



Bereavement Bulletin

Help Me Make It Through The Night

By Larry Dawalt, M.Div.
Director of Spiritual and Grief Care Services

I have always been a Kris Kristofferson fan. With their gentle melodies and storybook lyrics, songs like *Sunday Morning Coming Down*, *Me and Bobby McGee*, *Why Me*, and *For the Good Times* resonate with me like a warm shower on a cold morning. But the lyric that has recently caught my attention again is “and it’s sad to be alone - help me make it through the night.” While the entire song is a long way from being a grief anthem, that particular lyric could be both a desperate cry, as well as an earnest middle-of-the-night prayer for many in the grief process.

Why are nights so difficult after a loss? There are many reasons, but the primary one has to do with planning. As difficult as it may sometimes be during the early weeks and months of grief, we try to plan our days with activity that could possibly bring comfort or at least distraction. At night, we plan to sleep, but those plans can’t always be carried out. The body may be tired, but the mind is still racing like an engine with a stuck accelerator. We recall memories as if we are watching them projected on a wall, we hear sounds and words almost audibly and our feelings are intensified with microscopic focus.

When the tears come, they can quickly move from a light mist to a pouring rain. Quiet sobs can progress to noises we didn’t think we could make. Eventually, we discover that we used all the Kleenex the night before and find ourselves with a roll of toilet paper, a towel, an old shirt or anything else we can use as a tear-catcher. “And it’s sad to be alone- help me make it through the night.”

I don’t have an instant solution to this kind of pain. Many who are grieving experience it at the level I just described; some even more so. Calling it normal doesn’t really make sense because it doesn’t feel like there is anything normal about it. I am more comfortable calling

it a part of the grief process that most people who have lost a great love experience. It hurts. It’s no fun. It’s lonely.

But it doesn’t last forever. If it continues longer than you think you can bear- intensely for weeks or even months- make sure you find some specific grief support, like the support we offer at Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region.

For those who are trying to make it through the night, let me share some simple advice from one who has also walked a piece of the road you are walking. First, consider moving some of your night thoughts to day thoughts by journaling. As you record the thoughts, feelings and even tears from the night before in a journal entry, you put them somewhere you can leave them. You can look at them in the light of day and approach them with the resources of daylight - resources that include friends, family and other support. Sometimes, having your “thought-work” done brings the same comfort as having homework done does to a student.



Another approach to making it through the night is to set up an ‘emergency pact’ with a friend or family member that you can call them at any hour if it is desperately needed. This is like a ‘lifeline’ on “Who Wants to be a Millionaire.” It’s something you might not use, but you know it’s there. They may not have the answer to your question, but at least you’ll know you’re not alone.

Eventually, you will hopefully move to the point that you can lie on your pillow at night and not only cry because they are gone, but also have some laughter at wonderful memories of your loved one. You cry until you laugh, then you laugh until you cry. And then comes rest. They rest. You rest - in peace.

Grief Goes to Camp

Put the word “grief” together with the word camp and the two appear, logically, mutually exclusive. Surely there is no fun to be had at a camp when a child is in the midst of grief! The Chameleon’s Journey™ camp has proven over and over again that calm and happiness *can* be restored to youth whose lives have been upset by the death of a parent, sibling, grandparent or other close relationship.

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region and its Kids Path™ program will host the 8th Annual Chameleon’s Journey overnight grief camp for children and teens ages 7 –



16, October 20-21, 2007 at Camp Thunderbird in Lake Wylie, South Carolina. The grief transforming camp is staffed with trained counselors and volunteers who team up with campers to provide a listening ear, compassion and a safe and caring environment which allows campers to gain strength and support from each other.



The camp is offered free of charge through the generosity of concerned individuals, organizations and area foundations. This and previous years’ camps have been sponsored by the Junior League of Charlotte. Donations are always welcome.

To receive an application, please call 704-335-4334 or visit the website, hpccr.org and click on Children’s Program/Chameleon’s Journey to download the application.

ANNOUNCING

Summer Grief Education Event

From Surviving to Thriving

Join us for a light summer breakfast and conversation.

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

9:30 AM -12:00 PM

7845 Little Avenue, South Charlotte

or

Thursday, August 16, 2007

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM

1420 East Seventh Street, Uptown Charlotte

Please call Janice Olive 704-335-4303 for reservations.

HPCCR SUPPORT GROUPS

The following groups are offered by Hospice and Palliative Care Charlotte Region for those grieving the death of a loved one.

Individual counseling is available upon request

Greater Charlotte Area

Uptown Support Group - Location: Groups meet in the Towlen Building, 1420 E. Seventh Street.
1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, Noon – 1:30 PM

Little Avenue Daytime Support Group - Location: HPCCR South Charlotte Office
7845 Little Avenue, Charlotte
1st Tuesday of each month, 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Little Avenue Evening Support Group - Location: HPCCR South Charlotte Office
7845 Little Avenue, Charlotte, NC
1st Wednesday of each month, 6:00 PM

Grief Support Group - Location: Providence Presbyterian Church,
10140 Providence Church Road, Charlotte,
1st and 3rd Monday of each month, 10:30 AM – Noon

Men's Support Group - Location: HPCCR South Charlotte Office
7845 Little Avenue, Charlotte,
1st Monday of each month, 7:00 – 8:00 PM

South Support Group - Location: the Well of Hope Church,
220 Main Street, Pineville
1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Let's Do Lunch - Location: The Olive Garden Restaurant, 9421 Pineville – Matthews Road
4th Wednesday of each month at 11:30 AM

Lake Norman

Hospice Lake Norman - Location: The Lake Norman office,
705 Griffith Street, Suite 203, Davidson
4th Monday of each month, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Lincoln County

**Please contact Carol Lawler, M.Div., Chaplain/Grief Support Specialist
Hospice of Lincoln County, 704-736-0264 for days and times of current groups.**

Kids Path™ Groups

Teen Group - Please contact Mike Holliday, M.S.W., Social Worker/Grief Support Specialist
HPCCR, 704-335-3541 for days and times of current groups.

Parent's Grief Group - Location: HPCCR Towlen Building, 1420 E. Seventh Street, Charlotte
1st and 3rd Monday of each month, 7:00 – 8:30 PM

GRIEF EDUCATION

We serve Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union Counties in NC and York County in SC.



The following passage is from the book **HEALING AFTER LOSS: DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR WORKING THROUGH GRIEF**

by Martha Whitmore Hickman.

This highly recommended book is available at www.amazon.com or from area booksellers like Barnes & Noble, Border, or Joseph Beth Booksellers.

“We cannot re-create this world... We cannot even, truly, re-create ourselves. Only our behavior can we re-create, or create anew.” -Alice Walker

How can we move ourselves out of the valley of despondency into which grief is apt to plunge us?

Not by changing the fact of loss. We know better than to hope for that. Not by some sweeping act of will that shifts our spirit from sadness into acceptance and an eagerness to live again. We may have tried that, but it doesn't work: at best, we achieve a momentary change of heart, but it will not last.

There is a classic line of thought in Christian spirituality that says the way to test the validity of the faith is to act as though it is true, and see what happens.

In the same way, we can begin to act as though we have an investment in the future, as though we are rejoining our life's activities, and re-enjoying our life - our friends, our gardens, our music, our work - and see what happens. Thought for the Day: I will step back into the stream of life - and see what happens.

Individual Grief Counseling Sessions are available upon request at all offices.

For more information on grief support groups, grief education or to discuss your feelings and experiences with loss, call 704-335-4300. Office hours are Monday ~ Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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.

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