Hospice of Lansing
Ionia Area Hospice
Stoneleigh Residence
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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 **nmathe@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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Grief MATTERS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER **2024**

On The Journey

The holidays are times spent with our loved ones." This is the way humans function. It's a tradition that we have enjoyed since childhood. We look back at children running around the Christmas tree, opening presents and feeling the joy of the season; or children lighting the menorah candles, playing dreidel and eating traditional foods; or families talking about traditions, dancing traditional dances, eating traditional foods and giving gifts. Holidays give us a chance to laugh, love, celebrate and even argue. For a short time, family and loved ones become the most important part of our lives.

When we lose a loved one, holidays can become difficult, even to the point that we want to cancel any celebration. There are ways to include your loved one in the celebration: set a place at the table; share stories (tape record them) about the loved one; set out a journal so folks can write a remembrance note.

Another way to get through the holidays is to start a new tradition: take a trip; celebrate at a restaurant; work at a homeless shelter by feeding the hungry; hand out blankets to the homeless; find a friend who is alone and share the holiday with them.

Remember, the need for support may be the greatest during the holidays. Pretending we don't hurt or it isn't a harder time of the year is just not the truth. You can – and will – get through the holidays. Rather than avoiding the feelings of grief, lean into them. It is not the grief you want to avoid, it is the pain. No one can take that pain away, but grief is not just pain, grief is love, tears release the tension, and remembering can bring a smile.

Nanette Mathe

Nanette Mathe

Chaplain, Bereavement Coordinator

We remember them

In the rising of the sun and in it's going down,
we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.
In the warmth of the sun and the peace of summer,
we remember them.
In the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.

A Jewish Remembrance

On Coming Alive: Journaling Through Grief

Allowing Yourself to Feel

Don't be afraid to feel. Feel pain, feel joy, feel love, feel anger, feel excitement or happiness. Feeling is good, and sometimes, after going through the hardest parts of life, we have to remind ourselves to stop ducking for cover, to stop wincing and grimacing, afraid to feel because we are afraid to break. If you are there, take a step today and let yourself feel something. It might be scary at first, it might hurt a little, but the whole thing about coming alive doesn't mean that you won't feel pain. It simply opens your heart to joy as well. What are your feelings right now? Take a minute to tap into them, to ask yourself how you're really doing beneath the surface and write it out.

"In every heart is an inner room, where we can hold our greatest treasures and our deepest pain."

M. WILLIAMSON

"Grief is not about relinquishing our relationship with the deceased, but about finding ways to stay connected."

THERESE A. RANDO
AUTHOR OF "HOW TO GO ON LIVING WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES"

"And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our feet, and learn to be at home."

WENDELL BERRY

Getting Through the Holidays after the Loss of a Loved One

The first Thanksgiving, the first Christmas, the first birthday and all other firsts without your loved one may be very difficult. There is no way to avoid the memories and the accompanying grief that these times call up.

For most of us holidays are full of traditions: "We always went to Mom's on Thanksgiving." "Harry always decorated the tree and lit it on Christmas Eve." "We always went to Coral Gables on our anniversary because she loved their bread pudding." These memories will forever be sacred AND painful. They are signs that our relationship with our deceased loved one was meaningful and real. They are signs that our love does not end when a life ends.

Holidays, like losses, cannot be avoided. Sometimes our grief feels unbearable and we may try to escape the pain. The key is to try to find a balance.

What is helpful for one may not be so for another. You may want to experiment with different ways to cope with the holidays; different ways to face the empty chair, allowing your grief to be a part of the occasion. Some people want to be alone. Some want to be with someone they feel close to. You may want to start a new ritual to acknowledge your loss and celebrate your love that lives on. Something as simple as lighting a candle and saying:

"On this day I remember _____ and give thanks for the time we had together."

Whatever choices you make; remember to be kind to yourself. Respect your needs. You may want to be with others or you may want to be alone. Take note of what feels right for you even if others make suggestions that they think you should follow.

Honor where you are. This may be the year that you don't celebrate the holidays even though it seems everyone else is in a joyful mood. This may be the year you help serve Christmas dinner at a homeless shelter, or just stay home and write a letter to your loved one who is no longer with you.

You are welcome to call Hospice of Lansing & Stoneleigh Residence and Ionia Area Hospice with any questions or concerns or if you need someone to talk to about what you are experiencing. Bereavement support if offered free to the community as well as to those who have used our hospice service. Please call (517) 882-4500 for (877) 882-4500 for more information.

Legend of the Lotus

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.