



Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support

Winter 2012 Newsletter

“Grief is the price of loving” –Leo K. Bustad

Whenever we experience grief, past losses come back to us. Grief is like an illness or injury, with an acute stage that heals but still leaves us forever changed. This is true whether the loss is a loved one, a job, or a beloved pet.

Helping with grief and loss is a small but important part of the services Lopez Island Hospice and Home Support provides. We hope the information in this newsletter will help you on your path to healing.

What is a Grief & Loss Support Group Like?

by Judy Tralnes, CSJP

Somebody said I should look into that Grief & Loss Support group at Hospice just because “I’ve undergone a big loss in life.”

Support? Right! I bet it’d be a royal waste of time.

*What goes on in the group, anyway? Besides, I don’t know **when** it is, or **where**.*

It’s across from the Post Office, -- at that Hospice office the last Friday of the month at 1:15 pm.

OK, so, I’ve lost a relationship (or position, or financial security), but I’m independent! I don’t need anybody’s help. Even if I did, I don’t want the whole Island to know I can’t take care of myself.

The cruelest response when I tell my story (once again) is “Come on! Get over it!” Besides, I don’t want to be trapped in a room with a bunch of people sobbing and blowing their noses.

But then how could they understand what I’m going through unless they’ve been through it themselves?

OK, I’ll take a deep breath and walk in and see what’ll happen.

*So, we all introduced ourselves and the facilitator emphasized several times, “**Whatever is said here stays here.**” Maybe in this confidential environment it wouldn’t be broadcast to everybody on Lopez.*

Each of us is invited to share only as much as we wish and, since we’ve all had a similar experience, it feels like they **understand** and can still listen long after others have stopped.

*It seems that we’re all uncomfortable about **something** around our loss, whether it is that it feels like it’s taking too long to “get over it,” or that the loss is so insignificant that I shouldn’t be grieving, or that it happens to everybody so I’m making a mountain out of*

a molehill. And, yeah, nobody is carrying on...they all seem pretty normal.

Ge, this whole experience is a chance to better understand the grief experience and learn some tools to cope with the loss.

I know sadness comes with grieving but they say other feelings like anger, guilt, relief, confusion, doubt, anxiety, and rage can also be part of grieving. Now, that’s beginning to explain what’s happening to me lately.

You know, some folks just can’t stand the idea of a “group.”

They can always call Hospice at 468-4446 and make an individual appointment with one of the facilitators.

There are a lot of advantages to getting support at a time of loss: It’s a safe place to share, you learn about grieving, and it’s even possible to meet new friends. How about meeting me there next month?

Judy Tralnes, CSJP, is a certified chaplain with a history of facilitating grief groups and assisting individuals with their grief.

New Memorial Plaque

A perpetual memorial plaque has been given for display in the Hospice and Home support office. On it are listed the names of persons honored and memorialized by donations made in their name to LIHHS. It is a long overdue chance to have this on display, and we plan to continue bringing it up to date in the future.

Help After A Tragic Death

by Mary O’Bryant

My oldest son was 31 when he took his own life. He was bi-polar and experiencing a period of severe depression when his wife found him hanging in the garage. After her phone call at 2 AM I remember going into a numb state during which my actions were more robotic than human. This feeling lasted for about two weeks, a period when I accomplished a number of tasks but have little memory of what they were.

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Help After A Tragic Death

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There is a stigma connected to a death by suicide. My daughter and younger son began to tell people that their brother died from severe depression as a way to distance themselves from this stigma. My sister's family complained that it wasn't right for a minister to be present at the funeral or for my son to be buried in a cemetery because suicide is against God's law. I really had no one I could talk to about this tragic death, and because we were all grieving in our own way we didn't talk about it much as a family.

I began attending the Lopez Island Hospice and Home Support Grief Group about two months after my son died. They met once a month. There were about eight of us in the group, including a person who was also dealing with a family member's suicide. I felt safe in the group and I was able to access my feelings of sadness, anger, and shame—and cry. I was able to learn from others how they were dealing with their grief, and the changes grieving brings into one's life. I learned to accept that my behavior would sometimes be different because I was grieving, which helped me forgive myself when I found I was emotionally unable to cope well with certain situations.

I attended the group for over a year, and it made my grief process easier, as well as making it possible to keep working as a mental health professional. I encourage anyone who is going through the grief process to attend our Loss Support Group.

Mary O'Bryant has an MSW in Health and Mental Health, and has worked in the field of Home Health and Hospice since 1989.

Losing a Pet

by Lynne Keeley

Coping with the loss of a beloved pet can be much like losing a family member or dear friend. For many, such a loss can trigger an intense grieving process. It's natural

to feel grief, and to expect people to be understanding and supportive. But sometimes that understanding and support is hard to find. Some people may consider the grief you feel is inappropriate because after all, it was "just a dog" or "just a cat."

It's important to remember you're not alone. Here are a few suggestions to help you cope with losing a pet:

It's alright to grieve. Acknowledge it and give yourself permission to express it.

Reach out to others who have had similar experiences.

Write about your feelings.

Create a memorial for your pet.

Someone who understands your loss can make a difference. Here are a few programs that offer a sympathetic ear.

Washington State University Pet Loss Support Hotline.
Monday-Thursday, 7pm-9pm and Saturday 1pm -3pm.
1-866-266-8635. plhl@vetmed.wsu.edu

The Delta Society. www.deltasociety.org

*With thanks to Chuckanut Valley Veterinary Clinic,
Burlington, Washington. 360-757-3722*

What is anticipatory grief?

by Jan Sundquist

Grief is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion for us all. It is both a universal and a highly personal experience.

Anticipatory grief is the grief that comes when a death is expected. It can arrive with the news of a dreaded or terminal diagnosis, and involves the acknowledgment that the death of a loved one is approaching. This can be extremely painful and difficult to endure. This type of grief is distinct because it is experienced while you or your loved one is still living...perhaps even "beating the odds."

Anticipatory grief is often accompanied by changes in opinions and attitudes, as well as introducing different

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Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (____)_____ email_____

My check is enclosed and made payable to **LIHHS**

Please charge my Visa MC card:

Card # _____

Expiration Date: ____ / ____

Signature_____

I would like to volunteer. Please send me information.

I would like information on planned giving.

Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution is fully tax deductible as provided by law.

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What is anticipatory grief?

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priorities and changeable routines. You will experience emotional fluctuations; feeling hopeful one day and in denial the next. A lack of control or ability to prevent the death from happening can leave you feeling helpless and frustrated.

One of the most stressful aspects in anticipating a death is the perceived pressure to spend all available time with the dying person and that time not spent with them will be lost. Striking a balance between caring for your loved one and meeting the other obligations, especially self-care, is difficult to manage.

Grieving is an important step towards adapting to a life

without this special person. Emotions that you would expect to feel after the death of your loved one may also be felt during the anticipatory grief process. These can include guilt, sadness, denial, anger, and loneliness. These feelings are often accompanied by physical changes such as headaches, changes in weight, and trouble sleeping.

Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support offers an ongoing Caregiver's Support Group and a Grief Support Group. Mourning can last for months or even years. Generally the pain of loss is diminished when you can share confidentially common feelings with others who know of what you speak! Grieving goes better when there's just enough social & emotional support around you.

Jan Sundquist has been a therapist in private practice, specializing in grief.

Island Friends Lost

The list of islanders lost over the past few years is long. Here are the black and white letters that represent people who touched our lives during days spent on Lopez. Thoughts of these friends drift unexpectedly into quiet corners of our days. The reminders are not just words in a newsletter or names on a plaque. A bite of Dubliner cheese, a drive down a familiar lane, a warped loom, a woodstove supporting a pot of simmering soup, a garden gate, a view once shared, a piece of an edited manuscript, a packed bag—each evokes a flood of memories. The connections are still

brimming over with the stuff of life: shared pain, humor, inner strength, frustration, and laughter, and treasured family members. As I scan the names I know I can't short circuit the grief process for myself or anyone else. People we treasured no longer walk the island with us. But I am also grateful for people who mattered enough to be missed. And I am thankful for the gentle, unexpected intrusion of memories. Please let us know if we have left your loved one off the list.

—Connie Baesman

Ruth Arnold
Roy Berg
La Vinia Besola
Helen Bittner
Curt Bliven
Barbara Brownstein
Bee Callahan
Bill Carpenter
Dorothy Conway
Francis Currier
Alice Estenson
Barbara Estenson-Simpson
Marguerite Goodrow
Ona Jean Goodrow
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Mary Lu Morgan
Leona Lindsey Nelson

Rudy Onstad
Helen Perry
Bill Perry
Barbara Phelps
Betty Richey
Charles Settles
Gladys Shipley
Sebatian Michael Sperry
Greg Starkman
Dave Stratton
Pat Stuhr
Rick Van Eeckhout
Craig Vaughn
Jack Wagner
Tony Williams

Every evening, we lose the morning
Every day, we lose yesterday.
What happens happens in its own time.
Once.
And then is gone
A walk, a gesture, an adventure.
There in the moment
Not in the next
And so it is not for the past we mourn.
We had the past, even as shared memories now live in only one heart.
We mourn instead for what we've lost.
Tomorrow's walk, tomorrow's gesture, tomorrow's adventure.
That's where the weight of "never" lies.
We think we can know the size of sorrow.
We can't.
It has proven time and again to be larger than we can imagine.
But sorrow does not rise and stand alone.
It can and often does have a beautiful shadow.
That shadow is musical – a chorus of love and support that rises up
behind sorrow.
One unique and beautiful voice adding to another unique and beautiful
voice and then adding to another.
That beautiful shadow stands up to sorrow, never defeating it,
but refusing to let it reign alone.

Lou Harry, 2012
Arts and Entertainment Editor, Indianapolis Business Journal
Author of more than twenty books, including *Creative Block* and *The Game of Life*

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