

# Living with Grief



# A Program of Caring

The mission of Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services is to provide and ensure meaningful and compassionate palliative (comfort) and end-of-life care.

As part of our program of service, we are committed to providing grief support and community education for anyone who wishes to participate.

**For additional information, please contact:**

## **The Grief Center**

**715-847-2703 or Toll Free 866-331-2467**



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# Symptoms of Grief

Most people who suffer a loss experience one or more of the following characteristics:

- An empty, hollow feeling in the stomach, and a loss of appetite
- A tightness in the throat and heaviness in the chest
- A weakness in the muscles and lack of energy
- A feeling, especially early on, that the loss is not real; that it didn't really happen
- Difficulty sleeping, and frequent dreams of their loved one
- A sense of the loved one's presence; sometimes "hearing" their voice or "seeing" their face; almost expecting the person to walk into the room
- Aimless wandering about the house; absent-mindedness and forgetfulness
- The need to keep busy; restless over activity
- A sense of loneliness and sadness
- Frequent tears and crying, often at unexpected times
- A sense of relief that the ordeal of dying and death is over
- A feeling of anger, sometimes directed toward the loved one for leaving them
- Feelings of guilt; a lot of "if only . . ." or "why didn't I . . .?"
- A feeling of anger or regret over what happened or did not happen in the relationship with the deceased
- A need to tell and retell the story of the loved one's dying and death
- The need to remember and share stories about the loved one and their relationship

# The Progression of Grief

Grief is challenging, difficult and at times exhausting. You will grieve in an individual and personal way. There is no pattern to follow, timetable to adhere to or model to measure yourself against. You own your grief, and what feels right to you is the right thing to do.

Some days you may feel that you are doing well, only to wake up the next morning and seemingly start the process from square one again. The goal is not to get over grief, but to live with it and to figure out a way to incorporate the loss into living and to keep your loved one alive in your memory.

## Suggestions

Grief is a healing process. It takes time and effort. Here are some suggestions that may be of help to you.

- Express your feelings in ways that are helpful to you. Give yourself permission to cry, alone or with others. Allow yourself to feel all feelings - sadness, joy, anger, relief, guilt, pain and helplessness.
- Talk about your grief. Share your thoughts and feelings with family and friends. If a friend gets tired of listening, find another who will listen.
- Do purposeful work that is meaningful to you. Take a break from your grief and do something fun - try to keep your sense of humor. See a movie, read a book, listen to your favorite music.
- Take care of yourself. At times it may be difficult to eat, sleep and exercise, but your body needs nourishment and rest. Drink plenty of water.

- Reach out to others. Old friends and new ones are an important part of our lives and our healing.
- Postpone major decisions. Give yourself some time before deciding to sell the house or change jobs.
- Make use of your faith. Your attitudes and values, as well as your religious beliefs and practices can play an important part in your healing.
- Get professional help if needed. If you decide that your grief is crippling you and interfering with your ability to function and enjoy your life, you may want to talk with a trained counselor.
- Participate in grief support activities. These activities are designed to help people with a normal grief process.
- Find a creative outlet to express your feelings, such as woodworking, art, photography, needle work, writing or scrapbooking.
- Write a letter to your loved one telling him or her how you feel.
- Honor the memory of your loved one by engaging in an activity or project he or she held dear.
- Start a new family tradition in your loved one's memory.
- Forgive yourself for real and imagined transgressions or missed opportunities.
- Be patient with your grief. Don't let others hurry you through your grief or tell you how you should feel.
- Above all else, **take care of yourself.**

# Children and Grief

- Children benefit from hearing truthful information appropriate for their age, relayed in a loving and supportive environment.
- Let the child talk, and actively listen to him or her. Encourage the child to ask questions and answer them honestly and directly.
- Given this information, children will be able to make decisions about going to the hospital, visiting a family member at home, attending a funeral.
- Any change in a child's world can trigger fear. It is important that they be told what is happening and how they will be cared for through the change.
- Frequent reassurances, comfort and nurturing, and a consistent routine help relieve distress.
- Talk about your loved one. These conversations can be therapeutic and reinforce the healing power of memories.
- Symbolic play, drawings and stories can encourage the expression of feelings.
- Physical activity, laughter and talking help a child to maintain a healthy balance and find the energy to cope.
- Children will model the behaviors of the adults in their world.

# Hope

There is always reason to hope. Feeling hopeless can make it difficult to cope with change and face the challenges of each day.

- We can hope that the treatment being given to our loved one will ease pain and reduce symptoms.
- We can hope for a good day.
- We can hope for a peaceful death.
- We can hope that others will understand and be there for us.
- We can hope that we will find the strength to go on.
- We can hope that our memories will sustain us.
- We can hope that reinvesting in life will help us fulfill the dreams our loved one had for us.
- We can hope that we can make it one day at a time.



# Support Groups

If you would like to speak to someone about your grief, please contact:

## **The Grief Center**

**715-847-2703 or Toll Free 866-331-2467**

The following is a listing of grief support opportunities. Please contact the Grief Center regarding specific dates and times the following groups meet.

For additional information regarding specific programs, please call the person listed as the “contact.” If there isn’t a name listed, please call The Grief Center.

## **Annual Family Memorial Art**

An art project for children and their families to memorialize a loved one.

**Contact:** *Woodson Art Museum at 715-845-7010 or The Grief Center at 715-847-2703.*

## **Annual Memorial Program**

Time to pause, reflect and remember loved ones.

**Contact:** *The Grief Center at 715-847-2703.*



## Live First, Grieve Second

Understanding Grief Work—A class for seasoned grievers who want to redefine life and purpose. Society has dismissed your grief as “finished”; but you have yet to reconcile with the final act of letting go. Lost in memories, you may be struggling with holding on to “who” and “what” you once loved. In this four-week series, participants are guided through the tasks of grief by evaluating the meaning of their loss, building new identities, and making positive choices to heal.

**Contact:** Nan or Gary 715-845-4159  
or [nan.wings1@gmail.com](mailto:nan.wings1@gmail.com)

## Healing Grief from the Inside Out

Loss is universal; yet the way each of us grieves is different. Grief has no rules and no timetables. Pause and deal with the grief that affects you physically, spiritually, and emotionally. This series offers information that can validate your emotions and help you face one of life’s greatest challenges. Understand the “surprises” of grief and find out why you are not crazy. In this six-week series for adults, learn, share feelings, ask questions and find healthy strategies to cope in a safe environment.

**Contact:** Nan or Gary 715-845-4159  
or [nan.wings1@gmail.com](mailto:nan.wings1@gmail.com)



# Holiday Presentation

## Annual Holiday Remembrance Program

An Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services sponsored holiday program presented by Wings – A Grief Education Ministry™ and supported by area funeral homes.

## When The Holidays Hurt

Each year, a new theme-based program is presented with fresh ideas and personal insight. When someone loved dies, the holidays can be a source of anxiety and added grief. Join us for this motivational program that helps families cope by giving them options and suggestions to manage their traditions and emotions. Discover ideas for celebration and remembrance.

**Contact:** *The Grief Center at 715-847-2703 or Wings - A Grief Education Ministry™ 715-845-4159.*

For additional information regarding specific programs, please call the person listed as the “contact.” If there isn’t a name listed, please call The Grief Center at 715.847.2703.

Visit our website at [aspirus.org](http://aspirus.org).

# Resources

## Websites

For those who have computer access, the following sites may provide some support, information, and links to other sites.

- [aspirus.org/grief-services](http://aspirus.org/grief-services)
- [bereavementmag.com](http://bereavementmag.com)
- [journeyofhearts.org](http://journeyofhearts.org)
- [webhealing.com](http://webhealing.com)
- [willowgreen.com](http://willowgreen.com)
- [compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org)
- [griefshare.org](http://griefshare.org)
- [centerforloss.com](http://centerforloss.com)

### *Teens and Children*

- [newhope-grief.org/teengrief](http://newhope-grief.org/teengrief)
- [childrengrieve.org](http://childrengrieve.org)
- [dougy.org](http://dougy.org)

## Books

The following list includes just some of the many excellent resources for children and adults available through your local book store or library.

### *Children*

- **The 10th Good Thing About Barney** – Judith Viorst. The death of a pet teaches grief lessons.
- **After Charlotte's Mom Died** – Cornelia Spelman. A daughter and father find hope for the future.
- **Daddy's Promise** – Cindy Klein Cohen. A mother helps her child deal with the death of his father.
- **The Fall of Freddie the Leaf** - Leo Busclia, Ph.D

- **The Saddest Time** – Norma Simon. Three stories about the death of an uncle, a grandparent and a classmate.
- **Sunflower Mountain** – Kathleen Foster-Morgan. The love of children for their grandparents.
- **Tell Me Papa** – Joy and Marv Johnson. Helpful information to prepare a child for a funeral.
- **What is Death?** - Etan Boritzer.
- **When Nothing Makes Sense** – G. Deskin and G. Streckler. Children and crisis related stress.
- **You Hold Me and I'll Hold You** – Jo Carson. The power of healing touch at times of loss.

### *Teens*

- **Flowers for the Ones You've Known** – Centering Corporation. A support group for teens in book form.
- **I Will Remember You** - Laura Dower. A guidebook through grief for teens.
- **Straight Talk About Death** – Earl Grollman. Straight from the heart information for teens.
- **When a Friend Dies** – Marilyn Gootman. A story to help teens validate their feelings.

### *Adults*

- **A Grief Observed** – C.S. Lewis. A famous author talks about the death of his wife.
- **After the Death of a Child** – Ann Finkbeiner. Living with loss through the years.

## *Books - Adult (continued)*

- **Bereavement and the Holidays** – Bereavement Publishing.
- **Final Gifts** – Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley. Understanding the special communications of the dying.
- **Healing Your Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas** - Alan Wolfelt
- **Helping Adults with Mental Retardation Grieve a Death Loss** – C. Luchterhand and N. Murphy.
- **Liberating Losses: When Death Brings Relief** – Elison and McGonigle
- **Man to Man** – Ralph Milton. The special needs of men in grief.
- **Midlife Orphan** – Jane Brooks.
- **The Next Place** - Warren Hanson. Appropriate for all ages.
- **No Time for Goodbyes** – Janice Harris Lord. How to cope with the feelings around a tragic sudden death.
- **Nobody's Child Anymore** – Barbara Bartocci
- **When a Man Faces Grief** - Golden and Miller
- **The Widow's Handbook** – Charlotte Foehner and Carol Cozart. A guide for living.
- **Understanding your Grief** – Alan D. Wolfelt  
Ten Essential Touchstones

# Your Grief Rights

You have the right to experience  
your own unique grief.



You have the right to talk about your grief.



You have the right to feel a multitude  
of emotions.



You have the right to be tolerant of your  
physical and emotional limits.



You have the right to experience 'grief bursts.'



You have the right to treasure your memories.



You have the right to make use of ritual.



You have the right to search for meaning.



You have the right to embrace your  
spirituality.



You have the right to move toward  
your grief and heal.

*From the Center for Loss and Transition  
Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.*

*“The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not ‘get over’ the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.”*

*~ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross*

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