

Grief Matters

NEWSLETTER



Spring Edition 2022

In this season of spring, when winter dying gives way to spring rising, we pause to marvel at the circle of life. In this edition of the *Grief Matters* newsletter, we'll explore growing around our grief. This concept was shared by WhatsYourGrief.com as a way to acknowledge that our grief doesn't go away but life grows around it. In the "Seasons of Grief" column, CPE educator Miguel Santamaria shares his own experiences of loss and the meaningful ways he's searching for connection as life goes on. In the "Speaking of Grief" column, chaplain Michelle Mehan shares how her "greatest growth has come from her darkest times." You'll see in the "Matters of Grief" column and in the other resources how grief education can help us re-imagine our grief as we explore what grief looks like over time.

We'll repeat our well-attended series of Grief Community Forums this spring. A forum is defined as a "place where ideas on a particular topic are shared." We do that and much more, as we gather online to explore our own unique experiences of grief, connecting with our chaplain presenters and one another. I hope you'll consider registering.

I offer you this quote as spring arrives:

Spring sang softly as winter died: "I'll bloom for you while my heart still cries."

~ Angie Weiland-Crosby

My hope for you is that there will be signs of some blooming as your heart still cries.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Bass".

Rebecca Bass
Bereavement Coordinator
Morton Plant Mease Hospitals



A Season of Grief

By Miguel Santamaria, BCC, ACPE Certified Educator, Morton Plant Hospital CPE Program

I grew up hearing that “time heals,” and I surely wish that would be the case. However, as the years pass, I realize that grief doesn’t go away by itself; in fact, it never goes away. So I need to find ways to learn to live with my grief, to connect with it rather than ignoring it.

Within the last two years, I lost two of my dear uncles. They died in my country of origin (Colombia) and for several reasons, including the pandemic, I couldn’t attend their funerals. I didn’t get to say goodbye, I didn’t have the opportunity to hug my family and share our sadness together. I was able to attend a virtual service for one of them, while seeing only the priest and barely hearing my family weeping and clearing their throats. Grieving, and feeling powerless and alone, I asked my cousins if they could save a couple of my uncles’ ties for me. I was seeking connection, perhaps a future tangible way to feel their presence. They agreed. As I understand how overwhelming it can be when a loved one dies, I didn’t dare to ask them to send the ties overseas. I hope I can get those ties someday.

Meanwhile, I continue to think of my uncles. They have actually appeared in several of my dreams. It’s as if they’re aware of my need to stay connected somehow, as I try to learn to live with their absence.



Grief Matters Community Forums



Join us for this online educational series addressing topics central to the experience of grief. The same presentation is offered with daytime and evening options.

Understanding Grief: An Introduction

Tuesday, May 10, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, May 11, 12–1pm

Love and Loss: Sorting Through the Feelings

Tuesday, May 24, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, May 25, 12–1pm

What Helps? Finding and Providing Support

Tuesday, June 7, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, June 8, 12–1pm

The Ripple Effect: Exploring Secondary Losses

Tuesday, June 21, 6:30–7:30pm

Wednesday, June 22, 12–1pm

Register in advance:

mpmbereavement@baycare.org
or (727) 462-7995

You can attend a single presentation or the series. They’re free and open to all and are held online using the Microsoft Teams program. Technical assistance is provided.

Growing Around Grief



Matters of Grief

WhatsYourGrief.com is a grief resource that featured an article about “growing around grief,” which offered this visual depiction. The article pointed out that one of the myths about grief is that there’s an orderly, stage-by-stage progression to grieving. In fact, as we know from our human experience, we never really move on or find closure for our grief. Instead, we learn to live with it and grow around it. Consider what Robert Frost once said: “In three words, I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: It goes on.”

Indeed, life does march on, and eventually we meet new people, try new things and live the life in front of us, one day at a time.

Then, there it is again, when anniversaries or birthdays or a song on the radio or a smell in the kitchen makes us deeply aware of the grief that will always be a part of our lives. This - living with our grief, mourning and choosing life - is what many who are grieving describe. Life isn’t as we wanted or hoped for, missing the one we loved so dearly, yet still an invitation is before us for life to go on.

In a recent *New York Times* article entitled ‘We Must Learn to Look at Grief, Even When We Want to Run Away,’ Dr. Sunita Puri says “I don’t believe in moving on and finding closure. The challenge for many is: Can we instead move forward with our grief? Can we find a way to integrate loss into life, to carry it with us?”

How are you being invited to grow your life around the grief you’re carrying now?



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TO:

To receive this newsletter digitally and to connect with us for online programs, email mpmbereavement@baycare.org. This newsletter is published quarterly by the Spiritual Care Department at Morton Plant Mease hospitals and is made possible with the generous support of Morton Plant Mease Health Care Foundation.

Speaking of Grief

By Michelle Mehan, MAPT, BCC
Morton Plant North Bay Hospital



Spring is in the air, the time has changed, the sunsets are later and, for us here in Florida, the humidity is inching up. We also see signs of new life and new beginnings all around us. We hear the birds and see the butterflies. We see people doing spring cleaning and planting flowers and gardens. The dormant comes to life. This reminds me of times in my life when I've grieved. In the midst of my grief, I've felt so many emotions: anger, frustration, loneliness and sadness. I still miss my loved ones who are no longer here. I still wonder "what if" about lost dreams. The intensity of the loss is softened. And I think of how I've changed as I navigated these times.

My greatest growth has come from my darkest times. I'm reminded of a baby in the womb, a seed in the dirt or a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. All were once in the dark before seeing light. Each one of those have changed. We can grieve and embrace a new beginning. We can be sad and look forward to a visit from a friend. Both can be – it's all part of life. My prayer for you is that you recognize the new life nature offers us each spring. May you take time to hear the birds sing, see the flowers open and be present with nature. It's in being present with things that we can find hope. And may you know you're not alone.