

# Calvary in Touch

## Greetings

### Inside this issue:

- 1 Greetings
- 1-2 Spotlight On
- 3 Bereavement Calendar
- 4 Contacts Tree of Life

Summer has descended upon us with a lot of mixed feelings. Typically the warmer climate in NY is a time of connection. People are gathering to have fun, enjoy time off from school, go on a vacation or just sit outside taking in the sun. This summer feels quite unfamiliar; I watch as our city tries to figure out how to take some steps forward in a time of intense confusion and uncertainty. Our bereavement group discussions have always incorporated the more difficult aspects of grief such as navigating suicide loss and addressing intense feelings of guilt and anger, however, our more recent conversations have been heavier, as has the climate we are currently in.

Our group members, both young and elder, have been navigating grief conversations around lack of visitation and ritual after a death as well as the grief of systemic racism; underscored by the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless others. The children have also

struggled to understand why our physical safety is being threatened by the COVID-19 virus and how to keep themselves safe in ways that are much different now.

Amidst all of this, we in the bereavement department tread with hope and find comfort in the honesty of these difficult conversations. We have focused on making sure our grieving children and their families feel they can reach out to us as a source of support and as a resource for valuable information.

We are in this together.

*Maria Georgopoulos, LMHC, FT  
Director of Bereavement Services*

## Spotlight On: Connecting & Reconnecting with Families

After nearly three months, patients and families were reunited on June 19 when Calvary Hospital welcomed visitors back to the hospital after the New York State Department of Health reinstated hospital visitation. In keeping with recommended safety precautions, visitation is limited to one visitor at a time, and visiting hours are from 1-5 p.m. in the Bronx and 2-6 p.m. in Brooklyn. Temperature scans, masks, and contact information are part of the new regulations, but they are a small price to pay for the chance to gaze into a loved one's eyes once again. Families are also given the option to continue virtual visits via Zoom or FaceTime if they cannot or do not want to be at the hospital.

For so many families, Zoom and FaceTime were the only way to stay in touch during a challenging time. Technology allowed multiple family members to visit at once, and often a family's spiritual care provider would join the call to offer prayer. It was also a chance for bereavement staff to meet families before the death of their special person and develop relationships with sons, daughters, spouses, and extended family.

Stephanie Insalaco, Bereavement Counselor in Manhattan, said, "As a bereavement counselor, I work with families after their loved one has died. The experience of connecting families with their loved one

*Continued on Page 2*



## *Spotlight On: Connecting & Reconnecting with Families*

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through FaceTime or Zoom brought up feelings of heartbreak, intense sorrow, and a general sense that none of this was fair. I would often have to take a deep breath, realize that under these circumstances this was the best that we could do, and do everything in my power to make sure the time spent was valuable for the families and to be present to offer support during and after the call. They always say it takes a tragedy for people to realize the value of life. I think, among everything else, this taught us how important hugs, affection, and being physically present are in any human being's journey."

Rashida Sanchez, Bereavement Counselor in Brooklyn, added, "We were occupying a different space. I felt the frustration of families who could not be at the hospital.

I was so aware of how hard it was for them. I honored those feelings and thought, 'what if it was me?'" She added that being at the hospital during the peak of the surge helped to bond Bereavement with the rest of the hospital staff. "We banded together to see what we could do," she said.

Connecting families during the pandemic was undertaken by various departments in the hospital including the Social Work Department, Pastoral Care Chaplains, the Volunteer Department and Bereavement Counselors.

*R. Abby Spilka, MA, CT, LMHC  
Bereavement Services*

## *Spotlight On: Grieving from the Lens of Our Youngest Members*

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In response to COVID-19 we moved all of our bereavement support groups online at the end of March. The task of exploring a range of grief experiences, exacerbated by a public health crisis, and a mounting systemic racial and social inequality, is complex work, particularly so, when working with young people.

Online platforms have proven to be an effective meeting space for our children. Our sessions continue to demonstrate how resilient and adaptable our children and teenagers are. Working with them has shown the importance of addressing grief and loss directly, even in challenging and uncertain times. Although we have all been physically distant, we are not socially or emotionally distant. Our young members have been able to share and foster empathy, address anger, locate difficult inner feelings, embrace diversity and uphold honesty, in an inclusive safe space.

Most of our young members have been sharing their direct experience of loss in group for some time. At a recent session, we touched upon the intersectionality of grief when young members shared their feelings about the Black Lives Matter protests. One child said the events made him feel "fearful," "scared" and that he didn't like "adults shouting." Another reflected that George Floyd, who was murdered, was Black and that his father who had died, was also Black. Another shared that she felt it was a good thing that White, Brown and Black families were protesting for what is right, before also adding that her young Black life mattered too.

Grief and loss are difficult experiences for us all. This often leads to the belief that these feelings and experiences are too big for children to articulate and process. Our young group members have shown time and again, given the right support and context, this is not the case. Our bereavement support groups have created a psychological space where individual grief journeys can connect through shared narratives and themes, creating community, understanding and hope. They provide consistency and allow each young griever to create their own meaning.



*J. Marlow, MA, ATR-P  
Bereavement Services*

# Monthly Calendar

## BRONX GROUPS

Calvary Hospital  
1740 Eastchester Road  
Bronx, NY 10461

Adult Death of a Child  
2nd, 3rd & 4th Thursday: Sherry  
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Death of a Child  
Wednesday: Joanne  
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm  
Wednesday: Jacqueline  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Adult Death of a Parent  
Thursday: Melanie  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Thursday: Joanne  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Death of a Sibling  
Tuesday: Joanne  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Death of a Spouse/Partner  
Tuesday: Joanne  
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm  
Monday: Joanne  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner  
Wednesday: Joanne  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Spanish Speaking Group  
Wednesday: Yvette  
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Precious Moments for Children  
Ages 6 - 9  
Tuesday: Jacqueline  
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

In Be-tween Ages 10 - 12  
Thursday: Jacqueline  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Teen Group Ages 13 - 17  
Thursday: Jacqueline  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Men's Discussion Group  
1st Thursday: Sherry  
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

## BROOKLYN GROUPS

St. Joseph High School  
80 Willoughby Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Precious Moments Ages 6 - 9  
Tuesday: Rashida  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

In Be-tween Group Ages 10 - 12  
Tuesday: Samantha  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Thursday: Abby  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Teen Group Ages 13 - 17  
Wednesday: Rashida  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Death of a Spouse/Partner  
Thursday: Rashida  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner  
Thursday: Abby  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Adult Death of a Parent  
Tuesday: Rashida  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Death of a Child  
Monday: Rashida  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm  
Tuesday: Abby  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Death of a Sibling  
TBD  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Young Adult Group  
Wednesday: Abby  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Mindfulness & Movement for  
Grief  
Wednesday: Samantha  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Living with Spouse/Partner Loss  
Grief 2 Years and Beyond  
1st Monday: Abby  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

What Now? Adults Grieving the  
Death of a Parent 2 Years &  
Beyond  
2nd Monday: Abby  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

## MANHATTAN GROUPS

Terence Cardinal Cooke Health  
Care Center  
1249 Fifth Avenue 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10029

Precious Moments  
for Children Ages 6-9  
Wednesday: Stephanie  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

In Be-tween Group Ages 10-12  
Wednesday: Jacqueline  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Teen Group  
Wednesday: Stephanie  
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Death of a Parent  
Wednesday: Melanie  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Death of a Spouse/Partner  
Monday: Stephanie  
11:00 am - 12:30 p.m.  
Thursday: Stephanie  
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner  
Tuesday: TBD  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

COVID-19 Bereavement Group  
Tuesday: Maria  
5:00 pm—6:30 pm

***Please make a note: You must call to schedule an appointment prior to attending any of our groups. We do not accept walk-ins.***

## MEMORIAL SERVICES

Bronx Christian  
Bronx Jewish  
Brooklyn Christian  
Brooklyn Jewish

**Due to COVID-19 there are no Memorial Services at this time.**

**All groups are free & open to the community. Please call to schedule an appointment**



# Contacts

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# Tree of Life



*Calvary Hospital complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.*

Through the Tree of Life, we can recognize your significant naming gift in a permanent and meaningful manner. Your loved one's name will exist in perpetuity with the lifetime of the Hospital.

This a loving way of memorializing someone special to you or saying thank you, because your gift of love helps patients and families today and for many years to come.

For more information on the Tree of Life, contact Sandrina Fernandez at **718-518-2039**.

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