



Your Journey

THROUGH GRIEF

“With open hearts and expertise, we serve the seriously ill and those touched by loss.”

Good Grief

A LETTER FROM THE BEREAVEMENT COORDINATOR

With the holiday season in full swing, the phrase “Good grief, Charlie Brown” may stir up memories of time honored holiday movie nights with the family. However, believe it or not, Linus was not talking about grief and loss at that moment. Good grief, when it comes to grief work means something entirely different. So many times, we may find ourselves “sucking it up” and pretending like a grief wave isn’t washing over us. For the lucky few, holding back tears and plugging along works!...in the short term that is. When we power through our grief, it does feel good in the moment. We convince ourselves that if we are not crying we are doing well. Holding back tears may feel good in the moment, but when we do that, we are essentially pushing our grief back into our bodies. It does not disappear. Unfortunately, this often causes our grief bursts to get bigger and more painful in the long term. Good grief comes when we lean into our grief. When we allow our bodies to naturally let out tears and fall apart when it needs to do so. Good grief may not feel very good in the short term, but if we think of it more as a medicine that we are giving our bodies, it will heal us in the long term.

With thoughts of comfort,
Kaylee Kron, Bereavement Coordinator

Just for You

PRACTICING GOOD GRIEF

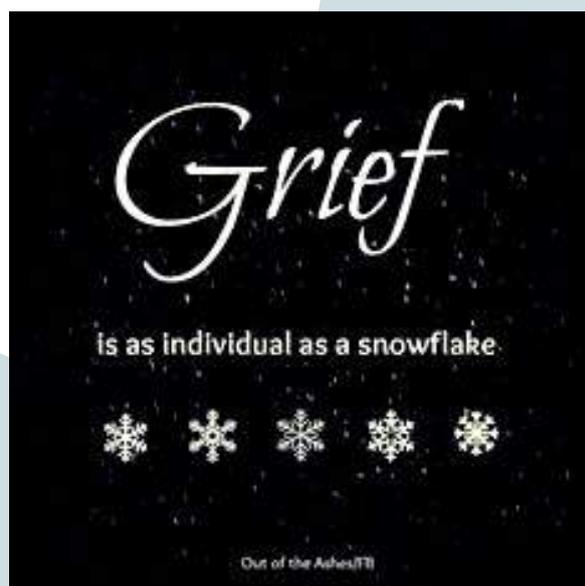
BY KAYLEE KRON

When we set out on a new project, journey, or challenge in life, we often do so with the hope that we will be able to do it “the right way”. In grief, we hear about the expectations of what we are supposed to look like, act like, sound like, and heal like, but unfortunately the road map to good grief is a bit blurry. We can spend all our time trying to fit into the box of what we are told about how good grief goes across the board from the perspective of those who have never had to walk the walk.

Sometimes, the hardest concept to wrap our minds around while we are in the midst of grieving is that we have to stop listening to the outside world, and focus within. Whether this is our first major loss, or the next in a series of losses, it is a completely new experience.

However, amazingly our brains do not need any information besides “someone I love has died” in order to put into motion a series of essential thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, that will inevitably lead to healing. We can get tripped up when we try to fight against these natural instincts, like crying, talking about the death or the person who has died, sleeping more, or getting short tempered with anyone who crosses our path for seemingly no reason.

Being an ideal griever is very simple in theory, but very complicated in practice. Blindly following our instinct to cry in public feels like a nightmare to many and snapping at your children can cause extra, unnecessary damage. For this reason, the idea of good grief is formed. Good grief looks like balance, and feels like following your heart. The balance comes from being able to accept that to heal, grief must be seen, and then scheduling time in the day to fully mourn a loved one. During this time, we look at pictures, listen to their favorite songs, write in a journal, or speak out loud to them. As we allow that grief to be seen for an allotted amount of time, our brains then recognize the need for us to have a



break! During that break, however long it may be, we have the ability to complete normal daily tasks like taking the kids to school, cleaning the house, and eating well thought out meals. When we achieve a balance in grief we allow our grief to be seen, while also not feeling like the death of our loved one has flipped our lives over completely.

In a way, good grief feels like a perfect mixture of mourning our loss and self-care. And indeed, that is exactly what it can be. Humans have experienced and endured grief since the very beginning. It is in our nature not only to survive, but thrive. We must trust our natural ability to heal our own hearts.

“Trust yourself, and remember, it will never be okay that your loved one has died. This loss will never feel any less devastating. However, the pain will soften, and you will be okay.”

- Author Unknown



AN OPEN LETTER FROM A FELLOW GRIEVER

BY DEBBIE RABY

I share my story in hopes that something in it will help others who have gone through the process of saying goodbye to a loved one. I lost the love of my life at age 54 after a battle with one of the most aggressive and deadly cancers on the planet. We had been together for 27 years and we thought we would be together well into our 90s and beyond. I mean why not? We Loved our life together and were looking forward to what was next. We dreamed about our future and with great gratitude toasted to our love and life circumstances. I knew what I had. I didn't have to lose it to know this. Friends would say to me, "You are so lucky," and I would say, "I know." I couldn't imagine living without this amazing and wonderful person and yet that's exactly what I had to do.

Everything in my life was turned upside down—I lost my career, my home, my confidence, my faith/spirituality. I was stripped bare of everything I thought I was and I had nothing to replace it with. For 5 long years I walked in a desert of the mind, searching for a purpose, and meaning to my life. Now at this point you might say, "Enough already. This is just too damn depressing. Get on with the helpful stuff!" So here it is. Although I had no idea where I was going or where I would end up, and even though I suffered major anxiety about that, I found that if I said yes to the opportunities that came my way things turned out ok; my greatest fears never materialized. And the more I said Yes to friends and strangers (all opportunities in

disguise) the more I grew until little by little a new-found confidence and trust started to form; not confidence in the sense that I finally KNEW what I was doing, but more the realization that I didn't have to know where I was going. I didn't have to control things to be okay. You see I was a triple-A control freak before losing my partner. I believed that my keen intellect and absolute faith in my spirituality was enough to ensure a happy, productive, abundant life and that it would all go according to plan.

I have grown in ways I never would have if my partner hadn't died. Yes, it was hard, excruciating even, but the good news is once we give up on what we think we're supposed to be and do and stop clinging to what we had, life brings in the unimaginable, the amazing, the miraculous. While we're grieving it's hard to make sense of anything. It takes a lot of time and we must allow ourselves to feel whatever we feel, but I can say for a fact that there is light at the end of the tunnel. It will be 6 years in March since I lost the love of my life. I will always love and miss my partner, but I am so grateful for the second life I am living now and for the person I am becoming. Don't give up. Try saying yes to things you might have never said yes to before, keep putting one foot in front of the other and watch how amazing your life can be.

Blessings to you who have traveled this arduous journey. We are all stronger than we know.

Spiritual Care

SELF-CARE IN GRIEF

BY REV JENNIFER HACKENBRUCH

SPIRITUAL CARE COORDINATOR

The Celtic cultures of the British Isles had an interesting concept about beginnings. They believed things began in darkness. A day began in the night rather than at sunrise. A year began with the darkening of winter rather than in the light of spring. Life begins within the darkness of the womb. Endings and change also begin in darkness and in a place of unknowing. Death is an ending. It is also a beginning.

I can understand why the Celtic people saw darkness as the beginning, not the end. We enter the darkness of new beginnings and slowly move into the light of new growth. Somehow this notion feels more complete. It acknowledges the confusion, loneliness, sadness, and pain that precedes endings and new growth.

Approaching Winter Solstice, the days will continue to shorten and the dark will continue to envelop. I invite you to settle into the darkness and find comfort within it. In due time the light will return. None of us know how long

this journey will be. It is a personal journey, and different for each of us, that will run its course, on its own time. Just when you don't think it is possible, the light will slowly begin to return, in the same way that light begins its return after the Winter Solstice. Little by little.

Honor your journey, and both the darkness and light you find within it, in the same way you honor your loved one.

I invite you to take a deep breath into your body. Breathing in through your nose and breathing out through your nose, saying to yourself; "I am here now. I am here now. I am here now." And breathe into the comfort of your darkness, knowing the light will return little by little by little.

As I breath in

I honor the darkness of this moment

As I breath out

I honor the return of the light

~ In deep respect of your journey

"You're going to be okay. Just breathe and think to yourself of all the times in the past that you've felt this much pain. Remind yourself how each time, you made it through. Breathe and trust that as long as you don't give up, you will make it."

~ Daniell Koepke

Kids In Grief

KIDS IN GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP



Hospice of North Idaho's "Kids in Grief Support Group" will begin its second session in January 2018. There have been many questions related to the purpose of a support group for grieving children. For this reason, I'd like to take this opportunity to supply information about our group, as well as why we feel such a strong need to provide this group to our community's children.

We all know the common saying, "kids are resilient" and due to that saying, all too often,

we find that kids are left out of the loop when a death occurs in the hope that they will naturally be able to side-step the pain of the loss. Unfortunately, many times, due to this lack of communication, kids are left feeling confused, different from their peers, and as if they are not allowed to ask questions. Of course, this is not the goal. Additionally, when a death occurs, it is very seldom that it is only the child who is experiencing grief. It is often the family as a whole. What we know about people in grief is that everyone's needs are very different. In families with people at different developmental stages and with different relationships to the deceased, this is especially true.

The Kids in Grief Support Group was developed for kids ages 6 - 12 to alleviate some of the stress for parents and caregivers who may not know what to say or how to say it, due to their own grief. This group has grief related goals, which are covered over the course of 6 weeks, including building trust between group members which promotes a feeling of community, preserving memories that are important to each child related to the loved one who has died, and learning how to identify and honor strong emotions as they come up.

Group members are also given the ability to say goodbye to their loved one or update them on their lives since they have died, through letter writing. A favorite activity from our Fall 2017

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Session included painting a feeling word related to their grief on a horse at the K-2 Equestrian Center. After painting a grief word on the horse, each child is then given an opportunity to wash the word off the horse in a symbolic gesture of letting that feeling go.

At the conclusion of group, kids leave with an understanding that they are not alone in their grief. Through group, they have built relationships and connections with other kids who can relate to their experience, which is invaluable to a child. Additionally, they have learned skills that will help them cope with losses as they occur throughout their lives.

Truly, we are proud to provide this service to our community's children free of charge, regardless of their affiliation with Hospice of North Idaho. This group is offered twice a year, once in the winter, and again in the fall. For more information, or to register your child for our upcoming session, please call (208) 772-7994.



"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it is our job to share our calm, not join thier chaos."

-L.R. Knost



HOSPICE
OF NORTH IDAHO

HOSPICE OF NORTH IDAHO
9493 N Government Way
Hayden ID 83835

Upcoming Events

HOSPICE OF NORTH IDAHO IS HERE FOR YOU

**ON-
GOING
SUPPORT**

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

Join Hospice of North Idaho Volunteer, Joanie Dwyer, and other women who can relate to the experience of losing a spouse. Fourth Tuesdays each month from 10:30-11:30 AM.

MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

Join Robert Wheeler, Hospice of North Idaho Volunteer, and a community of peers to support you through the loss of your spouse. Third Wednesdays each month from 2:00-3:00 PM.

WE'RE MOVING!

Our Community Building is currently under construction at our Schneidmiller House property located at 2290 West Prairie Avenue. Check our on-line calendar to verify Grief Support Group meeting locations in January and February.

Share this newsletter and check meeting locations at www.hospiceofnorthidaho.org