

J U L Y - S E P T E M B E R 2 0 2 3

CALVARY IN TOUCH



FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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GREETINGS

J. William Worden, Ph.D. is a renowned grief theorist who developed a widely accepted model of grief, the Four Tasks of Mourning: accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain, adjusting to the environment without the deceased, and finding an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life. These are not linear processes, and they may be revisited over time. In the last issue of Calvary in Touch, I wrote about working through the pain of the grief. In this issue I would like to briefly write about the first task, accepting the reality of the loss.

I hear the words “I can’t believe they’re gone. How can they be dead? I just can’t believe it!” in support groups or while doing intake assessments. The mind cannot grasp and accept that the person is dead. The mind experiences shock, disbelief, poor concentration and inability to make decisions.

When we speak of the mind we are speaking also of the brain. The areas of the brain that are affected by grief are the prefrontal lobe, which is associated with conscious awareness, decision-making, planning and organizing; the limbic system, which is associated with emotions like sadness, anger, hurt and guilt; and the amygdala, which is associated with fear and anxiety related to threat of safety.



**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

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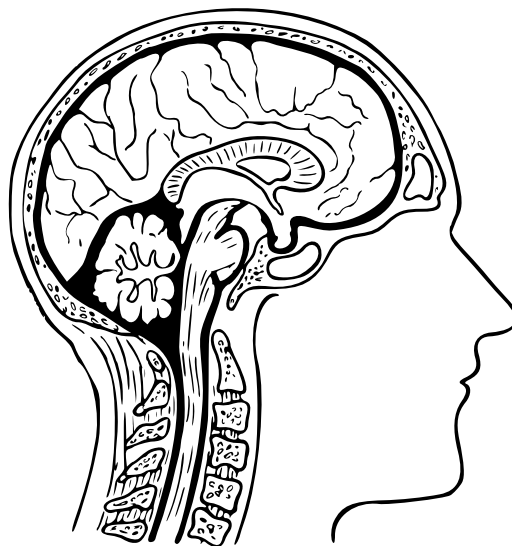
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GREETINGS, CONTINUED

The amygdala tells us how to respond to a crisis. Perhaps you have heard of the fight, flight, or freeze responses when one feels they are in danger. The prefrontal lobe of the brain becomes underactive while the limbic system and the amygdala become overactive. When someone dies, the emotions are heightened and the person's capacity for conscious awareness, concentration, and reasoning is diminished. The person has difficulty accepting the reality of the loss.

The summer months present many opportunities to develop conscious awareness, decision-making and the reasoning part of the brain in order to help one feel more balanced. Contemplatively attending to the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile touch of the outdoors, as well as planning activities, can ground us in the present and help us calm down and feel safe. Notice, plan and execute an activity, like a nature walk with friends, a trip to watch birds that are typical of the region, dig up weeds or plant seeds, practice yoga or tai chi outdoors, take a walk for 15 minutes during break time at work, take a bus or subway trip to a different destination, turn household chores into a playful game, start a writing journal or art journal, read a short story or learn something new. The goal of these activities is to connect the body, mind, and spirit to help one feel more balanced as one is working through the task of accepting the reality of the loss.



WRITTEN BY
Edgardo Lugo, MS, LCSW-R, RPT-S, CGP
Director of Bereavement Services

IT ALL STARTS WITH A PHONE CALL

Making the call to receive support is a big step in your grief journey. Intake Coordinator Jackie Abbondandolo, MS, LMHC offers some tips to help you know what to expect.

You will see on pages 9-11 the counselor's name and phone number associated with each group.

When you call the counselor, they will ask you some preliminary questions, and answer some of yours. If group seems like the logical next step, you will need to be assessed and participate in an intake with the counselor whose group you wish to join.

You and the counselor will set up a date and time to do the intake, which usually lasts an hour. Intakes are conducted virtually. During the intake, the counselor will ask you many questions that allow them to learn about you from a holistic perspective. You will be asked about your physical and mental health, trauma history, and how you have coped with previous losses, among other topics.

Admission to the group is not guaranteed, and if group is not the right fit, the staff will provide referrals.

Bereavement support groups are open to New York State residents up to 18 months after the death of their person. Groups run in six-week cycles and meet once a week for 90 minutes. You may sign up for additional cycles as long as you are within 18 months of your person's death. Space is limited in each group. Groups currently meet on a virtual platform.

Groups are open not only to Calvary Hospital and hospice families, but to the community, which means you will meet people who are grieving those who have died from long and short-term illness, accidents, suicide, and homicide, among other causes.

Some people feel they need support immediately, while others feel like they want to be with other griever after a number of months have passed. There is no one correct answer for those who grieve.

If you have additional questions, please reach out to Intake Coordinator Jackeline Abbondandolo, MS, LMHC, at 347-949-1266 or 718-518-2125.



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

A HAVEN OF COMFORT

Years prior to my mother's passing in 2019, she was diagnosed with a rare liver disease called Primary biliary cholangitis (PBC). I'm starting this story about my mother, Carmen Calderon, this way because PBC is an autoimmune disease that mostly affects women and was so rare that many doctors did not know what was wrong with my mother. Many people who are diagnosed with PBC have no noticeable symptoms. Early detection is vital and slows the progress of the disease. There is currently no cure for PBC. My mother lived with PBC for over 20 years. My family and I watched the pain and suffering this disease inflicted on all of us. In 2012, my mother was placed on a liver transplant list to no avail. In January 2019, mother's condition worsened, and she succumbed to the disease in March 2019 at Calvary Hospital.

The team at Calvary provided us with the love and support that we needed during a difficult time. I received scheduled support calls from Calvary @ Home Hospice Services, which was very helpful. Since my mother's passing, the Bronx Calvary team has provided bereavement support to my children through weekly children's groups and the summer camp, which my children have attended over the years. My daughter continues to attend the camp each summer and loves it!

The counseling services not only help my daughter understand that it's okay to grieve, but she continues to keep her grandma's memory alive with the stories shared in her group sessions. My mother passed away when my daughter Arianna was 7 and it was very difficult for her to make sense of the loss of such a significant person. Arianna is now 11 and is a member of the Tween Support Group (ages 10- 12 years), graduating from the Precious Moments Support group (ages 6-9 years). With the change of group, there has been a developmental shift in the conversations between Arianna and me. Arianna continues to learn ways to embrace the legacy of her grandmother, particularly with the use of the expressive arts activities and resources offered by her Bereavement Counselor each week. She is now vocal and even shares how she supports new members who have experienced the death of a significant person.

My daughter is not the only family member who benefits from this ongoing engagement with Calvary's Bereavement Groups. I am part of the Supportive Connections Group, which helps parents and guardians work through their own grief while supporting their grieving children. For me, the most important part of this group is that it helps me to be open and honest with my feelings. I can acknowledge the wonderful and amazing person my mother was and not the horrible disease that took her away from us. I am grateful to the team at Calvary for all they have done and continue to do for us. Calvary has become part of my extended family.



Audrey Cabbell and her mother, Carmen Calderon



Carmen Calderon

WRITTEN BY
Audrey Cabbell
Bereavement Group Member

HOMECOMING

November 2022. As I look out the window, my eyes feasting on the mossy green hills and the dazzling blue ocean, I hear the cabin crew announce that we will start our final descent. I was on the tail end of a nearly 17-hour flight to Manila, Philippines. It was my first time home in three years, a trip that was long overdue and that I had been anticipating and planning for months.

Home. I grew up wondering where that was for me, what that meant for me. As a child growing up in the U.K., I first understood it to mean the Philippines. We always “went home” for the Christmas holidays when we could, mainly to visit my grandparents who lived there. Over time I came to accept that in my heart home would always be the Philippines happily co-existing right alongside wherever I lived at the moment. And home would always be where my grandparents were. That didn’t change, even with all that angst about home and belonging.

In November 2019, I went home for the first time in nearly five years. Not that I avoided going back, but I was early in my career, wanting to spend my money to travel other places. I took for granted that the Philippines was “always there” and that I would go get to see my grandma and grandpa “one day.” Both in their early 90s, as far as I knew they were doing well, and there was no serious cause for concern, no immediate reason to travel all that way. In 2019, I saw that my grandmother was probably a little senile, asking me the same question every few minutes, but was otherwise doing fine. My grandfather was a different story. The last I had seen of him, he was a strong man, who stood proud, and walked around as if he was way younger than his 80 years. What I saw in 2019 rattled me -- a man in a wheelchair, frail and weaker, who could no longer speak -- a man who looked like his 90 years. I vowed that I would be back for the holidays the following year.



Domingo Family Mausoleum

HOMECOMING, CONTINUED

And then 2020 happened, and global travel came to a halt. I worried for my grandparents during that time, but I was happy to hear they were safe and could isolate. I hoped upon all hope that nothing would happen between then and when I eventually made it back. Then we lost both of them in 2021.

I found it difficult to grieve from afar, but with the help of the Young Adult Bereavement Group, I managed. All I wanted was to be back home, with my family, taking part in the rituals that muted the feeling of loss, yet celebrated their lives. From here I wondered: what did it mean that they were gone? What would “going home” look like? Did I just lose the reasons I went back? My ties to home? I always looked forward to visiting them. I wasn’t particularly close with either of my grandparents, and I had complicated feelings toward my grandfather, but they were always there. A constant presence in my life. The people I had to go back to, at first as obligation, but later by choice. A dear friend of mine had the misfortune of also losing her remaining grandparents right before I did, and she said that losing her grandparents felt like the ground she was walking on felt different. That’s what finally arriving back home in November 2022 felt like. The Philippines felt different. It was different.

I didn’t know what to expect before finally getting to visit each of my grandparents’ graves, but I know I drew from the work in group, the work that helped me to prepare. Once there, I felt like I was able to say the goodbyes I didn’t get to, and to ask each of them for forgiveness. It was nice to be with them, after only being able to imagine those moments after they died. Surrounded by the families I missed, the family each of my grandparents had raised and nurtured, and surrounded by their love, I knew where I was. Lola and Daddy Gab were missing, but I was in the homes that they built, the homes that remained constant. I was home.

WRITTEN BY
Khristine De Leon
Bereavement Group Member

THE GIFT OF TEARS

At times I am lachrymose,
but not, I think, morose.

At times I am awash in tears;
buffeted in an ocean of grief.

This is the curse of tears.

At other times that ocean is just a pool
of tears; a pool in which others, too,
are treading water.

And I am reminded that water
(and tears) is life-giving.

So, the tears that blur my vision
also soothe me.

This is the gift of tears.

WRITTEN BY
Phil M.

BRONX GROUPS

Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

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

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

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

Men's Discussion Group

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

Supportive Connections:

Parents/Guardians of Bereaved Children

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



CONTACT US

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BROOKLYN GROUPS

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

Wednesday: Jackeline 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Young Adult Group

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

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

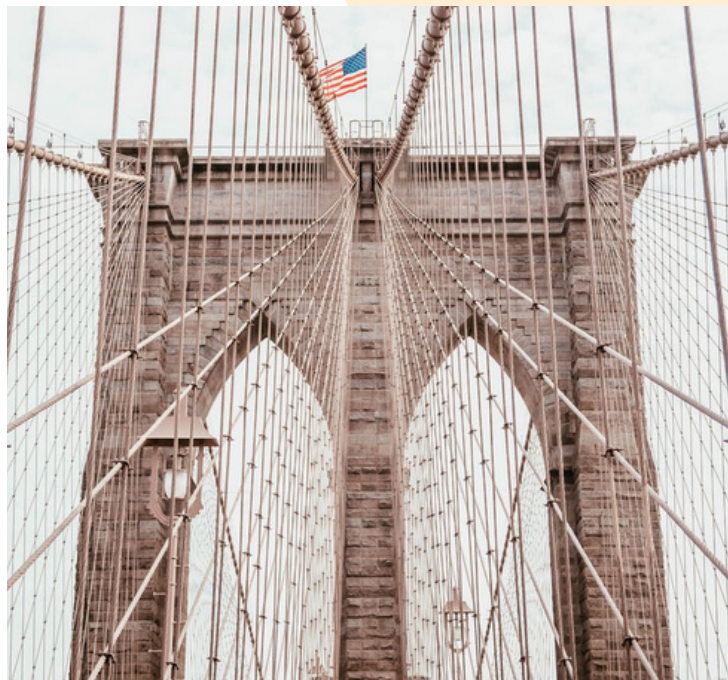
Tuesday: Jackeline 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Death of a Child

Tuesday: Abby 6:45PM - 8:15PM

Mindfulness & Movement for Grief

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



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Precious Moments (6-9 year-olds)

TBD

Teens (13-17 year-olds)

TBD

Adult Death of a Parent

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

Death of a Young Spouse/Partner

TBD

Death of a Spouse/Partner

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

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

Death of a Spouse/Partner to COVID19

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

Death of a Parent to COVID19

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



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INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging the past few years have been, especially for those who grieve. 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 718-518-2077.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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