

Grief Matters

It's been a long time coming. One of the greatest challenges for those who are grieving losses in the past year has been the delay in family gatherings, memorial services and celebrations of life. These have been replaced by Zoom gatherings or nothing at all, as placing memorial markers and opportunities to gather for mutual support have been sidelined by social distancing.

And now, it seems restrictions are lifting, and people are gathering. I've had conversations with people who are now, at last, laying loved ones to rest, sharing stories in person, placing memorial markers as family gathers. Most report a sense of closure and peace which comes from these times of remembrance in the company of those they love.

In this issue's *Matters of Grief* column, we'll explore what grief expert Dr. Alan Wolfelt (CenterForLoss.com) says about gatherings and ceremonies. Perhaps the wisdom he shares will prompt you to consider planning a gathering or to reflect on the meaning and purpose of prior gatherings.

Chaplain Blair Holtey tells us about his own early experience of gathering for a tender goodbye in our *Seasons of Grief* column. In our Grief Resource Corner, I'll point you to more resources from Dr. Alan Wolfelt. In the *Grief Matters* programming column, we'll preview upcoming programs. In *Speaking of Grief*, read about some ways to remember your loved ones.

As we've said before, there isn't an orderly timeline for grief but there are some practices that can help along the way. I hope you'll find some of what we offer personally helpful.

Most sincerely,



Rebecca Bass
Bereavement Coordinator
Morton Plant Mease Hospitals





Are We There Yet?

By Blair Holtey, MDiv, NACC
Chaplain, Mease Countryside Hospital

Are we there yet? That's the question one might have heard while growing up, traveling in the family station wagon. The youngsters used it, as they had no concept of time. As we grew older, we said it sarcastically! However, it took on new meaning later in life.

I was about 10 years old when I experienced the death of a pet hamster, Peaches. Friends who had climbed to the inner sanctum of the old tree house in "The Maple" over the past few years had gotten to know Peaches. To mourn his death, I put Peaches in a decorated shoe box and buried him in the back wooded lot next to the maple tree. The neighboring kids, members of the tree house gang, were given a time and location to pay their respects. Friends brought some form of plant, treats or object to Peaches' burial. I said the opening and closing prayers and invited the kids to say something. Until that pet funeral occurred, it seemed to feel like forever, having to wait for that gang to get together to mourn the death of our old furry friend.

As I look back at each aspect of that pet funeral, I now realize how much the exercise of these rubrics, symbols and rituals would one day help me and others get through our grief; the waiting to be "there." Simple acts. Profound effects.

A Litany of Remembrance

By Rabbi Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of
winter, **we remember them.**

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of
spring, **we remember them.**

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth
of summer, **we remember them.**

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty
of autumn, **we remember them.**

In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are
now a part of us, **as we remember them.**



grief Resources Corner

Matters of Grief: The “Whys” of Ritualized Goodbyes

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, director of the Center for Loss (CenterForLoss.com), is a leading grief specialist and educator. His respected model of care invites “companioning” rather than “treating” mourners. His Center for Loss and Life Transition in Colorado offers valuable resources and can be accessed at CenterForLoss.com. Dr. Wolfelt is a sought-after speaker whose compassionate, story-sharing approach brings comfort.



Dr. Wolfelt offers these reasons why funerals and memorial gatherings are so important to the grieving process:

- Having a memorial service leads to greater acceptance of the reality of the loss. Even if a service has been delayed, planning a gathering to express beliefs, thoughts and feelings about the death of someone we love can be healing.
- Funerals and memorial services provide a place for those gathered to remember and share memories with others. Social support is an important way to be present to those who are mourning.
- Dr. Wolfelt says, “Funerals may be about the person who died, but they’re for the living. A good funeral or memorial puts you on the path to good grief and healthy mourning.”
- Memorials help us remember and reconnect with what’s most meaningful in life. Bonds with family members and friends are strengthened. The best funerals remind us how to live.

“Grief is not a disease. Instead, it’s the normal, healthy process of embracing the mystery of the death of someone loved. If mourners see themselves as active participants in their healing, they will experience a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life.”

~Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Grief Matters Community Forums

Forums will return in Fall 2021. These forums draw material from SpeakingGrief.com and offer the opportunity for participants to learn about grief and to connect with others. Topics covered in the Community Forums include:

- Grief as a natural response to loss
- Supporting grief
- Love and loss: Sorting through the feelings
- Secondary losses

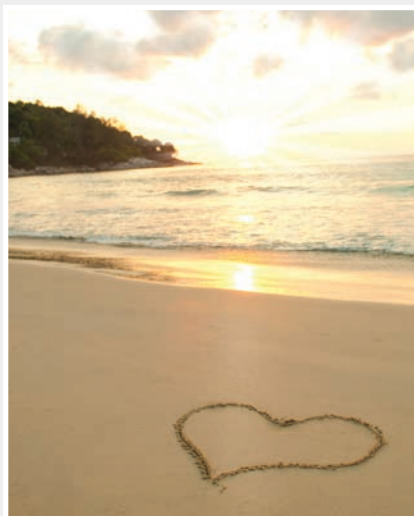
Chaplains from the Spiritual Care team serve as presenters. For more information, email mpmbereavement@baycare.org or call (727) 462-7995.

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Speaking of Grief

By Michelle Mehan, Palliative Care Chaplain, MAPT, ACC, Morton Plant North Bay Hospital

Every aspect of our lives has been affected by COVID-19. Events were postponed. Rituals that mark significant events such as memorials were delayed. Here are some ways you can honor your loved one:

- Plant a tree or bush
- Cook their favorite meal
- Make a quilt with an article of their clothing
- Place a candle and picture in a prominent place
- Play their favorite music or make a playlist
- Create a memory book
- Watch their favorite movie
- Host a get-together around their favorite sports team or hobby
- Share stories with family and friends
- Wear their favorite color

Remember there's no right or perfect way to navigate how you grieve. Do what makes sense for you and is a fitting tribute to your loved one. You matter. Your grief matters.

