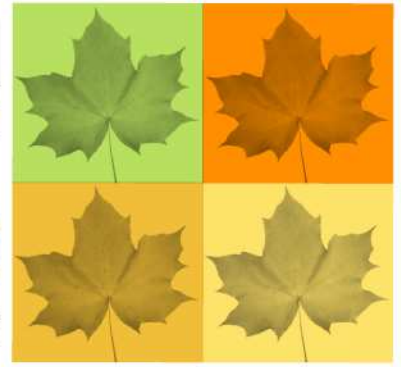


SEASONS



"Embracing the Seasons of Life."

September/October 2010

Grief is not a mountain to be climbed,
 with the strong reaching the summit long before the weak.
 Grief is not an athletic even,
 with stop watches timing our progress.
 Grief is a walk through loss and pain
 with no competition and no time trials.

Talking about death and grief is not easy. It is hard work to grieve, to walk through the loss and pain. We face it a little at a time, taking a few steps forward and then several steps backwards. We struggle to describe our emotions and understand what has happened. We search for how to keep going and begin anew. These are challenging topics for adults.

Teaching children about death and grief is not easy. Many adults choose to avoid the subjects entirely. If children perceive that it is not okay to talk about death and grief with parents or other adults in their lives, they will take their questions and feelings to someone else. Most children become aware of loss, death and grief at an early age, whether we choose to discuss it with them or not. Children see death on television and in the movies. They experience the loss of a pet. A family member or friend may become sick and die. They also experience loss and grief through moves, change of school, and divorce. Rather than trying to hide from the subjects of illness, death, and grief, adults need to help children explore questions and feelings in safe, non-threatening ways. Open exploration helps children to think of death as a natural (even if painful) part of life, rather than a frightening, unnatural occurrence to be dreaded and conquered.

Children experience the same kinds of feelings and questions that adults do, but they experience them on a different scale. Their experiences, memories, perceptions, understandings, and beliefs are most often smaller than those of adults. Their attention span and focus are generally more limited and, therefore, they tend to resolve things much more quickly. Remember, each adult and child is an individual; no two individuals are exactly alike. However, individuals can and do share commonalities.

When teaching children about death and grief it is important to know our own feelings and beliefs about death and grief. It is also important to keep in mind the child's level of understanding. Providing comfort to children who are mourning requires a willingness to listen and to be patient. Listen as they tell what happened from their perspective. Answer their questions with honesty and simplicity. Euphemisms may help you feel better but they aren't helpful to a child. Children can only absorb so much information at one time, so brief and simple is a good approach. As with any new learning, they will ask again and again until they have incorporated the new emotion, belief, or behavior.

Do not be afraid to show emotions to children. By your example you validate the feelings they may be experiencing. Children need to know that they can be sad, cry, laugh, get angry, cling on to, or forget as a normal human being who is not "weak" or "out-of-control."

A controlled silence from adults is much more threatening and difficult for children to cope with. A child's silence does not necessarily mean there are no feelings or questions. The child may be imitating an adult's behavior while keeping feelings bottled up. The child may also simply be waiting for the opportunity or the urge to share.

Showing compassion and an understanding spirit are the best approach. We may not be able to fix the hurt, but sharing the pain is an act of deepest companionship and caring.

Some resources for helping children and adults grieve together:

For young children: *How I Feel: A Coloring Book for Grieving Children*, by Alan Wolfelt
Saying Goodbye, by Jim and Joan Boulden
Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope, by Donna O'Toole

For Teens: *Facing Change: Falling apart and coming together again in the teen years*, by Donna O'Toole
Death is Hard to Live With, Teenagers Talk About How They Cope With Loss, by Janet Bode
Resilience: Discovering a New Strength at Times of Stress, by Frederic Flach

For Adults: *The Grieving Child: a parent's guide*, by Helen Fitzgerald
The Grieving Teen, by Helen Fitzgerald
Talking About Death: A Dialogue between parent and child, by Alan Wolfelt

For all ages: *Tear Soup*, by Pat Schwiebert and Church DeKlyen
Fat Chance, by Lady Borton
Oma's Quilt, by Paulette Bourgeois
The Old Woman Who Named Things, by Cynthia Rylant

Web-site Resources:

www.americanhospice.org The American Hospice Foundation provides links to many hospice and caregiving resources.

www.dougy.org The Dougy Center of Portland, Oregon was one of the first centers in the USA to provide peer support groups for grieving children. It has helpful information on bereavement for people of all ages.

www.kidsaid.com This is a safe place for children to share their losses and to help each other with their grief. Professionally directed by Cendra Lynn, Ph. D.

www.smartlink.net/~tag/ino.html Teen Age Grief, Inc. a nonprofit organization, has expertise in providing grief support to grieving teens.

If you need to talk with one of our staff, privately, please call the nearest Diakon Hospice Saint John office.

Diakon Hospice Saint John Pastoral Care and Bereavement Team

*Rev. Linda Williams Allentown Area (610) 391-2300 (888) 754-4608	*Rev Colleen Kristula Wyomissing Area (610) 320 – 7980 (610) 882-4530	*Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer Hazleton Area (570) 459-6778 (877) 438-3511	*Rev. Jane Mason Honesdale Area (570) 251-8712 (800) 622-3315
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*Rev. Brian Kern
Bereavement Coordinator
Allentown/Wyomissing Area
(888) 754-4608*

*Rev. Tom Neuwiller
Bereavement Coordinator
Hazleton/Honesdale Area
(800) 622-3315*

MISSION In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.



www.diakon.org/hospice

Please remember if you are feeling cut off and alone in your pain, we are here to listen; we do care.

ALLENTOWN AREA

Grief Support Group Meetings

Bereavement support is provided by the Allentown chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Linda Williams at (610) 391-2308 for information about grief support groups being held in your area.

September/October/November: Wednesday evenings 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sept. 29, Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25 at Union Evangelical Lutheran Church, 5500 Rt. 873, Schnecksville, PA 18078, (610) 767-6884.

September/October: Monday evenings 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Oct. 4, 11, 18, Nov. 1, 8 at the Allentown Public Library (basement) 1210 W. Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18102, (610) 820-2400.

WYOMISSING

Grief Support Group Meeting

Bereavement support is provided by Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Colleen Kristula at (610) 320-7980 or Family Life Services at (888) 499-2699 for the latest information on the location of these groups.

September/October: Monday evenings 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sept. 20, 27, Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25 at St John Lutheran Church, 201 E. Main St., Kutztown, PA 19530, (610) 372-5606.

September/October: Tuesday evenings 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sept. 14, 21, 28, Oct 12, 19, 26 at Kissinger Lutheran Church 715 Berkshire Blvd., Wyomissing, Pa. 19610, (610)369-1024

October/November: Monday evenings 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Oct 4, 11, 18, 25, Nov. 1, 8 at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Pastoral Center, 14833 Kutztown Rd., Kutztown, Pa. 19530.

HAZLETON AREA

Grief Support Group Meetings

2010 Memorial Service will be held on Oct. 31, 2010, at 2 p.m. St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mountain Top, Pa. Please mark your calendars and call the Hazleton office for more information. 1-877-438-3511 or 570-459-6778.

Please call the Hazleton office for current bereavement group meeting dates and time at 877-438-3511 or 570-459-6778.

HONESDALE

Grief Support Group Meeting

For more information on Grief Support Groups in this area, please contact the Chaplain Jane Mason at (570) 251-8712 or (800) 622-3315.

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 **DIAKON HOSPICE SAINT JOHN**
A LUTHERAN FAMILY & COMMUNITY MINISTRY
www.diakon.org/hospice

I recently came across a new book by Roberta Temes, Ph. D. titled *Solace: finding Your Way Through Grief and Learning to Live Again.* A noted psychotherapist, Roberta is also the author of *Living with an Empty Chair* and *The Tapping Cure*.

Those who are grieving loved ones ask “what can I do to feel better?” Sometimes we need to take action. When you do something to relieve your feelings and to give yourself a sense of achievement, you are accomplishing your journey through bereavement. Some of the activities Roberta speaks of may sound like common sense, or too simple to be helpful. But my life experience has taught me that simple means I can do it, and the doing provides a boost of energy and a sense of control.

Using the term Therapy as the connector for the suggested action, Ms. Temes reminds readers that we are working to bring about a new life after a loss. She suggests that Work is therapy. If you are lucky enough to have a job, return to it even if just part time. The structure of getting up and out, the obligation to greet fellow workers, and the need to keep yourself together for a number of hours is good for you.

Organizing is therapy. When life threatens to overwhelm you, it feels good to have control over something – even if that something is just a room, a desk drawer, or a shelf. Start by organizing one area of your home at a time. Here’s an opportunity to figure out what to do with your loved one’s belongings. Can’t do this alone, you say. Remember that socializing is therapy. It’s important to be among people. Lack of contact with friends and acquaintances is a predictor of difficulty in bereavement. Adopt a new social policy and say “yes” whenever you are invited anywhere. If you drive yourself you have a way to leave if it becomes more than you can handle. But get out there among people.

Reading, writing, art, or new classes are all therapeutic. Put your thought and feelings into words. Draw paint, sculpt. You don’t have to be an accomplished artist. You simply need to sit down and express your feelings. Take a one-day class or a full-term class. Attend a one hour lecture or a summer school session. Learn how to do a magic trick or learn how to grow your favorite flower. Reading can be a great escape to other lands and to other centuries. Mysteries may compel you to use your brain to ponder a dilemma belonging to someone else, not you – a welcome relief.

Want to learn more? Check out the book *Solace: Finding Your Way through Grief and Learning to Live Again* by Roberta Temes, Ph.D.

Chaplain Peggy Sue Pfeffer