

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

Dougry.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

bereaveddadsnetwork.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.

Movement & Grief

Much of grief is spent in a physically resting space (ie: sitting, emoting, sleeping, eating) and while this is natural, it leaves out a crucial element as griever learn to move forward: physical movement. For many griever, summoning the energy to remain physically active, within individual capabilities, is a daily struggle. However, the benefits of movement on grief are clear. See the list below of movement suggestions for physical grief processing. See page two for information about a grief-walking group starting in May, focused on the interplay of movement and grief processing.

- Stretching
- Walking/jogging/running
- Punching/kicking (in a fitness class, or just at the air/a pillow on your own!)
- Deep breathing with forceful blowing out during exhale
- Dancing to music that fits your mood or reflects how you'd like to feel
- Yoga (chair yoga is a great option!)
- Strength training with weights or bodyweight

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 spousal/partner loss support group. This group occurs on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays each month over Zoom (internet/camera/microphone required) from 10a-11:30a. Please call 616.355.5544 to register.

Annual Memorial Service: Tuesday, May 23, 6:30pm at CityFlats Hotel in Holland. Postcard invitation to follow in April with more details.

Introduction to Grief Walking: This 5 session outdoor group will focus on nature, movement, mindfulness/meditation, and remembering. Held at the Upper Macatawa Natural Area (1300 84th Ave, Zeeland) Wednesdays from 10a - 11a beginning May 10 and ending June 7. Call 616.355.5542 to register by May 3.

Journaling Your Grief: This recorded workshop teaches 4 different journaling techniques to creatively process and express your grief. The video instruction and handouts are available on a USB. USB port and video player are required for use. To request a copy of the workshop mailed to you, please contact 616.355.5594.

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

