

Grief Matters



Winter 2022

My inclination as this new year begins is to wish you a “Happy New Year.” But perhaps that should go on the list of things *not to say* to someone who’s grieving. Instead, let me acknowledge the challenges of the passage of time, especially as “special days” roll around year after year. In this issue of *Grief Matters*, in this new year, we’ll be acknowledging and offering support for the challenging relationship with time that grief poses. Time rolls on and the living carry on, marking this new year of “after moments,” one day at a time, one moment at a time. Special days - birthdays, anniversaries, dates of death, and other “before moments” pack a punch. In our *Seasons of Grief* column, chaplain Linda VanPutte reflects on the pain of anniversaries of loss as she continues to notice and name her own grief.

We’re here to walk with you this new year. Consider attending our series of *Grief Matters* Community Forums intended to support those who are grieving and those who want to be of support. One recent participant shared, “I found this program very helpful for my own personal growth and healing.” We hope you will too.

Perhaps you’re looking for some ways to help navigate special days as you move through your own journey with grief. Chaplain Michelle Mehan shares some practical, real-life possibilities in her *Speaking of Grief* column. No matter where you find yourself as the calendar pages reveal a new year ahead, know that your grief matters to us and that we’re here to assist you along the way.

There will be happy days in the year ahead and sad ones too. I wish you a new year of healing and hope.

Most sincerely,

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

Rebecca Bass
Bereavement Coordinator
Morton Plant Mease Hospitals



Grief Takes Time...(Let it!)



A Season of Grief

Linda VanPutte, PCHAC-BCC, Palliative Care Chaplain,
Mease Countryside Hospital

November 22 marked the 27th anniversary of my mother's death. She was 61 years young when she died. When I see pictures of friends celebrating anniversaries on social media, I smile for them. Yet, in my heart I feel the pain, anniversaries revive that loss.

My mother passed on November 22, a day that will always be remembered in the United States, as it marks President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Stories are written each November 22 of lost hopes and dreams of a promising young president. Important stories to hear on this somber anniversary.

These stories illuminate my personal loved one's anniversary. My heart mourns the love my mother had for her family and community. She had an ability to give to others when she had nothing to give. She had a listening heart, kind words and relationships never formed with her grandchildren. Tears are shed. Tears that bring a smile as I remember the love she had for family, friends and the community.

It's said grief is a journey - a journey of twisted paths. After 27 anniversaries, I continue to travel the winding paths of grief. Life moves forward, at times at a snail's pace and others at lightning speed. My mother is always with me. On this anniversary, I paused to permit myself to feel the pain of her death and remember her love.

Blessings to each of you as I reflect on my grief anniversary. My hope for you is when you find yourself experiencing a grief anniversary, you take a moment to pause and care for yourself.



In My Heart

(source unknown)

I thought of you today but that is
nothing new.

I thought about you yesterday and
days before that too.

I think of you in silence. I often speak
your name.

Now all I have are memories and your
picture in a frame.

Your memory is my keepsake with
which I'll never part.

God has you in good keeping.
I have you in my heart.



grief
Resource Corner

What's Your Grief?

The website WhatsYourGrief.com is all about grief. Their mission is to "promote grief education, exploration and expression in both practical and creative ways."

Explore resources related to understanding and coping with grief and loss, guidance on how to help a grieving friend or family member, podcasts and blogs, and online courses, all in a supportive virtual community.

Grief Matters Community Forums - Winter 2021

Join us for an online educational series addressing topics central to the experience of grief. The same program is offered with daytime and evening options.



Understanding Grief: An Introduction

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

Tuesday, February 15, 6:30-7:30pm

Wednesday, February 16, 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, March 1, 6:30-7:30pm

Wednesday, March 2, 12-1pm

What Helps? Finding and Providing Support

Learn from those who have experienced grief what might be helpful and what might not be.

Tuesday, March 15, 6:30-7:30pm

Wednesday, March 16, 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, March 29, 6:30-7:30pm

Wednesday, March 30, 12-1pm

Register in advance by emailing mpmbereavement@baycare.org or calling (727) 462-7995. You may attend single events or the series. This program is offered virtually using Microsoft Teams. Technical assistance is provided. This program is free to participants and open to all.

A Thousand Grievs

By Grief Matters program participant Tricia Schachtel

As I move through life, especially as I age,
I'm learning from grief, my spirit can rage
In processing the loss, I can sink pretty low,
Great patience is needed, for this journey is slow
It happens in stages, and what works for me,
Commit it to pages, and then set it free
From the loss off the menu, a favorite now past,
I'm thankful I had it, the memory may last
The loss of a loved one can hardly compare
That grief comes in waves, no way to prepare
It starts with deep sadness, resistant sharp pain
I test out my balance, my ground to regain
When I can be grateful for what I did have,
It soothes all my feelings, like a loving warm salve
What works is a process of intense letting go
A silent, deep thank you, a release with a bow
A thousand griefs, some large and some small,
With one common way to process them all



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TO:

To receive this newsletter digitally and to connect with us for online programs, email mpmbereavement@baycare.org. This *Grief Matters* 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



The holidays are over and perhaps you feel a sense of relief. Society quickly moves on to the next thing. New Year resolutions, getting organized, getting fit, getting on with things and there you are trying to process and figure out how to move on. Your grief over the one you lost is still with you.

There's no right way to process your grief, however there are ways that are healthier, especially on days that mark special events and milestones for the one you're grieving. These "special days" sometimes sneak up on you or sometimes you're anticipating them for weeks to come. Either way, here are some things that you can do to mark the special day:

- Connect with a mutual friend and share memories
- Do an activity that your loved one enjoyed
- Have one of their favorite foods
- Write a letter to them and tell them how you're doing

Special dates are unique to you. Honor them, cherish them, be present in your feelings. People won't know it's a special date unless you tell them. Choosing to share your loved one's death anniversary is your choice. Know that there are people willing to listen and journey with you. A friend, counselor or spiritual leader can be a great support during these times. May you find ways that bring you peace and comfort as you honor your loved one and your grief.

