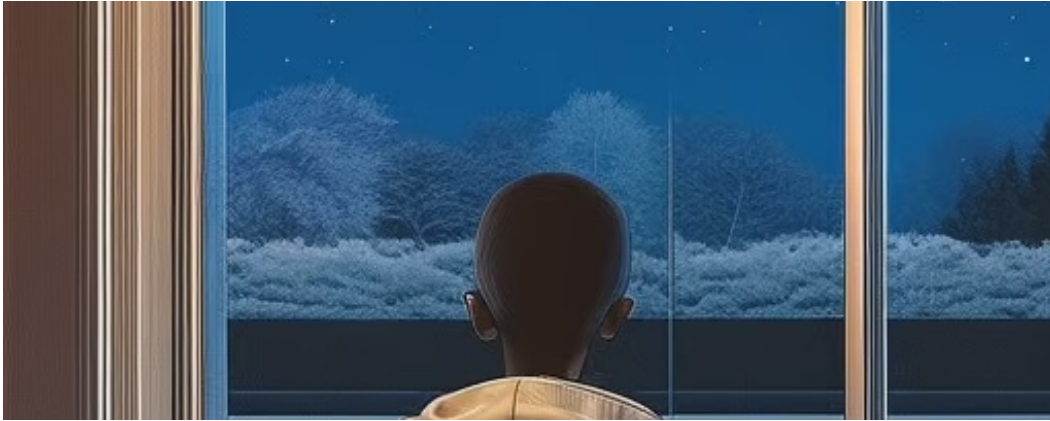


JANUARY - MARCH 2024

CALVARY IN TOUCH



**FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES CALL OUR BEREAVEMENT LINE:
718-518-2281**

GREETINGS

In this winter issue, I would like to discuss children's grief and how we help them when a family member dies.

Calvary Hospital offers groups for children ages 6–9, 10–13, and 14–17. Each group offers age-appropriate, fun activities to help children, tweens, and teens to understand grief. We also offer an annual day camp called Camp Compass, where children enjoy various recreational and special activities during the week to help them safely process their grief.

I want to focus briefly on how children ages 6–9 understand grief and how to help them. Children at this developmental age generally do not understand that death is final. There are several cognitive reasons why children do not understand death. These cognitive reasons are called egocentric thinking and consist of concepts called *animism*, *personalism*, *associational thinking*, and *magical thinking*. They can personalize events and believe that what happened is their fault. They understand cause and effect as things that happen simultaneously, *associational thinking*: A and B occur together; A is present; therefore, B must be present. For example, if a child goes to his/her first day of school and a thunder sound and lightning strikes next to the school, the child might refuse to go to school the next day for fear that thunder and lightning will sound and strike again.

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CONTINUATION OF GREETINGS

Another aspect of egocentric thinking is that their reality testing is not yet established. They can project thoughts and feelings onto inanimate objects (animism) and believe that their thoughts and feelings can cause things to happen (magical thinking). Egocentric thinking has implications for how children understand and process death. A child can believe that it is his/her fault (personalism) that a family member died. A child can believe that a family member died because the child was sick, and then the family member got sick and died (associational thinking). They can believe that family members are asleep and will wake up and be with them again (magical thinking). Children at this age can also express grief by acting out behaviorally in school and at home. They can regress and act in a younger manner and become clingy with caretaking adults.

At Calvary Hospital, we help grieving children by reading them age-appropriate books about grief, like *When Dinosaurs Die* by Laurie Krasny Brown or *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst and Joanne Lew-Vriethof or *The Memory Box* by Joanna Rowland and Thea Baker. We help kids overcome fears and nightmares by having them draw their fears on a whiteboard with colored markers, spray silly string on their scary nightmare pictures, and wipe the scary drawing/nightmare away. We help grieving children by letting them know that they are the experts in grief, and we do a role-play exercise called “The Helping News Network,” in which we imagine other kids calling the news network and asking a panel of kid grief experts how to cope with grief and manage grief during the holidays.

In 2024, we will be helping both children and their parents when we start a grief parenting support group focusing on trauma. The kids will be in one room with a counselor, and the parents will be in another room with another, learning about grief and skills to help their children cope and talk about grief.

At Calvary Hospital, we engage children where they are in their cognitive, emotional, and social development, and we use the modalities of play, art therapy, parenting support, and the expressive arts to help them process and work through their grief and grow in resiliency.

WRITTEN BY
EDGARDO LUGO, MS, LCSW-R, RPT-S, CGP
DIRECTOR OF BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

SURVIVING MY WIFE'S DEATH. KEEPING HER SPIRIT ALIVE.

I miss Debby, the love of my life and wife of more than 43 years.

Debby was my confidant, best friend, lover, soulmate - The mother of our three children and grandma of our seven grandchildren. Debby courageously fought her 12-year battle with metastatic breast cancer on January 11, 2022. I was at her bedside at Calvary Hospital when she took her last breath. Although I had lots of time to expect her Death, I was still unprepared for the challenges of grieving her loss.

Reflecting, Debby and I fortunately retired together at the end of 2017. We spent the next three years traveling the world. Ireland, Scotland, Normandy, Paris, and Morocco. We audited college courses and visited friends in Florida. During those times, Debby was winning her battle against cancer. Then, her cancer got worse, and the pandemic hit. No more traveling.

Fewer visits. More health crises. Then, the final blow. The doctors said that horrible word - "TERMINAL." The next stop is Calvary Hospice. We encountered excellent professional staff over the next eleven days. Debby was cared for there.

So, how did I survive after Debby died? First, I had to acknowledge that I was no longer a WE. I was a ME. Yes, I was still Michael. I am rediscovering myself.

The freedom of being a widower. It is not so good. But along with this freedom, I have located courage. The courage to experience new things. I feel vulnerable. Accept disappointment. I'll be honest. I often fail, but I keep trying. It is hard because I'm an introvert and prefer to retreat to quiet spaces.

I did not go on my grief journey and self-discovery alone. I contacted Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department. After I completed the intake process, I became a member of Joanne Castellanos's (behavioral counselor) weekly Death of a Spouse Partner Bereavement Support Group. Along with other widows and widowers 70 years of age and older, I realized my emotions were normal. I appreciate Joanne's empathetic and compassionate approach as a skilled therapist.



Michael Seidien and Debby Danis Seidien at their nephew's wedding on October 30, 2021.

"The love of my life. My wife of more than 43 years. Debby was my confidant, best friend, lover, soulmate - The mother of our 3 children, and grandma of our 7 grandchildren."

WRITTEN BY
MICHAEL SEIDIEN
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MEMBER

CONTINUATION OF SURVIVING MY WIFE'S DEATH. KEEPING HER SPIRIT ALIVE

When this program ended, I transitioned into Calvary's Mindfulness and Grief Group, a nine-week program facilitated by Jacqueline Marlow, a behavioral counselor. Jacqueline is another empathetic and compassionate therapist at Calvary.

This program taught me to gently pause and quiet my mind and body to absorb the psychoeducation on mindfulness, breath work, and apply guided imagery exercises. Over time, I began to incorporate mindfulness into my daily life - I can calm my mind and body in any environment to notice what I need and be more attuned to my feelings and triggers connected to my grief.

Choosing to develop an active lifestyle became helpful. I relearned how to take the initiative despite the relational disappointments. I have successfully planned get-togethers with friends and family events.

My health is a priority. I now exercise daily, including a morning ritual of Tai Chi every morning.

My amazing children are very supportive. My two sons don't live close by, but with seven grandkids, many opportunities exist to celebrate birthdays and holidays. My daughter lived close by, so we met at least once a week and talked almost daily. She was my tech support. My sister-in-law often invited me for dinner.

I worked hard at keeping in touch with Debby's spirit. I hung photos of her around the house. One photo is of the two of us at a family wedding ten weeks before she died. She dressed, had her hair done, put on makeup, and bought herself a new wardrobe. But you could tell she was sick. She remained optimistic until the very end.

I wrote a daily journal and recorded my thoughts. I wrote entries as though Debby could read them. I told her what I did, who asked about her, and how our kids and grandkids were doing. I still used the word "our." I often wrote about how much I missed her and still loved her.

When Debby got too frail to walk far, we walked a couple of blocks and sat on a park bench. When she died, I sat on that bench every day and talked to her. I believe she was sitting next to me.

I hung up a wall plaque that says, "Those we love never go away; they fly beside us every day." Another slogan I loved: People we love die twice. The day we bury them, then die again, the day we stop mentioning their name. I always mentioned Debby's name in conversations. If people didn't know what to say, that was okay. But it was great when someone told me a story about Debby.

When you're reading this article, it's been almost two years since Debby died. You might think I've completed my journey of grieving and mourning and that I live each new day joyously. Far from it. Every day, when I walk back into my empty house, I yell, "Debby, I'm home." Then I cry. When I get into bed, I reach over and make believe I put my arm around her and kiss her goodnight. The holidays have been super tough. An empty seat where Debby should be.

My journey of self-discovery, reinvention, and keeping Debby's spirit alive is far from over. I don't think my journey will ever end. I'll keep trying to be proactive. I expect there will be challenges and hurdles along the way. Good days and bad days. Debby's spirit and memory will always be with me, guiding my journey like a sailor uses the North Star.

WRITTEN BY
MICHAEL SEIDIEN
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MEMBER

WHAT WAS AND WHAT IS

My name is Jerry. I've been fortunate and blessed to be a part of one of Calvary's Death of a Parent groups, guided skillfully and oh-so compassionately by Jackie Abbondandolo.

My "person," as we often refer within our group to our parent who has died, was my mother - is my mother - Priscilla.

Why the word "is" when a life lived is over? For me, I think back upon a burial I attended for a chair yoga student, Nan - another mother, another person - who lived many years, dancing extraordinarily through the circle of life. Her loving daughter, Darnell, with whom I'd connected at classes, invited and welcomed me to Nan's burial in the early last spring on a chilly Catskill day on the cusp of winter and spring amid gray skies and promising buds of color. She asked me to lead a meditation. I felt humbled, I was honored, I agreed.

At the start of the ceremony, the funeral director said a few words about burial. And what stood out for me the most, sent chills up my spine, sparked a light in my mind, put a warm fire in the seat of my body and soul, were these words she spoke: "When people ask me about what I do, I say we bury bodies, not people."

I have always been comfortable with the word die. My mother, who was a prenatal educator, was known to use the words born, die, childbirth, and death respectfully and as a matter of fact. "It's a part of life!" she'd say fervently. And so, I believe that souls pass over or away and that bodies die. The funeral director's words somehow simplified, distilled, and affirmed this for me.

As for the "meditation," when the funeral director came to me before the ceremony, she said smiling, "So Jerry, you are doing the closing blessing!". In an instant, I thought to myself: "Blessing? At a gravesite? Like a benediction? - I'm not ordained in anything except maybe getting up in the morning, and sometimes I don't do that all that well!" But I agreed, without flinching, like something brighter than my doubts spoke up first.

And so, as I stood right by Nan's grave, next to a sapling and flowers that had been planted upon it just minutes before, from somewhere outside of me or deep within me and from amidst the presence and shared experience of others in that graveyard, I found myself saying:

"There is so much love here. Having never been in the presence of a human birth, I have, however, been blessed to have had the experience of holding newly born babies - and the sacred privilege of being next to each of my parents when they died. What strikes me now is that both those end-of-life experiences are exquisite, possessing the same quintessential and precious essence of pure love, except in the first instance, we embrace a body; in the latter, we let one go".

And so, like Nan, my loving friend Darnell's "person," my mother Priscilla is and ever shall be.

Somewhere beyond living and breathing, somewhere right in the center of great grief, the forever changing, the temporary, is true love, is eternal, is.



Priscilla

WRITTEN BY
JERRY SNEE
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MEMBER

I no longer consider the nuance
between “moving on” and “moving
forward” because all my days are,
happily, infused with you-
Everyday.

I no longer consider where we
were when such and such
happened because something
worth remembering happened-
Everywhere.

And I no longer need to wonder
if this or that photo, or painting, or
book, or TV show, or song might-
in remembering-bring me to
tears because everything can
and usually does.
Everything.

HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Calvary Hospice is excited to announce the recent implementation of the newly designed bereavement services program.

Weekly Anticipatory Grief Zoom sessions are available where all hospice patients, families, and caregivers are invited to receive education about anticipatory grief and the many ways it may impact one's life. Coping tips are also provided to assist patients and their families in adapting and preparing for the patient's eventual death. Those who join these sessions are welcome to share their experiences, as expressing thoughts and feelings is a healthy start to the beginning of one's grief journey.

Also available are monthly Topical Group Zoom sessions, which will provide education on the various aspects of the grieving process. These groups are open to all persons who lost a person on Calvary Hospice during the past year and are designed to be educational as well as supportive. In addition to the Topical Groups, individual counseling is available to those in acute grief who express the need and desire for individualized support.

Looking ahead to 2024, we aim to expand the Calvary Hospice Bereavement services as part of our continued effort to provide sublime, supportive care to our bereaved families.

As Calvary Hospice Bereavement Counselors, Rachel Borg and I are honored to be invited to help individuals who are experiencing anticipatory grief as well as acute grief after the recent loss of a loved one.

Thank you to all who allow us to be a part of your grief journey.



WRITTEN BY
STEPHAINE NEWMAN, LMSW
HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT COUNSELOR

VIRTUAL BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

DEATH OF A SPOUSE/PARTNER

Tuesday 1:00 - 2:30 PM
Wednesday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Monday 11:00 - 12:30 PM
Facilitator: Edgardo Lugo
347-963-7001
elugo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 4:30 - 6:00 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

ADULT DEATH OF A PARENT

Tuesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Wednesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Friday 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Facilitator: Edgardo Lugo
347-963-7001
elugo@calvaryhospital.org

ADULT DEATH OF A SIBLING

Tuesday 5:30 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Wednesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH OF A CHILD

Monday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
2nd & 4th Thursday 12:30 - 2:00 PM (2 years and beyond)
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

MEN'S DISCUSSION

1st Thursday 12:30 - 2:00PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE

Friday 12:30 - 2:00 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

VIRTUAL BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

TWEENS AGES 10-12

Tuesday 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Thursday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

TEENS AGES 13-17

Tuesday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18-35

Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

MINDFULNESS AND MOVEMENT THROUGH GRIEF

Wednesday 2:00 - 3:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

SPANISH SPEAKING

Wednesday 1:00 - 2:30 PM
Facilitator: Yvette Ramirez
347-880-6446
yramirez@calvaryhospital.org

IN-PERSON BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

PRECIOUS MOMENTS AGES 6-9

Monday 4:15 - 5:45 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

Parent/Guardian Group:
*Runs concurrently while your child is in
Precious Moments*

Monday 4:15 - 5:45 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

LOCATION:
CALVARY HOSPITAL
1740 Eastchester Road
Bronx, NY 10461



MENTORS THROUGH MOURNING: SCHOOL DAZE

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

Calvary Hospital invites mental health professionals and educators who work with children and teens to our *Mentors Through Mourning Workshop*. It is being offered virtually for one evening only.

**50%
OFF**

**JANUARY 22, 2024
4:30PM - 7:30pm
REGISTER NOW UNTIL
JANUARY 15TH, 2024 & PAY
\$37.50 (originally \$75)**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE ATTACHED REGISTRATION FORM
& EMAIL TO: [JCASTELLANOS@CALVARYHOSPITAL.ORG](mailto:jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org)**

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

PAYMENTS BY CHECK/ MONEY ORDER TO BE MAILED TO:

1740 Eastchester Road, Bronx NY 10461

PAYABLE TO: Calvary Hospital Bereavement Department

ATTENTION: Edgardo Lugo, Director of Bereavement

**PAYMENTS BY CARD, PLEASE CALL
CALVARY HOSPITAL'S CASHIER'S OFFICE AT
718 518 2048**

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR SUPPORT GROUPS
PLEASE CONTACT:**

Jacqueline Marlow, Children's Bereavement Counselor
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

Joanne Castellano, Adult Bereavement Counselor
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Edgardo Lugo, LCSW-R, Director of Bereavement
elugo@calvaryhospital.org



PRESENTATIONS

1

Grieving Community Violence & Trauma

The barrage of violence in headlines and social media today impacts us all, including children.

Children may be affected individually or collectively by school or neighborhood-based violence and accidents. Learn about the ways trauma and grief intersect and how to implement strategies to acknowledge, understand, and support grieving children.

2

Understanding Children's Grief

An estimated 5.6 million children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent, sibling, friend, or other significant person by age 18. Learn about the different ways children's grief is influenced by developmental level and age to better support children after a significant loss or traumatic event.

3

Interventions & Experiential Workshop

To better understand the emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual responses to grief; participants will learn the exercises and interventions that will enable them to work with and support grieving children.

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Calvary Hospital's Bereavement Department would like to acknowledge how challenging the past few years have been, especially when grieving. We offer individual bereavement counseling for a nominal fee to extend our support.

If you would like more information, please call 718-518-2281.

TREE OF LIFE



Through the Tree of Life, we can recognize your significant naming gift permanently and meaningfully. Your significant person's name will exist in perpetuity for 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.

**For more information, please call
718-518-2689.**

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.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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