

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022

CALVARY IN TOUCH



FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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GREETINGS

For many griever, the end of a year brings mixed feelings. While it can be a time of creating new memories, participating in holiday festivities, and sharing traditions, it can also be a time of deep sadness, anger, and anxiety. All of the elements of a wonderful holiday are there...except for the person who died. Grief can be full of transitions, often potentially felt during holiday seasons. In support groups, we frequently speak about the value of self-care.

It can be difficult to know where to begin and how to pinpoint what you need to take care of yourself. Sometimes people confuse self-soothing with self-care. Self-soothing acknowledges our need for comfort, warmth, and pleasure and self-care allows us to acknowledge our need for self-respect and self-connection. Whatever you choose to do, be intentional about pausing and taking care of yourself on any given day. Want to relax after a long day? Small things like a warm shower, cup of tea, watching your favorite television show can help you feel more at ease. Need a break from your tasks? A long walk, turning off your phone for a bit, fitting in a nap are just some of the things that can be good for the body and mind. Drawing, going to a concert, or taking a course are other ways to check in with yourself. Self-care can also be talking to a friend or journaling about your experiences.

Grief looks different for everyone. The busy holiday season can lead individuals to share more about their person who died while others may process their grief silently. There is no one way to work through grief, just different approaches. Whatever your approach, we hope you take the time to do what is right for you.



**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

RASHIDA SANCHEZ
Assistant Director, Bereavement Services

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GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

For the griever, sharing the narrative of your grief and giving the space to process what emotions are present is encouraged. A part of navigating your grief is giving yourself the time to explore and release your emotions when necessary. The following poem is from Marilyn Schultz, a member from the Death of a Spouse-Partner group. Through the poem, Marilyn expresses what her experience in group has been like as she shares her “gratitude and much appreciation” for having the space to share her grief.

GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

“Thank you for what you do,
Thank you for being you.
Life gets easier and better
When weekly together with you.
For those who mourn for love,
Who have only the stars above,
When lost in deep despair,
And hearts in need of repair,

You listen, you mirror,
You help, you care,
You make the present clearer
You’re the best that is there.

Listening to the pleas of widows and widowers,
Thinking thoughts in our darkest hours,
Opening up on our misery and grief,
Yours is a fit place for sad sweet relief.

You respond with an open heart,
Showing us a new place to start,
'Be kind to yourself, pace yourself.'
As I hear these words, I see this for myself.”

WRITTEN BY
Marilyn Schultz

Bereavement Group Member

GRIEF: THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE

I remember a pivotal moment in my grief a few months after Kate, my partner of 15 years (age 32), passed away in December 2021 after an intensely aggressive bout of cancer. The June heat was oppressive as I struggled on a 5k run. Running had become the only momentary reprieve from the deep, intense sadness that had permeated nearly every minute of 2022 for me, and this was a particularly rough day. The humidity had stolen my steady breathing, and my body and mind both felt like they had already given up just a mile in.

It was then I had a string of rapid-fire thoughts that would come to define my grief journey. At this point I was thinking in short, basic sentences but they came in waves:

“I feel like I’m dying”

“I’m not actually dying, it just feels like a part of me has died”

“When Kate died, a part of me had to so that I could carry her forward with me”

“Maybe grief is just the other side of love”

At this moment I had to stop as tears began to cloud my vision and sting my already sweaty eyes. I don’t remember the walk home. For the next few days I became obsessed with the relationship between grief and love, devouring everything I could including the highly recommended book “It’s Okay that You’re Not Okay” by Megan Devine.

Kate and I met when we were 17; we were each other’s true loves, soul mates. We grew into adulthood together, our intertwining development making both of us stronger through our fundamental bond. We joked we were like swans, mating for life.

Throughout our adult lives I had someone to dote on, and even during her decline I had someone to worry about. But after she passed I had nothing, except a void that couldn’t be filled no matter the running miles, expensive gadgets, or sugary sweets I shoved in there. But, as time went on I came to realize that it wasn’t a void, it was the space left by the love I had for Kate. Our love still lived somewhere in that blackness and I was intent on finding it.

I attended a bereavement group through Calvary and started to write in a journal to help collect my thoughts. Looking back on it after almost a year of grieving, I can start to see the transition from where I stopped talking about myself in the diary and started to talk to Kate. I kept her up-to-date on events in my life, wrote down what I thought she might find funny, and mostly told her how much I missed her.

It was through these conversations I realized I still loved her, and always will. I tried my best to cherish the happy moments. Over time, the memories of hand-holding on beaches and cuddling in the snow started to come back, pushing the hospital beds and beeping monitors away.

I realize not all grieving journeys are filled with love; some grief is complicated, jagged, and doesn’t fit into neat boxes. I also won’t pretend like I feel any semblance of normalcy or I don’t have days where I’m not curled into a fetal position on the bedroom floor. But, in those moments of despair I know that it’s love, not the void I’m staring into.

A few months after my revelation I looked into what swans do after a partner dies; they grieve for quite some time and move on from the pond where they lived with their mate. Some eventually find a partner.



WRITTEN BY
Jordan Stabley

Bereavement Group Member

CAMP COMPASS 2022: WE FINALLY MEET

For 25 years, Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department has hosted its annual Camp Compass® each summer. It is a week-long day camp for children and teens ages 6-17 who attend our groups. While every year has its highlights, this year's camp was especially significant because it was our first IN-PERSON camp since 2019. The counselors and children finally gathered and met after two years of virtual groups. Camp Compass® took place August 15-19 and was held at The Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica Estates, Queens.

During camp week, counselors and campers are guided through many grief-related projects, games, and conversations. Of course there is always tons of recreational activities to engage in, and breakfast and lunch is served every day. The children are given the opportunity to share about their person/people who died, their feelings, and receive validation and support from the counselors and other campers. At Camp Compass®, they are reminded that they are not grieving alone.

Calvary Camp Compass® is funded solely by generous annual donors, making it completely free for the families whose children attend.



Campers arrived by bus from the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan and were welcomed warmly.



Face painting and tattoos provided by therapy clowns are a favorite activity.



Signage and a very tall clown, as well as a different site, were new additions to this year.



The strong connection between counselor and camper flourishes during the week.

WRITTEN BY
R. Abby Spilka & Stephanie Insalaco
Bereavement Counselors

A SIMPLE RITUAL TO CREATE CONNECTION

Each year at Camp Compass®, our annual summer camp for grieving children, we conclude with a special ritual to acknowledge all that we learned and shared during the week. Campers, counselors, staff, and donors participate in this activity to close out the week of memories, both old and new. Bereavement Counselor Stephanie Insalaco organized this year's ritual in honor of our 25th Camp, and it was such a meaningful experience that we have chosen to conclude Camp with this activity from now on. Below is a description of the project. As you read the instructions, consider this affordable and portable activity as a great alternative to releasing balloons on special days. It is a powerful way to create connection with your special person any time you want to reach out, whether at the cemetery or on a random day when you are really missing them.

Needed:

Water soluble paper (regular paper will not work)

Soap bubble solution + water

Small jar

Small bubble wand

Permanent marker

Take a piece of water soluble paper and cut it into quarters. Take one quarter piece and with the permanent marker write or draw a message to your person.

Fold up the paper until it is a small piece, perhaps 1"x1".

Take the jar and fill it with 1 part bubble solution to 5 parts water. Stir with wand.

Put the piece of paper into the jar and tighten the lid. You can shake the jar or let the paper dissolve on its own.

After a few minutes (yes, you will need to be patient), the paper will dissolve and the water and bubble solution may have turned the color of the ink.

Go outside or open a window. Unscrew the lid, dip your wand in the solution, and blow your message bubbles into the sky.

WRITTEN BY
R. Abby Spilka
Bereavement Counselor

B R O N X G R O U P S

Death of a Child Bereavement Support: 2 Years and Beyond

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

Death of a Child

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

Adult Death of a Parent

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

Wednesday: Yvette 1:00PM - 2:30PM

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

Monday: Jacqueline 4:00PM - 5:30PM

Tweens (10-12 year-olds)

Tuesday: Jacqueline 5:00PM - 6:30PM
Thursday: Jacqueline 5:30PM - 7:00PM

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

Thursday: Jacqueline 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Men's Discussion Group

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

Supportive Connections:

Parents/Guardians of Bereaved Children

3rd Thursday: Jacqueline 6:00PM - 7:30PM



C O N T A C T U S

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BROOKLYN GROUPS

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

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

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

Wednesday: Jackeline 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: Jacqueline 6:00PM - 7:30PM



CONTACT US

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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

Adult Death of a Parent

Wednesday: Jackeline 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

Death of a Spouse/Partner to COVID19

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

Death of a Parent to COVID19

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



CONTACT US

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INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging the past few 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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INTAKE COORDINATOR

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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 718-518-2689.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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