

Calvary in Touch



Where Life Continues



“If you are busy hugging the past, you can’t embrace the future.

Don’t let the past kidnap your future.”

*Poet-philosopher
Noah ben Shea*

Greetings

Now that the winter holidays are behind us we hopefully can breathe a sigh of relief. The holidays were hard. They may have been harder than you thought they would be or perhaps you found that the anticipation was actually harder than the actual holiday. As with all holidays and events, there are no right or wrong ways to grieve. Each of us travels through this journey in our own way. It is important that we be respectful of other family members who may be grieving differently than the way we are.

As we begin to face the New Year without our loved one

the reality becomes sharper. This will be a year of firsts. *How could it be that they will not be at our side on New Year’s Eve?* As the rest of the world celebrates the arrival of 2010 you may not feel like celebrating. This certainly is not unusual; of course we don’t feel like celebrating.

While this is a time to look ahead and not behind us, we can’t help thinking back on happy, loving memories. But as we face the New Year we recognize that our focus is not on celebrating but rather on recognizing the need for us to continue. We have a choice and that is important when we have the need to take control. We

can choose to continue our healing recognizing that although painful, we will heal. We can choose to allow ourselves to cry or to feel whatever emotions we are feeling – anger, guilt, loneliness. Working through our grief brings healing.

It is helpful to remember that the best way to honor your loved one’s memory is to live. To live fully and to appreciate the blessings that you have and the love that you’ve shared.

Dr. Sherry R. Schachter,
Director of Bereavement Services

Starting the New Year

December 31st 2009 ends a year of 365 days that were bound to be full of countless memories. Some memories may be cherished; others may be painful and wished to be forgotten. In any event New Years offers a time to reflect. January 1st 2010 marks the beginning of a new year and with it comes the opportunity for a clean slate. Looking ahead to the New Year can be a source of strength or an overwhelming

task. However, it can be a new beginning and a fresh start. Most American adults participate in the annual tradition of making New Year’s resolutions. Throughout the years the most popular resolutions are continuously found to be weight loss, starting an exercise program, stopping to smoke, or getting a new job. New Year’s resolutions usually sound great, but

many times the good intentions fall through the cracks by February. Resolutions tend to be broad, and aim to change behavior but often they are not continued as the year progresses. Instead of making New Year’s resolutions try to make specific detailed goals. Goals will allow you to set a marker in the future and to make concrete plans or steps to reach that goal.

Inside this issue:

Greetings	1
Starting the New Year	1
Starting the New Year	2
Spotlight	2
Spotlight	3
Monthly Calendar	4
Key Contacts	4

Starting the New Year



In the year following the loss of a loved one it may be hard to imagine setting goals. As a caregiver, most of the previous years may have been spent caring for the one you loved and not taking care of yourself.

Consequently the beginning of a New Year offers the time to reflect on those you have lost, embrace those who are still here and re-focus energies on yourself. Setting goals can provide new ways for getting and staying healthy, developing or improving skills, initiating self-reflection, renewing spirituality, helping the community and re-evaluating what is important to you.

Below is a list of questions to help initiate goals for the New Year or provoke insightful thoughts about the

future and the self.

- What skill do you most want to learn this year?
- What is one skill you already have that you'd like to improve this year?
- Name 3 books you definitely want to read in 2010.
- Think of one of your major life goals. What will you do this year to make you one step closer to reaching that goal?
- What is one of your strengths? How can you best use your strengths?
- What is one of your weaknesses? How can you improve?
- How can you best remember your loved one and honor their memory?
- Think of other important relationships. How will you nurture those relationships this year?
- Name a few ways your physical health could be improved.
- Name a few ways your family's health could be improved.
- In what way do you want to include spirituality in your life?
- In what ways will you be involved with your local community?
- What is one thing you'd like to accomplish by your birthday this year?
- Think of three words you'd like to describe your 2010.

Spotlight

My name is Lysander Puccio and both of my parents have died. My mother, Mae Crane Puccio was a singer, actor, teacher and comedian. She died of pancreatic cancer when I was 9. The date of her death was April 15th-as if the fact that it's tax day doesn't make it bad enough. My perception of her illness as a child was that it went on and on forever but I later found out that she was diagnosed and died within six months. My father reacted very badly after her

death. He spent a lot of time isolating himself and had difficulty paying the bills even though he was working. One of my worst memories of Christmas was when she was sick. We had to put the Christmas tree in the landing of the second floor by her bedroom because she couldn't come downstairs. My mother was very creative and always put a lot into the holiday, it was very difficult to watch her being unable to participate in the holiday. She would usually make

beautiful things out of the wrapping paper, so it wasn't just about regular gift-giving for her; she put a lot of thought and effort into it. The Christmas after her death was even worse because I was 10 and my father and brother didn't want to celebrate Christmas and this was inconceivable to me. Christmas was important for my mother and I felt that it should be carried out. My relationships with extended family members evaporated

Spotlight



shortly after her death.

My father remarried when I was 13 and due to family conflict, it was up to me alone to maintain connections with other parts of my family.

My father's name was Joseph F. Puccio, DDS. He worked as a periodontist until he was 84. He died of a brain cancer called a glioblastoma. He declined extremely rapidly and when he died I was with him. That last day I had been with him for hours, sitting and praying; three of his friends came by to visit. I got a phone call from a priest friend and I was popping in and out of the room as I was on the phone. One of the moments when I stepped back in he had stopped breathing. I held on to him and didn't want to let go. He was a very cute little man; it was really awful to have to let him go, even though I could see the life slowly vanishing in him. I didn't want him to be taken away, I just wanted to stay with him and stay with him. I miss him all the time, he's irreplaceable. Once, when he was in the hospital, he turned and said to me "you know, I think of you all the time" and I knew it was true. We shared things with each other that no one else in my family cared about or even knew about. We had similar interests and could walk in

the park for hours just talking. He would also bail me out when I was in trouble. Although my various jobs didn't pay much, it was meaningful for him to know that I was doing the work I do, helping others, and he supported me in that. One day we were asking him about what kind of planning he wanted as far as hospice or funeral arrangements and what he said was that he just wanted to be with his children. That really meant a lot to me.

My father's birthday is in January so whenever I would shop for a Christmas present I was also shopping for a birthday present for him. Christmas shopping brings up feelings of wishing I would've demonstrated my love more. Did I spend enough time with him and show him how much I loved him? These are the questions I have right now. There are very few things that feel good about looking ahead without him. My father was a big Tiger Woods fan and I'm actually happy that he's not here to see what's happening with him. I also feel freer doing different bold and daring things now without having him worry about me. He was always worried about me and my risk-taking. I took the risks anyway but I was always worried about his worrying. He was always having a hard

time with my choices because I'm so adventurous. I feel sad that he's not going to be here to see the things I do. Part of my motivation for doing things at all was because he was watching. Of all the people in my life, I feel like he loved me the most and I loved him the most. My brother left home shortly after my mother's death so it was just me and him for a while until he got remarried and we bonded a lot.

I think participating in the support group is very helpful. I think a lot of people in my life just don't get it until they have experienced it themselves. In my family, we are all taking it in different ways and we haven't really been able to be helpful to one another. People always say that time helps but I'm still not over my mother's death and it was in 1969. The person's suffering, death and absence from our lives is something that will always be with us and affect us. I guess what happens is you learn to create space for your losses. Time changes your perspective on things but deep experiences create change in you and make you who you are.

Monthly Calendar *(All groups are free and open to the community)*

- **Bronx Day Group for Parents Whose Adult Child Has Died (Sherry Schachter)**
Every Monday from 11:00 AM -12:30 PM.
- **Brooklyn Spouse Group (Robert Ludwig)**
Every Monday from 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM.
- **Precious Moments (Bronx) (Maria Georgopoulos)**
Group for children, ages 6-11 years, Monday afternoons 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM.
- **Brooklyn Evening Group for Adults Whose Parents Have Died (Robert Ludwig)**
Every Monday from 7:15 PM - 8:45 PM.
- **Teen Bereavement (Bronx) (Maria Georgopoulos)**
Group for teens ages 12-18 years, meets Monday evenings 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM.
- **Bronx Spanish-Speaking General Bereavement Group (Yovani Santiago)**
Every other Monday. Please contact Yovani at 718-518-2569.
- **Bronx Day Spouse Group (Evan Jeske)**
Tuesdays from 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM.
- **Next Steps (Bronx) (Sherry Schachter)**
Tuesday, Jan 19
Tuesday, Feb 16
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM.
- **Bronx Young Spouse Group (Evan Jeske)**
Every Tuesday from 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM.
- **Bronx Evening Group for Adults Whose Parents Have Died (Maria Georgopoulos)**
Every Tuesday from 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM.
- **Teen Bereavement (Bronx) (Maria Georgopoulos)**
Group for teens ages 12-18 years, meets Wednesday afternoons. 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM
- **Monthly Christian Memorial Service**
Bronx--Saturday, Jan 9
2:30 PM - 4:00 PM.
Saturday, Feb 13
2:30 PM - 4:00 PM.
Brooklyn--Sunday, TBA
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM.
- **Jewish Memorial Services**
Bronx--Sunday, Feb 7
9:30 AM - 11:00 AM.
Brooklyn--Sunday, Feb 21
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM.
- **Friday Matinee (Bronx)**
Friday, January 8
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM.

“Bang The Drum Slowly”
Is a moving film about the friendship of two professional baseball players. A young Robert DeNiro who plays a rookie catcher diagnosed with cancer and his friend a veteran pitcher played by Michael Moriarty. Also in the film is Vincent Gardenia and Danny Aiello.
- **Friday Matinee (Bronx)**
Friday, February 12
1:00 PM -3:00 PM.

“Sleepless in Seattle”
Is the story of a young widower (Tom Hanks) whose wife dies of cancer. He and his young son (Jonah) move to Seattle Washington to make a fresh start. Trying to help his lonely father, Jonah calls into a radio show for advice. Thousands of women are so touched by his story that send him letters. One of the letters is from a journalist (Meg Ryan). Jonah tries to convince his father to go to NYC on Valentine’s Day so that he could meet her.

Key Contacts in Calvary’s Bereavement Department

Sherry Schachter, PhD	(718) 518-2125	sschachter@calvaryhospital.org
Maria Georgopoulos, MA	(718) 518-2370	mgeorgopulos@calvaryhospital.org
Evan Jeske, MSW	(718)518-2575	ejeske@calvaryhospital.org
Robert Ludwig, MEd, MA	(917) 680-2510	
Lynne Marie Pappalardi	(718) 518-2173	lpappalardi@calvaryhospital.org
Kristen Finneran, Graduate Intern		

Calvary In Touch has been made possible by a generous bequest from Michael Camara