

Grief Matters

NEWSLETTER



Summer 2022 Edition

The question I'm asked most frequently is, "What will help me with my grief?" My response is usually a series of questions to learn more about the person asking. You see, there's no one answer to this question. Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprint. Still, there are things that might help. It's really a matter of trying some things, checking in with yourself and honoring your experience. This issue of *Grief Matters* offers perspectives from a variety of people who have walked the journey of grief. In our "Season of Grief" column, chaplain Phyllis reflects on how she continues to work with her own grief following the death of her parents. Chaplain Michelle writes about "what she really needs" and invites you to ask yourself that same question.

One thing that has helped many people in our community has been attending our *Grief Matters* forums. We offer a series of four fall, winter and spring programs each year. These programs are open to those who are grieving and those who want to be better equipped to be of support. The details for our fall series are included in this newsletter. We hope you'll consider joining us and inviting others in the community to attend also.

I hope this *Grief Matters* newsletter contains something that'll help you. Grief is hard. Your grief matters to us.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Bass".

Rebecca Bass
Bereavement Coordinator
Morton Plant Mease Hospitals



A Season of Grief

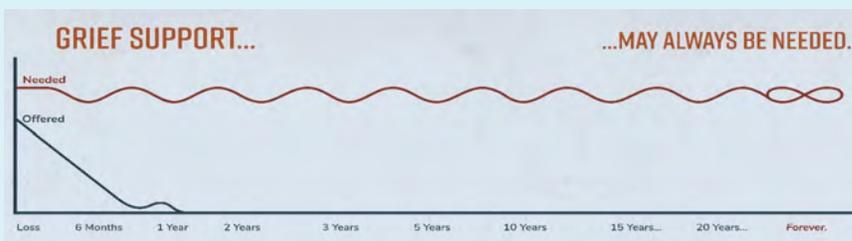
By Phyllis Shaughnessy, OSC, MA, BCC
Palliative Care Chaplain and Spiritual Care Coordinator,
Mease Dunedin Hospital

We had just come home from the hospital. Dad's cancer was terminal; nothing to be done, keep him comfortable. Mom was leaning up against the sink counter. They had been married 56 years. She was looking off into space; her body was sagging and yet rigid.

If I was hurting so much, how much more was she hurting? I wanted to comfort her, and I needed my mother. I asked how she was. She didn't look at me but said "When you first fall in love, you don't think of death, and if you do, you hope that you'll go first, so not to lose the one you love, to have this pain. Now we've shared life. I hoped that he would go first, and he wouldn't have to live this pain."

As I continued to ask, "What's best for my parents?"; I got directions. And after their deaths, a few months apart, I've continued to ask the question, but it has changed into "What would they want for me? What have they taught me?" Our relationship continues to live on in me and my siblings. I live with the swirl of emotions, and I've gradually learned to focus on the strongest emotion and then move to the next. I walk in nature to clear my head. I journal, which helps get things outside of myself and allows me to see what's going on in the middle of the chaos in my mind and heart. Talking to friends who knew my parents and to my siblings who have some very different memories than me also helps. Talking to my parents as if they're sitting physically right beside me. Writing letters to them, enjoying music that we shared, helps.

What helps you?



Coping with Grief

Coping with grief is a deeply personal journey. What works for one person may not work for another. So how do you know what will help you? At WhatsYourGrief.com, coping is defined as "active efforts to master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress."

One way of coping is to learn more about the grieving process. This can help us understand what's happening. Another way is to talk with others who have training and experience working with grief. This can help us feel less alone. And certainly, having a supportive, caring community, even virtually, helps us grow around our grief. You'll find all three of these types of support in our new *Grief Matters* Community Forums, led by our experienced team.

As you explore what helps you to cope, ask yourself:

- What has worked in the past?
- What am I open to trying?
- What things do I enjoy or find meaning in?

Exploring activities that boost positive emotions will lead to more energy to deal with grief. Take some time to brainstorm activities you've found enjoyable in the past. Make a list, then give yourself permission to do what you believe might just help.

From WhatsYourGrief.com:

"It's essential to find ways to cope with the thoughts, experiences and emotions directly related to your loss. However, it's equally important to engage in coping that promotes adjustment and overall well-being. The better you feel, the more strength you'll have for dealing with grief."

Grief Matters Community Forums

Join us for this online educational series addressing topics central to the experience of grief. The presentations are offered with daytime and evening options. You can attend single events or the series.

Understanding Grief: An Introduction

This forum will focus on types of grief, the grief timeline and the uniquely personal ways individuals experience grief.

Tuesday, September 27, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, September 28, 12–1pm

Love and Loss: Sorting Through the Feelings

Grief is a whole range of emotions that have physical, emotional and spiritual consequences. Learn helpful strategies to cope with your grief.

Tuesday, October 11, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, October 12, 12–1pm

What Helps? Finding and Providing Support

From those who have experienced grief, learn what might be helpful and what might not be.

Tuesday, October 25, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, October 26, 12–1pm

The Ripple Effect: Exploring Secondary Losses

Recognizing that many losses can follow a death, including loss of hopes, dreams, relationships, finances and more, is an important part of the grieving process.

Tuesday, November 8, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, November 9, 12–1pm

Register in advance:

mpmbereavement@baycare.org or (727) 462-7995



grief
Resource Corner



Ted Talks can be excellent resources. One that may be particularly helpful is by Dr. Lucy Hone, entitled “Three Secrets of Resilient People.” Dr. Hone also has a new book entitled “Resilient Grieving.” This is what she says about her work: *“This book aims to help you relearn your world, to help you navigate the grieving process as best you can—without hiding from your feelings or denying the reality, or significance, of your loss.”*



“And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed.”

-Dr. Maya Angelou

Morton Plant Hospital

A Division of Morton Plant Hospital
Association, Inc.
300 Pinellas St.
Clearwater, FL 33756

To receive this newsletter digitally and to connect with us for online programs, email mpmbereavement@baycare.org.
This newsletter is published quarterly by the Spiritual Care department at Morton Plant Mease hospitals
and is made possible with the generous support of Morton Plant Mease Health Care Foundation.

Speaking of Grief

By Michelle Mehan, MAPT, BCC, Morton Plant North Bay Hospital

What I Really Need

None of us are immune from grief. I'm still learning and will always be learning about grief. Some days I'm better at being with my own or another's grief. Grief is a constant learning process.

I'm asked, "How can I help my friend, family member or colleague in their grief?" The question is complex and doesn't have an easy answer. I'll share what can be helpful. Once the funeral, memorial service or celebration of life is over, the real work of grief begins. People go back to their lives, but the world for the one grieving is forever different.

What has helped me as I grieve the loss of my loved one is the ability to talk about the person. More often than not, I want to share a story or feeling. I know it can be awkward and hard to be around me as I grieve; however, I find it especially comforting to share. Here's a list of other ways you can show support:

- Check in with the person by text, phone call or email.
- Acknowledge a significant date, a birthday or anniversary. These can be difficult days for those left behind.

- Be ready to listen. Invite them, even if they say "no" numerous times. Give them the opportunity to go, and they will, when they're ready.
- Bring food, help with home chores and offer to run errands.
- Spend some time with this question: What might you or those you care about really need right now?

