunteer

As part of the bereavement support team of Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice I have heard many people express thoughts of sadness, worries and regrets.

We all have a basic capacity to endure stress and loss. However when we are grieving, it feels like our vulnerabilities have increased and our reserves have decreased. We are under stress due to intense loss. We may become overwhelmed and exhausted; we may feel like we are weak and crazy because we no longer can concentrate or remember those things that need doing.

Guilt is often part of grief. We question the care we gave our loved one, wondering if we did enough or should have done something differently. 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.

Grieving is hard work at any time. 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 remember to embrace the good feelings and emotions, like joy and gratitude. They might be missing now, but they will 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

Reducing Stress and Worry

Ever notice that the harder you try to stop worrying about something the more you worry about it?

When we keep ruminating on something it is helpful to find ways to counteract those thoughts. Here are some ideas that might be helpful.

Stop and observe the thought. Don't judge it, just observe it. For example, you might be thinking, "I feel so bad that I didn't tell them I loved them enough." This is a thought; it might be true, or it might not be true. But it is the thought you keep having. Instead of trying to control it, just let it come and then let it go. Imagine, for example, seeing this thought in a cloud that floats by, in a car driving down the road, or in a balloon that disappears up into the sky. Just see it and then let it go.

Writing our thoughts in a journal may also be helpful. It is a way to get them out of our heads. We can respond to those thoughts by continuing to journal.

If our thoughts keep coming back, pair the thought with a specific time to focus on it. Perhaps saying, "Ok, I see you, but now is not a good time." Then imagine putting it in a drawer until a more manageable time to deal with it.

Engaging in activities you enjoy can bring moments of relief from those ruminating thoughts. Consider restarting activities you may have put on hold, whether it is a daily walk, listening to music, having lunch with a friend, working a crossword puzzle, or shopping for fabric for that next project.

Meditation is another technique that may be helpful in dealing with ruminating thoughts as it can help us observe our thoughts and then intentionally let them go.

(Adapted from "What's Your Grief?" by Eleanor Haley, MS and Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C.)

There may be times in your journey when you need additional support. Speaking with a grief counselor, joining a grief support group or seeking out a therapist may be helpful. Please remember that Hospice of Lansing, Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice provide grief counseling. Don't hesitate to reach out to us.