

JANUARY - MARCH 2022

# CALVARY IN TOUCH



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## THERE ARE STARS

By: Hannah Senesh

There are stars whose radiance is visible on earth long after they themselves are gone.

There are people whose glorious memory continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living.

These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark.

They light the way.

**CALVARY  
HOSPITAL**

*Where Life Continues*

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# BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT

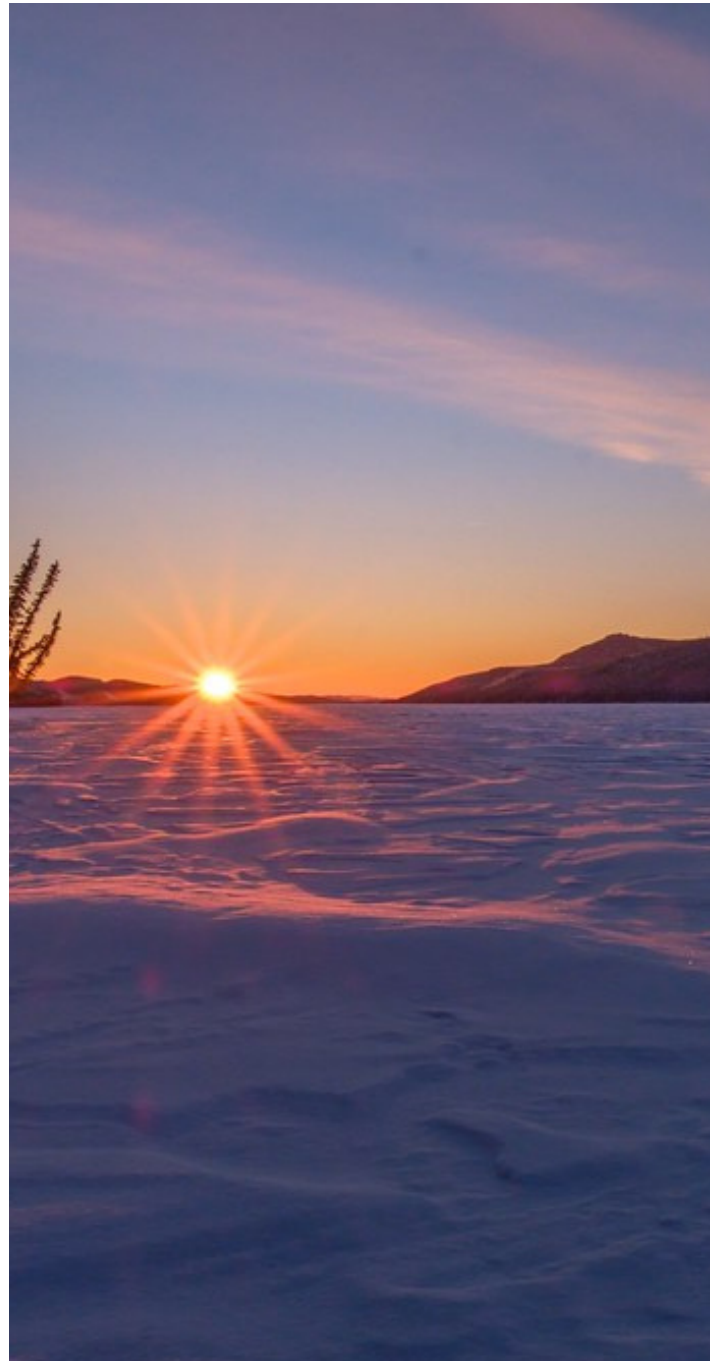
We are emerging from December and the Winter Solstice; the longest night of the year is in the rear view mirror. Although the days are still quite cold and crisp, each night is a little shorter and continues on this path until springtime. I am reminded of the phrase: It is always darkest before the dawn. In grief, this turn-of-phrase can have multiple meanings:

For some people, these are seven empty words ... it is just something a person says to make you feel better without truly making an investment in your well-being.

For others, though, it is an attitude or a point-of-view that provides hope. Through the great slog of grief, you manage to make it through the night to start each day anew. And what happens during the day? Daylight offers us possibilities, illumination, the chance to be seen, and see others; perhaps we get clarity or new perspectives on a problem.

But what about night? For some of us, night is the time when we are bombarded by the problems of the day, and answers (and sleep) are out of reach. For many griever, night puts loneliness front and center. For others, though, night allows us to sleep, recharge, and prepare for the challenges of the next day. Still others may prefer the solitude and quiet of night and get their best thinking done in the darkness.

Whenever we are feeling overwhelmed by grief, it is important to remember that before each dawn breaks, we are given another chance to reset. We can then rise with the sun and face those challenges in the light of day.



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

# FINDING HOPE IN DARKNESS

My name is Melissa Reyes. My story starts with meeting the man who had forever changed my life, and then suddenly losing Eric, my fiancé, on March 29, 2020, and the ongoing journey of finding a balance between grief and joy every day since.

I will begin with saying something we all need our hearts to hear and that is, "You are going to make it."

I am 39 years old, and my beloved Eric was 45 years old. We had an amazing relationship. One I always prayed for, and knew I deserved. Eric was unique, kind, brave, smart and a great partner overall. We had known each other for a few years and were great friends before we decided to become one. I can feel the joy breaking through my grief-stricken heart with all the memories of laughter and security, and just knowing that I got to experience real love, and how blessed I was to have had it. While we may have had our "down moments" or disagreements, and struggled with the challenge of infertility, I can honestly say everything we went through left us feeling closer, and with lessons to be learned.

After a decade of spending day after day together, and planning our future with the things we had yet experienced, my worst nightmare became a reality on March 29, 2020. When I was told of his death it felt like the floor was pulled out from underneath my feet, and I was falling down a dark hole just letting everything happen around me. I had lost the most important part of my life. I lost all the control I thought I had in my life. I laid in that dark pit for a while, and did the bare minimum to survive each day, such as getting off my bed, brushing my teeth, eating, and showing up for my life, with my responsibilities, and my loved ones. It honestly felt like I was floating. I was numb, but I did my best.

When Eric's one year anniversary was approaching, I realized how long it had been. I still felt emotionally and mentally stuck. On the day that marked one year since Eric's death, I remembered looking around my home and knowing that I had to start moving. Going at my pace helped big time. I slowly started finding ways to honor him, and to give myself permission to start to live again. I knew that if I didn't, I was going to fall back into that dark pit and die with Eric, and that would not be honoring him or us.

So, I started to pray, and little by little, I started to clean up, smile more, and find ways to navigate through my grief. I have learned that there is no right or wrong way to deal with grief. It's different for everyone. And there is Hope! I knew I had a mission and a forever journey in front of me, but it's one I want to take. I am now 20 months into my grief journey, and I have learned to climb out of that dark pit and started to let the sun into my life. I have discovered the tools to help me now, like therapy, prayer, my faith, loved ones and mine and Eric's love, which fills me up daily. I know the waves of grief can knock you down over and over, but loving yourself again can lessen the strength of those waves and they won't knock you to your knees as often anymore. I have also allowed myself to feel more on my good days and bad days and to not be afraid of these feelings of grief, which has also helped. My hope for all of us who are grieving is that we all find something bigger than ourselves to hang on to, because the world needs us. When our hearts start to accept what has happened, we will then learn to find new healthy ways of living with grief & joy side by side.

YOU WILL MAKE IT. YOU GOT THIS.

WRITTEN BY  
Melissa Reyes

Bereavement Group Member

# FOCUSING ON GRIEF AS A RECIPE FOR SELF-CARE

My husband, Ivens, passed away in April 2020. I have always said everyone should have an Ivens in their life. Ivens was witty, intelligent, kind, and always available to advise a friend. He was a former *New York Times* editor. He was an amazingly gifted writer. He started his own public relations firms. He drilled oil wells. He loved tennis and gardening. He was a man for all seasons! We were always together. It is Ivens who reminds me that every day is an adventure. His spirit and positive attitude remain with me. I tap into it every day, as he is my inspiration and source of strength.

Soon after Ivens passed I decided to focus on myself. I allowed myself to grieve. The emotional and mental toll of being Ivens' caretaker was overwhelming. I had already found a compassionate therapist. I had to make sense of this grief before it controlled my life. I began to set a few things in motion. I continued to play tennis. It was one of the few ways I was able to release all the energy inside me. I volunteered. During the early months of the pandemic I delivered meals to the homebound. Helping out in the community had always provided satisfying work. It had allowed me to remain productive. I began to meditate and was able to experience a calm that I didn't think I would ever achieve. "Healing" felt almost tangible. My self-care meant surrounding myself with good people. Learning to walk away when the situation no longer suited me. Acknowledging and appreciating all that is around me every day. Continuing to appreciate Ivens for always nourishing my curiosity. Staying grounded and each day determining what is best for me - - without judgment.

The first year without Ivens was absolutely devastating. I felt discombobulated. I was such a warrior fighter. With a box of tissues at my side, I fought to keep everyone at bay. Such as the judgmental ones who couldn't help but offer their (unsolicited) opinions. (I am grieving. I am not stupid! I still know what is right and wrong.) The suitors who thought I was available. (I'm grieving. Do you think I could have a moment, or two? Maybe three?

*"His spirit and positive attitude remain with me. I tap into it every day, as he is my inspiration and source of strength."*

Leave me alone!) I even braved a harassment case. (Just because I am grieving doesn't mean you can take advantage of me.) The incident temporarily shook me out of my fog. I jumped into action. I was calm. I was clear thinking. I had a glimpse of what was still inside me. I had strength, imagine that! I knew Ivens would have never forgiven me if I hadn't confronted this person. And I nailed the jerk!)

Continued on next page...

# FOCUSING ON GRIEF AS A RECIPE FOR SELF-CARE, continued

Baking has always been one of my passions. For months I couldn't focus or concentrate. My tennis game was off. My baking was tasteless. I decided to create a purpose for my baking. I targeted holidays and baking items that Ivens would enjoy. We were approaching Purim at the time. I researched hamentaschen recipes with the goal of making a bakery-style cookie. I succeeded and started down the path to becoming an even better baker. Focusing on the sweets that Ivens enjoyed was my way of keeping his memory alive. It kept us close and brought me comfort! Now each recipe is made "à la Ivens," with extra care and a few added ingredients that were special to him. Throughout the years, Ivens was positive and encouraging of everything I prepared. He was my taster. Early on, when we first met, I would often bake a different cake each week. I think this is what sealed the relationship, confirming the way to a man's heart is through his stomach – or his sweet tooth in this case. I began to share my baking at work and among friends. It was well-received. A colleague wrote me to say how delicious my brownies were. My baked goods were discussed on a work Zoom. I am slowly developing a following wherever I go. I couldn't have asked for better.

I believe as caregivers we have given so much of ourselves to our spouses not because we had to but because we wanted to. I doubt anyone of us would have done otherwise. While we nitpick all that we did wrong, we need to remind ourselves of the huge sacrifices we made for our loved ones, suffering stress and trauma. I feel privileged that I was there for Ivens and that he always wanted me by his side. What a painfully arduous journey one must endure. However, I remain optimistic that we will move forward because we are trying...

*"[Baking] kept us close and brought me comfort! Now each recipe is made "à la Ivens," with extra care and a few added ingredients that were special to him."*



Julia & Ivens, Sept 30, 2019

WRITTEN BY  
Julia Chang-Stanton  
Bereavement Group Member

# 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

## **Teens (13-17 year olds)**

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

## **Death of a Spouse/Partner**

Thursday: Abby 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**

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



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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: Abby 5:00PM - 6:30PM



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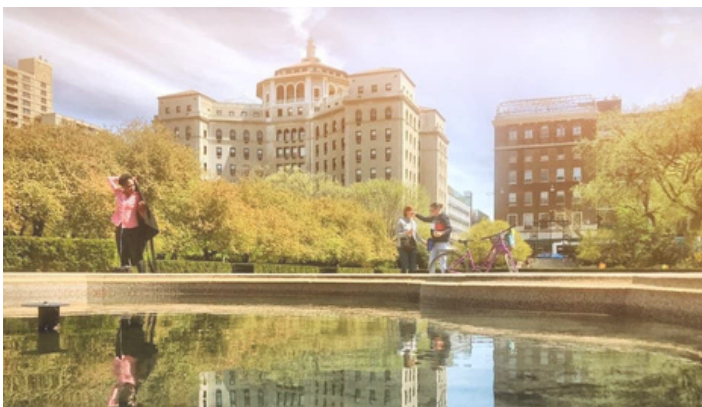
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# INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging the past two years have 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 Jackie.

## FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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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.