

The plant grows in the mist and under
the clouds as truly as under sunshine.

—William Ellery Channing

Quick Links

Hollandhospice.org

YoungWidow.org
book lists, online resources
and support

GriefNet.org
online support groups

GROWW.org
online bereaved community

wpsgr.org
Grand Rapids Widowed persons
service: local groups and support

Dougy.org
website for children, teens and
parents following a loss

WebHealing.com
grief resources

Centering.org
grief resources and books

Griefshare.org
nationwide grief support
program; find one nearby

Griefwatch.com
resource for more websites

Griefwords.com

In the midst of winter, I discovered that
there was in me an invincible summer.

—Albert Camus

The Journey of Grief

You are on the journey of grief. This journey is not one you chose and is not one you can choose to avoid. Much like the continued turning of the calendar and changing of the seasons, the journey of grief sweeps you up and in without permission. Because you are an individual with your own personality and distinct relationship with your person, your journey of grief is unique to you; remember, though, that you do not walk the path alone. The Hospice of Holland Bereavement Team is here to assist you with in-person support, phone calls, mailings, groups, and specialty workshops. We hope you receive this newsletter as a reminder you are not alone and find in it helpful articles and resources, as well as reminders of upcoming events.

Grief & COVID-19

In addition to all the usual patterns of grief as discussed, it is important to know that our current reality is likely heightening your grief responses. As a result of COVID-19, there is increased isolation and a need to maintain physical distancing from those who might be most helpful to you in your grief. You may not be able to give or receive hugs, sit nearby, or even have a face-to-face conversation without a mask covering half of your face. It is important to find ways to feel connected with others, even for minimal amounts of time, to assist you in moving forward in grief. If you're surprised by the intensity of your grief right now, know it is likely due to the world around you. You haven't done anything wrong and there is nothing abnormal about your grief. If you have any concerns about how your grief is manifesting, please contact a bereavement counselor. Being heard and validated can go a long way in alleviating the additional burden you might be carrying in this season.

Seasons of Grief and Healing

Spring has sprung! People around you are likely exclaiming this or similar celebrations that winter has ended and spring is now upon us. What those people don't understand is that, this year, the change to this season that fosters talk of growth and new life might not be something you are ready to embrace.

No matter where you are in your grief journey, the beauty of spring is difficult to experience because for you the world continues to feel different and maybe even without color. People in your life might want you to focus on enjoying increased sunshine and daylight or the beauty of blooming flowers no longer dormant; you might instead prefer the rainy days.

You may feel nature is betraying you by confronting you with so many signs of moving forward while you feel stuck or want desperately to cling to what was, because moving forward without your person is wrong.

And yet, as much as you fight against it, there is a piece of you, perhaps just a speck right now, which knows you too are continuing to move forward. You might be noticing your grief waves are coming with less

Continued...

Seasons of Grief and Healing *continued*

frequency or intensity. You might find you're able to think of your person and feel emotions beyond emptiness or sadness; memories are beginning to bring you joy and peace even in the midst of your pain.

Even as you recognize these signs of spring in your journey of grief, you wonder if it means you're on a road to forgetting or that your love for your person is lessening. Be assured nothing could be further from the truth.

Your love of your person keeps you connected to him or her. Your mind, body, and soul, are incapable of forgetting your person no matter how much time passes. In fact, you are able to move forward because you give attention to your grief—and you can only grieve because you loved. That love will sustain you as you face your daily journey.

Following are suggestions for going through this springtime we've been referring to.

- Focus on the word 'try'. On a day you feel ready, try something that will help you know you are moving forward. Maybe for you it is calling a friend, going for a walk, or visiting a place that has special meaning to you and your person; whatever it might be, remember you only need to try. If it doesn't go well, be gracious with yourself even while you make a plan of when to try again.
- Allow yourself to experience grief waves when they come. But, also, be gentle with yourself when you realize it has been a while since you've experienced a grief wave. This is a sign of healing and that alone; your love for and memory of your person is not gone.
- Spring is all about new growth, planting, and starting fresh. When you reach the spring season of grief, the theme is the same. Whether you feel new growth within yourself as you find your new identity or you're planting seeds for the growth you want to see, allow yourself space to welcome a start of looking forward instead of only looking behind.
- Remember that no choice or change you make now needs to be permanent. Experiment and try. If after some time the change no longer fits, you have every right to change it again.
- Speak your person's name and story.
- Reach out to your support system or ask them to reach out to you if you're not ready to do the contacting. Grief is unique and individual, but we aren't meant to do it alone.

Upcoming Events/Support Groups

Going Solo (Virtual): A yearlong spousal loss support group for those aged 65 and up. This will take place over Zoom (internet connection required). Sessions will be held on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month from 10am to 11:30am beginning on Thursday, April 22. Space is limited, registration is required by April 9. Please call 616.355.5544 to learn more and register.

Understanding Grief: This virtual workshop, held over Zoom on Saturday, April 24 from 10:00am to 11:30am, will provide participants with a deeper understanding of grief; how it manifests, and how to cope with it. It is appropriate for griever and helpers alike. Please call 616.355.5544 by April 19 to register and obtain the Zoom details.

Memorial Service: Our annual memorial service for families will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, May 25 from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. This is a time to remember those who have died in the past 13 months. Please contact 616.355.5594 by May 25 to register, obtain the Zoom details, and provide the name of your loved one.

Because of you, I love a little more.
Because of you, I take time to give an
extra kiss good-bye. Because of you,
I have a new favorite song. Because
of you, there may be dust on the
window sill, and I don't care. Because
of you, I live today, before I worry about
tomorrow. Because of you, I don't give
up quite as fast. Because of you, I still
believe in rainbows. Because of you,
now I can help or listen more.

Because of you, today, I am me.

—Eileen Wernsman

