



As we enter the holiday season many of us begin to feel some level of anxiety even if we have not experienced the loss of a loved one. This time of year, has been traditionally described as joyous and magical. However, if you have lost a loved one that is most likely not how you are feeling at all. The holidays can stir up difficult and painful memories and in many circumstances feelings of deep sadness due to our loss.

These feelings are to be expected and are a normal part of the grieving process. I have come to learn, however, that every adverse situation, especially the loss of a loved one, can provide an opportunity for growth and uplifting the spirit. We can push away and try to apply the standard line... "I'm fine" and pretend that we are not hurting or even worse, put up walls for self-protection and isolation, but the truth is that by allowing ourselves the opportunity to reach out to others in need, we help in our own healing process. In giving we do receive. Giving comes in many forms and the reward for giving of your time, talent or treasure can act as a powerful growth spirit in the healing process. Even the smallest act of generosity has an amazing ripple effect. Remember the "pay it forward" principle? It really does feel good to do something nice especially when it is unexpected.

I always know that someone is on a good path of healing when they are able to reach out to others who are in need or hurting. This is the sometimes-unrealized benefit in participating in activities like volunteering or bereavement support groups. So many times, hearts have been mended by the words of others who have walked in similar shoes. We learn from each other that we are not alone. The encouragement that we receive and share helps to keep our minds positive, our hearts open and affirm that although our lives will not be the same, that there is hope for the future. With the holiday season rapidly approaching, I hope that you will join us by participating in our support groups. There truly is a special quality of healing that comes from being with others who are willing to listen and understand the pain of losing someone dear.

In this Newsletter you will find information about our Bereavement Support Groups, and "Surviving the Holidays" a four-week series specifically designed to offer support for the holiday season. We hope that you will join us and that you have a peaceful Holiday Season.

Peace to you. Dr. Karen



WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

Susan Palwick

A Plus Spiritual Care Counselor

In autumn the days get shorter, until at last they begin to lengthen again in late December, after the winter solstice. Humans respond to dwindling daylight by sharing food and fellowship in brightly lit rooms that drive back the darkness. Thanksgiving is the first such festival, followed by an array of winter holidays. Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa all feature lights and candles.

For anyone mourning a loved one, the holidays are hard. We are acutely aware of the empty seat at Thanksgiving, the absence of grandmother's signature pie, the missing Christmas stocking on the mantle. Even as we are grateful for the people we still have around us, we grieve those we have lost. Grief and gratitude, like light and darkness, balance one another. We are grateful for our happy memories of those who have gone on, but that very gratitude makes our grief more piercing.

When I was a child, I loved Christmas because my mother made it so magical. She transformed the house with beautiful decorations, special food, and family traditions: drinking cocoa on Christmas Eve while we listened to carols, getting up early on Christmas to explore our overflowing stockings before breakfast. For a long time after my mother died, Christmas was agonizing for me, because it reminded me only that I no longer had her.

In the last few years, that ache has begun to soften. Like darkness surrendering to light, my grief has given way to gratitude. My Christmas memories are warm and happy now, instead of painful. I will always miss my mother, but now I can also celebrate how lucky I was to have her.

At this turning of the year, we at A Plus wish you a renewal of joy. Even in our darkest days, the light is returning. Spring will come.



Make a World of Difference!



Have you ever considered becoming a volunteer in your community? The act of giving of your time, talent and treasure can be an integral part of your own healing after the loss of a loved one. In many ways, serving others can be a powerful next step in the bereavement process.

At A Plus Hospice Care, volunteers provide support for patients and their families in a variety of ways. Volunteers are part of the interdisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, social workers, spiritual care coordinators, certified nursing assistants and volunteers. A hospice volunteer is no ordinary volunteer. They bring a unique style and set of skills and life experiences, which enhances the hospice experience for patients.

People continue to grow in a variety of ways at end of life. Many patients find a new depth of understanding as they reflect on their life and find new meaning, both spiritually and emotionally. It is a privilege and incredible opportunity to be invited to share in this precious time.

Many patients are located in the Carson City/Gardnerville/Minden area and that is where the need for volunteers is the greatest. Please consider opening your heart to one of our special patients. If you would like more information, please contact Julie Ruiz, Volunteer Coordinator at 775-329-0900.



Bereavement Support Groups

A Plus Hospice Care is here to support you through the loss of your loved one. Our Bereavement Program offers a variety of options tailored to give you the opportunity to choose the level and amount of bereavement care that is best for you. We provide individual counseling sessions for family members whose loved ones have been on our service as well as bereavement support groups. There is no charge for our bereavement services.

In Person Bereavement Support Groups: On the **First** and **Third Tuesday** of the month we will provide an in-person open forum support group at our Reno Office located at 227 Vine St., Reno from **1-2 pm**.

October 4th and 18th

November 1st and 15th

December 6th and 20th

Surviving the Holidays

a three week in person bereavement group series at our Reno office 227 Vine Street

Week One-Wednesday, November 30th 1pm

Week Two- Wednesday, December 7th 1pm

Week Three-Wednesday, December 14th 1pm

**We hope that you will join us for this informative bereavement support series.
Educational material and worksheets will be provide.**

Please contact Dr. Karen at karen@aplushospicecare.com or (775) 351-7346 with any questions.

Suggested Reading Material

A Grief Observed, C.S. Lewis

Life After Life, Raymond Moody

A Time to Grieve: Meditations for Healing After the Death of a Loved One, Carol Staudacher

Beyond the Broken Heart: A Journey Through Grief, Julie Yarbrough

Beyond the Broken Heart: Daily Devotions for Your Grief Journey, Julie Yarbrough

Elegant Choices, Healing Choices, Marsha Sinetar

Lessons of Loss: A Guide to Coping, Kenneth Ring

Healing After Loss, Martha Whitmor Hickman

The Four Things That Matter Most, Ira Byock, M.D.

Hello from Heaven, Bill and Judy Guggenheim

The Grace in Dying, Kathleen Dowling Singh

I Can't Stop Crying, John Martin

Understanding Your Grief, Alan Wolfelt, PhD

The Grief Recovery Handbook, John W. James & Russell Friedman



Suggested Dos and Don'ts-

When Someone You Know Has Lost a Loved One

Sometimes the most well-meaning friends and family can have difficulty knowing what to say or do when a loved one dies. The following are some tips that you may wish to share with them so that they can help and support you during this difficult time.

DO: Be specific when offering help. Some helpful tips are:

- Allow the person to express his or her feelings. Try to listen without offering advice or interrupting. If the person is open to it, a listening ear, a hug and a soft shoulder to cry on are great gifts from the heart. Remember, sometimes silence is what the grieving person wants and needs. Don't be uncomfortable in the silence.
- Be patient with the grieving person's myriad of moods. The bereaved often alternate between anger, sadness, numbness and acceptance and sometimes they will display all at once.
- Call from time to time to check in.
- Offer to run errands or get groceries.
- Drop off food, don't wait to be asked.
- Cut the grass, pull the weeds, shovel snow.
- Go for walks or enjoy a physical activity.
- Do an activity with them that they enjoy - maybe a game or going to the movies.
- Remember, grieving is a personal journey. There is no time limit on grieving. Be patient!

Appropriate things to say may include:

- I am sorry. My heart hurts for you., Tell me how I can support you.
- _____ was a good person and friend of mine. I will miss him or her.
- Please tell me what you are feeling, I have never been through something like this and can only imagine.
- It's ok if you do not feel like talking right now. Just know that I am here to listen whenever you are ready.
- If you are close enough—I love you, would you like a hug?
- Talk openly and directly about the person who died. Don't be afraid to say the deceased's name or share stories.

DON'T:

- Try to avoid the bereaved person. It only makes them feel more isolated and alone.
- Give unsolicited advice or try to fix anything unless asked.

Inappropriate things to say include:

- "I know how you feel." Truthfully, you don't know how they feel, no one does, whether you have been through a loss before or not.
- "You should..." or "Time heals all wounds." Offering advice or quick solutions just ends up frustrating and upsetting the grieving person.
- "At least he's no longer in pain." Or "She's in a better place now." Or "It was God's timing or God's will."
- "Just call me if there is anything I can do." It's best to simply let them know you are thinking about them.

Supporting a friend or family member through the grieving process is one of the kindest gifts we can share. It will never be forgotten and likely will help build a bond that will last a lifetime. Dr. Karen