

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2021

CALVARY IN TOUCH



GREETINGS

Children need grief support that is tailored to meet their developmental needs when someone significant in their life dies. Adults can have a very hard time talking about death with children because they may feel ill-equipped or simply because these conversations are difficult. At Calvary, we help our grieving families in several ways. We help guardians have tough but necessary discussions about death and assist them with finding their own support. For the children, we offer peer support groups to help them discover what the death means for them and give them an opportunity to see their grief through the lens of their peers.

Parents and guardians can support children by providing a safe space for them to talk about their grief and by finding ways to accompany them in their grief. One way they can do this is by working with them to find ways of remembering their special person on important days such as holidays or birthdays. With the holidays coming up, we want to share with you some of the voices of our families because validating and supporting children in their time of grief helps them develop healthy ways to manage beginnings and endings throughout their lives. We certainly cherish their stories and think you will, too.

**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

Maria Georgopoulos, LMHC, FT
Director of Bereavement Services

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CONTINUING BONDS

My husband Michael Martinez died on June 29, 2019, right after our daughter, Aleena, graduated Kindergarten and just before her 6th birthday. As hard as grief is for me, I feel at times that I need to turn my autopilot on to ensure that our children are taken care of. Learning to be a “lone parent” to young grieving children has been an unimaginable challenge. However, I do my utmost best to support our children and to keep Michael the heart of our family.

Aleena keeps me on my toes with creative ideas to acknowledge his anniversaries. For example, on what would have been Michael’s 40th birthday, our children and I went to The Cheesecake Factory, which remains one of our favorite spots on the weekends. The children wanted the waitress to come out holding his favorite cheesecake and sing Happy Birthday to the picture we brought of my husband. Aleena asked the waitress and as I explained our circumstances, it brought our waitress to tears and she agreed to meet the children’s request. As emotional as that moment was, it continues to feel right to celebrate and honor him.

Over the summer, we visited the beach. On those days, all three of his girls would wear their “Dad/Daughter Squad” matching shirts as we read letters to him while taking in the views.

As time went by, each one of his daughters wanted to choose their own pictures of their father to hang by up by their beds and use his shirts to sleep with. Aleena continues to express, “I love my papa’s shirt, it smells so much like him and I hold it and smell it and I know that I will remember him. I sleep and hold his shirt every night. When I sleep over my grandma’s house, I make sure I pack his shirt so that I know he’s around me. I am so grateful that grandma made our shirt pillow to hold as we all grieve papa. Knowing that our pillows were favorite shirts that papa used to wear, I hug and smell the pillow. If I’m feeling sad or angry, I hug it.”



WRITTEN BY
Anaïs Reyes-Martinez & Aleena R. Martinez
Bereavement Group Member

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THE BIG STUFF" NAVIGATING GRIEF THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

Tammara Tillman and Dreame Monplaisir have participated in Calvary's Bereavement Groups since 2018. Alexia Michee Monplaisir, 30, Tammara's daughter and Dreame's mother, died on Thanksgiving in 2017, which that year fell on Nov. 23, Tammara's birthday. Grief at the holidays can be challenging, but this family has coped by creating new rituals, being attuned to each other's needs, and being mindful of boundaries that are instrumental to healing.

Alexia cooked the Thanksgiving meal in 2017, an abundance of food that covered the table end-to-end. That day Tammara wasn't feeling well and stayed home while Alexia prepared her feast for the family, including her children Dreame, then 7, and D'vaule, then 4. Before dinner was served, Alexia went into cardiac arrest and was rushed to the hospital where she was pronounced DOA (dead on arrival). Alexia died in front of D'vaule, and Dreame was awakened by the noise of the paramedics trying to resuscitate Alexia. "Thanksgiving will never be the same. We no longer celebrate Thanksgiving, per Dreame's request," says Tammara.

Instead, Tammara hosts a small family dinner without turkey and where seafood has a starring role. "Why seafood? It was the one kind of food Alexia didn't make that day," says Tammara, flashing her signature sad smile.

"Thanksgiving will never be the same."

"I love seafood!" adds Dreame, who is now almost 12 years old. There is an assortment of mac and cheese, chicken, collard greens, and perhaps Alexia's classic sweet potato pie. A plate is always set for Alexia at the holiday table. D'vaule, 8, announces "we gotta set a plate for mommy." He also makes cards for Alexia that Tammara keeps in a book.

Subsequent holidays have been tricky to navigate. "The first year was really tough because Dreame's birthday is December 9th; Alexia's funeral services were conducted on December 7th," says Tammara. The next year, Amber, another of Tammara's daughters, hosted a Thanksgiving/Birthday Party in New Jersey. Even with other family members present, Tammara says she felt the walls closing in. "I never want to be in a place where I feel trapped." Tammara says that she learned in her bereavement group the importance of giving herself permission to set boundaries and take care of herself.

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"YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THE BIG STUFF" NAVIGATING GRIEF THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS, continued...

She suggests, "Set the boundary, explain it, hopefully family members and loved ones will understand that it's a very delicate time." Dreame likes to remind people that holidays are not always the way you would want them to be. "They are supposed to be happy, but sometimes things happen. They can be very hard," she says.

She advises people who are grieving during the holidays "that you don't have to do the big stuff. You can do small things. You can do the stuff your person loved." Dreame likes to listen to the music her mom liked, eat foods she liked, and play her favorite games.

The family does celebrate Christmas and Kwanzaa. They set up an altar to Alexia in the kitchen and make gifts to give to others. Keeping the holidays quiet keeps Tammara's anxiety at bay. She spends a lot of time consulting with Dreame and D'vaule about what they need and want. "I have to be in tune with the verbal and non-verbal signals they give me. And I let them know it's okay to cry and it's okay to talk about mommy."

And what about Tammara's birthday? Dreame recognizes that it is a day of celebration and remembrance. "We get balloons, we have apple cider, and we pour a little on the ground for mommy."

Tammara remembers that Alexia used to shower her with presents. After her daughter's death, Tammara acknowledged that "my house took on my depression." Crediting the bereavement group with its belief in self-care, Tammara decided that a gift that both memorialized Alexia and created a safe and comforting place for the family would be a new kitchen. The renovations were completed this year.



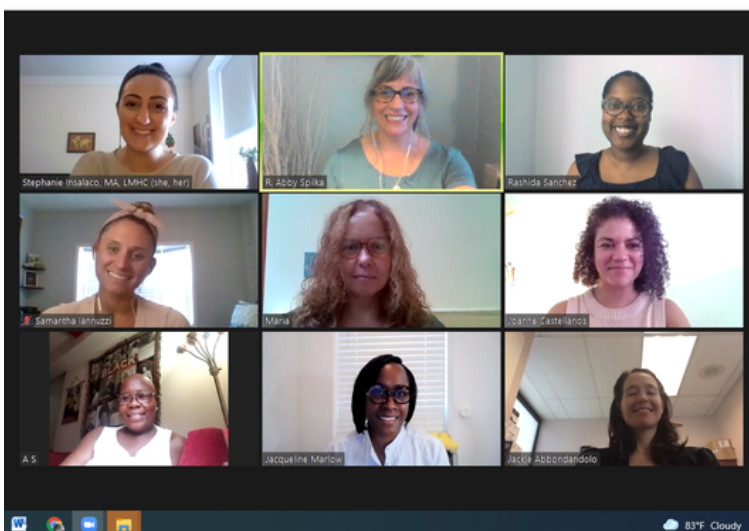
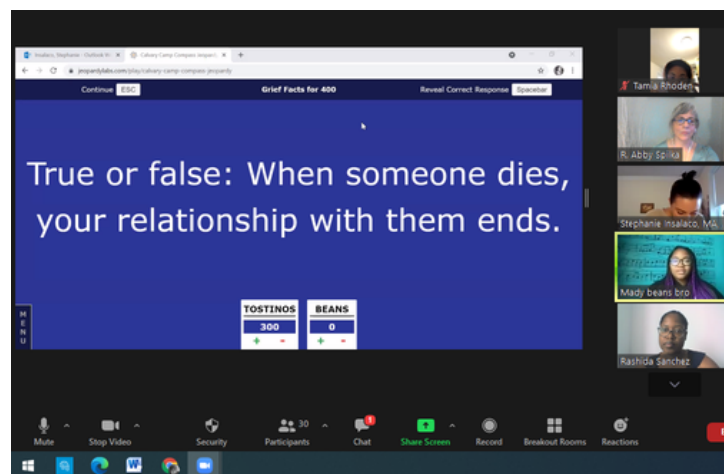
WRITTEN BY
R. Abby Spilka, MA, CT, LMHC
Bereavement Counselor

CALVARY'S CAMP COMPASS©



Calvary's Camp Compass© took place this year on August 18th and August 19th on Zoom. This is our 24th year of camp, and our second annual virtual version of camp.

This year, we played games like bingo and grief Jeopardy, talked about grief, and processed our thoughts and feelings together.



We are honored to provide this space and support for the children in our program. With love, Stephanie, Abby, Rashida, Samantha, Maria, Joanne, Alicia, Jacqueline, and Jackie.

BRONX GROUPS

Death of an Adult Child

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

Death of a Child

Monday: Joanne 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 Spouse/Partner

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

Spanish Speaking Group

Yvette: TBD

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

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

Tweens (10-12 year-olds)

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

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

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

Men's Discussion Group

1st Thursday: Samantha 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 6:45PM - 8:15PM

Young Adult Group

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

Mindfulness & Movement for Grief

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

Supportive Connections

Brooklyn/Queens: Parents/Guardians of Bereaved Children

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



CONTACT US

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MANHATTAN GROUPS

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: Abby 5:00PM - 6:30PM



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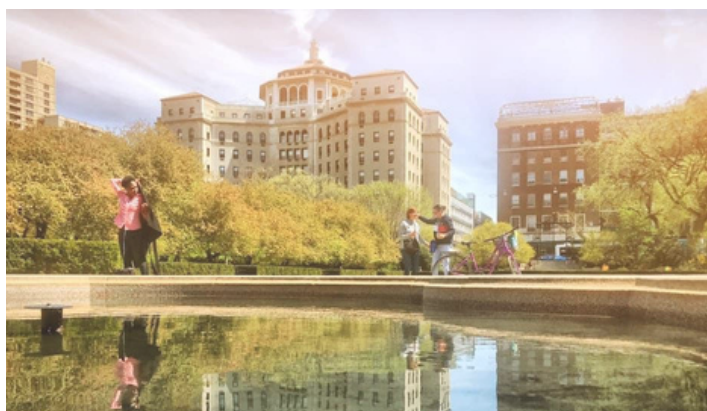
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INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging this past year-and-a-half 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!

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