



Bereavement Bulletin

Our eight-county service area: Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Union

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year?

By: Larry Dawalt, M. Div., Director of Spiritual & Grief Care Services
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region

There's no escaping it because it happens every year. I'm driving along with a stomach filled with Thanksgiving leftovers going over a mental list of my work tasks, that has suddenly become shorter than my list of non-work tasks, which is shorter than my shopping list, which is shorter than the list of people to whom I want to send holiday wishes. Suddenly, the radio speakers are overflowing with the familiar sound of "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," sung by a crooner whose voice is seemingly dripping with too much eggnog.

The most wonderful time of the year? Excuse me? I really don't think so. It might be the most wonderful time of the year when it's all over, but right now? Give me a break! If this sounds like whining, consider for a moment the holiday experiences of those who lost a parent this year, a spouse, or those who lost a brother or sister, or especially a child. Was the crooner thinking of them long ago as he stood in the studio singing into the microphone that carried this gleeful tune through the airwaves into elevators, radios, and on our home stereos?

No, he wasn't, and the fact of the matter is that he's not the only one who may neglect to think of those who have had losses and what they may be experiencing at the holidays. Like the song says, "Hearts will be glowing, when loved ones are near," but what if that special loved one has died? What happens to the heart then? It's obviously broken, and usually broken beyond the repair of "everyone telling you to be of good cheer." The holidays, or any other day for that matter, just aren't the same.

Those who have experienced losses are well served to

accept the likelihood of their pain and make adjustments that involve accepting limitations, trimming down to essentials, changing traditions or eliminating traditions for a year or two, asking for and accepting help, and giving themselves permission to be who they are and feel what they are feeling, regardless of what's going on around them. They can also give themselves permission to not participate like they used to, and know that it's okay to acknowledge that things are not the same this year.

Those who haven't experienced losses can learn from those who have by putting their other worries into perspective. Do you have a list of work tasks? That means you have a job. Do you have a list of non-work tasks? That means you must have a family to love or a cause worth the investment of your time and heart. If you have a shopping list, that means you must have people in your life to whom you want to express love and appreciation, and that you have the means to give them something. And if you have a list of people to contact or places to be, that must mean you are loved and respected as well.

So how do you make holiday stress go away? You don't. But you can lower it tremendously by planning ahead, being realistic about time and money limitations, and adjusting the expectations of yourself and others. You can also lower it by listening to "hearts will be glowing when loved ones are near" and not just see the lists and everything to do on them, but instead see the smiles on the faces of those you're doing it all for. Put your attention on what's really important, and be kind to those for whom the holidays may not be the most wonderful time of the year.

GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS

By: Carolyn I. Hicks, M.Div., BCC

When we think about the winter holidays, we associate these times with warm feelings and special memories. Our holidays are filled with rituals, traditions, and customs. Each year we have those great expectations for our families to come together and have the “best holiday ever.” However, when a member of our family dies we wonder if our holidays will ever be the same. Holidays are stressful, and more so when we are grieving.

Our celebrations of the holidays are interwoven with memories of our loved one. Now, we have to face the holiday without him/her. We are left to engage in the rituals, traditions, and customs of the season without him/her. We grieve not only for our loved one but we also grieve for the life we lived with that person.

There are two important things you can do to be prepared for grieving through the holidays. First, take care of yourself. Evaluate your list of things to do and take care of only the essentials. Consider letting some things go. You can also delegate. Let others help with the decorations, preparing the food, or the shopping. Find some time for yourself, even if it is just a few quiet minutes with a cup of coffee. Make sure to get plenty of rest and eat healthy foods. Taking care of our physical self will also help us to cope mentally and emotionally. Second, consider redesigning an old tradition, or adding a new tradition in order to honor the life of your loved one.

- ◆ Place a candle in honor of your loved one. Not because he/she died but in honor of his/her life. You may want to use a candle in your loved one’s favorite color.

- ◆ Each year your main meal may be a sit down event, and you may use your “good china.” This year you may think about a more simple buffet style to serve your family and friends.
- ◆ At your Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Hanukkah dinner, make a toast or prayer to honor your loved one.
- ◆ Make a list of the funny things you remember about your loved one, and share it with family. Photos are a good way to share memories as well.
- ◆ For Thanksgiving, make a “gratitude table” to encourage family members and friends to leave a note or symbol illustrating their gratitude for your loved one.
- ◆ Consider attending a different religious service. If you have always attended Christmas morning, consider attending a midnight service.
- ◆ Include children. We do not want to teach our children to deny their own feelings of grief. Remember, it is okay to let children see adults grieve and cry.
- ◆ Consider donating time or money to a local charity in honor of your loved one. Reaching out to others during this time can help us focus on something other than our loss.

Remember, the grief process is unique for everyone, and grief continues to change day to day. Take care of yourself and find a meaningful way to honor your loved one during the holidays. These things will help you navigate your way through the holiday season while grieving.

“Let’s Do Lunch”

4th Wednesday of each month - 11:30am
The Olive Garden
9421 Pineville-Matthews Road
Pineville, NC 28134

For information contact:
Marge Brokaw, LPC - 704.335.4308
Grief Counselor
brokawm@hpccr.org

4th Thursday of each month - 11:30am
Bob Evans Restaurant
16707 Northcross Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078
I-77 - Exit 25

For information contact:
Amy Thomas, MSW - 704.650.1949
Grief Counselor
thomasa@hpccr.org

Holiday Workshops

Holiday Memories: Finding Ways to Celebrate

Please call Gerri Cummings at 704.335.4334 for registration

Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County

Thursday, November 5, 2009, Noon and

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 6pm

107 North Cedar Street, Lincolnton 28092

HPCCR – South Charlotte

Tuesday, November 10, 2009, 2:30pm

7845 Little Avenue

Charlotte 28226

HPCCR – Uptown Charlotte

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 2:30pm

1420 East Seventh Street

Charlotte 28204

Hospice & Palliative Care Lake Norman

Thursday, November 12, 2009

2:30pm and 6pm

Levine & Dickson Hospice House

11900 Vanstory Drive, Huntersville 28078

Grief Workshops - Winter 2010

Turning the Page: Starting a New Chapter

Please call Gerri Cummings at 704.335.4334 for registration.

Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County

Monday, January 25, 2010, 6pm

107 North Cedar Street

Lincolnton, NC 28092

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - Uptown

Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 2:30pm

1420 East Seventh Street

Charlotte, NC 20204

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - South

Thursday, January 28, 2010, 6pm

7845 Little Avenue

Charlotte, NC 28226

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region Lake Norman

Thursday, January 28, 2010, 6pm

Levine & Dickson Hospice House

The Park Huntersville

11900 Vanstory Drive

Huntersville, NC 28078

Grief Support Groups

“Grief: The Reluctant Journey” winter support groups begin in February at our HPCCR-Uptown Charlotte, HPCCR - South Charlotte, Lake Norman, and Lincoln County locations. A pre-group interview with one of our grief counselors is required prior to registration for the grief support groups. In order to respect the group process, new members to our support groups will not be admitted after the first session. Please contact **Gerri Cummings** at 704.335.4334 or cummingsg@hpccr.org to arrange an appointment for a pre-group interview.

LIGHT UP A LIFE ... A Celebration of Life

The holiday season is a time of traditions - a time of celebration with family and friends. For those who experienced the loss of a loved one, it becomes a time of new traditions that honor the memory of *that special someone* who has been a part of our lives. Start a new tradition this year and join us at one of our *Celebration of Life* interfaith memorial services. These candlelight services give you an opportunity to enjoy special music, listen to thoughtful readings, and celebrate the memory of your loved ones. Please join us, and others throughout the community, at a time and place convenient to you as we honor the families we have served.



Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County

Thursday, December 3, 2009 - 6:30pm
Emanuel Reformed Church
329 East Main Street, Lincolnton 28092

Hospice & Palliative Care Lake Norman

Thursday, December 3, 2009 - 7pm
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
19600 Zion Street, Cornelius 28031

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region

Saturday, December 5, 2009 - 5pm
St. Martin's Episcopal Church
1510 East Seventh Street, Charlotte 28204

Levine & Dickson Hospice House

Sunday, December 6, 2009 - 2pm
The Park Huntersville
11900 Vanstory Drive, Huntersville 28078

Contact the Spiritual Care Department at 704.335.4334 for more information.

Individual grief counseling sessions are available upon request at all our offices. For more information on grief support groups, grief education, or to discuss your feelings and experiences with loss, please call 704.335.4300. Our office hours are Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 5pm.

The mission of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region is to relieve suffering and improve the quality and dignity of life through compassionate hospice care for those at the end of life, palliative care for those with advanced illness, and through community education. How we care for you: Hospice Care, Palliative Medicine Consultants, Kids Path® Pediatric Care, Grief Care, Inpatient & Residential Hospice Care, and Professional & Community Education.

ACHC Accredited

1420 East Seventh Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28204
704.375.0100
www.hpccr.org

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Palliative Care
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