

HOPE NOTES

December 2009



Hospice of Charleston
a Gentiva® company

Halting The Holiday Hassle

The Holiday Season, among other things, is a time when families come together for reunion and the celebration of unique family traditions. The impact of losing a loved one is certainly exacerbated during these times of family gatherings. The experience that once brought joy and anticipation, now brings anxiety and increased sadness.

The impact and meaning of death upon the entire family unit must never be overlooked or ignored. Although certain aspects of the bereavement process is experienced individually, there are other aspects of the grieving process that will be experienced as a family unit.

Because death does not change the nature of the relationship, the attachments are still very present. One's father will always be one's father, whether they are living or dead. Depending on the nature of the death, the length of the illness, and the closeness of the relationship, among other factors; may impact the intensity of the emotions that the Holiday season trigger.

Regardless of the stage or strength of the attachment, this is a difficult time for most people

who have experienced loss. It requires both awareness and sensitivity towards the entire family unit during this bitter sweet season. Demonstrating sensitivity towards every family member is perhaps the most important and valuable gift that will be given this year.

Be prepared for a variety of responses, especially from the younger members of your family. For children and teenagers, the death of a loved one, during this fragile time of their lives, can be extremely challenging. Do not expect this holiday season to be "normal", it may in fact be very much out of the "normal". The primary rule at this point and time is that there are no rules that must be followed without exception.

Be patient with yourself and with your loved ones. Give yourself and your family members permission to experience what they are feeling, and the freedom to express their emotions in the safe environment of a loving and sensitive family.

J. Chris Adams D. Min. Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager, Gentiva Hospice Division

Upcoming Small Grief Group

6-Week Grief Support
Is now forming which will begin in January 2010.

Grieving is hard enough alone; journey with others for emotional nourishment.

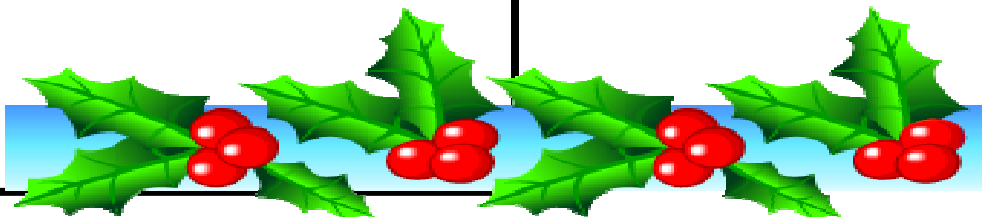
This group will be on six consecutive Monday evenings.

Please call Greg Mason 843.529.3100 or email Greg.Mason@gentiva.com for details, dates, and location.

"Hope In Healing" Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month
10:30am-11:30am
Hospice of Charleston,
3870 Leeds Ave. Suite 101
N. Charleston, 29405

Please contact Frank Butler at 843.529.3100 or frank.butler@gentiva.com for information



BEREAVEMENT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

Alabama

Huntsville- Dan Anderson
256.519.8808

Florence- Fred Wilks
Steve Reed 256.764.0873

Montgomery- John Sparks
334.271.1293

Opp- Roger Stone/ Lee Joyner
334.493.0725

Birmingham -Jim Elrod
205.682-9441

Dothan- Eddie Biss/Charles
Goldsmith/ Paul Cowley /Bill
Frank/ Tallmadge Butler
334.792.1100

Jasper- Bill Daniel
205.384.3882

Eufaula- Tim Stevenson
334.616.0061

Cullman- Fred Wilks
256.737.7234

Oxford- Winfred Logan
256.831.2964

Gadsden-Richard Bradford
256.442.3208

Mobile- Dave Tarvin
Candler Cain
251.340.6387

Florida

Crestview- Jim Vail
850.689.0300

Fort Walton- Frank Dole
850.862.1069

Marianna- Gino Mayo
850.526.3577

Panama City- Mike Young
Craig Brannon /Michael Dease
850.769.0055

Pensacola- Bill Eddins/ Shane
Tucker 850.474.7288

Georgia

Marietta/Rome- Don Reed
Johnnie Porter 770.951.6251

Stockbridge- Oliver Cam-
eron/770.389.5760

Bainbridge- Andy Glover
229.246.6330

Newnan- Asa Mangham
770.502.1104

Riverdale- Ken Rose
770.907.2410

Lawrenceville- Jamie Kauffman
770.822-6377

South Carolina

Greenville- Dave Garner
864.329.0588

Columbia- Edison Cheeks
803.213.9986

Charleston- Greg Mason
Alan Poe/ Frank Butler
843.529.3100

Tennessee

Cookeville -Barry Boggs
931.528.5133

Mississippi

Tupelo - Ryan French
662.844.9725

Columbus- Marquette Rodgers
662.327.9669

Jackson - Terry Robinson
601.362.7801

“ Remembering the person I have loved allows me to slowly heal. Healing does not mean I will forget. Actually, it means I will remember. Gently, I will move forward, never forgetting my past.

—Alan D. Wolfelt
Creating Meaningful Ceremonies
(Fort Collins, Colo.: Companion Press, 1997), 47

“People must be given the opportunity to hurt out loud.”

—Lady Bird Johnson
Quoted in Jan Jarboe Russell
Lady Bird: A Biography of Mrs. Johnson
(New York: Scribner, 1999), 53

When Children Grieve and How we can Help

J. Chris Adams DMin
Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager
Gentiva Hospice Division

Never underestimate the perception of children when it comes to being connected to the emotional climate within the family. Their emotional antenna is up and receiving all signals. When death comes; children hurt, grieve, and process the event like everyone else- *in their unique way*. To impose your grief model on a child is not only emotionally unhealthy for the child; it is not fair to the child.

Here are some suggestions as you interact with your child through grief.

Honesty is the best policy.

You must tell them in age appropriate ways what has happened. "Grand dad died last evening." "Susie was in an automobile accident and was killed." We as caring adults desire to shield our children from the hard pain of loss; however, when we shield them too much we simply delay and compound the grief by giving partial answers. If you leave too many gaps in the story, be assured they will write their own story and at times it will be skewed and harmful.

Let the pain begin.

Allow your child to feel the hurt of loss. We must remember that tears are a gift - they cleanse the soul and help heal the broken heart. It is o.k. to cry, it is o.k. to be angry, it is o.k. not to cry or be angry, and you can create the environment that allows them the freedom of expressing both the positive and negative expressions of grief. It often makes us uncomfortable when we see these negative expressions of grief, but we must let the pain begin as they journey through grief in their unique way.

Don't just do something- stand there.

Having the right thing to do or knowing the correct thing to say is not what your child needs most. It is you, your presence, touch, acceptance, and unconditional love that they need most. Your presence gives the security, and assurance that they are loved and that everything is going to be alright. The shared tears, the soft eyes, the sensitive touch demonstrates your love better than words.

Stay in touch.

Stay in touch with your children; keep an eye out for significant changes in mood and behavior. Be certain to talk open, and often about the loved one who has passed. Allow the child to express their feelings, and make sure you express yours. Staying in touch helps give your child the skills and energy to continue traveling on their journey of grief.

WE are changed by those we love who have left us, because we were formed by them while they were here.

WHEN someone dies or leaves, we have to revisit in new ways the places they inhabited in our hearts. It is not so much that we take part of them into us as that, in their absence, we discover or cultivate a part of us we did not know was there. This does not compensate for their loss. The loss is still loss, but our creative healing becomes part of their legacy to us.

—Susan Ford Wiltshire
Athena's Disguises (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1999), 135

Hospice of Charleston
3870 Leeds Ave, Ste 101
N. Charleston, SC 29405

Our Bereavement Staff are available to you, please call us at 843.529.3100 to discuss additional community resources and individual grief concerns.



Your loved one was unique... You are unique... Your grief is unique