

Pathways Hospice®

Community Care for Northern Colorado

Pathways Perspectives on Grief and Loss

N E W S L E T T E R



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 and click "Green Efforts". Thank you!

ADULT SIBLING LOSS

"The sibling relationship is more complex than nearly any other, a mixture of affection and ambivalence, camaraderie and competition. Aside from your parents there is simply no one else on earth who knows you better.... unlike your parents, your siblings are people you assume will be part of your life for the rest of your life too." ~T.J. Wray



As grief counselors, we are drawing from our personal and professional experience with sibling loss which gives us a unique perspective as we work with bereaved individuals. Because of this dual perspective, we wanted to share with you some of our observations and research we have done into this often under-acknowledged grief.

Of all the risk factors affecting grief, one of the most complex is the death of a child regardless of the age of the parents or the child that dies. Children are not "supposed" to die before their parents; therefore, surviving siblings may find themselves consoling their parents, setting aside their own grief to provide support and direction for them.

In *Surviving the Death of a Sibling*, T.J. Wray says, "When an adult sibling dies before his or her parents, the remaining siblings must not only deal with their own grief; they must also help their parents cope with losing their child, precisely when they may be least equipped to help anyone."

When an adult loses a sibling, the family structure and dynamics are forever

changed—very often families do not realize the imbalance that has resulted. Family members may find themselves in unconscious struggles to regain balance to the way the family functioned prior to the death. For example, with the loss of an older sibling, the second child may be expected to fill their shoes and perform a role that is unfamiliar and uncharacteristic for them. If family members are not aware of this process, there can be much family conflict.

The grief related to adult sibling loss may be prolonged due to multiple factors and responses that affect grief. Along with providing support to parents, there may be a surviving spouse or children of the deceased which may take attention away from the surviving sibling's grief. Symptoms of shock and survivor guilt may also complicate grief with consequential denial that may result as a way to cope with the unfathomable death of a sibling. This may strain the potential for communication and support of family members for each other.

Because of the family hierarchy of grief, perhaps giving more importance to

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ADULT SIBLING LOSS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the grief of the parents, the loss may be trivialized and the surviving sibling may feel that his or her grief is not valid. The natural tendency to attend to parental grief before our own disrupts our ability to care for ourselves as we would if the loss were not our sibling. In our work and social circles, we are often praised for caring for our parents and our loss may not be acknowledged. Some of this information may be seen in other types of complicated grief situations. Society often fails to recognize the depth and complexity of loss.

Wray comments in her book that there is little written to address this subject and we found this to be true. Aside from Wray's book,

most of what is written is geared toward younger children and the death of a sibling.

Grieving is an individual process; therefore, there is no limit on the timeframe for addressing grief. In our experience, bringing awareness to the issue of sibling loss is one of the first steps in caring for yourself. You may find that it has been years since your loss and are in the midst of family or internal struggles that are possibly related to the loss. This is not uncommon and we want you to know that Pathways for Grief and Loss services are available with support literature and counseling services to help you sort through this difficult loss.

Written by Margaret Hartsook, grief counselor and art therapist and Renee Baker, grief counselor

RESOURCES:

SURVIVING THE DEATH OF A SIBLING: Living Through Grief When an Adult Brother or Sister Dies. By T.J. Wray

Grief Is..., a booklet published by Pathways Hospice

Pathways Hospice Grief Support Groups
www.pathways-care.org

Pathways Hospice Grief Counseling (970) 663-3500

www.adultsiblinggrief.com

EXPLORATIONS: EXPRESSING GRIEF IN WORDS, FORM AND MUSIC

Letting our stories out is a way we begin to understand our struggles and reconcile them.

—Charles Garfield

When we are grieving the death of a loved one there is often a desire to share our stories of loss. We may look for new ways to "tell" these stories when literal speech is not enough. It is then that we turn to the arts as a means of expression. The Explorations Retreat offers a unique opportunity for bereaved persons to explore writing, visual art, music and movement as ways of expressing grief.

This year's Explorations Retreat will be held on Friday May 6th and Saturday May 7th at Pathways Hospice, 305 Carpenter Road. Those attending the two day retreat will have an opportunity to use writing, visual art, music and movement in new ways as expressive outlets for their emotions and thoughts. Activities range from playful to more serious, all with the intent of offering new insights into your own unique grief experience. Participants may discover personal resources and learn what their loss can teach them. The retreat schedule will include a variety of creative experiences as opportunities for reflection, insight and expression. No prior experience with any of

the art forms is necessary, just an interest, willing spirit and openness to discovery.

The facilitators and counselors for Explorations include: art therapists, Margaret Hartsook and Amanda Hillman; creative writing teacher and poet Veronica Patterson; music therapist, Keisha Davis; dance choreographer, Judy Bejarano and grief counselor, Nancy Jakobsson.

If you would like more information about Explorations, please call Pathways Hospice (663-3500) and ask to speak to any grief counselor.

(See registration form below)

Explorations Registration - *Space is limited to 24 participants. The fee for the retreat, including lunch on both days, morning and afternoon snacks, small and large group sessions, and materials is \$85. Registration Deadline: April 29, 2011*

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ City and State, Zip: _____

Name of deceased: _____ Date of death: _____

Your relationship to deceased: _____

Method of Payment: Check (payable to Pathways Hospice) Visa Master Card

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date. _____ Signature: _____

Return to: Pathways for Grief and Loss, 305 Carpenter Rd., Fort Collins, CO 80525

WALKING GRIEF: A PATH OF STORIES AND POEMS

Walking Grief: A Path of Stories and Poems is our current publication. It includes selections of writing from participants in the writing group during the past six years. The group members have lost children, spouses, siblings, grandparents and friends. The poetry and stories represent the experiences of bereaved persons learning to live with their loss, sorting through memories and finding new ways of connecting to their loved ones who have died. Alla Renee Bozarth states, "As no love is the same, no loss is." Each selection represents a uniquely personal story written in a time of grief; yet, the stories have the capacity to touch that which is common to all of us when we enter a period of personal loss.

Books are available for a cost of \$10.00 at Pathways Hospice or online at www.Pathways-care.org. Proceeds from the sale of *Walking Grief* will go to support the expressive therapies at Pathways for Grief and Loss.



The following poem by Robin Williams can be found in *Walking Grief*.

Recipe for Working Through Grief

If you can,
Breathe
If you can breathe,
Cry
If you can cry,
Eat a little
If you can eat a little,
Sleep
If you can sleep,
Dream
If you can dream,
Dream of your loved one
If you can see him,
Pray
If you can pray,
Just breathe

Robin Williams

PATHWAYS FOR GRIEF AND LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS AND EVENTS, SPRING 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**

April 13: Journey through the Fog-Finding Your Way to a New Normal

May 11: Letting Go and Holding On-Is There Such a Thing as Graduation?

June 8: Walking Away From Grief-Allowing Yourself to Take an Emotional Vacation

Facilitated by Lani Hickman

This group, **no fee, no registration required.**

Newly Bereaved Group

Three-week group: Surviving the early days after loss; for grieving persons in the first months of grief.

■ **Wednesday evenings 6:30-8 PM**

May 11, 18, 15

June 15, 22, 29

**\$25.00

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

Mindful Grief Relief

As we grieve, how can we reduce our stress, handle our varying emotions and enhance our self-care? In this six week series, we will experience several different types of meditative or contemplative practices. We will explore gentle ways to turn everyday activities like eating a meal, waiting at a stop light or moving between tasks, into a de-stressing and life-enhancing moment in our day. Join us for this nurturing and supportive workshop.

■ **Tuesday Evenings 5-6:30 PM**

April 5 - May 10

\$50.00

Registration Required.

Grief Buddies

This spring 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.

■ **Tuesday Evenings 5-6:30 PM**

April 12, 19, 26, May 3

****\$40.00 first child, \$20.00 for each additional child (fee includes materials and snacks).**

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

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

Kids, Horses and Healing

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

■ **Sunday June 12**

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

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Summer Grief education Series

Pathways presents a series of topics on grief and loss. All sessions are open to the community including those grieving the death of a loved one, anyone providing support to the bereaved and those who want to learn more about the impact of grief in our lives. Persons interested may attend any or all of the sessions.

No fee, no registration required.

■ **Weekday Afternoons.**

Dates to be determined. Call Pathways for more information 663-3500.

BOOK REVIEW

Beloved on the Earth: 150 Poems of Grief and Gratitude

Edited by Jim Perlman, Deborah Cooper, Mara Hart and Pamela Mittlefehldt

Poetry has a way of slowing us down and asks for our full attention. Especially in a time of deep loss, words can console the grieving heart. A poem may bring solace and insight at a time when we feel lost and are searching for renewal and a sense of direction. This collection compiled by four friends, each mourning the deaths of loved ones and also providing comfort to others who are bereaved. The collection

includes poems for the loss of a child, parent, grandparent, spouse and friend. Some are meditations or reflections on death. The poems are written by well known and lesser known poets. Each poem, like each death, is unique and offers its own particular view of loss. *Beloved on Earth* can be a companion to the bereaved, a resource if searching for a poem to mark a memorial or a source of deeper understanding to the universal experience of loss and grief.

Submitted by Nancy Jakobsson, Director of Pathways for Grief and Loss
(This book is available in the Pathways Hospice library.)

