

Calvary in Touch



Where Life Continues

Greetings



Summertime is generally a time for relaxation and reflection. A time to bask in the sunshine and spend time with children who are home from school. Sometimes, especially when grief is new, our 'inside' emotions don't coincide with the 'outside' weather. We may feel sad and down, yet the sun is shining brightly. It's as if the warmth of the day is in

direct confrontation with how we actually feel inside. Anger, rage, guilt, and even perhaps relief are some of the emotions that bereaved family members describe.

Acknowledging these feelings is part of the healing process. Our feelings remind us that no two people - even if they both express anger, guilt, or other emotions - feel the

same exact way. Your grief is unique to you. In this issue of *Calvary In Touch* we focus on some of the emotions you may be feeling.

Dr. Sherry R. Schachter,
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Anger and Grief

When we have lost a loved one, our emotions may be difficult to manage. People often talk about their anger, which is a common reaction during the grief process. Although not *all* individuals experience anger after the death of their loved one, it is not unusual to see bereaved family members who are angry or feel that they are receiving someone's misplaced anger.

Many times we can easily identify and name who or what is the cause of our anger:

- "I'm so angry. I kept telling my husband to

quit smoking and he didn't listen to me!"

- "My mother left mostly everything to my oldest sister, although my younger sister and I did all her work and cared for her while she was sick. Now we're not talking to each other. The whole family is in chaos and torn apart."
- "That doctor didn't diagnose him right away. He kept saying your husband is 82 years old and has Alzheimer's. I kept telling the doctor, but he's working full-time and spends the weekends on the golf

course. The doctor just kept saying it's dementia. So the brain tumor wasn't diagnosed and treated early enough. I don't think it would have made a difference, and he would probably have died anyway, but we could have spent our time differently."

- "We never resolved anything. My father was sexually and physically abusive to me, and my mother allowed it to happen. When she was dying, I had to take care of her and was so angry with her, but we never had the chance to talk.

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Anger and Grief (continued)



“The road through grief is a rocky one. Traveling along it requires courage, patience, wisdom, and hope.”
Anonymous



My father was in a nursing home. When he died two months later, I was furious with both of them.”

- One husband expressed anger at non-supportive family and friends who arrived on the scene just days before his wife died. “Where have they been all along? Where were they when my wife needed them? Where were they when she wanted their support?”
- “My supervisor keeps saying no one wants to see a sad face in the office. I feel like I have to smile and be pleasant all the time.”
- “My neighbor says I have to move on with my life. I have to clean out the closets and give my mom’s belongings and clothes away.”
- “My friends insist I go to the movies with them or take a trip to change my environment. It’s gotten so bad that I’m screening my telephone calls. Just too much pressure. They have no idea how I feel and at the end of the day they all return home to their waiting spouses.”

In situations such as the above examples, it’s easy to

identify who or what the survivor is angry with: someone or some situation becomes the target and focus of their anger. However, misplaced anger is not so obvious.

- After the death of a parent, one of the siblings who others describe as always being even-tempered and easy-going, became “stubborn and obstinate, always ready to start a fight.”
- A bereaved spouse screamed at her teenage son for leaving his homework at home.
- After the death of her adolescent, a bereaved mother is enraged at her eight-year-old daughter for going into her deceased older sister’s room and trying on her



makeup. At times we can become frightened because our anger can be so intense that we may feel out of

control, yet it’s important not to let our anger overpower us. Many of us were raised in households where displaying anger was not considered acceptable behavior. Therefore we may be ashamed to even admit that we’re angry. However, suppressing anger is not helpful, since anger left unattended and turned inward will fester and grow into a larger obstacle than it already is. Suppressed anger doesn’t disappear and often manifests itself in unhealthy ways (physically such as migraines or gastric upset, and emotionally such as difficulties with relationships). Finding helpful and safe ways to express our anger is very important to healing.

Some constructive ways to release anger may be very physical, i.e. hitting a punching bag or pillow, throwing foam rubber balls at a wall, punching a pillow, or doing activities such as walking, jogging, and lifting weights. Activities such as fishing, sewing, repairing household items, and doing construction projects can also provide an outlet for anger. Other people may prefer writing, journaling, or pursuing forms of art therapy as a way of releasing their anger.

Spotlight on: Angelina Holmes (Interviewed by Barbara J. Nitzberg)

I understand that you experienced the death of a parent.

My father, Harry Asbery, was diagnosed with brain cancer in March 2008. Until he passed away at age 72 on November 21, 2008, he endured radiation and other treatment, at Regional Medical Center in South Carolina. He lived most of his life in his hometown of Vance, South Carolina.

How did you first become familiar with Calvary Hospital?

I had always been familiar with Calvary. My husband had several loved ones over the past 15 years who were inpatients; they all received excellent care. I also knew of Calvary through school and my own interest in “death and dying.” I have visited your web site a number of times.

What expectations did you have of us before your initial contact? How did that compare against your actual experience?

The week before my father died, I was able to be with him in South Carolina. It was a privilege to be there advocating for him and making sure that he got the best possible care. After he died, I knew I had to get help with my grief process.

How did Calvary help you address the loss of your parent? When did you begin attending the bereavement support groups?

After my meeting with Maria Georgopoulos in January

2009, I attended my first 6-week session, took a break, and then attended a second one. I am planning to start my third group session very soon.

I didn’t have any specific expectations. Being in the bereavement support group has been so much more than what I could have hoped for. I felt like I was lost in a tunnel and the group helped me open a door to “see the light.” I felt so comfortable expressing myself and listening to what my fellow members were going through. In a nutshell, the support group has been my comfort zone.



At work, people try to sympathize but they really don’t understand the depth of grief that a person can feel when they lose a very important person. In my Calvary group, it’s so wonderful not to have to “explain” your feelings. Once you begin to say something- such as crying “out of nowhere”- the other members nod because they’ve experienced exactly what you’re describing. There is so much comfort in not feeling so alone.

Are there specific things your groups have done to help you heal?

Two things have been really helpful, both involving art. We did a photo collage and we made ribbons about our loved ones.

I had some wonderful photos of my father to use in my collage. On the ribbon, I made sure to include the word “inspiring.” My father always told me that I could do anything as long as I put my mind to it.

Working on these art projects helped me remember the man he was. When my father moved back to South Carolina, he became a member of a gospel group and was very active in his church. Everyone in town knew him. At his funeral, we were so pleased at the numbers of people who came to say goodbye.

For people who are hesitant about being in a support group, what would you tell them?

Being in a support group means you will be with other people who are experiencing the *same* things you feel. You owe it to yourself to give it a chance. Go with an open mind and open heart despite your pain. Take a friend with you if that will help.

What should people know about Calvary and its many services for family members?

If I had to describe Calvary to someone who was unfamiliar with the Hospital, I would say “compassion, love, understanding, and a family environment.”

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 (Karen Wilkow)**
Every Monday from 6:30 PM - 8:00 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 (Karen Wilkow)**
Every Monday from 5:00 PM - 6:30 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)**
Every other Tuesday from 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.
- **Bronx Evening Group for Bereaved Adult Siblings (Evan Jeske)**
Every Wednesday from 6:15 PM - 7:45 PM.
- **Monthly Christian Memorial Service**
Bronx--Saturday, July 11 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM.
Saturday, August 8 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM.
Brooklyn--Sunday, August 23 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM.
- **Jewish Memorial Services**
Bronx--Sunday, August 2 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM.
Brooklyn--Sunday, Sept 13 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM.
- **Friday Matinee (Bronx)**
Friday, July 10 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM.

"How Green Was My Valley"
A classic film that won Best Picture for the 1941 Academy Awards. Sixty-year-old Huw Morgan

looks back on his life as a boy (Roddy McDowall) in a small Welsh mining town. Maureen O'Hara and Walter Pidgeon co-star in the story of one family's dreams, struggles, and triumphs. Huw is the youngest of seven children whose family faces various crises and devastating losses. It's a rich, moving portrait of family strength and integrity.

- **Friday Matinee (Bronx)**
Friday, August 14 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM.

"Five People You Meet In Heaven"

"Five People" is based on the bestselling book by Mitch Albom. Jon Voight is an 83-year-old amusement park maintenance man and war veteran who ends up in Heaven after an accident takes his life. There he meets five people from his past, and each shows him how he impacted their life or they his, and not always for the better.

Key Contacts in Calvary's Bereavement Department

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