



Brattleboro Area Hospice *Newsletter*

May 2007

Brattleboro Area Hospice • 191 Canal Street • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
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WINDOW WONDER

In the deep woods, you're liable to find
A rich landscape and wondrous world
Which adulthood has left far behind.
Take a peek and remember,
It's not so far from your grasp,
Open your eyes, your mind, and your heart,
And make the moment last
You will discover, it's easy to believe,
Invite the fairies back into your life
and the wonder you can retrieve.

If you haven't had a chance to see the windows at Experienced Goods, it is worth the effort. They were created by our own Imelda Reilly, Gemma Champoli, and Hannah Dancing along with help from Emma Champoli (age 10), Elise Doucet (age 10) and Anne Bebko, and inspired by the fairies! Take a close look, you may even have to get down at kid's level (physically and imaginatively). If you are so inspired, play **I Spy in Fairy Land** and find the following: A small brass frog, The grasshopper, A wee bear, A lost pelican, The Walnut pincushion, The laughing Buddha, The plate with wings, A llama (or is it an alpaca?), A dragonfly, The little donkey, Seven nesting shells, How many nests? One smiling kitty, and A knife. Come in and visit us while you are at it!



WORDS FOR KEEPS: CREATING POEMS FROM HOSPICE WORK

Volunteer In-service, BAH Office 191 Canal Street
May 16, 2007, 6:30-8:30 PM

Hospice work combines simple actions and life's most profound changes, ones that are often beyond words. The space of intimacy and awe is the home territory of poetry.

On Wednesday evening May 16, poet Verandah Porche will facilitate a workshop for volunteers. We will spend time together exploring a variety of ways to create collaborative and individual poems. No experience necessary but your own.

Verandah Porche works as a poet-in-residence, performer and writing partner around New England. Based in rural Vermont since 1968, she has published *The Body's Symmetry and Glancing Off*, and

has pursued an alternative literary career, creating collaborative writing projects in nontraditional settings: literacy and crisis centers, hospitals, factories, nursing homes, senior centers, a 200 year-old Vermont tavern and an urban working class neighborhood. The Vermont Arts Council awarded her an Award of Merit, honoring her contribution to the state's cultural life, and more recently, a grant to support her own work.

To reserve a space for this event, please call Bettina or Jennifer at Hospice. 257-0775.



Birth, life, and death - each took place on the hidden side of a leaf.
~ Toni Morrison

FROM BETH

I find myself lately in conversations with volunteers and peers about the topic of the Hospice Foundation of America's recent tele-conference: *Living With Grief, Before and After a Death*. It is often difficult to find the words, space or the support to navigate the journey of grief, particularly prior to a loss. If you are a volunteer or a professional clinician companioning individuals in end of life care, it may be even more ambiguous; there often isn't the forum or permission to tend to our grief. Perhaps you feel you shouldn't feel grief—after all you don't know this person very well—, or feel you need to be a certain way for those you serve, or do not yet recognize the sorrow you hold.

There is much grief we all carry, many losses we witness or anticipate, while often taking on the 'do it all' persona, seemingly unaffected. Loss is a part of all our lives, and intrinsic in caring for someone with an illness, whether this is a loved one or an individual you are just now meeting. These next words are for all of us, as an invitation and a reminder.

Grief is a normal response to loss. We often begin feeling the effects of loss before a death occurs. Not to mention all the little losses we accumulate and don't always talk about; a move, a divorce, a job change, a friendship that ends, ageing loved ones no longer the people we once knew. Grief in response to these events, big or small, are normal reactions to current and future losses.

Anticipatory grief tended to, may actually help us prepare for loss, decrease the intensity of grief after death occurs, or of symptoms associated with what Stephen Levine calls, our "unattended sorrows". Some characteristics of this may include:

- Feelings of guilt
- Tearfulness
- Constant changes in emotions
- Anger
- Depression

- Feelings of emotional numbness
- Anxiety or feelings of fear
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits
- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness or poor memory
- Loneliness
- Denial
- Acceptance
- Fatigue

Anticipatory Grief is the beginning of the process of acknowledgement and healing to integrate an expected loss. It is about finding a way to respect our own internal disorder and confusion, to contemplate its meaning and trust that it helps make growth possible.

Because the patient or loved one is still alive, it may feel confusing or unacceptable to express grief's emotions. Exploring these reactions can allow us to acknowledge our own limits, to develop alternative strategies for healing, and be more authentically present for another. Notice your resistance, and don't resist. Presence, the quality of our attention, is the greatest gift we offer.

Grief may manifest itself in a number of ways. Many of these emotions, even paradoxical ones, may be experienced simultaneously. As you would for those you so lovingly care for, validate your own expressions of grief. We all need to have these experiences acknowledged, allowing space to explore our reactions to the experience.

BAH's monthly volunteer or team meetings can provide a secure and confidential environment in which volunteers can discuss issues and responses to loss. It is also a way of remembering someone which can help the grieving process. Building in time for self-care is crucial, and we need to recognize our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. I invite you

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to dedicate energy to your own health with the same passion you invest in work outside yourself.

Provide space to explore the spiritual issues raised by anticipatory grief, and assess the ways in which you can effectively utilize your beliefs, rituals, and faith communities. You may find complementary therapies such as meditation, visualization, art, or other approaches to be useful. These can reduce stress and reinforce a sense of control, while tapping into feelings. Wellness comes from honoring our needs as whole people—mind, body, and spirit.

There are things we can do which may be helpful for working through the anticipatory grief process.

Some suggestions may include:

- Acknowledge and express your emotions as they arise; allow yourself to move naturally in and out of your feelings.
- Don't judge, yourself or others. Everyone will go through this process differently
- Be gentle and kind with yourself
- Give yourself permission to suspend unnecessary activities, to say NO.
- Keep a journal. It may be helpful to loosen and interrupt grief that is naturally present, from accumulating.
- Cultivate a supportive environment of friends, other volunteers or family who will listen and accept where you are
- Eat well and Exercise.
- Meditate. Pray. Sit quietly.

- Establish boundaries.
- Plan for the future.
- Seek spiritual assistance.
- Call our Hospice Coordinator if anticipatory grief feels overwhelming or you want to talk about your feelings.
- Attend a support group.
- Get massages or back rubs. Soak in a hot tub.
- Have someone else cook for or tend to you.
- Release your anger, scream in your car; let it go.
- Make time to cry, it is a natural healthy release of tension.
- Bring something into your life that is alive; a new plant, flowers.
- Realize that you know best what you need; listen and trust yourself.
- Call someone who makes you laugh; nurture humor in your life.
- Do something crazy or playful, allow the kid in you to be.
- Listen to music that comforts you.
- Walk with the other in the search for meaning.
- Catch joy, build belief, and cultivate peace.

ENDINGS

By Lynn Kozma

Frail as porcelain
She sits, unmoving
Except for bone thin hands
Mending with care
Forgotten clothes
Which are not there—
Threading unseen needles,
Moistening fingertips
From parchment lips,
Knotting the thread
Carefully.

There—one more finished—
Smoothing the wrinkles away,
Softly laying it by,
Slipping back
To the early May
Of her life
As easily as breathing.

My planet—earth;
Hers—a distant star.
Impossible to travel
That far.

Brattleboro Area Hospice

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Calendar

May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Tuesdays, 12:15-12:45 pm. Silent sitting at Hospice Office. Information: 257-0775.

May 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, Thursdays, 5:30-7:00 pm. Bereavement Support Group. Facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman.

May 4. Volunteer Report Forms due.

May 7, 14, 21 & 28, Mondays, 6:30-8 pm. Loss Writing Support Group. Facilitated by Muriel Winter Wolf.

May 7, Monday, 3:30-5 pm. Good Grief Children's Program for children 8-10 yrs old. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider.

May 9, Wednesday, 12:30-2 pm. Monthly Volunteer Support Meeting, BAH Upstairs Meeting Room.

May 9 and 23, Wednesdays, 4-5:30 pm. Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards.

May 16, Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 pm. Creating Poems from Hospice Work, Volunteer In-service. BAH Upstairs Meeting Room. RSVP 257-0775.

May 21, Monday, 5:30-7:30 pm. Board of Directors Meeting.

Mark your calendar: Thursday, June 7: Hospice & Palliative Care Council of Vermont Annual Conference at Lake Morey. More information in the June newsletter. Call Jennifer at 257-0775 if you'd like a flyer mailed to you.

Brattleboro Area Hospice
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