



Bereavement Bulletin

Serving nine counties from five regional offices.

Memorials and Hope

**By Janice Olive, MHDL
Grief Counselor**

Today is the first sunny day following a series of gray and rainy days that have made up this winter. It reminds me of spring and stirs some hope for better days ahead. At Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, this is the time of year when our thoughts turn to preparations for the Annual Memorial Service. That event also stirs hopefulness in many of the participants. It is a special time to turn our thoughts back to those who influenced our lives in so many ways. A Memorial Service is a special link to loved ones who have died and a way of honoring them. Your memories may lead you through difficult days of sickness and pain, then gradually to better times full of young love and laughter. Maybe there were favorite sayings, wise advice passed on and special ways of doing things that added so much to your life together. Even the arguments and differences between you could be gifts now from which lessons are learned.

One of the essential tasks of grief is memorializing your loved one. It is healthy to mourn the death of your loved one in some public way like the ritual of a memorial service. Rituals have been performed throughout history in cultures throughout the world. The purpose of many rituals has been to reflect on those who came before us. They are an attempt to unite us and serve to empower us in times of need. Many rituals have disappeared from our society, leaving us with few opportunities to come together for the

purpose of healing. Yet we need this comfort today more than ever in the face of the losses we all experience.

At the Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region Memorial Service you will find a beautiful way to get in touch with the memory of a loved one. There will be music, inspirational readings, and an opportunity to participate in a candle lighting ceremony. Joining the many others who grieve at this time is often encouraging and may take some of the loneliness out of your grief experience.



For those who are unable to attend there are ways of creating your own meaningful rituals. For instance you may light a candle and read a favorite poem, or pray or spend some time reminiscing. Planting a tree or making a memorial garden has been a healing ceremony for many. Writing a letter to other grieving friends and relatives on special days or holidays can become a ritual. You may also include memories of your loved one in your greeting cards around holiday times. It will mean so much to once again hear a loved one's name.

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Perhaps remembering still brings up sadness or other strong feelings. Know that this reaction is normal and not destructive. In the words of James E. Miller:

*I believe in the promising paradoxes of loss.
In the midst of darkness, there can come a great light.
At the bottom of despair, there can appear a great hope.
And deep within loneliness, there can dwell a great Love.
I believe these things because others have shown the way-
Others who have lost and then have grown through their losing,
Others who have suffered and then found new meaning.
So I know I am not alone;
I am accompanied, day after night, night after day.*



ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

Sunday - May 4, 2008
2:30pm

Levine & Dickson Hospice House
The Park, Huntersville
11900 Vanstory Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078

For more information
Please call 704.335.4300

Bring a picture or a memento
of your loved one.

Grief Groups Offer Help and Hope

While there are many benefits of joining a grief support group, one of the best was stated by a member of our winter day group at Levine & Dickson Hospice House.

“This is a place where I am normal.”

A sense of normalcy is one of the gifts the 40+ members of our five winter groups were able to give to each other. They also shared laughter and tears as they listened to each other tell their grief stories. These experiences, shared in a safe, trusting environment, are an important part of our eight-week support series, “Grief-The Reluctant Journey.” We invite you to join one of our upcoming groups. Please call 704.335.4334 for registration or visit us at www.hpccr.org.

Come join our “Let’s Do Lunch” Grief Support Group

Beginning the 4th Wednesday in April 2008, and each 4th Wednesday of the month thereafter, a drop in grief support group will meet at The Olive Garden, 9421 Pineville-Matthews Road, Pineville, NC at 11:30 a.m.

Individual Grief Counseling Sessions are available upon request at all offices.

For more information on grief groups, grief education or to discuss your feelings and experiences with loss, call 704.335.4300. Office hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30am - 5pm

Writing Your Way Through Grief

By Larry Dawalt, M. Div., Director of Spiritual & Grief Care Services

Writers are everywhere-especially in coffee shops. Some have fancy pads, fresh off the shelf of a bookstore, with luxurious leather binding or a themed cover. Others use a plain wire-bound notebook. Still others have loose leaf notebook paper that they will insert into a three-ring binder after the pages are written, and the coffee cup is empty. What they have in common is that they are writing.

Writing is good for the soul, especially the soul of those who are grieving. It is a way to express inner feelings that are often difficult to verbalize. Writing is extremely therapeutic, because you get your feelings out. It also creates a record to look back on and know you have made it through some difficult days.



I encourage those who are grieving to write in various ways. A journal is one way to do it. Recording events, thoughts and feelings each day is valuable. It is an opportunity to have a dialogue with the universe without worrying about hearing anything back. One person who kept a journal of his first year of grief, Richard Ballo, actually turned his work into a touching book, Life Without Lisa. It didn't start out as a book. It simply started out as a way for him to express his innermost thoughts and feelings. As the book jacket says, those who read the book "sob when he sobs and cheer him on when he begins to sense a glimmer of hope."

In addition to keeping a journal, another valuable tool is to write letters to your loved one. This activity is one of our traditional support group exercises, and it is very valuable for expressing feelings, conveying hope and extending gratitude for the many gifts received from our loved ones.

One constant resistance I hear to writing during grief is that "I'm not a good writer." The answer to that is simply, Compared to what? You are writing a story that only you can tell. You are not writing to be graded. Your punctuation doesn't have to be correct. And you can even begin a sentence with 'and' like I just did. Just write.

Some people suffer from writer's block. They don't really know where to begin. When that happens, let that be your opening sentence. A typical journal entry could begin something like this: "I don't really know where to begin, but here goes. Mom/Dad/Husband/Wife died. Does anyone remember? Does anyone care? Some days it seems like they do, but not today. Today I am alone and I miss them. I feel like screaming". (Write that in big letters.)

A few months later, you might write something different like: "I'm working and actually not thinking about them every moment of every day. I still love them more than ever and I am still hurting. But I can feel it getting a little bit better."

Then, the moment might come where you can write, "Dear _____" and begin a letter that's been inside you for a long time.

As for what to do with your writing, that's up to you. My friend Richard wanted to share his feelings and give people an opportunity to see themselves in his story. Others put their writing in a box and seal it. Others have their notebooks stored on shelves or under the bed. But they've got them written. They have a story they have told.

Grief is as individual as the love that brought it about. Write the love. Write the grief. Tell the story that only *you* can tell.



GRIEF EDUCATION

Our nine-county service area: Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Union and York

Continuing Connections

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region is pleased to announce a new summer workshop for 2008, **"Continuing Connections."** In addition to members of our grief care staff, this workshop will feature a panel discussion from individuals who have suffered the loss of a spouse, parent, child, sibling or loved one. Together, they will share different traditions, projects and other aspects of their grief journey that have helped to keep the memory of their loved one alive.

This is an interactive workshop where everyone can share helpful ideas and activities. We hope you will join us at a location and date convenient for you. To reserve your space, please call **704.335.4334**. Light refreshments will be served.

Monday, July 21, 2008

6:30 - 8pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region
Uptown
1420 East Seventh Street
Charlotte, NC 28204

Monday, July 21, 2008

6:30 - 8pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County
107 North Cedar Street
Lincolnton, NC 28092

Tuesday, July 22, 2008

6:30 - 8pm
Levine & Dickson Hospice House
11900 Vanstory Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078

Thursday, July 24, 2008

6:30 - 8pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region
South
7845 Little Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28226



1420 East Seventh Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28204
704.375.0100
www.hpccr.org

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The mission of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region is to relieve suffering and improve the quality and dignity of life through compassionate hospice care for those at the end of life, palliative care for those with advanced illness, and through community education.

How we care for you: Hospice Care, Palliative Medicine Consultants, Kids Path® Pediatric Care, Grief Care, Inpatient & Residential Hospice Care and Professional & Community Education.