



# About grief

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF THE WESTERN RESERVE

WINTER 2016-17

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## OUR MISSION

Hospice of the Western Reserve provides palliative and end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio.

In celebration of the individual worth of each life, we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care, and support effective grieving.



## Find *Light* in Love and Gratitude

By Mary Murphy, M.Ed., LPC

**A**fter the death of your loved one, the anticipation of these first holidays can be filled with a combination of dread, anxiety or numbness. Many intentions pass through your mind and the realization sets in—your loved one will not be home for the holidays. And they will be missed. The season is as laden with memories as a Thanksgiving table is with food.

There may be some relief for you if—in your grief—you can turn your heart to love, acceptance, and gratitude. You might say, “Right. And why don’t I lift my car over my head while I’m at it?” It isn’t easy, but know there is a window of possibility to relieve the dread, anxiety, and numbness.

“Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.” There is truth in this saying, and it can be a mindful message for grieving. We grieve those we love. It hurts. How much you suffer, though, is optional.

How do you get through the hurt and the holidays?

First of all, let’s remove the big push. Words have power, so let’s change the words

around and **set a positive intention**. Ask yourself, “How can I experience love, peace, and gratitude (*fill in your own intentions*), while grieving, during these special days?”

**Don’t brush your grief and sadness aside.** Take care of those feelings. Have a special candle devoted to your loved ones, possibly with pictures and music, then spend time reflecting on the love they gave you and the love you gave them—the treasure you now carry. Through the tears, a smile might emerge.

When you’re suffering, **pay attention to what you love or are grateful for in that moment**. Begin a daily habit of writing three expressions of gratitude and three loves at the end of each day. It might be as simple as: *Gratitude: 1. I woke up; 2. My feet are working; 3. I can smile. Loves: 1. My friend Sarah; 2. Shimmering snow; 3. Cream in my coffee.*

**Have an attitude of gratitude.** The practice of gratitude (and love) is supported by research.<sup>1</sup> Among other benefits, an attitude of gratitude helps one better cope with stress, boosts the immune system, improves mental alertness and positive

see “Find Light...” on page 7

*"I thought I was doing much better. The pain had subsided; I could laugh again. I was beginning to spend time with friends. Then, I had to face my first big holiday without him. I felt the similar effects of grief wash over me and it was just like the healing process had never begun."*

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN



# About grief

a Publication from



The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center and  
The Robertson Bereavement Center

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Go green! If you would like your copy of About Grief emailed to you, please send your email address to Diane Snyder Cowan at [DSCowan@hospicewr.org](mailto:DSCowan@hospicewr.org)

**T**he holiday season is often overwhelming. We are bombarded with the jingle jangle, the advertisements, the decorated stores and doctor's offices. Everything is in your face, constantly reminding you of the joyful holidays that loom ahead.

What's a grieving person to do? The physical absence of your beloved is palpable and your grief washes over you like it was just yesterday that your loved one died.

Many bereaved have felt the three C's were helpful. Communicate, commemorate, and compromise. One couple was grieving the death of an adult child and it was the first Christmas. The wife did not want any decorations, let alone a tree. The husband wanted a tree. They talked about it and decided to have a tree in a different room than usual. As they hung the decorations, they reminisced about their child and added an ornament to honor her. They compromised and commemorated. Another family wanted their sister, who was recently widowed, to attend the holiday dinner. She didn't know if she could or if she wanted to. She let her siblings know her feelings and only decided at the very last minute to attend, leaving her car in the street for a quick get-away.

There's no right or wrong way to grieve during the holiday season. Each person needs to do what feels right in their grief process. Communicate your feelings and let others support you on your journey.

Wishing you peace in the new year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Snyder Cowan".

Diane Snyder Cowan, MA, MT-BC, CHPCA  
216.486.6312 • [dscowan@hospicewr.org](mailto:dscowan@hospicewr.org)

## TRIBUTE GARDENS AND WALKWAYS

## Remember Your Loved One

### THE GARDENS AT AMES FAMILY HOSPICE HOUSE,

David Simpson Hospice House and the Medina Hospice Inpatient Care Unit offer beautiful outdoor spaces for meditation and reflection. Whether it is with a tree, a paver or a rustic, stone bench, when you dedicate an outdoor tribute to your loved one, you are helping us create an atmosphere of care and healing. To inquire about garden tributes, please call **855.475.0245** or visit our tribute page online at [hospicewr.org/tribute](http://hospicewr.org/tribute).



By Mindy Stewart, LPC

# The Holiday Present Nobody Wants...

**Have you ever been so excited** to open up your beautifully wrapped holiday presents that you beg and beg your parents to let you open up one gift before you normally would? You only ask for one because you know the answer will be “no” to any more than that. You do everything you can to convince your parents to allow you to at least have a peek, shake it or size it up to the items on your wish list. Nonetheless, all your hard-fought efforts fall short and you are destined to wait until your family’s holiday gift exchange occurs.



## Grief can be a gift when it:

Allows you to **empathize with others** who have experienced loss in their life.

Increases your **compassion** toward others.

Helps you **remember what your loved one meant to you**.

Reminds you that **you are not alone** – others have loss in their life too.

Keeps you focused on the **value of the present moment**.



**The day has arrived!** You finally have that present you've been begging for, sitting on your lap. The anticipation is mounting and you can hardly stand another minute of patience. As soon as you're given permission to unwrap the gift, you rip off the ribbon, tear into the paper, flip open the box, and stare at it. This thing—it isn't what you hoped for. It's not only the wrong color or size, but it was never on any wish list or advertised on any commercial. You can't believe it—you just opened grief?

What in the world are you supposed to do with this? You start to think: “Am I supposed to say ‘thank you’ to someone? Is it something I wear? Do I play with it? Can it do my chores for me? Maybe I’ll just give it to my sibling, or re-gift it next year? Perhaps I opened the wrong box?...” Questions and thoughts continue to swirl in your head, and you realize others have opened similar packages. They don’t look exactly the same, the colors and size are different, but there’s something similar between all of them. The feelings of confusion, frustration, disappointment, sadness or anger are all things you notice and identify with when you see someone else open their grief. The only thing you can really say is “I’m sorry,” or listen to them as they experience their own range of emotions. It’s definitely not a present anyone wants, but there’s something about it that actually is a gift.

Everyone who opens their own box of grief is able to understand, if even just a little bit, what others have experienced. There is a shared humanity in knowing we all grieve and can find gifts in our grief.

# Support Groups

WINTER 2016/17

## Bereavement Support Groups

Unless otherwise noted, our support groups are open to anyone who has had a loved one die. Groups are subject to change. *Please call to verify time and location.*

## Adult Support Groups

### Circle of Hope Series

A four- or six-week educational support group for adults who have had a loved one die. *Please call the facilitator listed below for more information and to register.*

#### Ashtabula Office

Wednesdays, January 18–February 22  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.  
✉ Susan Hamme 440.596.3582

#### The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center

Tuesdays, January 31–March 7  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.  
✉ Diana Battles 216.486.6364

#### Fairview Park West Campus

**22730 Fairview Center Drive, Fairview Park (location subject to change)**  
Mondays, January 9–February 13  
6:30 to 8:00 p.m.  
✉ Judy Beckman 440.414.1731

#### Lakeshore Campus

Mondays, January 23–February 27  
6:00 to 7:30 p.m.  
✉ Tensie Holland 216.383.3741

#### HMC Hospice of Medina County

**The Robertson Bereavement Center**  
Wednesdays, February 15–March 22  
1:30 to 3:00 p.m.  
✉ Theresa Suing 330.241.6282

#### Mentor Office

Tuesdays, January 17–February 21  
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.  
✉ Lisa Florjancic 440.853.5365

#### Hope & Healing

An on-going monthly support group for grieving adults. Registration is not required. Please call facilitator for more information.

#### Lakeshore Campus

Third Monday of the month  
6:00 to 7:30 p.m.  
✉ April Ratcliffe 216.383.3782

#### Renaissance Group

**Renaissance Main Building, second floor craft room**  
**26376 John Road, Olmsted Falls**  
Second Tuesday of the month  
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.  
✉ Laurie Mason 440.787.2099

#### HMC Hospice of Medina County

**The Robertson Bereavement Center**  
Second Thursday of the month  
3:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
✉ Theresa Suing 330.241.6282

#### Mentor Office

First Tuesday of the month  
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.  
✉ Lisa Florjancic 440.853.5365



### Hopeful Hearts

A monthly grief support group for anyone age 60 and over who has experienced the death of someone special in the past two years.

#### Avon Lake Holy Spirit Parish Center

**410 Lear Road**  
Fourth Tuesday of the month  
1:00 to 2:30 p.m.  
✉ Chemarra Bryant 440.414.1737

### Parent Loss – Monthly

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

#### West Side (please call facilitator for information and location)

Second Tuesday of the month  
6:30 to 8:00 p.m.  
✉ Judy Beckman 440.414.1731

### Parents Together – Monthly

A monthly support group for parents who have experienced the death of an adult child.

#### Warrensville Heights Office

Second Thursday of the month  
2:30 to 4:00 p.m.  
✉ Vicki Jackson 216.763.6441

## Circle of Hope: Art Therapy Edition

A six-week art and educational support group for adults who have had a loved one die.

#### The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center Art Therapy Studio

Wednesdays, January 11–February 15  
10:00 a.m. to Noon  
✉ Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544



## Partner/Spousal Loss Groups

Monthly support groups for adults who have experienced the death of a spouse, partner, or significant other. Groups are open-ended and on-going. Registration is not required.

### New Beginnings

Adults in middle life.

#### HMC Hospice of Medina County

#### The Robertson Bereavement Center

Second Tuesday of the month

6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

 JoDee Coulter 330.662.4240

#### Westlake

#### St John Medical Center, Westshore Professional Building

#### 29160 Center Ridge Road, Suite R

Second Wednesday of the month

6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

 Chemarra Bryant 440.414.1737

### New Journey

Adults of any age.

#### Ashtabula

89 East Satin Street, Jefferson

First Thursday of the month

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

 Susan Hamme 440.596.3582

#### The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center

Fourth Thursday of the month

10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

 Diana Battles 216.486.6364

### Horizons

Adults in late life.

#### Mayfield Village Baptist Church

#### 6500 Highland Road, Mayfield

Second Tuesday of the month

1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

 Kathryn Harrison Brown 216.486.6331

#### Lorain County Community College

#### Spitzer Conference Center, Room 219

#### 1005 North Abbe Road, Elyria

First Friday of the month

10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

 Laurie Mason 440.787.2099



## Community Support Groups & Holiday Activities

### Yoga Matters

**ON-GOING** *Yoga Class designed for caregivers and bereaved.* Give yourself the gift of time and attention. The practice of Yoga helps you tune into yourself and take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

#### Lakeshore Campus

Wednesdays, 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.

\$40/month or \$12 Drop-in (*sliding scale fee available*)

 216.486.6838

### Hope for the Holidays

#### Mentor Office

Saturday, December 3

9:00 to 10:00 a.m.

Register by November 30.

 Lisa Florjancic 440.853.5365

### Holiday Family Night

December is full of holidays. Whether you celebrate Bodhi Day, Mawlid An Nabi, Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, Christmas or Kwanzaa, come share your special holiday memories by creating a holiday decoration or ornament that reflects your religious or spiritual tradition.

#### Western Cuyahoga County\*

Tuesday, December 6, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

#### Warrensville Heights Office

Wednesday, December 7, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

#### The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center

Thursday, December 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

 Mollie Postotnik 216.486.6544



**HOSPICE OF THE  
WESTERN RESERVE**

#### THE ELISABETH SEVERANCE PRENTISS BEREAVEMENT CENTER

300 East 185th Street

Cleveland, OH 44119-1330

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#### THE ROBERTSON BEREAVEMENT CENTER

5075 Windfall Road

Medina, OH 44256

330.725.1900

#### AMES FAMILY HOSPICE HOUSE

30080 Hospice Way

Westlake, Ohio 44145-1077

440.414.7349 or 835.281.5727

#### ASHTABULA OFFICE

1166 Lake Avenue

Ashtabula, OH 44004-2930

440.997.6619

#### DAVID SIMPSON HOSPICE HOUSE AND LAKESHORE CAMPUS

300 East 185th Street

Cleveland, OH 44119-1330

216.383.2222 or 800.707.8922

#### HEADQUARTERS

17876 St. Clair Avenue

Cleveland, OH 44110

216.383.2222 or 800.707.8922

#### LORAIN COUNTY OFFICE

2173 N. Ridge Road E., Suite H

Lorain, OH 44055-3400

440.787.2080

#### MENTOR OFFICE

5786 Heisley Road

Mentor, OH 44060-1830

440.951.8692

#### HMC HOSPICE OF MEDINA COUNTY

5075 Windfall Road

Medina, OH 44256

330.722.4771

#### WARRENSVILLE HEIGHTS OFFICE

4670 Richmond Road, Suite 200

Warrensville Hts, OH, 44128-5978

216.454.0399

#### WEST CAMPUS

22730 Fairview Center Drive

Fairview Park, OH 44126

216.227.9048



# Healing Arts Workshops WINTER 2016/17

Healing Arts Workshops provide grieving people with a creative outlet for their grief and are open to the community. No art experience is necessary. Please call **Mollie Postotnik** at **216.486.6544** or email her at **mpostotnik@hospicewr.org** to register no later than four days in advance of workshop date. Suggested \$5.00 donation for supplies.



## Fabric and Feelings

**ON-GOING** A group where participants use fabric techniques such as quilting (sometimes with clothing from loved ones) or photo transfer to create quilts, pillows, dolls and other types of lasting memories. *Sewing expertise is not necessary.*

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Weekly – Thursdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

## Celebrating Their Light

Paint a candle to commemorate your loved one. Combining acrylic paint and adhesion medium, make a beautiful design on the surface of the candle itself. If you wish, you may bring your own plain white pillar candle (not in glass) or use ours. A candlelight ceremony will complete the evening.

**Western Cuyahoga County\***

Tuesday, January 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Warrensville Heights Office**

Wednesday, January 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Thursday, January 26, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

## LGBTQ Art Therapy Event: Door to Tomorrow

*This event is for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer Community who have experienced the death of a loved one.* Death is a kind of threshold that separates the familiar times you had with your loved one and the unknown future without them. One of the tasks of grief is imagining a future without your loved one. At this workshop, participants will decorate both sides of a small door, representing the past and the future.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Tuesday, January 31, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.



## Always in my Heart

This time of year, missing a loved one is especially difficult. At this workshop, participants will paint and decorate a paper clay heart which can be worn as a pin. A one inch (maximum) photo can be incorporated into the pin.

**Warrensville Heights Office**

Wednesday, February 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Western Cuyahoga County\***

Tuesday, February 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Thursday, February 16, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

## Kidz Art: Memory Weaving

Our lives are a tapestry of memories and experiences. What memories of your loved one make you smile? Are there things you wish you could tell them now? Weave your memories and wishes into a paper tapestry honoring your loved one. *Ages 6+.* Kids are invited to bring family members along for this workshop. Light refreshments provided.

**Western Cuyahoga County\***

Tuesday, March 7, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Tuesday, March 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

## Art for Relaxation: The Tree is Me

If you were a tree, what kind would you be and where would you live? Would you be an evergreen high in the mountains or deep in the forest? Or perhaps a tall oak on the plains or a weeping willow by the lake? Bring along your imagination and paint an image of the tree that is you.

**Western Cuyahoga County\***

Tuesday, March 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Warrensville Heights Office**

Wednesday, March 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center**

Thursday, March 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

\*Western Cuyahoga County locations to be announced. Please call facilitator for information.

# New Year *Resolutions*

By Diane Snyder Cowan, MA, MT-BC, CHPCA

**Many people think about** making resolutions in the New Year. Lose weight, eat better, exercise more and spend less are common examples of resolutions long forgotten by the first of February. For those grieving a death, resolutions may be the farthest thing from the mind. Perhaps your resolution might be adjusting to the absence of your loved one. Adjusting to the loss includes making meaning of the changes that have happened as a result of the death. Here are some considerations:

- 1** ***Be honest with your feelings.*** Others might expect you to be "over it" at three or six months post death, but there is no calendar for grief. Find a place, a way, or a person with whom you can express your grief feelings.



- 2** ***Do something that feels good.*** This can be spending time with people you like, finding a hobby that provides an outlet for your creative energy, or an escape from the day-to-day. Doing something often builds self-esteem through a sense of accomplishment. Take a walk or hike, make art, journal, listen to music, be with others.

- 5 | Continue your loved one's legacy.** Think about what was important to the person who died. There are ways you can transform your grief into a legacy of love. Share stories about your beloved with younger generations. Contribute to a charity or attend an event in honor of your special person. Bake or cook those special recipes. Listen to their favorite music. ►►

As you search to find meaning in loss and adjust to changes in your life, you may begin to make some sense of what has happened. You may find a bridge that connects the past with the future in a way that makes sense to you.

"*Find Light...*"

from page 1

feelings. I am reminded of a friend whose husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness. The hope they had for one another was to do their best in that moment. When times were tough, one of them would begin to recite gratitudes. "We have clean water running from our tap," one would say. "The autumn leaves are spectacular this year!" would say the other. "We have love in our home right now." And the list would go on until they had found peace in love and gratitude.



- 3** ***Talk about your deceased loved one.*** Say his or her name out loud. Find ways to honor or include him or her at holidays and special occasions. Create a remembrance project such as a scrapbook, photo album or a collection of recipes or letters.

four

- Give yourself permission to change.*** Life is different now. Consider what you have lost, what you have left and what you are going to do now. What is becoming of the person you used to be and who are you now? What lessons or self-discoveries have you learned?



**If you choose to attend holiday gatherings, notice who is there, not who is absent.** Though the thoughts and loneliness will creep in, turn toward love and gratitude. Sometimes we are so involved with grief we become blind to the beauty and love around us. When your eyes mist, turn toward a person you love. Find comfort, step into the moment and open your heart and your eyes to the love that faces you.

Source:

Emmons, Robert, and Michael McCullough. "Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84.2 (2003): 377–389. Print.



The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss  
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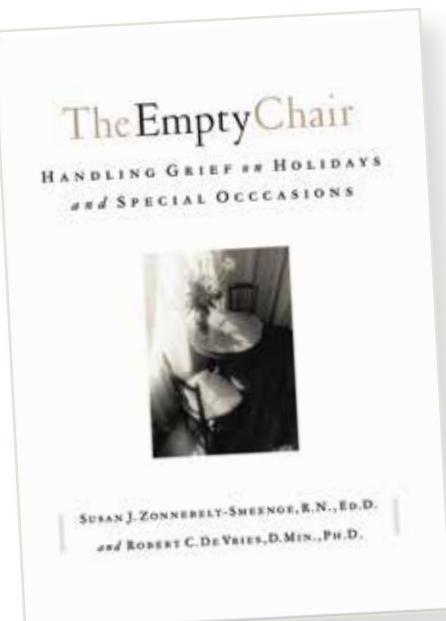
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*The Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Bereavement Center and The Robertson Bereavement Center are community-based grief support programs that provide services throughout Northern Ohio. We offer support to anyone who has experienced a loss due to death.*

## BOOK REVIEW

By Vicki Jackson, MSW, LISW-S



## *The Empty Chair Handling Grief on Holidays and Special Occasions*

**A**uthors Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge, a registered nurse and licensed clinical psychologist, and Robert C. DeVries, an ordained minister and seminary professor wrote this book specifically about grief and the holidays offering hope for bereaved individuals in need of support during these times. This book is intended for the newly bereaved however, it can be utilized regardless of time.

Using their professional and personal experiences and beliefs, they have integrated the five chapters into three parts. The first part encourages personal self-reflection of loss from the very beginning to a new and hopeful future. The second part contains specific suggestions from a mental health perspective on managing grief during holidays and special occasions. The third part contains spiritual meditations and prayer on loss, mainly from a Christian perspective.

One can read all three parts of each chapter or pick one chapter that is most helpful at any given time. The chapters are short, easy to read, and contain an ongoing theme of hope and peace on one's journey through grief.

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