Believe it or not, grief and creativity have some things in common. They are both matters that many of us have little experience with and find difficult. (Though these last couple of years have given all of us greater exposure to grief and loss, as well as the necessity of using our creativity to survive these times.) Often, we keep both our grief and our creativity hidden. We may hide our grief because we want to appear strong to others or be strong for others, or we feel vulnerable in letting others see our real emotional selves. We also hide or don’t recognize our creative or artistic abilities because we think our ideas or skills are not good enough.

We live in a death-averse culture, and it is hard for many of us to acknowledge that death is a part of life. Therefore, discussions about death and grief are seldom had. Because of these things, participants who attend our Healing Arts art therapy grief workshops often worry that their grief is abnormal in some way. Attendees are educated about the various facets of grief, and group members offer support, normalizing grief and allaying fears. They learn that each person’s grief journey is unique, just as their relationship was with their loved one.

We also live in a culture that celebrates those who make art that is extremely valuable and worthy of critical acclaim. No wonder we feel shy about our creativity. Many of us can recall childhood art classes where we were not encouraged to follow our own creative ideas. Instead, we were expected to follow the lesson plan. Our art may have been ridiculed, and as a result, our creativity squelched. Many participants in Healing Arts workshops assure me and the group that they are not creative, lowering expectations for the art they will make. They nearly always impress the group and themselves in their creativity! We are ALL creative in our own way, we just need to give ourselves and each other permission.

In Healing Arts grief workshops, both your grief and your art are normalized, and your own creativity helps you navigate your grief. Participants in different stages of grief share their experiences of loss, their strength on the journey and their hope for the future. Attendees find that they are not alone in their deep feelings of sadness, remorse, love, regret, anger and gratitude. They can identify with and learn from each other’s grief experiences. It is humbling for me to watch a person come to their first workshop apologizing for their show of emotion, unsure of themselves and their art-making abilities, then over time learning to trust themselves in their grief process as well as in their creative process. Although art instructions and directives are given to participants, these are always secondary to the creative spirit inherent in everyone. Expressing yourself through your natural creative abilities allows you to open up to healing.

The Healing Arts program offers diverse projects throughout the year. They are listed in this publication. The sessions provide grieving people with a creative outlet for their grief and are open to the community. The program is made possible by a project support grant from Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.
As we move from winter into spring, I am reminded that the changing of seasons each year is entirely predictable – while at the same time completely out of our control. It’s helpful that we generally know what to expect – typical temperatures, what activities we “normally” associate with various times of the year – and are able to prepare in some ways for the days to come. During the transition between winter and spring we may wear a heavy coat but keep a light jacket nearby for random warmer days. Simple things like this help us to feel some control during weather that we all know can change seemingly at any moment... at least in Northeast Ohio!

Grief can also be unpredictable and leave us feeling overwhelmed. Beyond acknowledging what we feel, without judgment, what can we do to feel some sense of control? Even small decisions and actions can help. Taking a walk, brushing your teeth, calling a friend or family member, looking at photographs, opening a few pieces of mail, doing one load of laundry, or any number of other things, can help us feel more like we have some say in what is happening to and around us. A little like keeping that extra jacket or an umbrella in the back seat, doing even small things to take control can help you weather this storm of grief.

As always, I encourage you to consider registering for one of our many support groups that are listed in this newsletter. We are excited to offer several new programs for adults and children that we hope will be helpful to our families and the community. For calendar and group format updates as well as other resources, please visit our website at www.hospicewr.org or the Western Reserve Grief Services Facebook page. Please know that we are here with continued care and support.

~Megan Devine
Guilt and Grief: A Burden Worth Exploring
By Jonathan Cahill, MDiv

Grief is frequently accompanied by the pain of guilt. Feelings of guilt can arise when we feel we have not lived up to the expectations we have set for ourselves. It can raise nagging questions that take root like the most stubborn of weeds:

“Is it my fault my loved one got sick?”
“What if I had noticed this earlier?”
“Was I a bad parent/sibling/friend/lover?”

We try to answer these questions rationally:

“Illness is natural. There’s nothing I said or did that made them sick.”
“I didn’t always know what to do, but I always acted out of love.”

Even with the most rational responses, removing the pain of guilt can be difficult. If you’re a guilt-racked griever, you’re not alone. Spouses, siblings, parents, children and friends can all experience guilt in their grief. Writing about bereaved parents, authors J. William Worden and James R. Monahan describe several forms of guilt:

**Cultural guilt** can stem from our perception that we have somehow failed to protect those under our care. Parents whose children precede them in death and medical practitioners, for instance, may be especially susceptible to this form of guilt.

**Causal guilt** is feeling responsible for a loved one’s death through real or perceived negligence, or even through the passing on of an inherited disorder.

**Moral guilt** is the sense that a loved one’s death is “punishment” for something we have done in the past that we perceive as a transgression.

**Survival guilt** can occur when we live and our loved one does not (e.g., “I survived the car crash; why didn’t they?”)

**Recovery guilt** may be the most insidious of all. As we move through grief and begin to find happiness, we may feel that we are somehow dishonoring our loved one.

There’s rarely a satisfying answer as to why bad things happen and feelings of guilt are unlikely to give you what you’re looking for in the long run. Yet in the face of a profoundly tragic event, guilt may serve as a temporary coping strategy. It may be that finding a reason for a loss – even by misdirecting the blame inward – is more tolerable than not being able to find any explanation at all.

So, if guilt is what you need right now, that’s fine. Take your time with it. Know that it’s there for a reason and that it’s trying to do some work that needs to be done for you to survive.

When guilt feels overwhelming and is doing more harm than good, it’s probably time to let it go. With time and a healthy amount of curiosity and self-compassion, you’ll discover the tools and the people you need to continue your journey. Guilt, stubborn as it is, need not have the last word. Even if it does stick around like a weed, beautiful flowers can grow up beside it.
Unless otherwise noted, our support groups are open to anyone who has had a loved one die. Groups are subject to change.

Community Support Groups and Activities

Except where noted, support groups will continue to be offered in a virtual format. All groups require advance registration, and the number of participants is limited. Participants of in-person groups will be asked to maintain distance and to wear a face covering within the meeting space. Virtual groups will be offered via Microsoft Teams. For more information or to register for a group, please call or email the facilitator listed for that group. Grief support groups provide:

• A safe place to express emotions
• A place to “tell your story”
• Education about grief and loss
• Normalization and validation of your grief experience
• Opportunities to learn new roles, ways to problem-solve and cope with situations
• New friendships
• A chance to laugh

Circle of Hope

SERIES An educational support group for adults who have had a loved one die. Registration is required no later than a week prior to start date.

Wednesdays, March 16 to April 6
6 to 7 p.m.
Register by March 13
Lisa Florjancic
lflorjancic@hospicewr.org
440.853.5365

Hope and Healing IN PERSON

MONTHLY An ongoing monthly support group for grieving adults.

For older adults
Fourth Thursday of the month
10 to 11 a.m.
Grafton-Midview Public Library
983 Main Street, Grafton, OH 44044
Call to register 440.926.3317

Parents Together

MONTHLY For parents who have experienced the death of an adult child.

Second Tuesday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Shawn Eigenbrode
seigenbrode@hospicewr.org
216.486.6364

Parent Loss

MONTHLY A support group for adults adjusting to life after the death of one or both parents.

Second Monday of the month
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Susan Hamme
shamme@hospicewr.org
440.596.3582

Branches of Hope

SERIES A group for adults who have lost both of their parents. Living life after both of our parents are gone is a big adjustment for many. This group provides an opportunity to explore family traditions and gifts you have within because of your parents, as well as how to manage feelings and the changes in family dynamics that come with this loss.

Thursdays, April 7 to May 12
6 to 7 p.m.
JoDee Coulter
330.662.4240

Millennial Grief

MONTHLY For adults ages 25 to 40 grieving the death of a parent or parent figure.

Second Wednesday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Kelly Dittorno
kdittorno@hospicewr.org
440.414.1737

Child Loss

MONTHLY Parents who have experienced the death of a child aged 20 or younger are invited to join us for an opportunity to find support and feel community with others who have experienced similar losses. When possible, this group will be offered in a combined virtual and in-person format. Please contact Jonathan for in-person details.

Lakeshore Campus
Third Wednesday of the month
6 to 7 p.m.
Jonathan Cahill
jcahill@hospicewr.org
216.389.0704
Support Groups

Healing the Heart
MONTHLY Grief after an overdose death.
First Tuesday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Shawn Eigenbrode
seigenbrode@hospicewr.org
216.486.6364

New Journey
MONTHLY For adults of any age who have experienced the death of a spouse, partner or significant other.
First Wednesday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Vanessa Smylie
vsmylie@hospicewr.org
216.763.6441
OR
Third Tuesday of the month
6 to 7 p.m.
JoDee Coulter
jcoulter@hospicewr.org
330.662.4240

COVID-19 Loss
MONTHLY For adults who have experienced the death of a loved one due to COVID-19. Prior completion of a COVID loss or Circle of Hope series is encouraged but not required.
First Monday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Susan Hamme
shamme@hospicewr.org
440.596.3582

Year of Firsts
MONTHLY This virtual monthly group for adults will provide a space to prepare for and process important “firsts” after a death – from your first trip to the store to birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and more. Registration is required no later than a week prior to group date.
Third Monday of the month
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Kelly DiTurno
kditurno@hospicewr.org
440.414.1737

Grief 101
This one-hour virtual class is for those who have experienced the death of a loved one in the past six months. Learn about signs and symptoms of grief as well as helpful strategies.
Thursday, March 10
6 to 7 p.m.
Register by March 7
Lisa Florjancic
lflorjancic@hospicewr.org
440.853.5365
OR
Monday, April 11
11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Register by April 7
Lisa Florjancic
lflorjancic@hospicewr.org
440.853.5365

Who Am I? IN PERSON SERIES A four-session group (every other week) for adults who are trying to rediscover personal interests, explore new opportunities and identify support systems and tools to help since the death of a loved one. Come brainstorm, share, and discover new ideas and resources with the group. There will be independent assignments most weeks. Recommended for those whose loss was 6 months ago or more.
Robertson Bereavement Center
Mondays, April 4 and 18, May 2 and 16
6 to 7 p.m.
Caroline Corbitt
ccorbitt@hospicewr.org
330.662.4149

Kidz Hope IN PERSON SERIES A four-session grief group for kids ages 8 to 12 that have experienced the death of a loved one.
Lakeshore Campus
Mondays,
April 12 and 26, May 10 and 24
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Caroline Corbitt
ccorbitt@hospicewr.org
330.662.4149
PET LOSS: MEMORY JEWELRY
The animals we live with are a part of the family, and we grieve them when they die. In this workshop, design a necklace, bracelet, or rearview mirror hanger with beads that you can make out of magazine pages. A one-inch frame will be provided to display a photo of your beloved companion.

VIRTUAL
BOTH Tuesdays, April 5 and 12
6 to 7:30 p.m.

BEAUTY OUT OF THE DEPTHS
The lotus can survive extreme temperatures and is considered by Buddhists and Hindus as the most sacred flower. Lotuses grow out of the mud and emerge as beautiful blooms, just as we can arise from the mud of our grief into healing and growth. What will your lotus look like?

VIRTUAL
BOTH Wednesdays
April 13 and 20
6 to 7:30 p.m.

IN PERSON
BOTH Tuesdays, April 19 and 26
6:30 to 8 p.m.
West Campus

CIRCLE OF HOPE: ART THERAPY EDITION
A six-week virtual art and educational support group for adults who have experienced the death of a loved one.

IN PERSON
Wednesdays, April 13 to May 18
10 to 11:30 a.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center

BIRDS OF A FEATHER
Across cultures, birds have long been associated with life and death. Many people say that certain birds appear to them over and over after their loved one has died, which is a comfort to them. At this workshop, paint and decorate a bird house in memory of your loved one and that special bird.

VIRTUAL
BOTH Wednesdays
May 11 and 18
6 to 7:30 p.m.

IN PERSON
BOTH Tuesdays, May 17 and 24
6:30 to 8 p.m.
West Campus

IN PERSON
BOTH Thursdays, May 19 and 26
6:30 to 8 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center

FABRIC AND FEELINGS
A monthly group where participants come to gather with others who are grieving and create all things fabric, sharing both their grief experiences and fabric arts knowledge with each other. Attendees can create lasting memories of their loved one using pieces of their clothing, or make pillows, quilts, crochet, knit, etc. No sewing expertise necessary.

IN PERSON
Third Thursday of each month, 2 to 4 p.m.
The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center
A CHILD’S VIEW

It’s time to shed those winter coats, gloves and boots and feel a bit lighter. But every change in seasons is a reminder that the person you loved isn’t here with you to share the things you are seeing. As you spend more time outdoors, you may wonder what the two of you would be doing if only your person was here. One way to hold tight to your person is to share memories with family or friends. Another way is to create something that symbolizes your connection.

A CHILD’S VIEW

By Susan Lakin, LISW-S

**Memory Planter**

You’ll need an inexpensive clay pot – these are usually dark orange – and a clear plastic liner.

- Ask an adult to help you break the pot into a few large pieces. This is a good way to safely express some anger at how things have changed beyond your control. **AAARGH!**
- Use markers, paints, or stickers to decorate the pieces with words or pictures that remind you of your person or the fun you had together.
- With adult help use strong glue to put the pieces back together to form the pot.
- Place the plastic pot liner inside and fill with dirt.
- Fill your pot with dirt and plant a flower in your person’s favorite color, or a vegetable your special person loved. You can even use artificial plants.

The “new” pot looks different than it did originally – just as your life doesn’t look the same since your special person died. The pot may be a bit lopsided. It may be fragile in some places and strong in others. This is a lot like grief – sometimes we feel out of balance and find that some days are smoother or rougher than others.

- Decide on a good spot with your family.
- Collect rocks of different sizes.
- Paint each rock and allow it to dry.
- Write words, memories, feelings on each rock – whatever you choose.
- Arrange the rocks in the space you’ve chosen.
- Use your imagination to add more rocks or other objects – like a wind chime – as time goes by.

Some days you may like to sit quietly or play near your garden and think of good memories you shared. It can also be a place to go when you’re feeling sad and just need some time to let it all out. Just being close by may help you feel connected to your loved one. What might he or she think of the project? Over time your garden may change. You may add new rocks, or a wind chime that moves in the breeze. Rain, wind, and sun may change the look of the paint or the words, but the rocks will remain, just like the love you have for your special person.

**Memory Rock Garden**

Some days you may like to sit quietly or play near your garden and think of good memories you shared. It can also be a place to go when you’re feeling sad and just need some time to let it all out. Just being close by may help you feel connected to your loved one. What might he or she think of the project? Over time your garden may change. You may add new rocks, or a wind chime that moves in the breeze. Rain, wind, and sun may change the look of the paint or the words, but the rocks will remain, just like the love you have for your special person.

SAVE THE DATE!

Together We Can 2022 Camps

Together We Can camps provide the opportunity for kids to be with others who are also grieving the death of a loved one. Camps are expressive in nature and led by experienced facilitators in art, music, play and nature activities. For more information or to receive a registration packet, please contact us at 216.486.6838.

**Five-day**

**Riding Through Grief**

Fieldstone Farm
16497 Snyder Road, Chagrin Falls
9 a.m. – noon
June 20–24; kids ages 8–12
July 18–22; teens ages 13–17
$15 registration per camper

This camp is offered in collaboration with Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center and is for children and teens who have experienced the death of a loved one. Through riding and working with horses, campers explore grief issues supported by trained counselors.

**Three-day**

**Red Oak**

Red Oak Camp
9057 Kirtland Chardon Road, Willoughby
August 9–11, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
$25 registration per camper

A three-day bereavement day camp for children ages 6–13 who have experienced the death of a loved one. Transportation is available from our Lakeshore campus.
By Kelly DiTurno, MSSA, MNO, LSW

Steve Leder would not be so bold as to say he is an “expert” on death. Even after three decades of sitting vigil at deathbeds and memorials of thousands of community members as the senior rabbi of one of the largest synagogues in the world, Leder is learning about death like the rest of us. In his latest book *The Beauty of What Remains: How Our Greatest Fear Becomes Our Greatest Gift*, Leder engages readers with a starkly honest and deeply humble set of reflections on how his own practice as a spiritual and community leader has been upended and rebuilt again by lessons in loss imparted in the most unexpected moments.

In this candid memoir, Leder is both vulnerable and irreverent, infusing a searing sense of wit and observational humor into heartfelt discussions on some of humanity’s most solemn and inescapable themes while offering his own tales of personal and professional loss.

*The Beauty of What Remains* offers simply written but deeply impactful stories and reflections as a gesture of hope for those still learning to recognize, celebrate and navigate the abundance of what is left behind after a loved one’s death.

Books reviewed by our team can be found at your local library or purchased online or from local bookstores.