

APRIL - JUNE 2021

CALVARY IN TOUCH



GREETINGS



Our parents leave an imprint on our lives no matter what our relationships with them are like. Thinking of our time with them may bring up memories of cooking together, laughing together or even arguing with one another. We may remember learning some of life's important lessons from them and may carry their voice with us in some way. These deaths can feel powerful and overwhelming.

In this edition of our newsletter, several adult children from our groups share aspects of their grief during a time when grieving has been so especially isolating and confusing.

I cherish their voices and feel grateful they have chosen to let us bear witness in some way to such an intimate, painful process.

**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

Maria Georgopoulos, LMHC, FT
Director of Bereavement Services

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AN EXCERPT FROM *LIVING WITH GRIEF SINCE COVID-19*



*"Sometimes it
feels like I'm
mourning a
community of
souls."*

The experience of my mother's death from COVID-19 has had a profound impact on me. It took me months to leave the house. I became fearful of everything; I felt unable to function and lost trust in the world around me. I became afraid to touch anything because I was afraid of contracting COVID-19 myself. I would check over and over again if I had enough masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, alcohol sprays, paper towels. I panicked whenever I would see a person wearing a mask incorrectly or not wearing one at all. I would hold my breath when I passed people.

Since my mother's death I have been mostly alone, living in my parents' apartment. The loneliness can feel unbearable at times. Within the community of my mother's nursing home, I had become close to many of the other residents. I turned to some of them for trusted advice. Many of them were part of our holiday celebrations or birthday parties, including my mom's last big party with our family. Too many of these special people also died of COVID-19 around the same time as my mother. Sometimes it feels like I'm mourning a community of souls.

WRITTEN BY
Maryrose Cidoni
Bereavement Group Member

LOSING MY MOTHER TO THE COVID-19 VIRUS

Swept away suddenly and without advance warning, my mother Josephine succumbed to the COVID 19 virus on April 11, 2020. At 90 years of age, my mother was still a very strong and independent woman. “Oh, she was 90” is something I hear as if that’s a rationale for why she died. That’s not true and certainly not of sound argument.

My mom lived alone in her own home and managed her daily needs without outside support. A widow for 30 years, she was a diabetic, but was not insulin-dependent, and her sugar was very much in control. She was very careful and ate well, and did not take chances with her health. She saw her doctors regularly and they were always happy to see her. She was pleasant and they would often comment on how “spry” she was. However, without knowing how, the virus entered her home and she became very ill and was taken to the hospital. Due to COVID hospital protocols, my family and I were not permitted to visit and although we were told intermittently that her status was improving, her condition suddenly worsened and she passed. Unlike many others, our family did have a small measure of relief when my younger brother, a physician on the hospital staff, who had been hospitalized before my mother, was being released from the hospital and was allowed to visit our mother before he left. She did see him and he assured her that he was fine and she would be too. Another grace was that my son who is also a physician at the hospital did visit my mother daily. During her hospitalization I was ill with the virus and my husband was later hospitalized for what became a 21-day ordeal.

I was not fully “present” while she was hospitalized as I was experiencing COVID symptoms. I could not really even grasp what I was being told when my older brother called to tell me she was gone. ***How did that happen?***

It has been a struggle for the past year to understand and deal with my grief. There was no chance to say good bye or to encourage her to be strong and fight. ***She was alone.*** Those words are very hard to say. ***“There was nothing we can do.”*** As someone who has thrived on being in control throughout my life, being unable to control this horrific situation has been difficult to say the least. My mother was my best friend. We spoke every day ... multiple times. I visited every day. We went to Mass every Sunday at the same time and sat in the same seat each week. She listened to me and I listened to her. It wasn’t perfect but we loved and accepted each other as we were. I miss her and will never get past the way her life ended. She was a very devout Catholic and I was most relieved to learn that although she couldn’t have visitors, she was seen by the hospital chaplain who gave her last rites before she passed. I thank the chaplain and the hospital for this small blessing in a time of crisis. Sadly, our family was unable to have a traditional Catholic funeral, surrounded by friends and family. Our parish church was closed and we could not bring our mother in for her final blessing or to hear “On Eagles Wings” as would have been our choice.

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LOSING MY MOTHER TO THE COVID-19 VIRUS, continued...

We were fortunate that we could hold a small wake and burial, with limited time and small number of attendees, with some family members viewing the cemetery burial from the other side of the fence. This should never have happened!

I was very blessed to discover the Calvary Bereavement group. The members of this group share one unfortunate commonality...we all lost a parent/parents/sibling to this insidious pandemic. But the common factor goes deeper than loss. Losing our parent(s)/sibling to COVID is different and that is something we share. Unlike the situation that many face when a loved one is dying, we were not able to sit with our parent and hold his/her hand... not

able to pray with them ... not able to hear their last wishes or cry or laugh together. I often wonder if this nightmare situation were to happen again, would hospitals re-think their COVID protocol and reconsider these restrictions. It may seem futile to think about the what if, however, it's part of my grieving process and who I am. I have no choice but to experience my grief and accept what has happened.

WRITTEN BY
Elisabeth Basile, Ed.D.
Bereavement Group Member



GRIEVING ONE DAY AT A TIME

I wonder why this happened to my family
I pretend things are the way they used to be
I feel frustrated at people's insensitivity
I feel like a child throwing a tantrum for things not
being the way I want
I say I'm doing ok
I try not to cry
I see my mother's picture and it is hard to look at
I hope I'm not always going to resent other people for
not having to go through this
I understand others can't grasp the depths of the
emotions I feel and it's not their fault



WRITTEN BY
Kristina Cruz
Bereavement Group Member

REFLECTING IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF

My parents have always been there, for as long as I can remember...particularly my mother. In fact, aside from some trips to their country of birth, Panama, the only time we were separated for any extensive period was when my mother required surgery when we were children; and it required a two-week hospital stay. She had gall bladder surgery, in the years before laparoscopy became widely used to treat these ailments. Her large surgical incision measured approximately 7-8 inches.

It is now spring 2021, and I am very aware of her permanent absence since her passing last Easter. I received a call from my brother informing me that she was complaining of persistent back pain, which she was reluctant to seek medical help for; she sounded lethargic when I spoke to her. Not suspecting Covid-19, I rushed down to my parents' place with the intention of getting her to a hospital. When I arrived, I found her fairly unrecognizable; having lost a considerable amount of weight and not breathing very easily. She was taken by ambulance to the local hospital. I observed her being wheeled into the emergency entrance. That was the last time I saw her.

My father, who had been battling the debilitating effects of Lewy Body Dementia for years, and was being cared for by my mother, started showing symptoms of Covid a few weeks later. Ultimately, he passed away on Memorial Day.

A year later, I am often flooded with thoughts of what this period was like for me. I like to say that I have good days, and those days...

The emotions from their loss come in many waves. There are days when a song will trigger thoughts of

the past and I will have to wipe away tears multiple times during the day. I still have voicemail messages from my mother, and I've clicked on only two over this past year, for fear of what feelings will arise if I do listen.

"I still have voicemail messages from my mother, and I've clicked on only two over this past year, for fear of what feelings will arise if I do listen."

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REFLECTING IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF, continued...



Working from home gives me ample opportunity to watch coverage of the pandemic. Many of the news programs produce beautiful tributes to those who have departed; usually leaving me near tears, or just over that line. The beautiful memorial tribute to Covid victims the night before the inauguration was the pinnacle of a week filled with thoughts about them and was the most emotional moment I have experienced since my father's passing.

I think about having to pivot immediately from the loss of my mother to care for our father...about having to go through their belongings, about their absence, and it triggers feelings of sadness. But

there are good days. Days when I think about our good fortune in having them for so many years. It wasn't a perfect life by any stretch of the imagination, but many of the life lessons that I was given are still within me. I miss them very much...and those songs that trigger feelings of sadness on those days, are beautiful memories on these ones.

"I think about having to pivot immediately from the loss of my mother to care for our father...about having to go through their belongings, about their absence, and it triggers feelings of sadness."

WRITTEN BY
Wil Haywood
Bereavement Group Member

BRONX GROUPS

Death of an Adult Child

2nd, 3rd, & 4th Thursday: Sherry
12:30PM - 2:00PM

Death of a Child

Monday: Joanne 5:30PM - 7:00PM
Wednesday: Jacqueline 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Adult Death of a Parent

Thursday: Melanie 6:00PM - 7:30PM
Thursday: Joanne 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Death of a Sibling

Tuesday: Joanne 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Death of a Spouse/Partner

Tuesday: Joanne 1:00PM - 2:30PM

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner

Wednesday: Joanne 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Spanish Speaking Group

Wednesday: Yvette 12:30PM - 2:00PM

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

Tuesday: Jacqueline 3:45PM - 5:00PM

Tweens (10-12 year-olds)

Thursday: Jacqueline 5:30PM - 6:30PM

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

Thursday: Jacqueline 4:30PM - 5:30PM

Men's Discussion Group

1st Thursday: Sherry 12:30PM - 2:00PM



CONTACT US

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BROOKLYN GROUPS

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

Tuesday: Rashida 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Tweens (10-12 year-olds)

Tuesday: Samantha 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Thursday: Abby 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Teens (13-17 year olds)

Wednesday: Rashida 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Death of a Spouse/Partner

Thursday: Rashida 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner

Thursday: Abby 6:00pm - 7:30PM

Adult Death of a Parent

Tuesday: Rashida 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Death of a Child

Monday: Rashida 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Tuesday: Abby 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Young Adult Group

Wednesday: Abby 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Mindfulness & Movement for Grief

Wednesday: Samantha 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Living with Spouse/Partner Loss: Grief 2 years and Beyond

1st Monday: Abby 5:30PM - 7:00PM

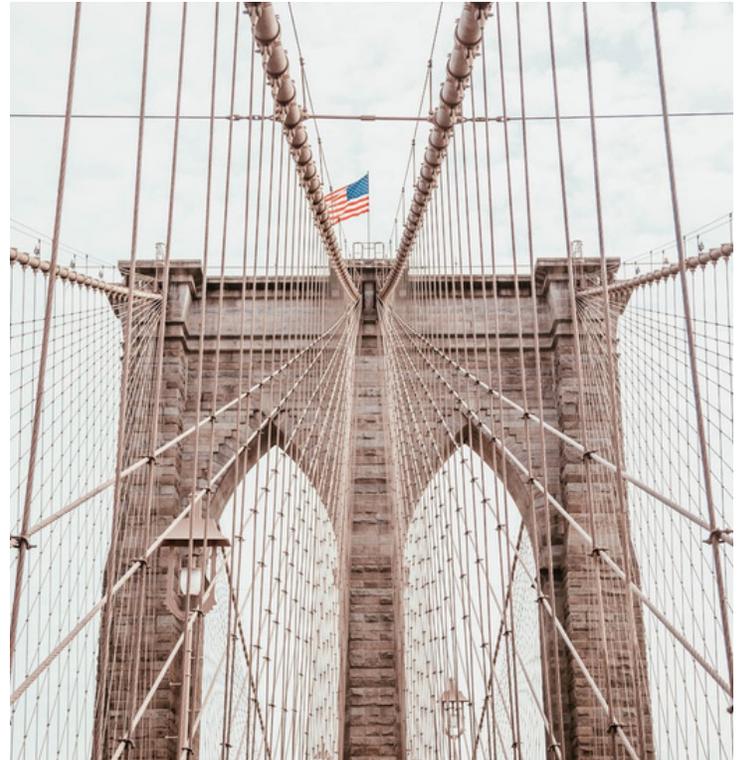
What Now? Adults Grieving the Death of a Parent 2 Years and Beyond

2nd Monday: Abby 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Supportive Connections

Brooklyn/Queens: Parents/Guardians of Bereaved Children

Thursday: Samantha 6:00PM - 7:30PM



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Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

Wednesday: Stephanie 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

Thursday: Stephanie 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Death of a Parent

Wednesday: Melanie 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner

Tuesday: Stephanie 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Death of a Spouse/Partner

Monday: Stephanie 11:00AM - 12:30PM

Thursday: Stephanie 6:00PM - 7:30PM

ArchCare Employee Support Group

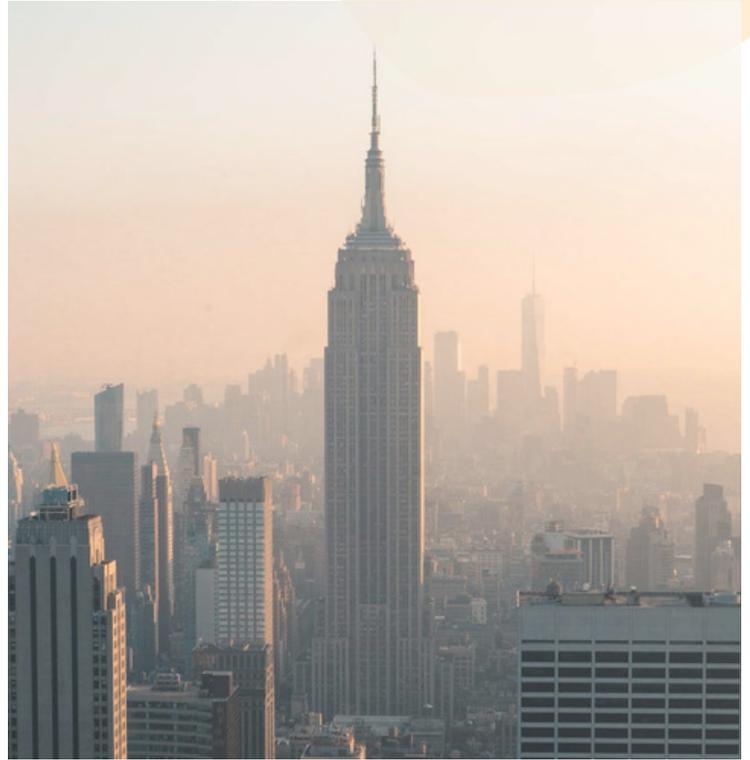
Tuesday: Melanie 5:00PM - 6:00PM

Death of a Spouse/Partner to COVID19

Tuesday: Samantha 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Death of a Parent to COVID19

Tuesday: Maria 5:00PM - 6:30PM



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INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging this past year has been, especially when grieving. As a way to extend our support, we are now offering individual bereavement counseling for a nominal fee. If you would like more information, please contact Pamela or Jackie.

SECRETARY, BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

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BEREAVEMENT INFORMATION

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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 significant person's name will exist in perpetuity with the lifetime of the Hospital. This is 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, please call 718-518-2039.

THANK YOU FOR READING AND STAY SAFE.

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