

## Pathways Perspectives on Grief and Loss

NEWSLETTER



### WHEN A PARENT DIES

*Move to the front/ of the line/ a voice says, and suddenly/ there is nobody/ left standing between you/ and the world, to take/ the first blows/ on their shoulders.*  
The Death of a Parent, Linda Pastan

The death of a parent in childhood is a life changing event. It may have direct financial implications resulting in change of residence and/or school. The entire family undergoes change. The surviving parent and children attempt to restore a sense of balance and stability in their family that temporarily feels unstable and vulnerable. Roles and responsibilities are redistributed. For a child, some of the changes are less visible. There is a kind of loss of innocence, as they experience a new world in which death exists and try to understand themselves in the face of loss.

The death of a parent for an adult holds many of the same challenges; perhaps not as directly, as an adult is usually not financially dependent on a parent and lives an independent life. However, when a parent dies, adult families are challenged to create balance that is disturbed by the absence of a central parent figure. Adult siblings may not agree on how to resolve important decisions. There may be variations in styles and ways of expressing grief that make communication more difficult, while each person struggles to deal individually with loss.

When you lose a parent at any age, you lose your "roots"; the family history that is carried by our parents. It may mean the physical loss of the family home, as well as sorting and distributing of personal belongings and financial holdings. Often it is our parents who are the center or glue that holds a family together. Who then will fill that role, if anyone? And how will these important decisions be made?

These are some important things to consider when negotiating all the changes that take place after a parent's death:

- Be close enough to be supportive but far enough apart to respect each other's grief journey and accept different ways of grieving.
- Be flexible in the reorganization of the family and the reallocation of the functions and roles the deceased parent played.
- Communicate openly and be supportive of one another.

As an adult, the death of your parent brings you face to face with your own mortality. The buffer of the preceding generation is gone and the idea that "someday I too will die" becomes a reality. The death of the second parent may leave you feeling "orphaned". It is not only the 30, 40, 50 year old who grieves, it is also the "child" inside, at 5, 10 or 15 that grieves

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### OUR MISSION

*Honoring every moment of life, Pathways Hospice provides compassionate, excellent, comprehensive care for those who have an advanced medical condition and those who are grieving.*

### OUR VALUES

*We honor life through: Compassion, Respect, Integrity, Excellence, Stewardship*

### GREEN EFFORTS

*To reduce our impact on the environment and support your preferences, we now offer email in addition to paper-based communication. If you wish to switch to email communications, or be removed from the mailing list, please visit [www.pathways-care.org](http://www.pathways-care.org) and click "Green Efforts". Thank you!*

week creative workshop held at Pathways Hospice, Sacred Spaces. In this workshop participants use found objects, unique personal mementos, photos, and other ephemera to create a sacred space that holds their varying experiences of loss.

*Submitted by Taylor Siemon  
Grief Counselor and Art Therapist at  
Pathways Hospice*

#### NEW BOOKS AT PATHWAYS HOSPICE LIBRARY

The Pathways Hospice library has over 1000 books mostly concerning grief and the death and dying experience. Books are available for check-out for all members of the community including clients, family, staff and volunteers. We have been busy purchasing new books for the library and have designated a "New Books Shelf" so that you can easily find the new books

selected or suggested by staff and volunteers. Examples include:

#### **After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal**

By Margo Requarth. 155.937 Re

#### **Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking**

By David Bayles and Ted Orland. 745. New

#### **Creative Wildfire: An Introduction to Art Journaling - Basics and Beyond**

By LK Ludwig. 745.5 New, 2010

#### **Please Dance at My Funeral**

By Judith Haynes. 155.937 Ha, 2010

#### **Raising Spirits: Stories of Suffering and Comfort at Death's Door**

By Michael Goldberg. 362.0 Go, 2010

#### **Voices of Strength: Sons and Daughters of Suicide Speak Out**

By Judy Zions Fox and Mia Roldan. 362.284 Fo, 2008

#### **Walking In Their Shoes: Communicating with loved ones who have Alzheimer's disease**

By Michael Krauthamer. 649.8 New, 2010



## WHEN A PARENT DIES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the loss of their parent. As Mariel Hemingway reflected, "Once my parents were gone, I realized it was time to grow up. A big part of me was still a little girl."

No matter when you lose your parents, it is always too soon. It doesn't matter how old you are; it hurts. There are ways in which you miss your parents for the rest of your life. The missing may come at the most unexpected times, a time of year, a holiday or in difficult times. Perhaps that is the very time when their memory, values or even words can be a source of comfort and solace.

## SHOULD I ATTEND A SUPPORT GROUP

"When I counsel bereaved people, they frequently ask if I think they would benefit from a support group. I answer the question with one of my own: What do you expect to gain?"—Kenneth J. Doka, PhD.

Over the past several decades, people have found support groups to be helpful in dealing with a vast array of issues. In fact, if you type "support groups" into Google, you get over three million web sites! We, at Pathways for Grief and Loss, have found support groups to be very beneficial to thousands of bereaved individuals and we have worked hard to create multiple support group experiences to benefit bereaved persons.

Our grief counselors are commonly asked the question if a bereaved person should attend a support group. What we can share with you is what thousands of bereaved individuals have gained from attending one of our many support groups over the years. At the conclusion of every support group, we ask participating members to complete an evaluation of their experience. One of the questions in this evaluation is, "What did you gain from this group experience?" These are the three most common responses we receive from participants:

- "I am not alone." The experience of grief can be so isolating. Support groups can help us get "outside of ourselves" for a time and see that others are having similar feelings and experiences.
- "I am not losing my mind." Many people in support groups find great comfort in hearing that the enormity of their feelings, pain, and experience is normal. The experience of grief can create such abnormal behaviors and feelings in an individual; yet it is comforting to hear the experiences of others and realize that their experience is actually normal.
- "Everyone grieves differently AND I am learning how I need to grieve this loss." Just as every person in a support group is unique, every group member will grieve in a unique way. People gain the perspective and permission to allow themselves to grieve in a way that is unique to them. Likewise, just as no two relationships are exactly the same; no two losses will be grieved in the same way. Support groups create a space for people to receive and give the grace to grieve.

Unfortunately, the one thing that no group member has ever received from attending a support group is a magical spell that can make the pain of their grief disappear. However, there is healing power when like-minded individuals join together to support one another. Support is experienced by both giving and receiving from one another reaffirming an ancient truth that in helping others, we help ourselves. If you are experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, Pathways for Grief and Loss offers several support groups, support literature, and counseling services to help you through your unique grieving process. It is our hope that these services will help you to gain in your life what so many others have gained in theirs.

### The Door

What if I came to a door?  
Through it, all my worries would be gone.  
Like walking into another life.  
I could start all over.  
Would I go through?  
Would I make a fresh start?  
Write a new chapter?  
Sketch on the blank page?  
I have to say, I would not.  
My life may be uncomfortable  
But there's a peculiar familiarity.  
There are the same people.  
There is the same work.  
A home with the same responsibilities.  
And settled overhead is the haze of grief.  
The grief one only knows with the loss of a parent.  
The grief that changes everything that never changes.  
The unpredictability has become predictable.  
And life acquires a grayish tint.  
But should I cross that threshold,  
The number of new beginnings matters little  
Because all lives lived with love  
Will experience the pain, confusion, and hurt of loss.  
There are not enough doors  
To pass through life unscathed.  
Nor do I want to seek them  
And lose the lessons I have gained.

—Dana Wilks  
(Dana participated in the Writing Through Loss group. Her poem is included in *Canceling the Milk*, published in 2005 by Pathways.)

### PATHWAYS FOR GRIEF AND LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS AND EVENTS, FALL 2011

Space is limited. Advance registration and fee required, unless otherwise noted. Please call 663-3500.

All groups meet at 305 Carpenter Road in Fort Collins unless otherwise noted.

#### On Our Own

Ongoing discussion group for people who are adjusting to life after the death of a spouse.

■ Meets Monthly, every 2nd Wednesday 6:30 PM

September 14

October 12

November 9

December 14

Facilitated by Lani Hickman

This group, no fee, no registration required.

#### Writing Through Loss

Persons who have experienced a loss have an opportunity to honor loss, gain insight into their grieving, and take care of themselves by writing. No need to have any writing experience, just a willingness to explore grief in words. Group is co-facilitated by a hospice grief counselor and Veronica Patterson, creative writing teacher and poet.

■ Tuesday Evenings 7 - 9 PM

September 13 - November 1

\$100.00

#### Kids, Horses and Healing

A Therapeutic Riding Retreat for Bereaved Children and Teens at Hearts & Horses Therapeutic Riding Center, Loveland

■ Sunday October 2

Please call Janet Severance for registration information at 970-663-3500.

#### Sacred Spaces

A Creative Arts Workshop on making Memorials using Collage & Assemblage Techniques.

In this unique six week workshop, you will have the opportunity to honor, remember, and memorialize your loved one by creating a sacred space to "hold" the varying experiences of love and loss. With the support of trained art therapists/grief counselors within the context of a small group of fellow grievers, we hope this workshop provides some much needed nourishment, connection, and inspiration for the path you are on. There is no need for previous art experience, just a willingness to explore your innate creativity and expression. You will be invited to incorporate your own found objects and unique personal mementos and photos into your sacred space. All other art materials will be provided.

■ Tuesday Evenings 6 - 8 PM

September 13- October 18

\$90 (includes materials)

Please call Amanda Hillman for registration information at 970-663-3500.

#### Grief Buddies

Pathways for Grief and Loss will offer a grief support group for children ages 6-12. The group is designed for children who have experienced the death of a significant loved one in their life. Grief Buddies will provide an opportunity for bereaved children to come together and learn that they are not alone. The focus will be on special memories of loved ones and several projects are planned to help them express and capture some of their most treasured memories.

■ Thursday Evenings 5 - 6:30 PM

October 13, 20, 27, & November 3

Please call Janet Severance for registration information at 970-663-3500.

#### The Mourning After

Adult Grief Support Group

Our grief journey can send us on a steep learning curve in which the support of others can be invaluable. Finding mutual support is helpful for restoration and healing, even for those of us who do not usually join groups! This 6 week group helps us develop new understandings and skills to not only cope with the difficulties that we may face on our journey, but also to ultimately take advantage of the opportunities that grief and loss may offer to us. Each week we will focus on a particular theme. We will connect in a safe space, share stories, and learn about the adjustment process, the impact of secondary losses, how grief impacts our family, and making meaning and transforming our loss. Please join us for this rich experience.

■ Monday Evenings 6:30 - 8 PM

October 13 - November 7

\*\*\$60.00

\*\*Pathways Hospice families are exempt from registration fee for \*\*these groups only, but may donate the fee.

#### Surviving the Holidays After the Death of a Loved One

A presentation for bereaved persons providing ideas to navigate the holiday season. The holidays, especially the first year after the death of a loved one, can be very difficult. You may find yourself asking many questions about approaching the season. Do I make changes or try to keep things the same as before? Would it help to escape to somewhere else? There is no right or wrong answers to these questions. Come and hear some suggestions for consideration at the following presentation:

■ Thursday December 1, 1 - 2:30 PM

Also:

■ Thursday December 1, 7 - 8:30 PM

No fee, no registration required.

#### BOOK REVIEW

##### Crafting Personal Shrines

By Carol Owen

Crafting Personal Shrines is an informative beginner-friendly introduction to the craft of "shrining." Carol Owen provides easy-to-follow directions to create a basic

shrine form she calls a "spirit house." Seven projects are outlined using variations on dimensions of this basic shrine structure which can be adapted and personalized to suit your needs. No experience with woodworking or access to power tools is necessary, as all projects are constructed using foam-core or balsa wood.

In addition to simple and adaptable directions, the vibrant gallery of work offers a rich source of creative inspiration. Enshrining memories, legacies, and mementos serves as a meaningful way to memorialize both life and loss. This book would be a useful companion to the six

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