

# CALVARY IN TOUCH

BEREAVEMENT DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

September - December 2025

## GREETINGS

Dear Reader,

I am honored to introduce myself as the new Director of Bereavement Services. It is with a deep sense of responsibility and compassion that I step into this role, dedicated to supporting individuals and families during their most challenging times.

A veteran of the Bereavement Department with extensive experience in grief counseling and educating the community on the importance of having support during an intense and painful period in one's life, it is my mission and the mission of the bereavement team to continue to support the bereaved families and individuals experiencing intense grief. I believe that every person's journey through grief is unique, and we are here to support, guide, and offer resources tailored to your needs.

In this issue of Calvary In Touch, we look at how change can be difficult for the grieving person, especially if the person that died served as an essential part of the lives they left behind. As we enter a new season you may be challenged with how to feel, especially if there are holidays and events approaching that were shared with the person that died. It is normal to experience this anticipation. Finding outlets to help navigate the intense emotions is important. It is essential to have social supports, who take the time to listen which contributes to the lessening of the intensely painful emotions endured when in grief. You can also reach out to our department if you need that support.

I truly hope you find moments of comfort and encouragement as you navigate this challenging time in your life, and that, with time and gentle support, your grief grows lighter.



Written By  
Joanne Castellanos, MA,  
LMHC, FT,  
Director of  
Bereavement Service

**CALVARY  
HOSPITAL**

*Where Life Continues*

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# “How Grief Counseling Changed My Life”

By Laura Miele,  
Bereaved Adult Sibling

A little over a year ago I lost my “twin like” sister Paula, at the young age of 62, to metastatic pancreatic cancer. Paula lived the last few days of her life being cared for at Calvary Hospital with me and her boyfriend, Phil, right by her bedside.

Growing up, Paula and I had a unique bond. We were very close. Paula was not only my sister, but she was also my best friend. As we grew older, that bond grew stronger. From yearly sister trips, and talking and texting several times every day, to spending Sundays together, as well as every holiday. We loved each other for who we were, unconditionally, and just enjoyed being together. It was easy, and fun, and we knew what the love of a sister meant. We stuck together no matter what and built our worlds around each other. We were a force together and there was no way to separate us, until now.

When Paula was dying, she kept telling anyone who would listen to check in on me and to take care of me. She understood the pain that was ahead of me, but I was focused on taking care of her. I didn't think about myself or how it would be when she was no longer by my side. Her concern was for me, not herself. Talk about an amazing person. We should all have someone like Paula in our life.

When Paula died, people around me would say, please seek grief counseling. I wasn't a believer. I didn't think it would help me deal with the loss of Paula. Well, I was wrong! One very dark, lonely night, searching for answers, blaming myself, hopeless, crying and truly broken, a counselor from Calvary called. Her name is Stephanie Newman. Stephanie made me aware of the grief counseling offered through Calvary's bereavement services. I will never forget that call. It was perfect timing. It was when I realized I really needed help.

We began our monthly sessions shortly thereafter. Stephanie taught me coping skills and that grief is not linear, that grief doesn't follow a predictable path, that it's an emotional roller coaster, and that we all grieve differently. There's no one size fits all. She listened with care and offered so many great suggestions to help with the healing process.

With Stephanie's support, I started to try to understand the feelings of guilt, sadness, anger and the emptiness that I carry in my heart every day, but I started to feel stronger. Don't get me wrong, I have stumbled many times, and my struggles are far from over, but with Stephanie's counseling, I'm learning how to cope with life without my sister, Paula. I would never have been able to do this on my own. It truly made a difference for me.

Thank you!





# THE CHANGING SEASONS

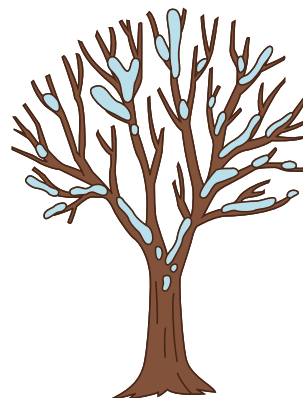
## Navigating The Holidays or Special Events

As Joanne mentioned in her greeting, change can be difficult for a grieving person. As holidays and other events approach, I invite you to navigate them in a way that feels right for you. Planning ahead can be helpful, and one way to approach these days is to simply acknowledge rather than celebrate it.

Celebrating a holiday without a loved one may be the last thing a grieving person wants to do. Instead, you might simply honor the day and the person who made it special. Another helpful strategy is to enlist a supportive ally, such as a friend or family member, to help you plan the day. This ally can also be your "Plan B" if you need to step away from an event for any reason.

While acknowledging the day, you can also acknowledge the absence of your loved one and how the day is different now. Some people find comfort in engaging in an activity that reminds them of their loved one, such as incorporating a cherished tradition into their day. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to get through the holidays and other special events. What matters most is that you acknowledge the day in a way that is meaningful to you.

By Jackeline Abbondandolo,  
Behavioral Health Bereavement Counselor



# TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR GRIEF

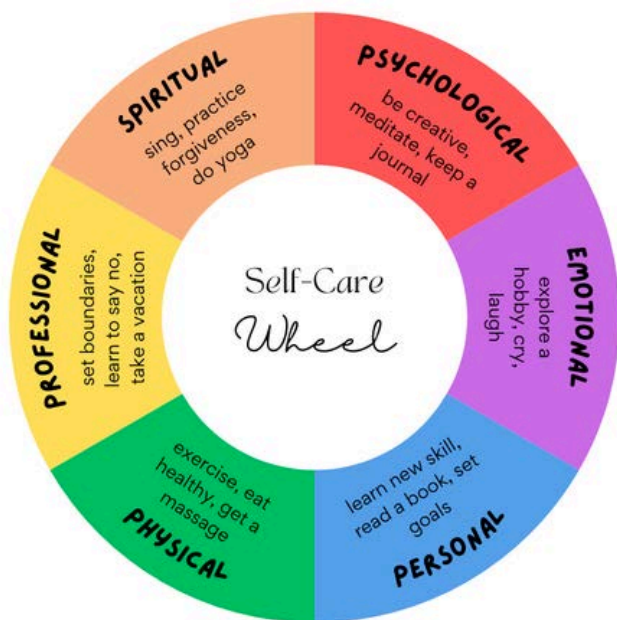
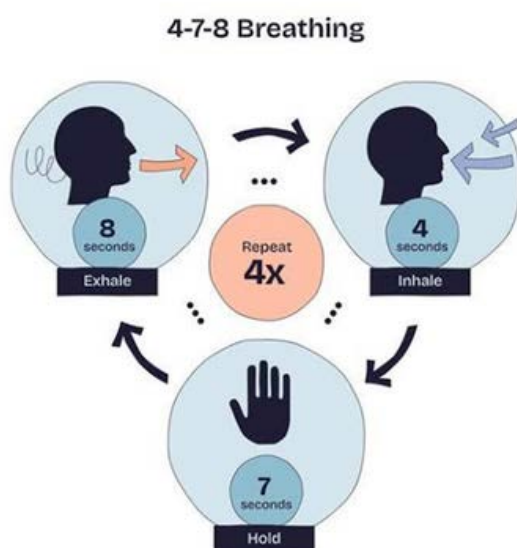
## Self-care Routine

Grieving can take up a lot of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual space. Developing a routine that provides you with the space to replenish your energy is important. Not giving yourself time to prioritize your own needs will affect your whole being. Grief exhaustion goes beyond just feeling tired; the exhaustion comes from the intense emotions and mental strain that are endured in the midst of grief. It will be essential to develop a routine that will support your healing.

Following is a list of ideas to consider when you need time to just be or during downtime.

- **Going for walks.** Strolling through nature can recharge your spirit and bring a soothing sense of calm to your soul.
- **Reflective moments.** Schedule time for reflection, journaling, meditation, or prayer to help work through your thoughts and emotions.
- **Resting.** Sleep is a need that helps the mind and body recover.
- **Breathing Meditation.** Grief dysregulates your nervous system, feelings, and thoughts. Using breathing exercises, such as the 4-7-8, can help to regulate your nervous system, which connects to and influences your thoughts and emotions.

May you find solace during this season.



# 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 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

## DEATH OF A YOUNG SPOUSE/PARTNER

Joanne Castellanos

- Wednesday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Tuesday: 6:00 - 7:30 PM

## TEENS AGES 13-17

Jacqueline Marlow

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

## TWEENS AGES 10-12

Jacqueline Marlow

- Wednesday: 5:00 - 6:30 PM

## ADULT DEATH OF A PARENT

Jackeline Abbondandolo

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

Joanne Castellanos

- Thursday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Friday: 10:00 - 11:30 AM

## DROP-IN VIRTUAL PARENT GUARDIAN GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Jackeline Abbondandolo & Jacqueline Marlow

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

## DEATH OF A SIBLING

Jacqueline Marlow

- Tuesday: 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Marissa Piazzola

- Tuesday: 1:00 - 2:30 PM

## MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Jackeline Abbondandolo

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

## BEREAVED YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Marissa Piazzola

- Monday: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

## CONTACT US

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# BRONX IN-PERSON CHILDREN'S GROUP

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

### PRECIOUS MOMENTS AGES 6-9

Jacqueline Marlow

- Monday: 4:00 - 5:30 PM

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

Jackeline Abbondandolo

- Monday: 4:00 - 5:30 PM

## CONTACT US

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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: 5:15 - 6:30 PM

## CONTACT US

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# INDIVIDUAL BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

Many people continue to struggle with the emotional pain of grief even years after losing a significant person in their lives. If you're feeling overwhelmed by your grief and need a safe space to process the challenging emotions don't hesitate to reach out to Calvary's Individual Counseling Services for the support and guidance you deserve during these difficult times. The services are offered for a nominal fee.

**If you would like more information, please call 718-518-2281, or email [calvarybereavement@calvaryhospital.org](mailto: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.