

CALVARY IN TOUCH

BEREAVEMENT DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

MAY-AUGUST 2025

GREETINGS

Dear Reader,

I would like this opportunity to share information with you about loss that you may find helpful when navigating the difficult emotions surrounding one's grief. There are three types of losses that one rarely hears about: **ambiguous loss, secondary loss, and non-death loss.**

The term *ambiguous loss* was coined by grief theorist Pauline Boss, PhD. Ambiguous loss is a type of loss in which there is a lack of clarity or solution to the loss. It is manifested when a person is psychologically absent but physically present, like when a person has dementia or Alzheimer's, or has a condition that takes away a person's mind or memories. Another way it is manifested is when a person is physically absent but psychologically present in the minds of the family members, like when a person is abducted or runs away or missing due to a natural disaster or war.

Ken Doka, PhD, is another grief theorist who defines *secondary loss* as a loss that occurs after an actual death of a person. Examples of secondary losses could be the loss of a role that your person had when they were alive, like gardening or accounting, or the loss of community, friends, and/or lifestyle.

The third type of loss is the *non-death loss* coined by theorist Darcy Harris, PhD. Through this significant loss, one experiences grief reactions not due to an actual death of a person. The loss can be tangible or intangible. Tangible examples of non-death loss are finances, a home, friends, and/or physical functioning. Intangible examples of non-death loss are loss of identity, hopes, dreams, or meaning or purpose in life.

All these losses can trigger grief reactions that can affect us emotionally, mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. The ways that you can cope can include journaling your feelings, planning a task and completing it, exercising, talking to a trusted friend, joining an online book club, meditating, or contemplating nature, or joining a bereavement support group.



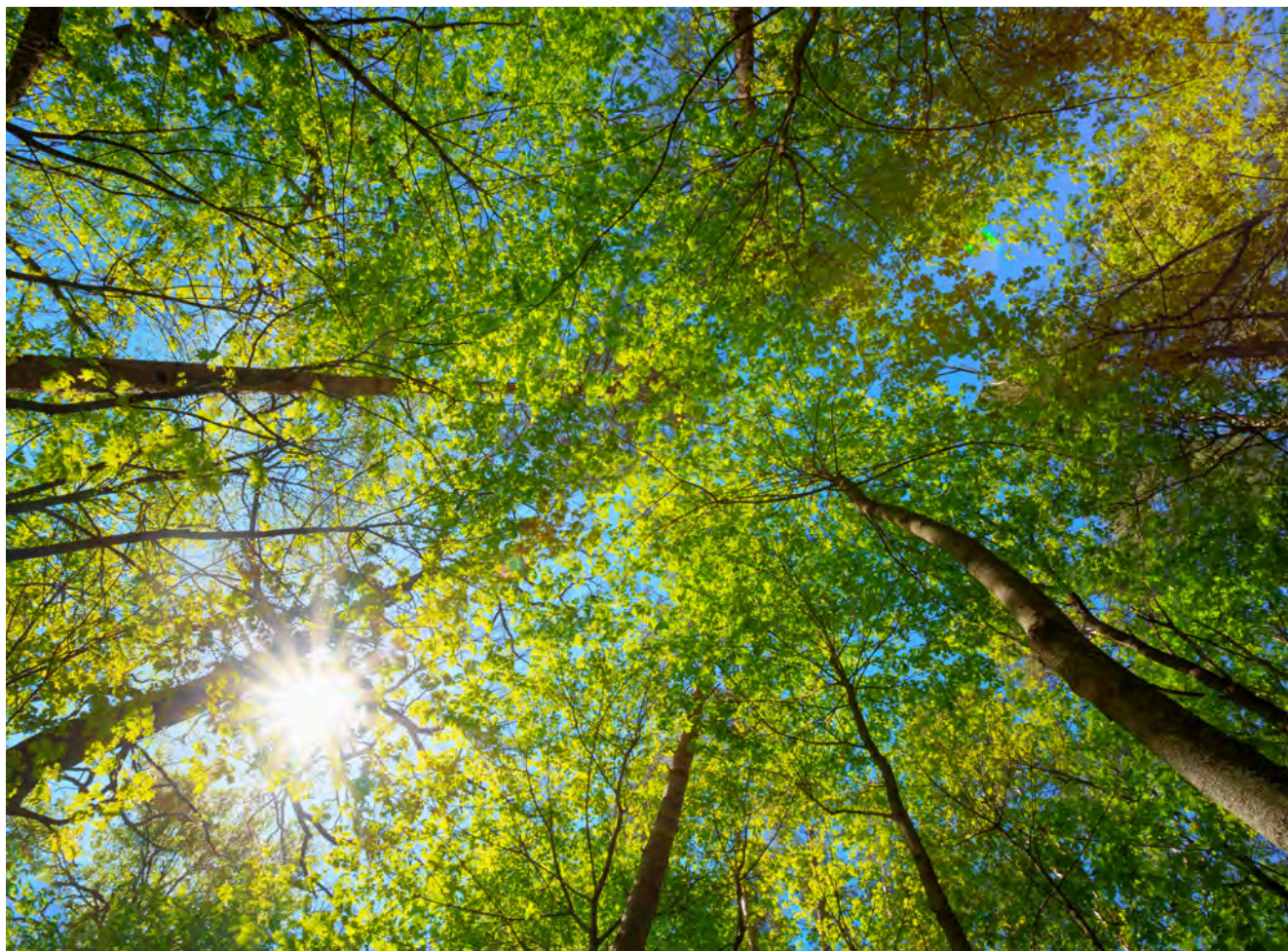
Written By
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Services

**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

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Finding my voice in the silence of grief

By Tania Padgett,
Bereaved Adult Child

I've always danced with words, spinning stories like laundry billowing on a clothesline, sunlight tracing hems. But when death stole my mother and grandmother, an unexpected thief in the early months of 2024, I became a storyteller with no story to tell.

I had disappeared, swallowed by a black depression, when I heard of a bereavement group at a local church.

My father and I, fragile travelers, agreed to attend. But solace was not there. The minister, unskilled, offered condolences that felt more like barbs. She referred to my father and I as "bereavement pros" after I mentioned other tragedies that had graced our door. I sat stunned and wordless.

Yet I returned for the next session, only to be met with more hollow platitudes, anger, shaming and tragedy comparing. This time, we did not return. A therapist pointed me toward Calvary Hospital's bereavement program, and I joined with skepticism wrapped around me like armor. If a minister could not soothe, how could a stranger behind a screen? Yet, I logged on, a vacant-eyed ghost, silent among six grieving faces. The stories spilled—anguish, rage and sorrow. The moderator wove compassion through every jagged edge, never once silencing, never once shaming. In that quiet haven, I felt seen. My voice returned, tentative at first, then bold, like a damned river breaking free.

I spoke of my grandmother, a titan who passed away like a delicate flower in my arms and my mother, a 4'11" dynamo with glinting hazel eyes and giant ambitions. But most of all, I spoke of the anguish of missing them, the void they left and my fury at their leaving. And as others told me to "be strong," my bereavement group taught me the quiet power of vulnerability. Many months later, my grief remains; but I can speak it, name it, give it form and voice. For I am a storyteller, still lost in mourning, but able to dance with words again.



The Beauty and Pain of May

By Marissa Piazzola,
Behavioral Health Bereavement Counselor

It is May, and nobody asked if I was ready.

I adapted this line from Sarah Kay's poem "Winter Without You." Of course, Kay was referring to the December holiday season. But the truth is, when it comes to loss, there are difficulties all year long.

Ask anyone whose mom has died, and they will tell you May is a paradoxical month. On the one hand, the Spring season reminds us of rebirth and renewal. Flowers bloom in brilliant colors on branches that were once frozen and barren. Chirping birds fill the morning air, as if encouraging us to greet the day. Warmer temperatures and longer days bring us out of hibernation. But while the Earth flourishes, the bereaved find themselves at a standstill over the second Sunday of the month.

My fraught relationship with Mother's Day goes back as far as I can remember. I lost my biological mom suddenly when I was five years old. It's hard to process death as a young child because the developing brain cannot yet understand such a concept. I don't know when I started to "get" it, but I do know that nothing made me feel more aware or out of place than Mother's Day. In my elementary school classes, there would always be a special project of some kind. I noticed all the other students dedicating theirs to "mom" or "mommy." The teacher would encourage me, the token motherless kid, to instead make something for my grandma or aunt. Not yet having the tools to express my grief or advocate for myself, I would comply while secretly wishing I could altogether opt out.

When I was eight years old, my dad remarried. I like to say that I've had two moms: the one that made me and the one that raised me. My stepmom was as authentic, charming and caring as they come. She was a force to be reckoned with. She worked full time while also holding our big, blended family together. She was a fantastic cook and holiday hostess. She put herself together even just to run errands. She showed up for me for 20 years. She was someone I loved celebrating on Mother's Day.

In the summer of 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, my second mom died. Another sudden loss. I could understand the concept this time, but somehow it made as little sense as it did when I was five. Since then, Mother's Day has once more become a thorn in the rose of springtime.



But now I know how to grieve. I can opt out if I want to, whether it's avoiding social media on Mother's Day weekend or unsubscribing from triggering emails. I can also express myself. I've posted tributes on Instagram to my two moms over the past few years. And I've posted messages of solidarity to other grievers. Only now do I realize that this has helped heal my inner child. No one can tell me to just make something for another relative instead. I don't need to quietly blend in with my peers or worry about making them feel uncomfortable by my losses.

Yet the question remains: how do we reconcile the beauty of May with its pain? I feel strongly that it is possible for them both to exist at the same time. I invite feelings of grief in, while also using mindfulness to connect with and appreciate the natural wonders of the season. I believe the spirits of my two moms dwell in all kinds of living things unique to this time of year: every butterfly that flutters past me, every red-orange flower I happen upon, every rare looking bird perched on a tree branch. I'm reminded that through continuing bonds, we can cultivate an eternal Spring inside ourselves.



SPECIAL DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE THAT HONOR YOUR GRIEF

The following list includes special dates to honor the attachment figures that are no longer living, yet continue to live on in us when we take the time to remember them.

- **MOTHERS' DAY, MAY 11TH**
- **FATHERS' DAY, JUNE 15TH**
- **MEMORIAL DAY, JUNE 26TH**
- **JUNETEENTH, JUNE 19TH**
- **NATIONAL BEREAVED
PARENTS DAY, JULY 3RD**
- **JULY BEREAVED PARENTS
AWARENESS MONTH**

TIPS ON WAYS TO HONOR THEM AND HONOR YOUR GRIEF

Develop a personal ritual that honors their memory, such as:

- Letter writing
- Share their stories
- Create art in their name
- Engage in some of your person's favorite hobbies
- Visit a favorite place of your person
- Plant a tree
- Engage in a fund raising event that honors your person's memory
- Set a place at the table
- Make a toast
- Light a candle through **Calvary Hospital's Virtual Memorial:**
<https://memorial.calvaryhospital.org>

VIRTUAL BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

DEATH OF A SPOUSE/PARTNER

Joanne Castellanos

- Tuesday: 1:00 - 2:30 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Monday: 11:00 - 12:30 PM

Jacqueline Marlow

- Thursday: 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Jackeline Abbondandolo

- Thursday: 6:00 - 7:30 PM

DEATH OF A YOUNG SPOUSE/PARTNER

Joanne Castellanos

- Wednesday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Tuesday: 6 - 7:30 PM

ADULT DEATH OF A PARENT

Jackeline Abbondandolo

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

Jacqueline Marlow

- Wednesday: 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Joanne Castellanos

- Thursday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Friday: 10:00 - 11:30 AM

DEATH OF A SIBLING

Joanne Castellanos

- Tuesday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Jackeline Abbondandolo

- 1st Thursday of each month: 12:30 - 2PM

DEATH OF A CHILD

Death of a Child

Joanne Castellanos

- Monday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Death of a Child - 2 Years & Beyond

Joanne Castellanos

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

Death of a Young Child

Jackeline Abbondandolo

- Wednesday: 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

TEENS AGES 13-17

Jacqueline Marlow

- Tuesday: 5:00 - 6:30 PM
- Thursday: 5:30 - 6:45 PM

VIRTUAL PARENT GUARDIAN GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Jackeline Abbondandolo & Jacqueline Marlow

- 1st Monday of each Month: 6 PM - 7 PM

CONTACT US

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BRONX IN-PERSON CHILDREN'S GROUP

IN-PERSON TWEEN & PARENT GUARDIAN BEREAVEMENT GROUP IN THE BRONX

TWEENS AGES 10-12

Jacqueline Marlow

- Monday: 4:00 - 5:30 PM

Parent/Guardian Group: runs **concurrently with Tween Group**

Jackeline Abbondandolo

- Monday: 4:00 - 5:30 PM



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BROOKLYN IN-PERSON CHILDREN'S GROUPS

TEENS AGES 13-17

Jacqueline Marlow

- Thursday 4:00 - 5:15 PM

PM AGES 6-9

Marissa Piazzola

- Thursday: 4 - 5:30 PM



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INDIVIDUAL BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering aftermath, many of us continue to grapple with unprecedented emotional and mental health challenges; if you're feeling overwhelmed, please remember that you're not alone, and don't hesitate to reach out to Calvary's Individual Counseling Services for the support and guidance you deserve during these trying times. These services attract a nominal fee.

If you would like more information, please call 718-518-2281, or email calvarybereavement@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 718-518-2689.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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