



Coping in the New Year

Occurring within the first two months of the year are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, President's Day and Winter Vacation. Birthdays and Anniversaries may fall in these months as well. When those closely connected to us have died, we are likely to recall ways we spent time with them on these particular days in the past. A variety of feelings may arise, from sadness and anger to poignancy and rejoicing in the life of that person. Allow for differences in behavior among family members. As we are all unique beings, we will find our own unique ways to remember and mourn the passing of a loved one, to come to terms with any difficulties in those relationships, and to celebrate those lives and relationships that nurtured us. Some choose to remember their loved ones by lighting a candle, visiting a grave and leaving a rose in the snow, giving a gift or performing some commemorative act to honor a loved one. These special days may then take on new meanings, while honoring what has been.

Perhaps holidays aren't that challenging, but particular times of the day or week are. Are mornings the best times while evenings are difficult, or vice versa? Is it Sunday, Monday or some other day on which you invariably have the least patience with yourself and others?

Sometimes Reflection Helps

Janus, the Roman God for whom January is named, has two faces: one looks backward while the other faces forward. The month of January, like its namesake, is a good time for pausing to remember and reflect on what has been and to consider what yet may be. Putting picture albums in order or writing down thoughts and feelings can give focus to the "betwixt and between" state we find ourselves in while grieving. *See suggestions on page 2.*

Sometimes Activity Helps

The biggest part of the word emotion is motion. By putting our bodies in motion we can alter our "emotions." Many people find that dancing or engaging in indoor or outdoor sports can be both invigorating and comforting. Some activities, like yoga or t'ai ji, allow for both motion and reflection.

Check out our new year's offerings on page 3 and consider participating in a support group. If it would be helpful to talk out feelings and ideas about how to spend special or ordinary times, call Elizabeth or Muriel (257-0775). And however you choose to care for yourself or for family and friends, please remember to be gentle with yourselves.

~Elizabeth E. Pittman
Bereavement Care Coordinator

Winter is a good time for relaxing and replenishing ourselves. Remember to find small ways ~ from making soup to singing in the shower or taking a nap ~ in which to care for and be gentle with yourself.



In *Part Of Me Died, Too: Stories Of Creative Survival Among Bereaved Children And Teenagers*, author Virginia Fry says, “When change and loss come into our lives and take some of our dreams away, it is important to create new hopes and wishes.” She suggests writing a “Fears and Hopes” poem that answers the questions “What are you afraid might happen?” and “How can you stay hopeful when you are scared?”

A long time I have lived with you

And now we must be going

Separately to be together.

Perhaps I shall be the wind to blur your smooth waters

So that you do not see my face too much.

Perhaps I shall be the star to guide your uncertain wings

So that you have direction in the night.

Perhaps I shall be the fire to separate your thoughts

So that you do not give up.

Perhaps I shall be the rain to open up the earth

So that your seed may fall.

Perhaps I shall be the snow to let your blossoms sleep

So that you may bloom in spring.

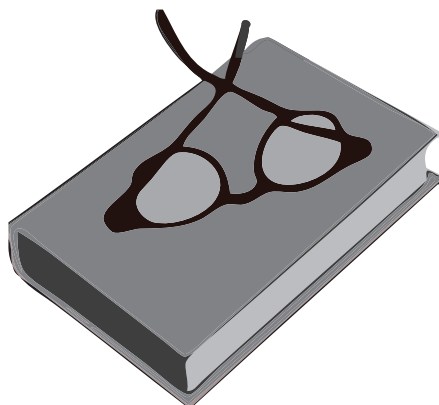
Perhaps I shall be the stream to play a song on the rock

So that you are not alone.

Perhaps I shall be a new mountain

So that you always have a home.

~ Nancy Wood (from *Earth Prayers*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon)



Creative Responses to Grief for All Ages

Writing a letter to a loved one who has died is one way to sort through our feelings and memories. Anne Brener in *Mourning and Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing* suggests “It might be helpful to look at a picture of the deceased before writing the letter. Allow yourself to absorb the image and the feelings the picture generates within you. If you already know what needs to be said, just begin writing.” If not, she offers many partial sentences to complete of which the following are only a few.

In losing you I feel that I have lost

The biggest surprise has been

The hardest thing has been

I am most grateful for

<http://www.americanhospice.org/grief/working-through-grief> has articles of interest including *Helping Yourself through Grief*; *The Sudden Death of a Child- A Mother's Tool Kit*; *Remember Your Loved One with a Memory Cookbook*; *The First Year Anniversary*; *You Know You Are Getting Better When...* and 17 other articles.

Bereavement Support Activities

Bereavement Support Groups offer a safe, mutually supportive environment for sharing experiences, insight and encouragement through discussion, handouts, and suggestions for writing. Groups are free of charge and meet at our 191 Canal Street office. To make a pre-group appointment or for further information, call Elizabeth Pittman or Joyce Drew at 257-0775 or email: info@brattleborohospice.org

A Grief Support Group for Adults, Tuesdays, 5:00-6:30pm, if there is sufficient interest. A writing and discussion group facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman for adults whose parent, sibling, friend or other cared-for person has died. This 5-week series meets January 17-February 7 and February 21. Call Elizabeth to register.

Good Grief Groups meet when 4 or more close-in-age children or teens express interest. Contact Elizabeth Ungerleider: 258-0763 or email: hanglidr@sover.net; or call Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775.

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS MEET YEAR-ROUND

Dates shown are for the current 2 month period

Bereaved Parents Support Group meets 6:30-8 pm, the 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month, January 9 & 23 ; February 13 & 27. Facilitated by Lynn Martin.

Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group meets 5-6:30 pm, the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of each month, January 11 & 25; February 8 & 22. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards.

Individual or family support is also available with trained bereavement volunteers and staff. Call 257-0775 x 104 for Elizabeth or x 101 for Muriel, for information, an appointment, or just a listening ear.

The Safe Place Support Group, for survivors after a suicide, meets weekly in Keene. Call: 603-357-5510 or email: pc@samaritansnh.org for information.



Hospice Lending Library

The Library at our 191 Canal Street office has a collection of over 650 books, CDs, DVDs, and audio or videotapes for all ages. Browse and borrow during office hours Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm. Books quoted in this issue are available for checkout, except *The Year of Pleasures* by Elizabeth Berg which is available from Brooks Memorial Library.

The Good Grief Program for Children and Teens

Could you, or a child or adolescent you know, benefit from an expressive arts support group?

Using a range of activities- drawing, sculpture, collage, photography, writing, movement and music- participants find safe, creative ways to explore questions, thoughts and feelings with others their age that have experienced the death of a significant person. Groups can be offered in schools where four or more children are interested; group meetings are also held at the hospice office. Elizabeth Ungerleider facilitates these free-of-charge sessions and can be contacted at 258-0763 or call Elizabeth Pittman, 257-0775 x104. Note: A wintertime teen group is being formed at BUHS. A group for school age children will begin at our office in March, given sufficient interest.

Brattleboro Area Hospice
Bereavement Program
191 Canal Street
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

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Seasons Mailing List

To add or remove a name, please call 257-0775
or email info@brattleborohospice.org

Speaking Truth, Accepting Help

“I don’t suppose it’s ever easy,” Delores said. “For me, the hardest thing was not to turn bitter. At first, there’s all this attention, casseroles and pies and cards and phone calls. But then it’s just you, and it starts to sink in, all that you’ve lost. Funny, for the longest time it seemed like I was surprised that it didn’t all go away, that Carson didn’t come walking back in the door saying, ‘Well, sweetheart, that was a real good job you did on my funeral, now what’s for dinner?’ But they don’t come back and they don’t come back and it takes a toll. You can get mad. And then you can take it out on the whole world. I’ve seen that happen often enough. But the alternative is...well, you can speak the truth and shame the devil. You can tell people you need a little help and then let yourself take what people offer—even though it’s hard to do! It is hard to do! And you can let yourself be gentle, which takes a lot of strength.”

From *The Year of Pleasures*, Elizabeth Berg

Elizabeth Evans Pittman, Bereavement Care Coordinator

Muriel Wolf, Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator

Elizabeth Ungerleider, Youth Program Coordinator

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