

Bereavement Support

A community newsletter published by The Hospice of VNS Center for Loss & Hope

Will Everyone Forget?

by **Julie Smith**, LISW, Hospice of VNS Social Worker

*"Teach me how to know death
And go on with life.
Teach me how to love life
And not fear death."*

- Judith Viorst

During the election season, I was reminded of a story a grieving wife once shared with me. She spoke of going to the voting polls as she did every fall. As she was quietly casting her vote, she could not help overhearing the chatter of the election workers at a nearby table. However unintentional, the election workers' words cut like a knife leaving her feeling broken, nauseous and weak. You may be wondering what harsh and insensitive things the election workers spoke of. The overheard conversation was in reference to the woman's husband. They talked about needing to erase her husband's name from the

voter registration record. As she recounted the story, tears spilled down her cheeks and she asked, "Will everyone so easily forget him?"

The sentiment expressed by this grieving woman is echoed in the hearts of many. Your loss makes you keenly aware of the many facets that your loved one touched in your life and the lives of others — from the simple and mundane things of everyday existence to the special

and treasured moments that may come only once in your lifetime.

And so the quandary of desiring to preserve these moments meets with the task of adjusting to a world in which your loved one is missing.¹ One can feel at an impasse, bracing him or herself between the past and present. The question begs: will meeting the task of adjusting inadvertently lead to forgetting?

MEMORIES VALIDATE WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN AND PROVIDE A FOUNDATION OR BASE FOR CREATING NEW DIRECTION AND BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE AS YOU ADJUST TO THE WORLD WITHOUT YOUR LOVED ONE'S PHYSICAL PRESENCE.

SEE "MEMORIES" ON PAGE 2

Camp Promise to be held June 15-17

The fourth annual Camp Promise will be offered by the Hospice of VNS Center for Loss and Hope daily June 15-17 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. The **free** summer camp is for children **ages 6 - 11** who need help processing a significant loss, such as a parent, grandparent or sibling.

The children will learn to manage and understand their grief through creative activities such as craft-making, music, drama, and play therapy. A staff of experienced facilitators will oversee the children as they go through the creative stations.

There is **no cost** for the program. A morning snack, boxed lunch and afternoon snack will be provided. Camp Promise will be held at the Hospice Care Center at 3358 Ridgewood Road in Fairlawn.

For more information, or to register a child, please contact Rochelle Sheppard at 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455, Ext. 4662.



"MEMORIES" / CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As you are making your grief journey, consider the possibility of "mingling" what may seem like two distinct areas of your life. This "mingling" becomes possible as you recognize that your relationship with your loved one goes on in a new fashion. While your relationship was once made of a series of evolving interactions, it is now a relationship based on memories. These memories validate where you have been and provide a foundation or base for creating new direction and balance in your life as you adjust to the world without your loved one's physical presence. Integrating these memories into your life is healthy and can take several forms.

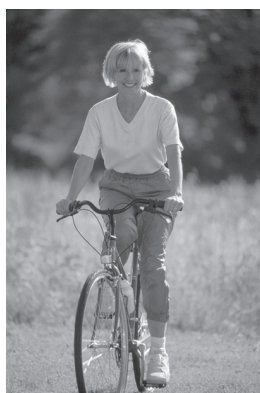
- Displaying pictures or shared mementos may help to commemorate your relationship.
- Evaluate what part of your old life and relationship with your loved one can be retained. This may include activities, hobbies or routines you shared such as a brisk morning walk, a cup of hot tea in the afternoon, watching a favorite television program in the evening.
- Are there parts of your old life and relationship to let go of — perhaps your role as a caregiver or couples activities such as dancing.
- There may be rituals, formal or informal, that help you to honor



and reflect on your loved one. Talking about your loved one with friends and family. Visiting the cemetery at certain times during the year. Upholding values or special causes that your loved one was committed to.²

Any of these ideas, refitted to your unique circumstances, can lead to "mingling" your past and present. Consider using these ideas to integrate the relationship of memories with your loved one and affirm the ongoing meaning of your loved one in your life.² This can allow you to adjust to a world without your loved one's physical presence without forgetting. You will not forget... ever.

1. Worden, J. William (2002), *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner*, New York: Springer.
2. Rando, Therese (1988), *How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.



Moving On Support Groups for 2009

The following monthly topics are being offered free of charge by the Hospice of VNS Center for Loss and Hope this year.

March 11 - Good Self Care While Grieving, 2 - 3:30 p.m., Care Center or **March 2** from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Rose Lane

April 8 - An Afternoon of Board Games and Food, 2 - 3:30 p.m., Care Center or **April 6** from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Rose Lane

May 13 - How Rituals Help the Grieving, 2 - 3:30 p.m., Care Center or **May 4** from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Rose Lane

June 10 - Building New Relationships/Developing Support, 2 - 3:30 p.m., Care Center or **June 1** from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Rose Lane

Location Information:

- Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service Justin T. Rogers Care Center, 3358 Ridgewood Road, Akron
- Rose Lane Health Center, 5425 High Mill Ave. NW, Massillon - meet in the Buckeye Room

To register or for more information, please call 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455, Ext. 4662. More groups will be announced in the Summer issue of *Bereavement Support*.

Bereavement: Guidelines for Hope and Growth

by **Rochelle Sheppard**, MA, LPCC-S, GC-C, CT, Spiritual Care and Bereavement Services Coordinator

Life is irrevocably changed when a loved one dies. The experience of loss will have a strong and lasting effect. However, the loss can also open the way for new opportunities of growth and appreciation for life and its daily challenges. Because of your love for the person who died, you will want to reinvest in life, however different that life may be from what you had before. Listed below are some ideas that might help as you create a 'new normal' for your life.

- ♦ Writing out your feelings can be helpful. Keeping a journal will help to externalize your feelings.
- ♦ Educate yourself on the

grieving process. The more you know, the more you will be able to help yourself.

- ♦ Set new goals and write them down. Focus on what interests you.
- ♦ Take advantage of your religious affiliation. If you have been inactive in matters of faith, this may be a good time to become involved again. Your community of faith can be a great place for receiving grief support
- ♦ Exercise regularly. Return to your old exercise program or start one as soon as possible.
- ♦ Recall the humorous times and laugh about them.

Remembering with laughter is hopeful.

- ♦ Check out what adult education college programs are available in your area. Chose a subject or a skill that you have always wanted to explore.
- ♦ When the time is right, assist other bereaved persons. Your experience of adjusting to loss can support and encourage a new griever.

You will eventually reach a place of accepting what has changed forever. You will be able to remember with less pain and be able to focus on a future filled with hope. The best memorial to a loved one is a full-growing life.



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Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service

Bereavement Support is a community newsletter published by the Communications Department of Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service, #1 Home Care Place, Akron, OH 44320, 330-745-1601, 800-362-0031, www.vnsa.com

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President, **Karen L. Talbott**
Bereavement Coordinator, **Rochelle Sheppard**, MA, LPCC-S, GC-C, CT
Editor, **Kelly Ward-Smith**, Communications Specialist

As a nonprofit organization, Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service relies on the community to support the development of new patient care programs and the delivery of hospice care to those who are unable to pay for their care. Gifts to Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service can be made in a number of ways. For more information, contact the Development Office at 800-335-1455.

For more information about our bereavement support services, or about hospice care, call your local Hospice and Palliative Care of VNS office:

Summit and Medina	330-665-1455
Portage	330-677-4666
Stark	330-834-3484

Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service is a nonprofit, Medicare-certified agency, and is a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Ohio Hospice Organization.

You have the right to request that we not send you any future fund raising materials, and we will use our best efforts to honor such request. You may make the request by sending your name and address to Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service, Attn: Development Office, at 3358 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH 44333, together with your request to be removed from our fund raising mailing and contact lists.

Can You Help?

Yes, I would like to help make bereavement services available for grieving adults and children in our community.

My Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Accept my tax-deductible gift of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100

☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$ _____

Please return this coupon with your check to:

Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service
3358 Ridgewood Road
Akron, Ohio 44333

Thank you!

Calendar of Grief Support

Hospice and Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service provides bereavement support programs in group settings for those in our community who have experienced a loss. There is no cost for these programs. If you would prefer to talk with someone individually, please call for an appointment. Evening appointments are possible.

All sessions meet at the Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service Justin T. Rogers Care Center, 3358 Ridgewood Road, Akron, unless otherwise noted. Some support groups/programs require registration. For more information, to register, or to schedule an individual appointment, please call 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455, Ext. 4662.

TRUSTED SHARING SUPPORT GROUP

An eight-week series for adults who wish to learn what they might experience during the grieving process. Group members share their stories, emotions, victories and hopes. Group members can expect to receive loving support from group leaders, information on the grieving process, and tools for handling the normal grief response. *Two more series will be held in 2009, all on Thursday's, beginning May 14 and September 10 from 2 - 4 p.m. or 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.*

HEALING JOURNEY SUPPORT GROUP

A six-week series focusing on rebuilding life and incorporating hope after the death of a loved one. Group members will help normalize the grief experience through camaraderie with each

other, the sharing of feelings/stories, support and providing an incentive to make new friends and develop new interests as soon as they are able. *Two series will be held in 2009, all on Tuesday's, beginning March 17 and July 21 from 2 - 4 p.m. or 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.*

MOVING ON SUPPORT GROUP — AKRON OR MASSILLON

This once a month group focuses on supporting those who are moving along the journey of grief and are now beginning to incorporate new behaviors in their lives as they attempt to create their "new normal." *Group meets the second Wednesday of each month from 2 - 3:30 p.m. See page 2 for topics.*

MOVING ON FAMILY SUPPORT SERIES

A six-week program for adults with children under 18 years of age. The focus of this support series is to address communication challenges, family identity, and to help focus on the actual loss for each family member. An art therapist works with the children to help them express memories and feelings tied to the loss. *Call for dates of the next series.*

INDIVIDUAL GRIEF COUNSELING

One-on-one grief counseling is an option for individuals who either need more privacy in expressing their reaction to loss or who are unable to attend group meetings. *Call for more information.*

On a regular basis we update our mailing list. Each month we take off persons who have been on the mailing list for two years. If you have been receiving the Hospice & Palliative Care of Visiting Nurse Service Center for Loss & Hope mailings since October 2006, you will be taken off this year.

If you wish to continue to receive these mailings, please call and let us know. We will be glad to keep you on the list. Please notify us at 330-665-1455 or 1-800-335-1455.

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HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE OF VISITING NURSE SERVICE
CENTER FOR LOSS AND HOPE
3358 RIDGEWOOD ROAD
AKRON OH 44333-3118