AUGUST 2016
IN THIS ISSUE

Support Groups & Workshops
- Bereavement Coffee Hour
- Growing Through Grief
- Newly Bereaved Workshop

Brought to you by the Bereavement Department of Niagara Hospice

Bereavement Support: Niagara Hospice continues to serve family members even after the loss of their loved one. Our goal is to be there for those who are left behind as they move through the grieving process. Our knowledgeable counselors provide education and support as they guide participants through the grieving process.

Services Include:
- Supportive telephone calls and mailings
- Individual grief counseling
- Bereavement workshops and groups for adults
- Camp Hope summer bereavement program for children
- Memorial events throughout the year
- Healing Words Grief Library
- Information and referral services
- Bridges monthly newsletter

Please note: Our services are designed for bereavement education and support. They are NOT meant to replace or mitigate mental health counseling or psychotherapy.

Journaling Through Your Grief
By Jolene Currie, MDiv, Director of Bereavement

People are often looking for a “quick fix” to their grief or want to rush the process, of course who wouldn’t. But there are no easy fixes, no short cuts that will get one to the end of their grief path any sooner. You can try to ignore the pain. You can just go on with your life, as though the death of your loved ones was of little consequence to you – but at some point everything will come crashing down on you, you will come face-to-face with the reality of the death and you have to deal with it, even if it is many years later.

As Bereavement Counselors we are here to walk with people through their journey through grief. Everyone’s is different, there is no one size fits all pattern or “how to.” Only you can know what is right for you, and your family. You might not realize how far you have come, until you stop to look back.

One of my favorite tools to recommend during the grief process is journaling. Journaling is an easy and powerful way to help people grow through grief. By getting your thoughts out of your head and onto paper, you gain insights you would not otherwise see. Journaling means keeping a diary or journal about thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of your lives, or a specific event in your life. Journaling can help you manage stress, explore your feelings, and learn from them. Journaling as a tool for helping people through grief is not just recording what happens in your life, rather, it is a reflection of your innermost thoughts and feelings.

Benefits of Journaling
- It helps bring clarity to your thoughts and feelings.
- It is a good problem-solving tool and will help you process traumatic events.
- It may counteract the effects of stress and strengthen the immune system.
- It may improve cognitive functioning including brain related thinking abilities like attention, concentration, memory, language, abstract reasoning and calculations.
- It will allow you to see your progress. By going back to read journal entries from years ago you will see the progress you have made. This helps in the present moment too by reminding you that you are in fact growing and changing, even when it feels like you’re standing still.

(Continued on page 2)
Sometimes in life our metaphorical glass gets filled to the top. It gets filled with all those overwhelming things of life—death, loss, family discord, change, and our feelings and thoughts about it all. Sometimes our glass gets overfilled and it spills over. When this happens we lose it. We scream at a loved one, or sob in the Jell-O aisle at Tops... or worse - do something self-destructive to cope.

It is normal to feel overwhelmed when we have so much going on in our lives, especially when it comes to dealing with the death of someone we love. There is so much to do, so much unfamiliar road to travel, we can easily become overwhelmed with all the change, pain and confusing tasks to do. We can simply become overwhelmed with the sheer magnitude of what has happened.

When this happens, first and foremost forgive yourself. It's not that you can't cope, it's that you can't even see through that overfilled glass to figure out how you are going to cope, or exactly what you are trying to cope with! Secondly, we must figure out our healthy, effective coping mechanism. Do you garden, talk to friends, escape into a book, exercise, go to a support group meeting, or use some other healthy coping mechanism? Or have you been coping in a less healthy way? Do you smoke, drink or do drugs excessively, practice denial or try to run from the fact of it all? Things happen to us in life, and I know this is not the first time you have had to deal with crisis. Logically, you know this too shall pass - but until it does, it is so difficult to deal with. There is nothing you can do to stop these overwhelming feelings from rising to the surface so consider yourself given permission to let them come, because the only way to watch them go is to let them come. Peace to you as you navigate these discontented waters.

**Continued from page 1**

**Don’t know where to start? Just begin writing:**
Don’t think about what to say; just begin writing and the words will come; allow it to be streams of consciousness. Write whatever comes to mind, try not to self-censor. The great thing about journaling is that there are no rules. Nobody else needs to read your journal so you’re free to write about whatever you want. There is something that physically happens when we put pen (or pencil) to paper, there is something that engages when we do the motions of writing.

**Suggestions to get you started:**
Write what you are feeling, thinking, experiencing.
Write a letter to the one who has died.
Write a letter to God.
Write a letter to yourself, how you want to be in six months, a year or five years from now.
Write just a few minutes every day. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, over your lunch break, it doesn’t matter when. It’s just the act of doing it that is significant.

Some people hesitate to release any negative emotions or any emotions at all. Some people think they are betraying the person who died or if they release their feelings, they fear they will forget their loved one or have nothing left of them. This is not so. Releasing emotions, whether positive or negative, is healthy and healing.

With all of the back to school sales starting, just pick up a notebook or two and start writing. You don’t have to share this with anyone. As you look back in the weeks or months to come, you may be surprised by the words you have written. You may be surprised to find that healing has begun, in ways you have not yet fully realized.

If your writings bring up thoughts, feelings, or emotions that you are not yet prepared to deal with, you can put the journaling down for a few days and start again. Or better yet, give your Bereavement Counselor a call and talk about what you are discovering about yourself. Your counselor may invite you to come to the office for a visit. This way you can freely share your writings (as little or as much as you like) and use this as a starting point for further healing and wholeness.
### Bereavement Support Groups & Educational Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Support Group/Workshop</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, August 9</td>
<td>Bereavement Coffee Hour</td>
<td>10:30 - 11:30am</td>
<td>Lockport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 11</td>
<td>Bereavement Coffee Hour</td>
<td>10:30 - 11:30am</td>
<td>N. Tonawanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, August 8</td>
<td>Newly Bereaved Workshop</td>
<td>1:30 - 3:00pm</td>
<td>N. Tonawanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, August 10</td>
<td>Newly Bereaved Workshop</td>
<td>5:30 - 7:00pm</td>
<td>Lockport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, August 23</td>
<td>Growing Through Grief</td>
<td>5:30 - 6:30pm</td>
<td>Lockport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 25</td>
<td>Growing Through Grief</td>
<td>5:30 - 6:30 pm</td>
<td>N. Tonawanda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bereavement Coffee Hour**
Join us for coffee and friendship to socialize with others who have experienced loss. Coffee Hours are open to men and women of all ages at no charge.

**Growing through Grief**
A peer support group for adults grieving the loss of a loved one. Growing through Grief is open to men and women of all ages at no charge.

**Newly Bereaved Workshop**
This educational workshop is for those who have lost a loved one in the last one to three months. You will learn about the process of grief, common grief responses, and helpful suggestions for navigating this journey.

---

**Niagara Hospice**

**How will I know?**

Don’t wait. Ask us. 716-HOSPICE

Niagara Hospice will soon launch an education campaign, using the above theme, to help families better understand the benefit of calling Hospice sooner. And YOU can help!

**Help bust the myths of hospice care**

If you belong to a service group, faith community or other organization that accepts educational presentations, please call our Speakers Bureau line at 716-280-0742 with contact information, and help bust the myths of hospice care - and help your neighbors in your community. Or, scan this code to make an on-line request for a presentation.

---

**2016 Niagara Hospice Butterfly Release**

N. Tonawanda Temporary Location:
Northgate Health Care Facility
7264 Nash Road
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Lockport Location:
Niagara Hospice Administrative Building
4675 Sunset Drive
Lockport, NY 14094

*Individual counseling is also available. Call (716) 280-0777 to register for workshops and groups, or for more information.*
Caregiver Survey Alert

The Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a family caregiver survey that helps assess patient and family experiences with hospice care. Much of the survey helps measure if caregivers received adequate training from hospice staff to care for their loved one. All hospice providers are required to participate in this national survey. Niagara Hospice has selected DSS Research to conduct our survey.

Family members designated as the primary caregiver for their loved one receive the survey by mail. Niagara Hospice encourages those family members to complete and return the survey as soon as possible. You may also receive a follow-up phone call if the survey is not received within a specific amount of time. We truly appreciate your taking the time to help us assess our services.

Niagara Hospice Bereavement Services

Hours: 8:30am - 4:30pm Monday - Friday

Phone: (716) 280-0777

TDD # for hearing impaired: 1-800-662-1220

Please visit www.NiagaraHospice.org for more information and resources.

Niagara Hospice is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Lockport Location:
Niagara Hospice Administrative Building
4675 Sunset Drive
Lockport, NY 14094

N. Tonawanda Temporary Location:
Northgate Health Care Facility
7264 Nash Road
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, or you would like to stop receiving supportive bereavement calls, please contact us at: BereavementServices@NiagaraHospice.com or call (716) 280-0777.