

A P R I L - J U N E 2 0 2 2

CALVARY IN TOUCH



FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Jackeline Abbondandolo, Intake Coordinator
347-949-1266 | jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org



GREETINGS

The promise of spring can certainly help us look forward. When spring takes hold, it's hard not to think of how beautiful life can be. In the same breath, life is ripe with endings and the death of the physical self is a difficult ending to live with for many of us. Our protest to endings can be quite loud and strong; our pain running quite deep. It can feel unimaginable to stand upright enough to notice the burst of color in the garden or even the warmth of the sun on your face.

There are many losses deserving of our grief. The death of a significant person usually brings a transition that is utterly unwanted. But even for transitions that we have willed or hoped for, like changes of season, changes in the workplace, or graduations, there is still an ending to lament and a beginning that may feel uncertain and scary.

As we approach all kinds of losses in our lives, may we have the courage to give ourselves the space and time we need to move at the pace of our grief. May we remember that our feelings have their own life, even though we may feel so worn and weary by their appearance. May we pause and notice when our bodies are reacting in grief and learn how to nourish them with things like a walk or a hug from a trusted person in our lives. May we allow ourselves to seek out support in places where it is available. And maybe it's also okay to push ourselves, when we are able, to pick our heads up from our grief and take in the beauty of spring in the air around us.

**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

MARIA GEORGOPOULOS
Director of Bereavement Services

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TWO FUNERALS AND A WEDDING

When I was 27 years old, my mother was diagnosed with a fatal brain disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. A gray fog of agony and rage consumed me as I prepared her 53-year-old youthful body to accept the inevitable. Three weeks after she died, I sat defeated at my kitchen table when death came back into my life and took my father away from me, too; he was 54 years old and died of congestive heart failure and Covid-19. I was left orphaned within a month. This broke my spirit and threw me into a world that didn't make sense. It awakened the reality of my mortality and reminded me of my lack of control.

The loss of identity and purpose merged with the loss of my culture. My mother's Café con Leche no longer filled the air with its familiar Spanglish, and my father's seasoned personality was no longer able to offer humor or comfort. Feelings of abandonment and guilt drained me. But slowly, I started to remember flashes of their radiant energies, which overshadowed the memories of them being sick. Their deaths taught me to say, "I can't be strong anymore," which saved me. I learned to trust and lean on others when I had to. I remembered their joy, and I allowed myself to accept a life without their physical presence, even as I decided to continue to plan my wedding scheduled five months after my father's death. Moving forward with my life did not mean I was moving forward from grief. Instead, I accepted the pain as a lingering reminder of love.

On the day of my wedding, I walked towards the ceremony alone. Before I got to the aisle, I felt the hysterical ache of not seeing my father's familiar side smile and not hearing my mother's usual yelps of happiness. I tried to keep it together for this day, but I could no longer move my feet. Just when I thought I may crumble, my father's two best friends ran to either side of me, and they caught the pain that threatened to bring me down. "In honor of him," the friend on my left said, lending my legs strength to stand. The other on my right whispered, "We feel them here with us." I knew my parents had their way of communicating with me at that moment. I walked towards my future, letting grief trail behind, holding my veil. The tears fell, but hope relaxed my shoulders and lifted my hand into my husband's hand.



That night grief comforted me with the spirits of my parents swirling on the dance floor. My step-mother laughed with my father's energy, and my step-father smiled with my mother's pride. I do not know if it was the familiar vibe of joy, perfect weather, or if it was the birds swooping over my husband and me when we said, "I do," but I felt my parents beside me that day.

Nothing in my life will ever be the same. There will continue to be moments when I feel lonely, guilty, or angry; all I can do is acknowledge those feelings and move with them. I do not have signs of their presence all the time, but I live forward knowing they still support and love me the way they did when they were alive.



WRITTEN BY
Kristel Torrellas

Bereavement Group Member

'TIL I DANCE WITH YOU AGAIN

Transitions are a time of change. Perhaps it is this latest one that has made me reflective, that has moved me to think back, to think about the few transitions I've lived through. How I've been able to deal with each has been the confluence of a few key factors, such as my age, my upbringing and the love that has always surrounded me.

I think the first big transition came when I left Puerto Rico as a very young adult to come to New York for graduate school. What a different country...how many different people and customs! I was homesick to be sure, but I was at an age where the spirit craves adventures and change, so I welcomed all these new experiences wholeheartedly. I remembered my mother's joy at the fact that I was giving myself this new adventure because she believed it would make me stronger. Little did I know I would never return to my island to live there permanently again, but I was never away in spirit. I was a Puerto Rican wherever I went, so that helped ease the nostalgia.

The next significant transition was when I became a mother. Suddenly this whole new life, then two more, depended on my care...our care. My husband's support and experience, his own joy in being a father again, were key to my not only embracing this new role, but thriving in it! I was at an age where I could balance my career and my family, but of course, I had a partner who was balancing it all right along with me. Oh, how beautifully we danced together throughout our shared lives!

Almost two years ago, I began my journey through this last transition. I lost my husband to the first wave of COVID -- unexpectedly and quickly. We had other plans... plans that included relocating, maybe traveling, playing lots of tennis as well as enjoying our grandchildren and, always, dancing! My whole family was stunned, how could such a vibrant, strong man who loved living, be gone, exist no more? He was the pillar, the patriarch, the one everybody went to. He rejoiced in the good news and helped us think through the bad. How am I supposed to live without him?

His death has made me think of mine; it has brought awareness of the fact that I have lived 66 years, that I will die sooner rather than later. I am not that young adult having new adventures, that new mom juggling different roles... but I feel young in spirit, in spite of my knees. I honestly feel I still have a life to live!

"His death has made me think of mine; it has brought awareness of the fact that I have lived 66 years, that I will die sooner rather than later."

What has kept me going during this challenging time?

The strength that I inherited from my mother, demonstrated through her early widowhood; that sense of purpose that my husband and I shared every day of our lives for 32 years; the possibility of sharing the new experiences our children have yet to live, and being alive, healthy and still curious about the world we live in. These are the magical elements that have been getting me through this last important transition... until I make mine, and I dance again with my loved one.

WRITTEN BY
Jackie Arandes
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: Wednesdays 1:00PM - 2:30PM

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

MARIA GEORGOPOULOS, LMHC, FT DIRECTOR OF BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

646-739-1005

mgeorgopoulos@calvaryhospital.org

JOANNE CASTELLANOS, MA, LMHC, FT

917-574-4941

jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

JACQUELINE MARLOW, ATR-P

917-708-0133

jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

YVETTE RAMIREZ, CHAPLAIN

718-518-2000 ext. 2281

yramirez@calvaryhospital.org

SAMANTHA IANNUZZI, MS, LMHC

347-963-8497

siannuzzi@calvaryhospital.org

MELANIE RAE PAPPALARDI, LMSW

917-624-0266

mpappalardi@calvaryhospital.org

BROOKLYN GROUPS

Tweens (10-12 year-olds)

Tuesday: Samantha 4:00PM - 5:15PM

Teens (13-17 year olds)

Wednesday: Jackie 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: Melanie 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



CONTACT US

SAMANTHA IANNUZZI, MS, LMHC

347-963-8497

siannuzzi@calvaryhospital.org

RASHIDA SANCHEZ, MA, LMSW, FT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

347-504-2704

rsanchez@calvaryhospital.org

R. ABBY SPILKA, MA, CT, LMHC

917-574-6879

aspilka@calvaryhospital.org

MELANIE RAE PAPPALARDI, LMSW

917-624-0266

mpappalardi@calvaryhospital.org

JACKELINE ABBONDANDOLO, LMHC

347-949-1266

jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

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



CONTACT US

SAMANTHA IANNUZZI, MS, LMHC

347-963-8497

siannuzzi@calvaryhospital.org

STEPHANIE INSALACO, MA, LMHC

646-771-6604

sinsalaco@calvaryhospital.org

MELANIE RAE PAPPALARDI, LMSW

917-624-0266

mpappalardi@calvaryhospital.org

R. ABBY SPILKA, MA, CT, LMHC

917-574-6879

aspilka@calvaryhospital.org



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.

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INTAKE COORDINATOR

347-949-1266

jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

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.