



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY



Howard Travers,
Bereavement
Care Manager

The “weight” of the world feels heavy for most of us right now, but for those in grief, the crisis of COVID-19 can double the distress. Winter’s shorter, colder days may complicate the anguish even more. That is why I believe it is critical to have what I call a “Grief Plan” - an acknowledgement of your loss and pain, coupled with ways to manage your grief, especially during this time.

Here are five elements I believe are critical when creating a Grief Plan:

- 1) **Acknowledge the pain and give yourself permission to grieve.** You have to pass through your grief in order to truly heal. Remind yourself that what you’re feeling is normal and talk about those feelings with someone you trust, on the telephone, over a Facetime chat, or through another virtual platform.
- 2) **Acknowledge that your grief work takes time.** Grief does not last forever, but even in the best cases, it takes time. Everyone grieves differently and at a different pace. Be patient with yourself and learn to let go of any feelings of shame or guilt you may have in the grieving process.
- 3) **Find creative ways to mourn.** There are countless ways to honor the life of your loved one and express your grief emotions. You might make your loved one’s favorite meal; plant a tree in his/her honor; fill a memory box; decorate a memory board with things that remind you of him / her; write a story about a



particular memory; or compose a “goodbye letter.” Journaling is also a great way to release deep feelings associated with pain and loss.

- 4) While it may be hard to do right now, **take good care of yourself.** Make that appointment you’ve been putting off to see your primary physician. In doing so, be certain to

notify him/her of your recent loss. Report too what you’re experiencing, especially if it is interrupting your sleep pattern, appetite, or other activities of daily living. While there, get a flu shot. Practicing good self-care during this time is critical. Proper rest, diet, and exercise are never more important than when we experience cycles of emotional distress. Be certain to also observe COVID-19 protocols. While in the public, wear a face mask and social distance. Observing the basics may trigger other emotions but practicing healthy self-care, especially during COVID-19 and the Flu Season benefits you and everyone.

- 5) **Attend a Coastal Hospice Grief Support Group online.** Utilizing the Zoom platform, many of our weekly group participants find this a helpful way to share their stories and their grief journey with one of our Bereavement Counselors and others who are experiencing life differently after a loss.

We’re here for you too. Our grief support services are open to anyone, whether having a loved one served under our care or not. Visit our website (www.coastalhospice.org) or contact our Bereavement Department at (410) 742-8732 x 612 to learn more.

Give Yourself the Gift of Choice This Holiday Season

by Jennifer Stern



Remember your loved one:

- Share stories.
- Go through pictures of treasured memories.
- Make ornaments with photographs of your loved one.
- Light candles and say a prayer in their honor.
- Make their favorite foods.
- Listen to their favorite music.
- Create a memory box: have each family member write down a memory on a piece of paper, read it out loud and then put it in the box. Each year you can add more memories while sharing memories from the years before.

Or don't.

If remembering your loved one feels like too much, if it is just too painful, then choose instead to focus on remembering yourself:

- Make your favorite foods.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Watch your favorite movie or shows.
- Write holiday wishes for yourself about how you hope to feel next year at this time.
- Make resolutions for yourself, for your healing.
- Gift yourself faith in yourself, in your healing, in your ability to endure the deep pain of grief while nurturing and caring for yourself.
- Be kind to yourself.

Choose to honor what feels right for you. There are no rules.

After my Mom died, I chose to honor the traditions of my family while adding some new. Honoring the traditions of my childhood after my Mom died felt comforting and in some ways empowering knowing that I was carrying on our family traditions in strength, in memory, in sorrow, in love, in the powerful knowing that my memories of holidays past would guide me to create more memories, different memories, new memories as I continue to live and celebrate life. I make an annual donation to Hospice in my Mom's memory and in honor of the compassionate care they provided during her last days. I also light a candle that burns for 24 hours, a *yahrzeit* candle, and say a prayer of remembrance and love on holidays. My brothers and I honor our Mom with her favorite key lime pie at family holidays, milestones and celebrations which always makes me smile.

If the thought of preparing Mom's turkey or Dad's stuffing is just too painful, choose to make something different. There are no rules, if you want breakfast for Thanksgiving dinner so be it. Get creative. Bring to the holidays this year what creates space, what makes you feel emboldened, able to come to the table with family or friends and honor the light in you that continues to shine even in the darkness of grief.

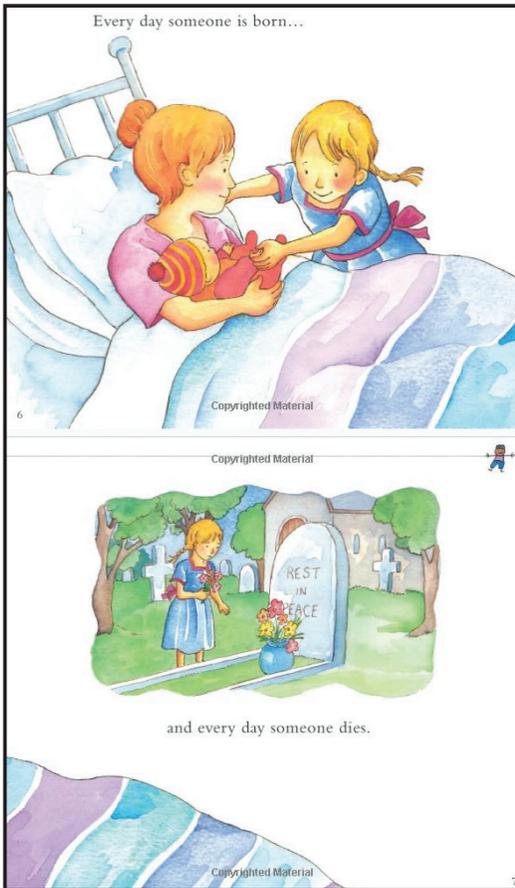
If you choose not to join family and friends this holiday season consider volunteering. Share the love that you are missing with others who may have never had it.

If leaving your home feels like too much, perhaps you will choose to engage in an act of loving kindness by making a donation in your loved ones name. Donate to the Humane Society if your loved one was an animal lover, to the Foodbank if your loved one was a foodie, to the library if your loved one was an avid reader, and so on.

Choose to give yourself the gift of extreme self care this holiday season. Holidays can be intensely emotional. If you feel the need to cry, cry. If you feel the need to scream, scream. Feel your feelings and nurture yourself in the most loving and compassionate of ways. Surround yourself in comfort by engaging your five senses in self care. Rest if you feel like resting. Dance if you feel like dancing. Go for a walk. Take a long hot bath or shower. Breathe. Breathe in strength and healing, breathe out pain and suffering. Know that all feelings are okay. Grieving is hard work. Grieving during the holidays can be especially difficult. There is not one way or a right way to grieve.

There are so many things in life we do not get to choose but we can choose how we endure pain. We can choose how we care for ourselves, honor ourselves, and encourage ourselves to continue on. We can choose to honor our loved ones by living our lives with deeper meaning, connection, and awareness of just how lucky we are to have loved and been loved, and that we can love and be loved still. Choose to honor yourself. Choose to give yourself the gift of choice this holiday season.

RECOMMENDED READING

*“I Miss You ~ A First Look at Death”*

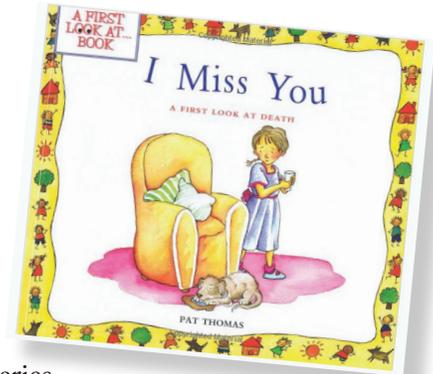
by Pat Thomas

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one’s passing.

Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Children are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them.

Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, the book promotes positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The story lines are simple and direct, easily accessible to younger children. There are full-color illustrations on every page.

Recommended by Coastal Hospice Bereavement Counselors, this book is the perfect gift to share with young children in your family at the holidays.



12 things to remember when you have suffered a loss

1. The best way to handle your feelings is not to “handle” them but to feel them.
2. Only by giving your losses expression will you begin to heal.
3. Seldom is this loss only “this loss” for you.
4. There is one person who can take care of you better than anyone, and that’s you.
5. In allowing others to help you, you help everyone: them and you.
6. Try to show grace with those who try to give you care.
7. Sometimes it makes perfect sense to act a little crazy.
8. Your grieving, your timing, and your progress in healing are all uniquely yours, and that’s as it should be.
9. You have a choice in how you respond to your loss.
10. Your time of loss can be a time of soul-making unlike any other.
11. Not all your questions will have answers, but they’re worth asking anyway.
12. Your time of loss can become a time of discovery.

Angel Appeal Takes Flight November 16



Each year, Coastal Hospice encourages our Lower Shore neighbors to be “angels” by including Coastal Hospice in their holiday giving. Angel Appeal is our largest fundraiser of the year and allows our donors to honor their loved ones. When you receive our small package in your mailbox, it will include our commemorative angel ornament, shown here. Just add the name of someone special and return it in the envelope. Other ways to donate:

- Directly from our website www.coastalhospice.org/angel
- By texting “ANGEL” to 345-345



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TO OPT OUT: You are likely receiving this publication following the death of a family member, friend or loved one who received care from Coastal Hospice. Grief support is a vital part of the hospice philosophy of care. This publication serves to share information you can use during this time and highlight upcoming events. If you do not wish to continue receiving this publication or have a change of address, please contact Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732, ext. 621 or mdasher@coastalhospice.org.

UPCOMING GRIEF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

These groups provide a time of respite and a safe place to express feelings in the grieving process. We offer these activities at no cost to any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, even if they were not a patient of Coastal Hospice.

**Due to Covid-19
restrictions please call or
e-mail for dates, times, locations
and/or Zoom codes.**

**Nicole Long
443-614-6142
NLong@coastalhospice.org**

*One-on-one phone support or
in-person meeting available
by request.*

Dorchester County

Support Group

During COVID-19, in lieu of group meetings.
Please call for one-on-one visit.

Nicole Long 443-614-6142 NLong@coastalhospice.org

Somerset County

Support Group

During COVID-19, in lieu of group meetings.
Please call for one-on-one visit.

Nicole Long 443-614-6142 NLong@coastalhospice.org

Worcester County

Support Group

Zoom group meeting - Thursdays @ 1:00 pm

Wicomico County

Support Group

In-Person small group meeting - Mon. - Fri. @ 11:00 am
Space is limited, please call for availability.

Zoom group meeting - Fridays @ 1:00 pm